ALLIANCE
for the Chesapeake Bay

2024 CHESAPEAKE WATERSHED FORUM CALL FOR SESSION PROPOSALS

SUBMISSION DEADLINE EXTENDED: 11:59 PM on Friday, May 24, 2024

BACKGROUND AND THEME

The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay will hold the 19th Annual Chesapeake Watershed Forum on October 18-20, 2024, at the National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, WV. This watershed-wide event reaches up to 400 restoration and conservation practitioners annually to inspire and empower local action towards clean water. We do this by:

- Sharing successful tools and techniques,
- Offering lessons and learnings from on-the-ground work,
- Building the capacity of local organizations,
- Fostering partnerships,
- Educating on new initiatives and emerging practices,
- Facilitating networking with each other, and
- Celebrating our successes.

Our theme for 2024 is, "Making It Last: Proven Tactics for Building Enduring Projects, Partnerships, and Organizations."

Grant funding, budget cycles, terms of elected office, legislative policies, and other externalities are key drivers that heavily influence our collective conservation and restoration efforts. As such, many projects, partnerships, and organizations operate by necessity within 2 to 5-year timelines that parallel these cyclical processes. These abbreviated timelines, however, rarely set us up to create the lasting and positive impact necessary to equitably and inclusively engage all people who live, work, and play in the region and restore the lands and waters of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

With this year's theme, we seek to showcase the projects, partnerships, and organizations that have continued to flourish for at least five years after establishment. We hope to learn about scientific research, technology, alternative funding streams, internal and external capacity building, community engagement techniques, and other approaches that foster their long-term success.

The Alliance is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in all partnerships and recognizes that systems have historically left out underrepresented

communities. Therefore, we will emphasize partnerships that prioritize equity and justice in their decision-making processes and elevate examples of long-term partnerships that are committed to creating equitable and sustainable solutions for all.

FORUM SESSION GUIDELINES

Proposal Evaluation:

- We will evaluate each proposal using the rubric provided at the end of this document. A maximum possible score is 30 points for 90 and 180-minute sessions and 25 points for 60-minute sessions.

- We aim to serve our entire Forum audience by offering balanced content tailored to three different knowledge/experience levels:

  - <u>Introductory or Early Career</u>: 100 college course level or less than 5 years of professional experience;
  - <u>Intermediate or Mid-Career</u>: 200 – 400 college course level or 5+ years professional experience; or
  - <u>Advanced or Late Career</u>: Graduate level or 10+ years of professional experience.

  When submitting your proposal, please select the knowledge/experience level that best reflects your target audience. If you feel strongly that your session transcends a specific experience level, you may submit your proposal without selecting one.

- More than one session proposal may be submitted, but each proposal must be submitted separately.

- The Forum Planning Team may ask speakers to condense more than one proposal into a single session based on shared themes or topics. Please note your willingness to do so in your application.

Presenter Expectations:

- The Chesapeake Watershed Forum is an in-person conference. All presenters will be present on-site at NCTC in Shepherdstown, WV.

- One presenter per session will receive complimentary registration to the conference for the day they are presenting. All other presenters must pay for their registration or may apply for a scholarship.

- Speakers are expected to attend a webinar on giving effective and meaningful presentations on September 11, 2024 at noon. In the two weeks leading up to the

Forum, presenters giving 90- or 180-minute sessions are encouraged to participate in a virtual run-through of their session with Alliance staff or planning team members in preparation for the event.

- The Alliance may consider offering honorariums for speakers on a limited basis. If you or a co-presenter will require an honorarium to speak at this year's event, please note this request in your application.

Specific Guidelines Related to Session Length:

- Sessions are scheduled for 60 minutes, 90 minutes, or 180 minutes.

  - **60-minute sessions** spotlight a case study(s) or introduce new, innovative, and/or hot topics.

    - No more than **two presenters** per 60-minute session will be accepted.
    - 60-minute sessions will not be graded by the participant engagement criteria in the rubric.

  - **90-minute sessions** are in-depth presentations that facilitate discussion and application to activities and organizations at the local level. Panel presentations are discouraged.

    - We strongly encourage no more than **three presenters** per 90-minute session. Lodging at NCTC is limited, and we do not guarantee presenters will be housed on-site. The more presenters in your session, the more likely some will be housed off-site during the Forum.
    - Panel presentations are discouraged.

  - **180-minute sessions** are an opportunity to lead a deeper discussion into a topic of choice about which the presenter(s) have special experience, knowledge, or expertise. 180-minute sessions are well-suited for workshops or field trips.

    - The 180-minute sessions must be held on Saturday, October 19.
    - The 180-minute sessions may occur on or off the NCTC campus. Classroom space, computer labs, and an extensive paved and unpaved trail system are available on the NCTC campus to incorporate into your session. If off campus, travel should be included in the 180 minutes.
    - Please be specific in your proposal about any expected costs (e.g., materials, entrance fees, bus rentals, boat rentals, etc.). The Alliance will work with you to either cover all of the costs associated with your activity or to build in an additional fee for participants to cover the remaining expenses.
    - Please consider if your session is accessible to people of all abilities and specify in the proposal if there will be any restrictions or limitations (e.g., a farm tour requires walking on rough terrain).

SESSION TOPICS TO CONSIDER

The following list includes priority topics for sessions under the Forum focal areas. We also encourage unrelated submissions, especially if the topic is theme-related and creative. However, proposals that relate to the priority topics identified below likely will receive a higher ranking than others (see evaluation rubric).

Focal Area	Priority Topics	
Restoration	• Agriculture (rural/urban/suburban) • Riparian forest buffers • Urban tree canopy • Emerging green technologies • Green energy	• Soil health and climate • Practice maintenance • Wetlands • Green stormwater infrastructure • New Best Management Practices
Conservation	• Forest and urban woodland management • Policies and laws • Climate resiliency	• Wildlife research/identification • Chesapeake Bay 101 • Native plant research/identification • Agriculture (rural/urban/suburban)
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice	• Engaging diverse community partnerships • Workforce development • Environmental justice	• Traditional ecological knowledge • Policy change/advocacy • Collective Impact • Trauma-informed care
Education and Engagement	• Art and the Environment • Behavior change • Organizing grassroots campaigns • Water quality monitoring • Volunteer management	• Engaging rural landowners, absentee landowners, OR non-traditional audiences • Youth engagement • Ecotherapy • Non-closure practices
Organizational Development	• Diversifying funding • Fundraising • Introductory grant writing • Large event planning • Executive Leadership • Succession planning	• Navigating multi-generational workspaces • Expanding corporate engagement beyond one-time sponsorship • Advocacy 101
Personal Development	• Advanced leadership training • Volunteer skill development	• Young professional skill development
Communications	• Basic graphic design • Data interpretation • Storytelling	• Media engagement • Social media and marketing for small nonprofits
Holistic Wellbeing	• Self-care • Connect with nature	• Human Connection

ONLINE PROPOSAL SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Each proposal must include/answer the following:

- Title of proposed session (6 words or less).

- Under which focal area (see page 3) does your session fall? Which topic will your session focus on?

- A summary/abstract (100 words or less).

- Describe your target audience, their knowledge, and experience level.

- List the practical lessons and/or skills your target audience will take away from this session. Please be specific as to why these are practical lessons and/or skills best suited for the target audience's knowledge/skill level. Are these lessons and/or skills relevant and transferable across sectors? If so, how?

- 90 and 180-minute sessions only: How will you engage participants in your session? Do you intend to share your content beyond the traditional lecture format? If so, how?

- How does your session relate to the theme?

- Does your session address diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) issues in the environmental sector? If so, how?

  - Please note that while we ask all presenters to consider their project through a DEIJ lens, we acknowledge that this can be a challenge for some to do so authentically, given their proposed session's content. We encourage you to address these questions as best as you are able.

- Does your presentation include underrepresented voices? If so, how? Including, but is not limited to, underrepresented communities, unique partnerships, farming/agriculture sector, community groups, etc.

- Is this a 60, 90, or 180-minute session?

- 180-minute sessions only: logistics of the session that must include length, the maximum number of attendees, cost, accessibility, and any specific equipment/clothing the participants should bring.

- Biography for each presenter (100 words or less).

- Have you presented at the Forum before? If so, how many times?

- Do you or another speaker need an honorarium to present at the Forum?

- Are you willing to combine your proposed session with one or more others into a single session at the discretion of the Forum planning team? Please note, that we will only offer one one-day scholarship for the combined session, with the other co-presenters able to apply for scholarships.

Where do I go to submit my session proposal?

Click here to submit your proposal. Please plan to prepare your proposal ahead of submitting your session via the online portal.

Forum Proposal Office Hours

The Alliance and our planning team are offering office hours to anyone who wants feedback on a proposal concept before submission. Office hour availability and sign-up can be found here.

For further information or questions about the guidelines, please contact Jenny McGarvey at chesapeakeforum@allianceforthebay.org or (804) 977-1657.

Evaluation Criteria	Poor (1 Point)	Fair (2 Points)	Good (3 Points)	Very Good (4 Points)	Excellent (5 Points)
1. Timeliness, importance, and appropriateness of the topic to the field and participants' interests and priorities (based on abstract)	The topic is not current or appropriate to the field or to the Forum participants. I would not attend this session.	The topic is somewhat relevant to the field and/or the Forum participants but is not current. I probably would not attend this session.	The topic may not be current but is a priority topic to Forum participants (as noted in the RFP). I may attend this session.	The topic is current, immediately relevant and important to the field, but it does not focus on a priority topic for Forum participants. I would probably attend this session.	The topic is cutting-edge, relevant, and groundbreaking to the field. It also is a priority topic for Forum participants. I would definitely attend or recommend this session.
2A. Practical Application and Transferability (e.g., skill building, problem-solving, action planning) IF PROPOSAL TARGETS A SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE OR EXPERIENCE LEVEL	No stated practical application in the proposal, or no attempt to connect practical applications to their target audience.		The practical applications appear to be for the target audience, but lessons are too broad and/or self-evident to be valuable.		The proposal content illustrates a clear practical application to the target audience. The learning outcomes are novel and important, and participants cannot find similar content elsewhere. It includes valuable resources that a specific set of attendees would highly appreciate.
2B. Practical Application and Transferability IF PROPOSAL IS FOR GENERAL AUDIENCE	No stated practical application in the proposal or the practical applications appear to be for a subset of attendees, not a broad range of participants.	.	The practical applications appear to be for a broad range of participants, but lessons are too broad and/or self-evident to be valuable.		The proposal content illustrates a clear practical application to a broad range of participants. This content is novel and important, and participants cannot find similar content elsewhere. It includes valuable resources that many attendees would highly appreciate.
3. Participants' Engagement FOR 90 OR 180 MINUTE SESSIONS ONLY	There is no evidence of meaningful interaction with the participants beyond the traditional lecture format.	The proposal includes some vague or poorly defined activities to engage the participants beyond the traditional lecture format, and/or the activities proposed are inappropriate for the session type and use of time.	The proposal includes at least one clearly defined activity to engage the participants beyond the traditional lecture format and is appropriate for the session type and use of time.	The proposal includes several clearly defined activities to engage the participants beyond the traditional lecture format, and are appropriate for the session type and use of time.	The proposal includes several clear, compelling, unique, and well-detailed activities to engage the participants, and are appropriate for the session type and use of time.
4. Relevancy to the Forum theme	The topic is not relevant to the Forum theme.	The topic is related only tangentially to the Forum theme.	The topic may not be current or groundbreaking but is relevant to the Forum theme.	The topic is current, important, and relevant to the Forum theme.	The topic is cutting-edge, relevant, groundbreaking, and relevant to the Forum theme.
5. The proposal addresses DEIJ issues in the environmental sector.	There is no connection made to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in the proposal.	Connections made to the topics of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice are vague and fail to provide examples, commitment, or understanding of the concepts.	The proposal demonstrates some concepts of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.	The proposal indicates some experience, commitment, and/or understanding of working in the DEIJ space.	The proposal content clearly addresses one or more DEIJ issues in the environmental sector. It also provides examples of intentional engagement with underrepresented populations.
6. Presentation uplifts underrepresented voices. This includes, but is not limited to underserved communities, unique partnerships, the farming/agriculture sector, etc.	There is no apparent representation of underrepresented voices within this proposed presentation.	The proposal is vague and fails to mention specific actions for incorporating underrepresented voices into the presentation.	The proposal makes an effort but lacks concrete examples and/or experiences including underrepresented voices.	The proposal demonstrates an understanding and acceptance of equity, inclusion, diversity, and environmental justice concepts but it does not necessarily uplift or integrate those voices into the content.	The proposal details how the presentation will incorporate underrepresented voices. These voices are integrated well into the presentation content and format and/or share successful experiences working with underrepresented populations.