

APNEP Citizen Advisory Committee 2026 Request for Proposals

Overview

The Albemarle-Pamlico National Estuary Partnership (APNEP) with guidance from their Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) is accepting proposals for community-based engagement and stewardship projects in the APNEP region that support the [2025 Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan](#) (CCMP).

This RFP is being released under the guidance of the CAC, one of the three advisory groups that comprise APNEP's [Management Conference](#) and provide direction and oversight for the partnership. The CAC works with the Leadership Council on CCMP implementation and meaningful community-led engagement activities. Committee members serve as liaisons to citizens, agencies, Tribes, and communities regarding environmental and natural resource management relevant to CCMP implementation. APNEP's CCMP is a 5-year plan that contains specific targeted actions to address a wide range of environmental issues in the Albemarle-Pamlico region. The CAC's goal is to engage regional communities and organizations in decision-making to represent diverse perspectives within the APNEP Management Conference.

This RFP is tailored to actions described in Engagement section of the CCMP focused on engagement, stewardship, and educational needs. Proposals must assist in implementing at least one of the following **engagement actions**.

- C1.1: Communicate the importance of stewardship and offer opportunities for volunteerism to further APNEP's mission.
- C1.2: Provide and promote opportunities for outdoor experiences that connect individuals with the Albemarle-Pamlico ecosystem.
- C2.1: Provide environmental education training opportunities for educators.
- C2.2: Increase public understanding of the relationship between ecosystem health and human health advisories relating to water, fish, and game.
- C3.1: Develop and implement a strategy to improve decision-makers' understanding of the return on investments in environmental protection, restoration, planning, and monitoring.
- C3.2: Enhance the coordination of targeted ecosystem management by federal, state, regional, Tribal, and local governments, and communities, by assisting with the incorporation of resilience, climate change and sea level rise considerations into planning processes.

Projects must also align with at least one of APNEP’s priority **focus areas** designated by the Leadership Council in the CCMP. These were selected to maximize APNEP’s resources in such a large geographic area.

- Water Quality
- Wetlands
- Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)
- Oyster Habitats
- Community Resilience

APNEP only accepts proposals for projects or initiatives that take place within the [APNEP management boundary](#) in North Carolina and Virginia. Proposals must assist in implementing at least one of the engagement actions from the CCMP and align with at least one of APNEP’s focus areas, as detailed above.

Award Amounts and Available Funding

Up to a total of \$300,000 in funds may be awarded, subject to continued funding availability. Awards may range from \$10,000 to \$100,000 for projects with an expected 1–2-year duration. Projects with lesser funding needs are encouraged to apply. Recent awards for similar RFPs have ranged from \$20,000 - \$30,000 for 1-year projects.

Timeline

Dates	Milestones
March 2, 2026	Request for proposals open
April 30, 2026	Deadline for submission
May 29, 2026	Notice of funding award
June 30, 2026	Contracted funds (<i>anticipated</i>)
December 31, 2027- June 30, 2028	Spend funding by date (<i>anticipated</i>)

How to Apply

APNEP’s Scope of Work application is available [at this link](#). All applications should be submitted as a single PDF file to this [submission form](#). Assistance with project proposals is available by contacting Natalie Ivey (Natalie.Ivey@deq.nc.gov).

Examples of prior funded projects can be found on [our website](#), and final reports from past projects are also available. As noted in the timeline above, applications will be accepted until April 30, 2026, and assessed based on criteria developed by APNEP’s CAC detailed below.

Eligibility Requirements

- The project must be located within the [APNEP region](#) in North Carolina and Virginia.
- The project must be located on public lands or public school/university grounds and where applicable, allow for permanent public access. Projects located on private land are not eligible.
- State and local governments, interstate and intrastate agencies, Tribes, and nonprofit organizations and institutions are eligible to apply. Educational Institutions including K-12, community colleges and universities are also eligible to apply. Individuals are not eligible to apply.
- The project must have a direct environmental benefit and must address at least one action covered in [APNEP's CCMP](#).
- The project must have a strong public outreach/education element.
- Where applicable, projects contain prominent signage. All signs and outreach materials, including those posted digitally, must contain the APNEP Logo.
- The project must have transferable methods. In other words, the methods used in your project must be able to be easily applied in other locations under similar circumstances.
- The project should be completed within a two-year period, by December 31, 2027, to June 30, 2028.

Proposals will be initially screened by APNEP staff to determine whether they meet the following requirements:

- Project will take place within or primarily impact areas within APNEP's management boundary.
- Project assists in implementing at least one of the actions from the Engagement section of the CCMP listed above.
- Projects align with at least one of APNEP's priority focus areas designated by the APNEP Leadership Council listed above.
- Applicant meets eligibility and legal requirements.

Proposals that meet these requirements will be reviewed and evaluated based on the following criteria, with a possible total score of 100 points. An independent selection committee of APNEP partners will evaluate the proposals.

Review

The APNEP Citizens' Advisory Committee will also consider the following when reviewing proposals:

- Distribution of projects around the region.
- Projects that help build both ecosystem and community resilience to recurring extreme weather events (e.g., use of natural based solutions).
- Projects that engage volunteers, students, or others without compensation.
- Projects that leverage or match funding request.
- Total project costs and available funds.
- Projects on public school and community/local government grounds.
- Whether a permit (such as CAMA) would be needed or has been issued for the proposed project.

**Federal agencies do not qualify for funding, although they can be partners on funded projects.*

Proposals that meet these requirements will be reviewed and evaluated based on the following criteria, with a possible total score of 100 points. An independent selection committee of APNEP partners will be evaluating the proposals.

Criteria	Points
1. Measurable Impact	30
2. Reach of Proposal	30
3. Capability	20
4. Evidence of Need	10
5. Budget	5
6. Partnerships	5
Total	100

1. Measurable Impact (0-30 points)

Proposal defines project success via quantitative or qualitative targets for output and/or outcome metrics. *(APNEP staff are available to assist with this process.)*

Proposal lists at least one or more output and/or outcome metrics that will be measured, documented, and reported after project completion, as well as expected target for each metric. *(up to 20 points)*

Proposal includes a short explanation for how each metric assists in measurement of a CCMP engagement action being implemented by the project. *(Up to 10 points)*

Proposal includes a short explanation for how one or more metrics contribute to the assessment of activities that address APNEP’s focus areas of (1) water quality, (2) wetlands, (3) submerged aquatic vegetation, (4) oyster habitats, and (5) community resilience *(up to 10 points)*.

2. Reach of Proposal (0-30 points)

Proposal clearly shows how project will assist in implementation of APNEP’s CCMP. Proposal demonstrates a clear connection between project implementation and implementation of one or more of the engagement actions in Section C, as well as potentially other CCMP actions. *(up to 10 points)*

Proposal defines and justifies intended audience(s), spatial scope (location, geographic region) of project, and explains how it is contributing to filling gaps in the Albemarle-Pamlico region. *(10 points)*

Proposal includes a clear and specific explanation of how the project contributes to addressing needs of under-resourced and underserved communities within the Albemarle-Pamlico region. *(up to 10 points)*

3. Capability (0-20 points)

Proposal clearly outlines project goals, objectives, and deliverables. Proposal is complete, concise, and specific. Timeline for project completion is realistic and achievable. (10 points)

Statement of qualifications and/or resume clearly demonstrates that applicant/organization has the ability to successfully complete the proposed project. (10 points)

4. Evidence of Need (10 points)

Proposal clearly addresses a need in the community (5 points)

Project proposal addresses an underserved community within the APNEP Watershed (5 points)

5. Budget (0-5 points)

Proposed budget provides enough detail to show that costs are appropriate to the scope of work and abide by project restrictions (see below). Proposed budget includes description of any leveraging or matching of financial resources or in-kind services such as volunteer hours. Indirect and overhead expenses are limited to 10% of the direct project cost. Matching funds are not required for this grant. Leveraged funds or in-kind should be noted in the budget sheet. (5 points)

6. Partnerships (0-5 points)

Project proposal has support of partners necessary to successfully complete the project. Proposal describes partner support (i.e., funding, technical assistance, in-kind services) or provides a justification for why support isn't needed to successfully implement project goals and objectives. (5 points)

Restrictions and Conditions

Awarded funds cannot be used to match federal grants. All awards are contingent upon availability of funds and current program priorities.

Projects that have research or monitoring components must comply with [EPA Quality Assurance Project Plan Guidance](#).

Any materials and media produced with APNEP funds must credit APNEP and/or include the APNEP logo as appropriate. Awards recipients will be required to submit a final report to APNEP upon project completion, which will include any data on any output/outcome metrics chosen during the proposal process.

The report will also include digital copies of any final products (i.e., brochures, videos, manuals, etc.). Any digital content to be posted on APNEP's website (final products, reports, maps, etc.) must meet [WCAG 2.1 Level AA accessibility standards](#). Deliverables must be submitted before final payment is made unless authorized by the administrator.

All funded work will be conducted under a contract with NC Department of Environmental Quality and subject to state and federal contracting conditions and requirements.

APNEP does not fund the following under this process:

- Projects that occur outside of the APNEP management boundary.
- Endowments, individuals, building campaigns, annual giving, fundraising, or venture capital.
- Political, governmental, or regulatory lobbying.
- Political donations or events.
- Reimbursement for a project that has been completed or materials that have already been purchased prior to the grant award date.
- Educator/substitute stipends.
- Transportation costs separate from core activity of project.
- Use of TikTok.
- Budget items that are considered secondary to the project's central purpose. These include promotional materials such as pens and key chains, or monetary prizes.
- Educational activities that exclusively benefit a single class or home-schooling activities. Projects for students like outdoor learning and field-based exploratory learning are encouraged, however, they must contribute to ongoing education, community engagement and outreach for the greater community.

Still Have Questions?

Please contact Natalie Ivey (Natalie.Ivey@deq.nc.gov).