



Request for Proposals: Evaluation and Communications Consultant for
eeBLUE Aquaculture Literacy Mini-Grants Program

Deadline: July 15, 2024

Introduction

[The North American Association for Environmental Education \(NAAEE\)](#) is seeking an external evaluator for the [eeBLUE Aquaculture Literacy Mini-Grants Program](#) to communicate program outcomes to diverse audience groups. This program will provide small grants to ten aquaculture literacy projects to form partnerships between informal learning institutions (e.g., aquariums and museums), the aquaculture industry (e.g., seafood farmers and organizations), and NOAA offices or programs (e.g., NOAA Fisheries regional office, Sea Grant programs).

This Request for Proposals (RFP) outlines the background of the eeBLUE program, the [2024 Aquaculture Literacy Mini-Grants Program](#), the program's draft intended outcomes, expected deliverables from the evaluator, and proposal instructions.

Background

The [North American Association for Environmental Education \(NAAEE\)](#) is pleased to offer organizations the opportunity to apply for the Evaluation and Communications Consultant for the Aquaculture Literacy Mini-Grant Program. Through this mini-grants program, NAAEE supports partnerships sharing the mutual aquaculture literacy goals of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of Education, NOAA Fisheries, and the National Sea Grant Office. These mini-grants will provide informal learning institutions (e.g., aquariums), the aquaculture industry (e.g., shellfish, finfish, and seaweed farmers), and NOAA partners with support for the co-development of innovative educational experiences that explore aquaculture topics. Successful proposals will use the unique education mission of the [eeBLUE partnership](#)—a collaboration between NAAEE and NOAA's [Office of Education](#)—as a context for engagement and advancement of public aquaculture literacy.

Aquaculture literacy within a community builds on and supports the collective goals of environmental literacy. *Environmental literacy* is "the possession of knowledge and understanding of a wide range of environmental concepts, problems, and issues; cognitive and affective dispositions toward the environment; cognitive skills and abilities; and appropriate behavioral strategies to make sound and effective environmental decisions. It includes informed decision-making individually and collectively and a willingness to act on those decisions in personal and civic life to improve the well-being of other individuals, societies, and the global environment" (Hollweg et al. 2011; NOAA's [Community Resilience Education Theory of Change, 2020](#)). Projects should implement formal or nonformal educational opportunities that build the collective environmental literacy necessary for communities to become more familiar with the aquaculture sector and understand related environmental topics.

From 2021–2023, the first cohort of the Aquaculture Literacy Mini-Grants Program built diverse, collaborative networks in ten communities across the United States. Their [reported outcomes](#) underscored the effectiveness of small-scale grant-making and the significance of flexibility and responsiveness in meeting partners where they were. Explore more about their impactful partnerships [here](#).

In addition to managing this grant program focused on building partnerships, NAAEE is working closely with NOAA's Office of Education to support a wide range of opportunities in outreach and education through the eeBLUE partnership program. Through this mini-grant opportunity, one of many collaborative [eeBLUE efforts](#), NAAEE is committed to leveraging NOAA and NAAEE resources to increase participants' understanding and stewardship of sustainable aquaculture activities and related environmental topics. NAAEE is also interested in forging lasting partnerships between environmental education providers, aquaculture industry experts, and NOAA to achieve greater impacts at several levels.

The 2024 eeBLUE Aquaculture Literacy Mini-Grant Program aims to support such partnerships by funding the development of aquaculture education programs that are responsive to the following goals of the Community of Practice for Aquaculture Literacy (CoPAL):

- Bringing aquaculture education programs to institutions and target audiences that currently lack resources.
- Enhancing the capacity of environmental education providers to offer high-quality programs in nonformal and formal settings by addressing aquaculture communication needs with existing research.

- Developing creative approaches for public engagement to promote a culture that values innovation, exploration, and community-relevant learning as a means to improve public aquaculture literacy.
- Identifying ways to integrate aquaculture topics into broader seafood communications to enhance public understanding of the relationship between wild capture fisheries and farmed seafood.

Mini-grants will support collaborative projects that create a partnership between (1) nonformal learning institutions (e.g., science centers and aquariums), (2) aquaculture industry experts (e.g., shellfish farmers, researchers, or organizations), and (3) NOAA (e.g., NOAA aquaculture coordinators and/or Sea Grant extension agents). The total portfolio of funded projects is anticipated to reach a minimum of [4 regions](#) with approximately eight projects in 2024, encouraging but not limiting partnerships between [Coastal Ecosystem Learning Centers](#) (CELC) network members as the informal learning institution. Mini-grant activities will focus on the co-production and delivery of essential education and outreach resources to the target audiences served by understanding and discussing aquaculture topics related to their community.

Work Statement

This RFP is intended to identify an evaluator and communications consultant to assess the outcomes of this cross-sectoral program. Specifically, we seek an evaluator and communication consultant who can disseminate the information reported by grantees about project implementation and program outcomes using reports, qualitative data collection methods, and attending the ending symposium. Evaluation questions include:

- What can the information grantees report about project **implementation** and results tell us about program outcomes?
- How can the information reported by grantees about project **outcomes** be synthesized into best practices for community engagement with aquaculture literacy discussions?
- What can the information reported by grantees about project **partnerships** tell us about cross-sectoral collaborations to reach diverse audience groups?

The evaluation findings will be used to develop best practices, lessons learned, and resources for the field. These will focus on promising strategies for inspiring and engaging various audience groups in sustainable aquaculture conversations. The consultant is expected to present this work at at least one conference.

The total amount available for this RFP is **\$15,000**, including travel expenses for at least one conference.

Intended Outcomes

Through this RFP, a consultant will be selected to work collaboratively with NAAEE and NOAA to assess the mini-grant outcomes in project communities, emphasizing what the grantee's final reports can tell us about best practices and lessons learned. We will also request that the consultant fold key takeaways into (1) a formalized logic model and (2) recommendations for changes or improvements to future implementation. The consultant will also support aquaculture literacy program wrap-up activities, including a virtual grantee symposium in the summer of 2025 and a virtual resource collection of grantee deliverables. Below are more details and a timeline for consultant responsibilities, which will be refined in collaboration with the consultant. Please review the reported outcomes in the [program evaluation report](#) from the 2021 Cohort.

Culturally Responsive Evaluation

[Culturally responsive evaluation](#) should be considered to ensure that it is sensitive to and inclusive of the diversity of cultures, backgrounds, and experiences of the participating grantees and their communities.

Responsibilities of the Consultant Include:

- Participation in a kick-off meeting with key NAAEE and NOAA staff to review program activities, goals, and objectives, discuss the grantee final report template, answer any questions, and plan ahead for a detailed timeline.
- Participation in monthly coordination calls with NAAEE and NOAA staff.
- Development of a final evaluation report that assesses the program's implementation and intended outcomes.
- A summary report incorporating findings from data collection and analysis from pilot program implementation with a formal presentation of findings to the program team and lead partners.
- Creation of a programmatic logic model to guide future iterations of this program.
- Presentation of findings to NAAEE program team and partners (NOAA, mini-grant partners, etc.) at one conference.
- Support for grantee end-of-project symposium (logistical support during the event).
- Supporting the 2024—2025 Harvest Stories, the monthly grantee blog on the NAAEE website.

- Supporting grantees by facilitating—along with NAAEE—a mid-project meetup.
- Leading resource collection development, created with grantee deliverables (curricula, educational videos, exhibit designs, and best practices), and hosted on NAAEE and NOAA web pages.
- Preparation of digital media communications (web content, social media posts, etc., to promote the grantee symposium and resource collection).

Evaluation Timeline

Milestone	Due Date*
Grant begins	July 1, 2024
Consultant selected	August 1, 2024
Kickoff meeting	Within two weeks of the consultant selection
Final report data collection ends (implemented by NAAEE and NOAA)	June 30, 2025
Assistance with virtual grantee symposium	August–September, 2025
Attendance at virtual grantee symposium	August 2025
Submission of draft cumulative evaluation report	October 2025
Final cumulative evaluation report and summary presentation	No later than December 15, 2025
Presentation at a conference	TBD, 2025, or Early 2026

Submitting Your Proposal

Applicants should review the following [eeBLUE Aquaculture Literacy Mini-Grant Program RFP](#) information when preparing their proposal.

Proposal instructions: Proposals should include your CV/resume and a maximum 3-page scope of work outlining how you would synthesize the information provided in the example of a **final grantee report form** (e.g., responsibilities and deliverables). The proposal should also cover relevant experience and skills and a proposed budget. It should also include at least **two** references for similar projects you or your organization produced. Please include references who speak toward end product satisfaction and project management experience (1-page limit).

Please submit proposals by **11:59 PM ET on July 15, 2024**, to eeBLUE@naaee.org.

Proposals will be evaluated based on experience, proposal, and proposed budget. Each submission will be evaluated for how well the proposal meets the project's goals and the goals of the eeBLUE program.

Additional Resources

- [Aquaculture Literacy Mini-Grants Program Page](#)
- [Logic Model: Aquaculture Literacy Community of Practice](#)
- [Coastal Ecosystems Learning Centers \(CELC\) One-Pager](#)
- [CELC Aquaculture Initiative One-Pager](#)
- [Webinar About Our Community of Practice Efforts in 2020](#)
- [Recordings of CELC Aquaculture Education Webinars](#)
- [NOAA Office of Education Aquaculture Literacy Resources](#)
- [10-Year NOAA Sea Grant Aquaculture Vision](#)
- [NOAA Fisheries' National and Regional Strategic Plans](#)
- [NOAA Education Strategic Plan](#)
- [NOAA's National Seafood Strategy](#)
- [NOAA's Community Resilience Education Theory of Change](#)
- [NOAA Aquaculture Outreach and Educational Materials](#)
- [NAAEE Resources Page](#)
- [NOAA Assets for Education Grants](#)
- [NOAA in Your State and Territory](#)
- [Environmental Literacy Program's Resilience Assets](#)