

LCCMR Communications and Proposal Process Goals and Strategies for 2025-2031 (DRAFT – 7/25/2024)

GOAL 1: THE PUBLIC IS AWARE OF AND UNDERSTANDS THE PURPOSE OF THE LCCMR AND THE ENRTF AND THEIR SHARED MISSION.

Strategies:

~~1. Provide direct and regular communication to the public about the LCCMR process, meetings, and decisions.~~

~~2. Hire staff dedicated solely to communications efforts. [pursuant to statutory restrictions]~~

~~3.1. Explore ways to maximize and expand the impact of social media and other online content, such as through the following:~~

a) Assessing website and social media analytics and using other appropriate methods to determine what forms of communication are the most effective and reach the most people.

~~b) Expanding the number of social media platforms used to communicate to the public.~~

~~c) Increasing the frequency of social media posts and e~~Ensuring that a regular flow of engaging written, audio, video, or other content ~~and information~~ is produced and communicated throughout the year on a variety of social media and other online platforms, ~~covering all aspects of what the LCCMR is doing and what the ENRTF is accomplishing.~~

~~d) Producing engaging audio and visual content.~~

~~4.2. Attend~~ Establish a presence at events, including:

a) Events hosted by ENRTF-funding recipients to highlight and amplify others' communications about the ENRTF and LCCMR.

b) Public events like the ag expo or the state fair to directly communicate with the public who may not regularly follow the LCCMR and the ENRTF.

~~5.3. Cultivate and amplify traditional media opportunities.~~

Additional Option for Consideration Based on Survey Input and Staff Discussion:

~~6.4. Engage with the Community Grants Program and other ENRTF-funded grant programs to explore opportunities to collaborate, coordinate, and, if needed, differentiate among programs.~~

GOAL 2: THE PUBLIC IS AWARE OF ENRTF FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND UNDERSTANDS THE FUNDING APPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION PROCESS.

Strategies:

1. Provide direct and regular communication on multiple platforms to the public about the LCCMR process, meetings, and decisions.
2. Provide direct and regular communication to applicants that keeps them informed about every step of the RFP and recommendation process and the status of their proposal.
3. Bolster RFP outreach to reach more potential applicants, such as:
 - a) Hosting and attending meetings and events – regional, topical, organizational – to directly communicate funding opportunities and answer questions about priorities and how to apply.
 - b) Cultivating and amplifying traditional media opportunities, including paid advertising.
4. Explore ways to maximize and expand the impact of social media and other online content, such as assessing website and social media analytics and using other appropriate methods to determine what forms of communication are the most effective and reach the most people.

Additional Option for Consideration Based on Survey Input and Staff Discussion:

5. Create new materials and opportunities to clearly and simply explain current LCCMR priorities and processes to the public and assist applicants.

GOAL 3: GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE NOT TRADITIONALLY PARTICIPATED IN THE LCCMR PROCESS UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF THE ENRTF AND LCCMR AND HOW TO APPLY FOR FUNDING.

Strategies:

1. Contact leaders, leverage existing connections and networks, and build relationships with communities and organizations that have not traditionally participated in the LCCMR process – including communities of color, tribal communities, and small nonprofits – to determine the best ways to communicate and conduct outreach with them.
2. Carry out targeted outreach to groups and organizations that have not traditionally been aware of the ENRTF and LCCMR to help them understand the purpose of the ENRTF and LCCMR and how to apply for funding.
3. Produce ENRTF and LCCMR-related outreach materials, including written, audio, and video content, that may be more accessible to groups and organizations that have not traditionally participated in the LCCMR process.

GOAL 4: THE LCCMR PROCESS FOR SELECTING AND RECOMMENDING PROPOSALS IS TRANSPARENT, UNDERSTANDABLE, FAIR, AND ACCESSIBLE FOR ALL MINNESOTANS.

Strategies:

Options for Consideration Based on Survey Input and Staff Discussion:

1. Continue to provide special consideration for small projects or organizations in the request for proposals (RFP).

Staff Question: If included, do you want to the strategy to apply to small projects or small organizations or both?

2. Evaluate on a regular basis the proposal application process and the LCCMR Proposal and Grants Management System to make it as accessible and simple as possible for users to submit proposals.
3. Review and update guidance on allowable expenses to make sure they are clear and align with commission expectations.
4. Explore alternative processes for selecting and recommending proposals to handle the increasing number of applications and to ensure the process is easy to communicate and for the public and applicants to understand.
5. Explore options to reduce the amount of time between proposal submittal and the availability of funding.
6. Develop a process for providing constructive feedback to applicants not recommended for funding.
7. Develop a process to receive regular feedback from applicants on the application, selection, and recommendation process.
8. Discourage lobbying of commission members between request for proposals (RFP) release and recommendation to the Legislature.

GOAL 5: THE LCCMR RECOMMENDS PROJECTS THAT WILL PROVIDE THE MOST BENEFIT TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

Strategies:

1. Require applicants provide data, citations, and/or letters of recommendation to support problem statements and proposed solutions in their proposal.
2. Explore options for periodic, rigorous, independent evaluation of the effectiveness and impact of past ENRTF investments.

Additional Options for Consideration Based on Survey Input and Staff Discussion:

3. Develop process for project managers to provide clear and measurable outputs and outcomes to assess project success.
4. Apply evaluation criteria consistently and review which priorities from the strategic plan are contained in the request for proposals (RFP) every funding cycle.
5. Evaluate opportunities to increase professional and/or expert review in the proposal selection and recommendation process.

GOAL 6: ~~COMMUNICATIONS WITH LCCMR MEMBERS REGARDING THE LCCMR PROCESSES, MEETINGS, AND EXPECTATIONS~~ STAFF ARE TIMELY AND EFFECTIVE IN RESPONDING AND COMMUNICATING TO APPLICANTS, PROJECT MANAGERS, AND LCCMR MEMBERS.

Strategies:

1. Hire nonpartisan staff dedicated solely to outreach, engagement, and communications efforts.
2. Implement standardized protocols for staff communication and coordination with LCCMR members on processes, meetings, and expectations.

Additional Options for Consideration Based on Survey Input and Staff Discussion:

3. Ensure appropriate staffing levels to manage the LCCMR proposal request, evaluation, and recommendation process and oversight of approved projects as funding levels and number of projects increase.

GOAL 7: THE PUBLIC KNOWS HOW ENRTF MONEY IS BEING SPENT (~~I.E., PROJECTS BEING FUNDED AND THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS~~) AND WHAT BENEFITS THE PUBLIC IS GAINING FROM THOSE EXPENDITURES.

Strategies:

1. Explore new opportunities and assess existing communications channels to identify the most effective platforms to communicate the accomplishments and benefits of ENRTF-funded projects to our varied audiences, such as:
 - a) Assessing website and social media analytics and using other appropriate methods to determine what forms of communication are the most effective and reach the most people.
 - b) Hosting and attending events that communicate ENRTF accomplishments, such as lunchtime lectures, events hosted by ENRTF-funding recipients, or public events like the state fair or ag expo.
2. Generate new, creative, varied, accessible, interesting, and comprehensive content that communicates the accomplishments of the ENRTF and the LCCMR, such as:
 - a) Focusing less on technical information and more on storytelling.
 - b) Gathering content, including photos and videos, related to active and completed projects for use in regular communications.
3. Cultivate and amplify traditional media opportunities.

Additional Options for Consideration Based on Survey Input and Staff Discussion:

4. Ensure full participation by all project managers in acknowledging the source of funding for their work in their communication efforts and signage.
5. Create clear and consistent brand for the LCCMR and ENRTF that connects all communications and outreach materials.
6. Communicate accomplishments and benefits of ENRTF-funded projects through existing LCCMR communications channels.