



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2024 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2024-015

Proposal Title: Jay C. Hormel Nature Center Supplemental Teaching Staff

Project Manager Information

Name: Luke Reese

Organization: City of Austin

Office Telephone: (507) 437-7519

Email: luke.reese@hormelnaturecenter.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: This project sustains momentum from the pilot project funded previously by the ENRTF for growing environmental education opportunities for learners from outside of Austin.

Funds Requested: \$410,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Environmental Education (C)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): SE

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): SE

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

For most of the over 50 years that the City of Austin has owned and operated the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center, a major part of the center's mission has been providing environmental education to local students. In fact, in 1970, Austin Public Schools were one of 12 pilot schools in the Minnesota Environmental Education Project. Schools from outside of Austin were squeezed into schedules when possible, but were never a priority.

Regional schools were not a priority until the fall of 2021, when the "Jay C. Hormel Nature Center Supplemental Teaching Staff" LCCMR grant began. This first project was a pilot to demonstrate that there is demand from schools outside of Austin for environmental education. The Jay C. Hormel Nature Center established new and grew existing relationships with at least 20 schools from outside of Austin.

If the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center is going to continue to focus on providing environmental education opportunities to students from the region, along with Austin students, continued outside funding is required for supplemental teaching staff.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

The proposed solution will maintain and grow the relationships developed within the region thanks to the funding awarded by the LCCMR and ENRTF from the 2020 projects. This project will continue to support the supplemental teaching staff of a full-time naturalist for three years and an intern, on a one-year term for each of the three years of the grant, to assist the naturalist with programming. Additional teaching staff allows the continuation of environmental education outreach into regional communities surrounding Austin. The educator and intern will utilize curricula that are already developed and are tied to state science standards and include the following themes: nature discovery, seasons, five senses, living vs. non-living nature, seed dispersal, animal habitat requirements, tree anatomy (maple syruping), habitat restoration, animal adaptations, winter survival, cross-country skiing, climate change, planets & stars, orienteering, and aquatic macroinvertebrates. Summer curriculum themes expand on these ideas and include: monarch butterfly life/migration, bees & insects, gardening, birds, astronomy, fishing & fish ecology, camping, raptor education, trees, orienteering, canoeing/kayaking, rock climbing, water programs, nocturnal nature, nature photography, and camouflage/adaptations.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

The Hormel Nature Center provides immersive environmental programming utilizing our 530+ acres of conserved land. The positions funded through this grant will offer high-quality and accessible programming to public schools, visitors, and families. Jay C. Hormel Nature Center curricula begin with exposing young kids to nature and environmental themes. Older students are exposed to the idea that where we have quality habitats, we must protect and care for them for future generations. Our oldest classes focus on preserving finite resources, water in particular, and how we can actively restore the land. We help develop environmental stewardship and ethics among visitors.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Maintain increase in environmental education programming to non-Austin schools and during the summer

Activity Budget: \$410,000

Activity Description:

With continued funding, the nature center will maintain 250+ school groups each school year, with at least 85 from outside of Austin. The additional teaching staff has allowed a 41% increase (from 198 to 279) in total school classes participating as well as a 183% increase (from 35 to 99) in classes from outside of Austin schools. We will also maintain a total of 45 summer classes, up from the previous 30, every summer for ages ranging from birth through adult. Curricula for school and summer programming have been established in the over 50 years that the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center has been in operation. Modifications are made as requested by schools or required to align with science standards.

This activity will be evaluated by logging the number of participants in classes to better develop and adapt to what the needs are for the community in both age range and content for environmental education.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Provide minimum of 45 summer programs for the 2024 summer.	August 31, 2024
Maintain 250+ school groups with 85 from outside of Austin and provide 45 summer programs	August 31, 2025
Maintain 250+ school groups with 85 from outside of Austin and provide 45 summer programs	August 31, 2026
Maintain 250+ school groups with 85 from outside of Austin	June 30, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Tim Ruzek	Friends of the Hormel Nature Center	The Friends fundraise to support programs, projects, and activities at the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center that enhance and encourage environmental education, scientific opportunities, and the enjoyment of nature.	No

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

During this second phase, we will maintain and grow relationships with non-Austin schools developed in the first phase, by teaching established environmental education curricula. The Jay C. Hormel Nature Center will continue to provide quality environmental summer programs by developing opportunities based on demand. While demonstrating the success of this program, we will continue to pursue future funding opportunities with other governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Jay C. Hormel Nature Center Supplemental Teaching Staff	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 05e	\$225,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Luke Reese

Job Title: Nature Center Director

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

Organization: City of Austin; Parks, Recreation, & Forestry Department

Experience:

- 6.5 years at the Hormel Nature Center
- BS from the University of MN in Forest Resources
- Over 10 years teaching environmental education in Minnesota and Arizona
- 1 year teaching 7th grade science in Arizona
- Over 10 years of experience with land management in Minnesota and Arizona
- Manage a staff of:
 - o 3 full-time permanent
 - o 1 full-time grant-funded
 - o 1 full-time grant-funded (changing yearly)
 - o 2 part-time permanent
 - o 1 full-time temporary
 - o 4 part-time temporary
 - o 20-25 mentees
 - o ~80 volunteers
- Receive and/or administer grants from:
 - o ENRTF/LCCMR – Jay C. Hormel Nature Center Supplemental Teaching Staff

- o MN DNR – Conservation Partners Legacy Grant
- o Greater MN Regional Parks & Trails Commission – Legacy funding for trails and bridges
- o The Hormel Foundation
- o Austin Area Foundation
- o Freeborn-Mower Operation Round Up
- o The Small Change Foundation
- Serve on or report to the following boards/committees:
 - o Austin Parks and Rec board
 - o Friends of the Hormel Nature Center
 - o Cedar River Watershed Citizens’ Advisory Committee
 - o Spruce Up Austin Board
- Completed Regionally Significant Park designation application and master plan for the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center resulting it being awarded a Regionally Significant Park designation by the Greater MN Regional Parks and Trails Commission
- Works closely with the Friends of the Hormel Nature Center board, who are significant funding partners for the Jay C. Hormel Nature Center.

Organization: City of Austin

Organization Description:

The Jay C. Hormel Nature Center is a part of the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department of the City of Austin. It provides over 500 acres of restored natural spaces for visitors to explore and serves as a natural classroom to thousands of students annually.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Naturalist		Coordinating and providing environmental education opportunities to students from outside of Austin			24.5%	3	X	\$271,347
Environmental education intern Year 1		This position assists with teaching classes and is required to teach the proposed additional classes			30.5%	1		\$44,362
Environmental education intern Year 2		This position assists with teaching classes and is required to teach the proposed additional classes			31%	1		\$46,218
Environmental education intern Year 3		This position assists with teaching classes and is required to teach the proposed additional classes			31.6%	1		\$48,073
							Sub Total	\$410,000
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-

Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$410,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Personnel - Naturalist		Coordinating and providing environmental education opportunities to students from outside of Austin	Classified : The naturalist position is additional to existing naturalist positions and must be classified the same. If funding no longer becomes available for this position, the position will be canceled, and the approved complement of the agency reduced accordingly once the appropriation has been spent.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	Friends of the Hormel Nature Center	Inservices x 3 years	Pending	\$3,000
Cash	Friends of the Hormel Nature Center	Mentorship program for 3 years	Pending	\$12,000
Cash	Schools attending programs	Program fees generated: 40 non-Mower County schools x 20 students/group x \$5/student	Potential	\$4,000
Cash	Schools attending programs	Program fees generated: 45 Mower County non-Austin schools x 20 students/group x \$1/student	Potential	\$900
In-Kind	Schools	Bussing 85 additional groups x \$150	Potential	\$12,750
In-Kind	City of Austin	Grant administration and supervision (10% of director's time) x 3 years	Secured	\$36,000
In-Kind	City of Austin	Supplies July 2024 - June 2027	Pending	\$7,500
			Non State Sub Total	\$76,150
			Funds Total	\$76,150

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [88b4b769-02a.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Picture of an intern working with students at the top. Map highlighting schools from outside of Austin participating in environmental education programming at the Nature Center. Text describing the 41% increase in all classes, 183% increase in non-Austin classes, and 50% increase in summer programming from the first grant....

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Signed resolution	ff4f9f3d-03d.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Letters of support	02de60fe-997.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, or sale of products and assets?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Does your project include the design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other capital asset costing \$10,000 or more?

No

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services, as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7?

Yes

Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to

whom children's services are provided by your organization?

Yes

