



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2024 Request for Proposal

## General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2024-292

**Proposal Title:** North Minneapolis Nature Connection: Storytelling and Leadership Pathways

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Anne Olson

**Organization:** The Loppet Foundation

**Office Telephone:** (763) 222-4992

**Email:** perkins@cityoflakesloppet.com

## Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Loppet and community collaborators will promote urban nature connection for North Minneapolis residents through storytelling, nature and environmental justice programming, and environmental leadership pathways for high schoolers and young adults.

**Funds Requested:** \$788,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** August 31, 2026

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Environmental Education (C)

## Project Location

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

Region(s): Metro

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

Region(s): Metro

**When will the work impact occur?**

During the Project and In the Future

## Narrative

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

Based on visionary and historic land preservation, Theodore Wirth Park (TWP) was set aside in the early 1900's along with corridors of urban green space connecting lakes, woodlands, and creeks with the Mississippi River. This has placed Minneapolis as a consistently top-rated urban center in terms of green space, with TWP rivaling NYC's Central Park in size. However, the vision of a city united by green space was left incomplete and checkered by a history of racism and systemic injustice. It is now widely recognized that Minneapolis parks were central to restricted covenances and red-lining practices that discouraged low-income populations and people of color access to green space.

Through scoping for this project, partners representing communities of color in North Minneapolis neighborhoods abutting TWP spoke consistently of a very real divide between white and black, and rich and poor along Plymouth Avenue which connects TWP to North Minneapolis. And yet these same partners also told stories of resilience and connection to nature and TWP centered around a network of families and community groups that have been working towards equal opportunities for nature connection among their neighborhoods and youth.

### **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.**

Through a history of quality outdoor programming and the realization of the Trailhead outdoor center, Loppet plays a central role in connecting people with TWP. But current Loppet offerings are based around culture and activities familiar to white and more affluent residents. In this proposal, we prioritize partnerships to tell stories of what TWP means for BIPOC neighbors, we implement nature and environmental educational initiatives that bridge the Plymouth Avenue divide, and we build a pathway for future leaders in nature connectedness and environmental justice.

### **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?**

Permanent indoor/outdoor signage, interpretive exhibits, and art installations throughout North Minneapolis parks tell stories of what green space and environmental stewardship means to residents.

7 exhibitions throughout North Minneapolis feature these multi-media stories for over 1200 primary and 18,000 secondary participants.

Engage 56+ North Minneapolis community groups in depth 4-8 session outdoor urban educational programs featuring stories of place, mindfulness, embodied practice, and environmental justice for 1150 participants.

Northside Pathways program will develop a cohort of 20-30 future high school and young adult environmental leaders. 60+ contractors, artists, and student leaders from Minneapolis' Northside employed in delivering project.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Telling Stories of BIPOC Nature Connection to Theodore Wirth Park

**Activity Budget:** \$272,000

**Activity Description:**

Current histories of TWP and outdoor activities prioritized within Loppet Foundation focus on values of white middle to upper class residents. With partners, we are in the process of gathering stories of connection to nature and TWP from voices within communities of color and lower income residents through interviews, focus groups, and community research. In this proposed activity, we will tell these stories of challenge, opportunity, and justice through the following. An interpretive traveling exhibit that includes 30 pieces of art that models, illustrates, or augment stories produced by North Minneapolis artisans. The exhibit will also include three audio/video displays of a multi-media mini-documentary series summarizing project stories and curricular elements. The whole exhibit will cohere to illustrate overarching stories and themes. This indoor exhibit will be housed in Theodore Wirth Park at the Trailhead Adventure Center and will travel for special events and programs to other North Minneapolis community centers. This indoor exhibit will be complemented by outdoor displays in Wirth Park and other North Minneapolis green spaces, and along Plymouth Avenue in North Minneapolis.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Contractors and Artisans Commissioned to Produce Storytelling Products	December 31, 2024
Initial indoor exhibit unveiled at Trailhead in Theodore Wirth Park	May 31, 2025
Outdoor interpretive signs and art installed in parks and along Plymouth Ave.	May 31, 2026
Travelling indoor exhibit visits 6 community centers with events and programming	August 31, 2026

### Activity 2: Connecting North Minneapolis Youth to Green Space and Theodore Wirth Park

**Activity Budget:** \$244,700

**Activity Description:**

Through listening to partners and their stories, Loppet is currently developing a 21st century environmental education curriculum based on the values of north Minneapolis residents to foster a sense of belonging, nature connectedness, and environmental stewardship. In this project activity, we will work with partners to implement this curriculum in TWP, in other North Minneapolis green spaces, and in civic hubs including schools and community centers. We will implement a combination of programs, indoor/outdoor interpretive exhibits, and community events that feature stories, storytellers, interpretive media, and art contributed by North Minneapolis residents. These programs will be delivered by Loppet staff and pathways leaders (see Activity 3) and offered on a year-round basis with additional capacity during the summer season with green spaces are most heavily utilized. Programs will be delivered in partnership with other community organizations. Each programs will be offered as both four and eight-module series to build depth of connection and commitment.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Summer programs delivered to 28 partner organizations	August 31, 2025
Three-season programs delivered to 28 partner organizations	May 31, 2026
Summer programs delivered to 28 new and 28 existing partner organizations	August 31, 2026

### Activity 3: 3. Developing a Pathway of Future Environmental Leaders from the N. Minneapolis Community

**Activity Budget:** \$271,300

**Activity Description:**

The activities above build on 15 years of Loppet youth programs in North Minneapolis public elementary and middle schools. We will partner with neighborhood high schools, community centers, and University of Minnesota to start an outdoor adventure and environmental leadership club for high school and college students, and young adults. The goal will be to deepen nature connection and build paid opportunities for the next generation of leaders to add their stories and experience to the legacy of Minneapolis parks. We will offer 12 paid semester-long positions for undergraduate and graduate students to participate as pathways leaders working with Loppet staff and partners to implement the activities outlined in this grant. We will also offer 8 positions for summer camp counsellors for high school students. All of these positions will be hired prioritizing demographic backgrounds and residence representing the North Minneapolis community. These leaders will also participate in an help lead a weekly outdoor pathways program designed to connect high school age youth and young adults from Minneapolis’ Northside with opportunities for nature connection, mindfulness, embodied practice, and environmental justice.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Weekly Northside Pathways outdoor education and leadership events begin for Northside high schoolers and young adults	December 31, 2024
First year academic year Northside Pathways interns assist with development of project activities	May 31, 2025
First year Northside Pathways summer interns and camp counsellors lead summer programs	August 31, 2025
Second year Northside Pathways academic year interns deliver winter programming and events	May 31, 2026
First year Northside Pathways summer interns and camp counsellors lead summer programs	August 31, 2026

## 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?**

This grant is part of an ongoing project with multiple sources of funding. North Minneapolis partners are gathering stories through interviews, focus groups, and community research. Prior to the activities outlined in this grant application, this data will be archived and analyzed, and key themes and illustrative stories will be presented to partners for feedback and incorporated into existing curricula. The activities in this grant will provide permanent interpretive resources, grow public interest, and help usher programs and leadership opportunities through development stages. We will seek funding for term personnel hired through this grant to continue over time.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Anne Olson

**Job Title:** Loppet Adventures Director

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

Adventures Director DeAnna Perkins is a Minneapolis community member who believes deeply in the power of service as the foundation to build community and connect others to opportunities. She brings a breadth of knowledge and experience in youth development, team management, project facilitation, and community organizing. DeAnna's professional experience including leadership and community engagement work for Minneapolis Public Schools, City of Minneapolis, and Northside Redevelopment Council. Previous to directing Loppet Adventures, DeAnna held the position of Executive Director at the Harold Mezile North Community YMCA which serves the residents of North Minneapolis.

DeAnna grew up in Minneapolis and graduated from Minneapolis North High School. She remembers her experiences as a youth outdoors at Theodore Wirth Park, including her first golf camp and bike trail. She is passionate about creating opportunities for North Minneapolis youth like she had as a child and has remained deeply rooted in the North Minneapolis community. DeAnna holds a Business degree from Bradley University, Peoria, IL.

**Organization:** The Loppet Foundation

**Organization Description:**

The Loppet Foundation's mission is to connect people to the outdoors through experiences that grow community. Our goals are to 1) build community around the outdoors; 2) partner with underrepresented communities and organizations to increase access to the outdoors; 3) host high-quality outdoor events that engage people of all backgrounds, ages and abilities; 4) create a public space promoting year-round outdoor recreation and wellness.

In Loppet's 20 years, we've grown to engage 20,000 people annually in outdoor activities including trail running, cross country skiing, mountain biking, and paddling. Loppet operates out of "The Trailhead", a 14,000 square foot facility that serves as a hub for outdoor activity and is surrounded by expanded trails and outdoor infrastructure.

Loppet Adventures currently partners with 20 public schools in North Minneapolis to run free programs that engage 1500 youth in year-round outdoor activities from cross country skiing and mountain biking to mindfulness and nature connection. Adventures programs are designed for outcomes of belonging, experience, healing, and empowerment.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Community Engagement Coordinator, \$62,500 + 25% Benefits (\$15,625) = \$78,125 / FTE x 2 years.		Lead team of community partners. Work with Loppet staff and partners to publicize project events and installations. Work with partners to manage all multimedia stories of connection to nature and North Minneapolis green spaces. Curate design and installation of exhibits. Organize community events and partnerships. Co-lead programs with education coordinator and pathways leaders. Mentor pathways leaders.			25%	2		\$156,250
Education Coordinator, \$62,500 + 25% Benefits (\$15,625) = \$78,125 / FTE x 2 years.		Work with partners to deliver curriculum and organize multi-stage outdoor-indoor educational opportunities for North Minneapolis youth and families to connect with nature in Theodore Wirth Park and North Minneapolis parks and community centers. Co-lead these programs. Oversee the future leaders pathways program including assisting in hiring and supervising paid high school, undergraduate, and graduate employees. Lead once a week programs for the larger pathways community.			25%	2		\$156,250
Northside Pathways - Summer Undergraduate/Graduate Summer Interns, 14 weeks, 40hrs/wk, \$21/hr = \$11,760 x 2 positions x 2 years.		Work with Education Coordinator and partner organizations or to deliver outdoor-indoor programming to North Minneapolis youth, families, and community groups throughout the busy summer season. Mentor high school pathways participants. Assist in leading weekly pathways events.			0%	1.08		\$47,000
Work with Education Coordinator and partner organizations or to deliver outdoor-indoor programming to North Minneapolis youth, families, and community		Work with Community Engagement and Education Coordinators, NatureWerks, and other project partners to develop multi-media stories for use in programming, install exhibits, and develop programs and events with partners. Co-lead outdoor-indoor programs and events for partners. Mentor			0%	0.54		\$23,500

groups throughout the busy summer season. Mentor high school pathways participants. Assist in leading weekly pathways events.		high school pathways participants. Assist in leading weekly pathways events.						
Northside Pathways - Summer High School Camp Nature Counsellors, 10 weeks, 40 hrs/wk, \$17.50/hr = \$7000 x 4 positions x 2 years.		Work with Education Coordinator and other Loppet Staff to deliver nature and stories curriculum to North Minneapolis youth through Loppet Adventures summer camps. Assist with other programs and events. Assist in leading weekly pathways events.			0%	1.54		\$56,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$439,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
NatureWerks Environmental Education, Sociology, and Project Management Services	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Work with staff and partners to hold project vision. With partners, craft multimedia stories from previous stages of project that collected stories through interviews and community research. Assist in supervision and mentorship of project coordinators and pathways leaders to implement stories into existing curriculum and new exhibits, programs, events.				0		\$122,500
Black Storytellers Alliances and Other Storytellers TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	In collaboration with a local storytelling mentorship program developed by Black Storytellers Alliance, we will contract a team of storytellers to mentor pathways participants in telling stories of connection to Theodore Wirth Park and Minneapolis environments and greens spaces. Stories will be presented through programs, events, and exhibits				0		\$20,000
TBD - Multi-Media Radio and Videography	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Project stories will be told through multimedia radio and videography through a mini-documenaries series summarizing project stories and curricular elements for display online, through social media, and through podcasts, as well as on display via three video screens (see equipment budget) as part of exhibits.				0		\$40,000

TBD - Outdoor nature education stations (7 stations at \$5000 per station)	Professional or Technical Service Contract	These outdoor nature education installations will present different aspects of our curriculum in ways that inspire community connection and engagement through stories, science, and art. Each will include an outdoor sculpture component contracted through a competitive proposal from a local artist from North Minneapolis.				0		\$35,000
TBD - Interpretive Art for Exhibit (30 pieces at \$450 per piece)	Sub award	Local artisans from North Minneapolis will have the opportunity to apply to tell stories through a piece of interpretive artwork that models, illustrates, or augments a part of our stories. Successful applicants will be matched with a sub-story so that the whole exhibit coheres to illustrate overarchings stories and themes.				0		\$13,500
TBD - Professional Designer	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Professional design for the following. A storyboard creating consistent design themes for all aspects of the project. Using materials provided by staff and partners, design interpretive signage for installations and exhibits. Design publications and flyers for events, exhibits, installations. Design elements of Plymouth Avenue street art project.				0		\$30,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$261,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Outdoor interpretive signs	Interpretive signs for display in Theodore Wirth Park and other North Minneapolis parks that facilitate connections between users and elements of green space in keeping with project curriculum, themes, and stories.					\$18,000
	Tools and Supplies	Art supplies for youth nature & art programming	As part of events, camps, and programs, youth will contribute stories to exhibits through literary and visual art.					\$2,000
	Tools and Supplies	Plymouth Avenue nature connection street art	Production and fabrication materials for connections to nature					\$30,000



			signage and street art project along Plymouth Ave through North Minneapolis from Theodore Wirth Park to the Mississippi River.					
	Equipment	20 tablets and cases @ \$250	For educational use by youth and families as part of programs and events.	X				\$5,000
	Equipment	Audio/video portable interpretive displays (3 LED digital displays at \$5000/display)	To present multimedia stories of nature connection as part of traveling exhibit.	X				\$15,000
	Equipment	Displays for traveling exhibits	Folding display walls, protective cases, and other equipment to display and transport mobile signage, media, art, and other components of educational exhibits.					\$15,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$85,000</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
	Printing	Flyers and brochures (~1000)	Educational handouts and event announcements					\$1,000
	Printing	Paper Interpretation Guides (~1500-2000)	Printable guides to all outdoor and indoor exhibits and installations telling project stories of nature connection for school or community group leaders, families, or other chaperones about nature narrative project and map of					\$2,000

			interpretive displays along Plymouth Ave and within Wirth Park.					
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$788,000</b>

## Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>		20 tablets and cases @ \$250	For use by students engaged in culture and nature stories curriculum for indoor and outdoor use.
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>		Audio/video portable interpretive displays (3 LED digital displays at \$5000/display)	Interactive narratives interpretive display of nature connection via audio and video storytelling, used in a portable kiosk-type display for digital signage interpretation.

## Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
<b>State</b>				
Cash	Age-Friendly Minnesota Community Grant	To create an action plan to fully realize our mission - connecting people to the outdoors through experiences that grow community. The plan will help expand Loppet Foundation engagement with and offerings to older adults in Hennepin County, with a focus on access to green space in North Minneapolis where we reside.	Pending	\$70,000
Cash	Hennepin County Equipment Grant	Donation of youth cross-country ski equipment for use in Loppet Adventures programming.	Secured	\$5,000
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>
<b>Non-State</b>				
Cash	Blue Cross Blue Shield Healthy Connections Grant	To implement intergenerational programming at the Loppet Foundation including collaboration among N. Minneapolis neighborhood residents, senior living facility residents, and Loppet youth programs to build connections in the outdoors through volunteerism and joint activities, the development of a contemplative healing space for all in Theodore Wirth Park, and a storytelling project that will create visual exhibitions in North Minneapolis and Theodore Wirth Park to highlight the historical and current role of the park in residents lives, with a focus on BIPOC and underrepresented communities.	Pending	\$90,000
Cash	Private Donor	Funding to purchase youth bicycles for a mobile bike fleet for use by Loppet Adventures after school programs, community programs, and summer camps.	Secured	\$35,000
In-Kind	Volunteers	Average 1500 volunteer hours logged for Loppet Adventures after school and community youth and family programs. (1500 hours x volunteer rate of \$29.95/hr)	Secured	\$44,925
In-Kind	Private Donors	Private donations designated for Loppet Adventures programming	Secured	\$20,000
In-Kind	Corporate sponsors and private donations	Additional staff support from Loppet Adventures Director (0.05FTE), and Accounting (0.03FTE)	Secured	\$20,000
In-Kind	Loppet Foundation	Use of great hall at Trailhead for workshops and events	Secured	\$6,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$215,925</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$290,925</b>

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [e9af4c83-7ab.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

North Minneapolis Nature Connection Project Visual...

#### *Financial Capacity*

File: [6e2afa91-45c.pdf](#)

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Signed Letter from Board	<a href="#">76057516-faf.pdf</a>

### Optional Attachments

#### *Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other*

Title	File
UMN IonE Letter of Support	<a href="#">296ebd5b-62f.pdf</a>
UMN UROC Letter of Support	<a href="#">2828eea8-71d.pdf</a>
Black Storytellers Alliance Letter of Support	<a href="#">489a89aa-db3.pdf</a>
Minneapolis Park & Rec Board Env. Ed Letter of Support	<a href="#">d10b4c58-093.pdf</a>
NatureWerks Letter of Support	<a href="#">f2ff05c2-00d.pdf</a>
E. Hall STEM Academy Letter of Support	<a href="#">fb1c12c4-277.pdf</a>

## 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