



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-125

Proposal Title: River Bend Nature Center Outdoor Diversity Initiative

Project Manager Information

Name: Brad Bourn

Organization: River Bend Nature Center

Office Telephone: (507) 332-7151

Email: Bourn@RBNC.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: River Bend Nature Center will lead a coalition of educational partners and culturally specific organizations to expand recognized environmental education curriculum into East African and Latinx communities in Southern Minnesota.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$247,000

Proposed Project Completion: September 30, 2027

LCCMR Funding Category: Small Projects (H)

Secondary 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 and In the Future

Narrative

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

BIPOC communities in Minnesota participate in nature at a lower rate than whites and there is a lack of representation in natural resource careers. The outdoor recreation and natural resource industry is approximately 2.4% of Minnesota's GDP, yet it remains largely inaccessible to BIPOC individuals.

Evidence suggests that as BIPOC communities see themselves represented in nature spaces and careers, there will be greater participation in the outdoor and natural resource economies by BIPOC communities. In 2021, the Met Council completed a study of regional park users and their key findings showed that three major obstacles to BIPOC visitation/engagement are: "park staff's lack of cultural competency, racist encounters in parks, and lack of opportunities to learn skills. In 2017 a report from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources showed that BIPOC communities are only 5.1% of state park visitors while BIPOC communities are more than 22% of Minnesota's population. Park districts and natural resource management agencies from local municipalities all the way up the the National Park Service reinforce these findings in both their visitor demographics and workforce.

We must eliminate obstacles and create opportunities for BIPOC communities connecting with nature to ensure our environmental sustainability.

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.

River Bend Nature Center, Somali Community Resettlement Services, U of M Extension along with the Owatonna and Faribault Community Education departments will provide culturally specific environmental education, career exploration, and job placement support for East African and Latinx young adults ages 18-24 geared towards removing systemic barriers faced by these communities to finding meaningful connections to nature and gainful employment opportunities in natural resource management.

Through Implementing and expanding elements of the University of Minnesota Extension's Nature paired with culturally specific outreach and paid training opportunities, we aim to develop BIPOC participants with meaningful appreciation of Minnesota's natural resources who will possess highly sought-after skills that meet the needs of employers in local, regional, and state public park systems.

Participants recruited by SCRS will participate in 8 weeks of educational programming co-led by RBNC and Faribault/Owatonna Community Ed instructors. Curriculum and certifications covered will be a combination of Minnesota Master Naturalist training, US Forestry Chainsaw training, MN licensed tree inspector certification, select pesticide applicator licenses. As part of the 9 weeks, participants will also participate in paid training at River Bend where they can put their newfound skills into practice while receiving career counseling support from SCRS.

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?

Our project will overcome systemic and overt racial barriers to provide up to 40 BIPOC immigrant participants with foundational environmental stewardship training and be exposed to conservation based careers through paid training in natural resource management.

Changing demographics make investments like this essential for Minnesota ongoing environmental sustainability. Our unique approach addresses priorities identified in LCCMR's 6 year strategic plan for "the creation and continuation of "green jobs" in Minnesota" while also "increasing the public's understanding of the need for better conservation, preservation, and restoration of Minnesota's habitats and landscapes."

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Convene partners and adapt curriculum

Activity Budget: \$15,000

Activity Description:

Objective: Convene coalition partners to incorporate, adapt, and expand University of Minnesota Extension’s Nature for New Minnesotans practices and curriculum to serve Owatonna and Faribault immigrant audiences.

During this initial stage of the program, River Bend environmental educators along with ABE instructors in the Faribault and Owatonna Community Ed programs will consult with U of M extension and ABE educators in the metro to adapt methodologies for our implementation.

U of M extension staff have committed to this support and providing this training is written into their original LCCMR application.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Modify curriculum and train area ABE instructors to co facilitate with River Bend Master Naturalist	August 31, 2025

Activity 2: Culturally specific partners recruit participants in hard to reach communities

Activity Budget: \$25,000

Activity Description:

Objective: Create a welcoming environment where BIPOC immigrants feel comfortable engaging in nature connections.

Cultural ambassadors in the Latinx and Somali communities employed by SCRS will assist with culturally specific recruitment of participants.

By having SCRS lead recruitment efforts for cohorts and by participating alongside students in the program, we aim to overcome the feelings of lack of representation in the communities we are serving.

SCRS will target recruitment with recent highschool graduates, participate in local career fairs, advertise on local Somali media, targeted flyering and door knocking along with onsite recruitment at local community resource hubs including in local career fairs, community action centers, Adult Basic Education Centers, mosques, and restaurants.

Participants will be paired with SCRS mentors to develop an individualized goal plan to help define their personal goals and interest as it relates to natural resource management and environmental education. Participants interested in becoming better environmentalists will receiving ongoing mentorship and support from SCRS while those seeking careers in natural resource management will receive individualized services around resume development, interviewing skills, civil service testing preparation, ELL/GED referrals (if necessary) and job shadowing opportunities that will happen concurrently with and immediately after the paid 8 weeks program.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
recruitment of 20 participants for cohort 1	August 31, 2025

SCRS staff participate in cohort 1, attain Master Naturalist designations	October 31, 2025
Recruitment of 20 participants fo cohort 2	July 31, 2026

Activity 3: Provide culturally specific training for up to 40 participants to gain a greater understanding and appreciation of Minnesota’s natural resources

Activity Budget: \$207,000

Activity Description:

Objective: Provide 40 young adult BIPOC participants with 200 hours of paid environmental education and natural resource career training.

River Bend has professional staff in natural resource management and are qualified to instruct Master Naturalist curriculum.

Somali Community Resettlement Services and Faribault & Owatonna Community Ed departments have significant culturally specific experience in English Language Learning instruction and principles of adult basic education.

The project team will work with existing Nature for New Minnesotans instructors through U of M extension to deploy curriculum and lead participants through approximately 60 hours of environmental education training and credential attainment including Master Naturalist designation, Minnesota Shade Tree Identification Courses, and select pesticide applicator licenses.

The program will be divided into two cohorts of 20 individuals. Cohorts will undergo a comprehensive program of 60 hours of classroom training and an additional 120 hours of paid training and field experience. Cohorts will run from late August to September in 2025 and 2026. In addition to experience gained from classroom and field experience, case managers from SCRS will assist participants with job placement and shadowing opportunities at other natural resource management agencies.

We currently have commitment from the Faribault Parks Department, Trust for Public Land, and the

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete cohort 1	October 31, 2025
Complete cohort 2	October 31, 2026

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Anisa Hajimumin	Somali Community Resettlement Services	Participant recruitment, translation, culturally specific curriculum adaptation	Yes
Faribault Community Education	Fariibault Public Schools	Curriculum design and co-facilitation	Yes
Owatonna Community Education	Owatonna Public Schools	Curriculum design and co-facilitation	Yes

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 work builds off of the U of M’s Nature for New Minnesotans program funded by LCCMR but there’s more to do. That project team has offered to help modify and adapt our program using their lessons learned. We envision providing that same service to other regions as they also being implementing similar work in the future. As we begin to build a cultural around nature and natural resources that is more inclusive to BIPOC and traditionally marginalized communities, we’ll see these types of initiatives and priorities embedded into the work of other organizations across Minnesota and the region.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Brad Bourn

Job Title: Executive Director

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

Bourn holds a master’s degree in public administration, has more than two decades of non-profit executive experience. He is a recognized leader in the field of Park and Recreation and increasing access and participation among BIPOC communities to nature. Bourn served twelve years as a commissioner on the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board and was instrumental in policy creation to expand career pathways for BIPOC youth in outdoor recreation and was a key leader in the name restoration of Bde Maka Ska (one of the state’s most visited regional parks) to create a more welcoming environment for BIPOC communities.

Other project leads include

Program and Engagement Director, Molly Dulka. Dulka is a recognized leader in engaging people from diverse backgrounds with nature and is a certified Minnesota Master Naturalist Instructor through the University of Minnesota. Dulka is a board member of the Minnesota Naturalists Association and leads work in creating more inclusive nature based programming.. Dulka is responsible for structuring content based classroom instruction and learning opportunities for each participant cohort and leading Master Naturalist certification process.

Equity and Inclusion Manager, Quanda Arch. Arch brings over a decade of experience in developing and managing adult and youth career pathway programs for BIPOC career seekers across Minnesota. She has managed DEED program grants through her previous roles at Phyllis Wheatley Community Center and has developed STEM workforce programming for youth with the Science Museum of Minnesota and the Northside STEM District.

Organization: River Bend Nature Center

Organization Description:

River Bend Nature Center was created in 1978 when excess land from the Faribault Regional Center (state hospital) was transferred to the City of Faribault for use as a nature center and public green space. Today, River Bend Nature Center's mission is to create a welcoming environment where everyone builds lifelong connections with the natural world. Since 1978 RBNC has grown to a regional destination for both eco tourism and environmental education. Each year, our 743 acre nature preserve and 10 miles of trails host approximately 100,000 annual visitors and we provide environmental education and conservation career path training to more than 10,000 adult and youth learners annually. RBNC staff are regionally and nationally recognized and credentialed leaders in natural resource management, environmental education, and creating opportunities for traditionally marginalized and excluded BIPOC communities to make meaningful connections with nature.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Executive Director (Brad Bourn)		LCCRM project compliance/funder reporting			3%	0.04		\$2,300
Director of Programs and Engagement (Molly Dulka)		Overall project mgt, curriculum adaptation, and course instruction			3%	0.3		\$18,750
Director of Environmental Stewardship (Brittany Smith)		Coordinate and supervise participants in paid work experience/internship components			3%	0.16		\$6,225
Naturalist instructor (Morgan Heier)		co-teach courses alongside Community Ed staff			3%	0.2		\$4,500
Environmental Stewardship Project Coordinator (Randy McMeeking)		Coordinate specific field days and lead crews during internship components			3%	0.2		\$4,500
Equity and Inclusion Director (Quanda Arch)		Serve as liaison between partners. Assist SCRS in recruitment efforts, provide case mgt services for jobseekers			3%	0.16		\$6,225
Paid participant / naturalist interns 40 positions		Participants receive 200 hours of paid training and internship opportunities. \$15/hr x 200 hours x 40 participants			3%	3.84		\$120,000
							Sub Total	\$162,500
Contracts and Services								

Somali Community Resettlement Services	Sub award	SCRS will primarily be responsible for recruitment of participants, ongoing support, translation, co-facilitation of classes, and case mgt for job seekers.				0		\$25,000
Faribault Public Schools Community Education	Sub award	Co facilitate 8 week Faribault cohort. Development of curriculum, communication, translation.				0		\$19,000
Owatonna Public Schools Community Education	Sub award	Co facilitate 8 week Faribault cohort. Development of curriculum, communication, translation.				0		\$19,000
							Sub Total	\$63,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Misc. Program supplies	Copy fees, notebooks for participants, nametags, etc					\$500
	Tools and Supplies	Materials for demonstration projects	seeds, hand tools, PPE, etc.					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$1,500
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								
		U of M extension curriculum	Cost of Master Naturalist materials and other select trainings. Estimated at \$500 per participant					\$20,000
							Sub Total	\$20,000
							Grand Total	\$247,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
---------------	---------------------	-------------	--

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
Cash	Multiple DNR CPL grants	River Bend has multiple land restoration projects happening through CPL grants. Participants will be able to learn about projects and participate during their cohort.	Secured	\$200,000
Cash	DEED Targeted Community Workforce grants	River Bend and SCRS have applied for a DEED targeted community grant. If funded, the grant will supplement participant wages, purchase laptops, supplement tuition allowances, and provide transportation stipends. Additionally funds will help support multiple program staff.	Potential	\$1,500,000
			State Sub Total	\$1,700,000
Non-State				
In-Kind	River Bend endowments and unrestricted donations	This will supplement staff time not covered by grant as well as program materials used in demonstration projects- tools, vehicles, supplies, etc.	Secured	\$50,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$50,000
			Funds Total	\$1,750,000

Total Project Cost: \$1,997,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [8388b0b2-93a.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Article showcasing RBNC and SCRS partnership on BIPOC youth engagement...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
River Bend 990 2022	5f805581-404.pdf
River Bend Audit	70b211ba-1eb.pdf
Secretary of State filing status	325f2e52-5dc.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board resoluion	6201db3e-97b.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Faribault Community Ed letter	7a0a4a21-f63.pdf
Owatonna Comm Ed Support	da2b3014-e66.pdf
UMN Extension support	7f14429a-553.pdf
SCRS Letter of support	bed936c5-d49.docx

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

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

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 pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

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 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

No

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:

None