



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-156

Proposal Title: Wilderness Access and Leadership Development for Marginalized Populations

Project Manager Information

Name: Beth Becker

Organization: YMCA of the North

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: This project increases leadership capacity and access to immersive outdoor education experiences and curricula for people of all ages with an emphasis on engaging historically marginalized communities statewide.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$1,134,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2028

LCCMR Funding Category: Environmental Education (C)

Project Location

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

Statewide

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

Statewide

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.

Too many people, especially populations historically marginalized from outdoor spaces, do not have the access to experiences in nature. Now, more than ever, protection of Minnesota's wild spaces is important for the health and wellbeing of populations statewide. It is of the utmost importance that all Minnesotans have access to nature to be able to develop an understanding of how they personally benefit from time outdoors and their roles in advocating for the preservation and conservation of nature.

We find often that outdoor experiences are one-time opportunities for many populations who do not have the resources to regularly seek outdoor adventure. While providing a touchpoint with nature is an important first step, there is a gap in transference for how to make outdoor experiences repeatable. Our continuum of youth day, overnight and family camp offerings at the YMCA of the North provide immersive experiences in nature that include environmental education, advocacy and leadership development opportunities that result in a lifetime engagement with nature.

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.

LCCMR funding will allow the YMCA to expand on previous LCCMR-funded programming by providing immersive outdoor experiences to young people and families, statewide. Through our leadership development and family programming curriculum participants will: (1) learn wilderness craft to create repeatable experiences at home, (2) gain an appreciation for Minnesota wilderness and understanding of environmental changes, (3) gain an understanding of native flora and fauna (4) develop lifelong leadership skills, and (5) increase belonging and representation by uniting diverse groups of people through shared outdoor experiences and learning.

Our programming, with an emphasis on leadership development and family engagement, will address a gap in knowledge and skills transference, supporting continued nature experiences and learning at home. These offerings, largely focus on wilderness trips (average 9 days), and week-long immersive family experiences which foster leadership development within outdoor recreation. This emphasis provides framework for caregivers to serve as leaders for their family by maintaining a connection to the outdoors at home and for young people to serve as stewards and advocates for the natural world within their communities at large.

We plan to serve 1500 individuals through our programming, year-round, with an emphasis on populations historically marginalized from outdoor recreation and education.

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 outcome goals for participants are:

1. To instill understanding of the need to conserve Minnesota wilderness through immersive learning in nature for all ages
2. To provide leadership development experiences for young people and families that allow young people and families to steward their outdoor experiences and increase advocacy
3. To create experiences that foster the transfer of knowledge and skills gained related to outdoor education and recreation, to increase repeatable experiences at home and result in a lifetime of engagement with the outdoors.
4. To develop improved outreach and increased access to environmental education and recreation for communities

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Participant scholarships with an emphasis on engaging historically marginalized communities

Activity Budget: \$750,000

Activity Description:

This grant will support scholarships for 1500 participants, with an emphasis on populations historically marginalized from outdoor recreation and education, enabling them to participate in Y Adventure leadership development and family experiences, wilderness canoe and backpacking trips that average 9 days in length, in wild places throughout the state of Minnesota, including Boundary Waters Canoe Area, regional and state parks, St. Croix Riverway, Superior National Forest and the Iron Range. Our family programming offers introductory, multi-generational programming throughout the state. Full and partial scholarships will be awarded based on financial need and a focus on youth and families from marginalized communities. Application for scholarships may be done on-line, or in person by telephone with our friendly and helpful customer service department (language translation/assistance is also available). Scholarships (average \$500 per camper stay) support all lodging, meals, and activities for campers and camper families and for whatever length of stay they choose.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
1,500 participants from marginalized populations receive scholarships	June 30, 2028

Activity 2: Leadership Development Internship Program for 15 young people annually, prioritizing youth from marginalized communities

Activity Budget: \$90,000

Activity Description:

The paid internship program invests in 15 young people annually who wish to explore careers in the outdoor industry. The 3-week program includes thorough training in the skills necessary to lead a wilderness trip including: social emotional learning, risk management, meal planning, care of equipment, how to teach skills to others. The program culminates with interns serving as trail counselors on trips.

Payment of the interns is of the utmost importance to making the internship accessible to teens who may otherwise not be able to participate in the program because they need to earn money during the summer months. Paying our interns further demonstrates the value we place in each of their unique contributions that they bring to the fabric of our communities. By investing in their growth and development, we believe it encourages interns to take on leadership roles within and outside of our programs, particularly pertaining to environmental programming, advocacy, and careers in the outdoor industry. Finally, we believe interns are important role models to inspire younger generations to also become stewards of wild spaces and communities, thereby changing the narrative around who belongs outdoors.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Investment in Leadership Development Internship for 45 youth to explore careers in environmental sciences	June 30, 2028
15 youth annually, 45 over 3 years will participate as paid Interns	June 30, 2028
Interns will explore careers in the outdoors	June 30, 2028
Interns will develop skills including leadership, social/emotional learning, risk management, and outdoor wilderness skills	June 30, 2028

Activity 3: Gear/Equipment Libraries to meet the needs of participants from marginalized communities

Activity Budget: \$45,000

Activity Description:

YMCA outdoor leadership development programs operate year-round, serving a high volume of participants every year. One of our core beliefs is for programs to be accessible for anyone regardless of the resources (or lack of resources) to be able participate. Each of our family and leadership development sites are creating Gear Libraries containing necessary items to loan out to participants. The purpose is to ensure that everyone who participates has access to high-quality, industry supported outfitting options for safety and performance ability. In order to meet the needs of all participants, and to ensure a successful experience, we will restock and update our gear libraries annually to meet these needs and reduce barriers of underserved youth and families to participate. These items include but are not limited to: hiking gear, backpacks, sleeping bags, fleece, rain gear, footwear, water bottles, clothing. Currently we have 3 launch sites and will expand to six at the end of three years to include: Ely, Eveleth, Babbitt, Grand Marais, Credit Township and Lakeville.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Removing barriers for 500 participants from marginalized populations to be able to attend and participate	June 30, 2028
Maintain Gear Libraries for reusable equipment and gear to make programs accessible	June 30, 2028

Activity 4: Presenting conference attendance by lead staff to disseminate project outcomes and impacts

Activity Budget: \$9,000

Activity Description:

Two staff will present at the National Boys/Girls Outdoor Leadership Development conference. Every year, leaders from around the country gather to report on program outcomes, discuss findings, and plan as a collective for national impact for the following year. Our expectation is the Conference will take place in Minnesota in the next two years. Attendance as a presenter is mandatory. YMCA of the North represents and second largest program in the country. This conference provides an opportunity for our staff to share the work that LCCMR has funded, report our findings and provide value to the national learning experience of environmental education and leadership development. Funding is not given to veteran sites from the national level to support conference travel, even for presenters. We will send two staff presenters annually to the conference. Costs include travel, hotel stay, and meals.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Two project staff will present annually at the National Boys/Girls Outdoor Leadership Development Conference.	June 30, 2028
Staff will present LCCMR outcomes and impacts of the project to a national audience	June 30, 2028

Activity 5: Project Staffing for project implementation of all components (e.g. Internships, scholarship management, Gear Libraries, outreach, and evaluation

Activity Budget: \$240,000

Activity Description:

Program Director, .6 FTE (1.8 FTE over 3 years), \$108,000 has the oversight of all projects, manages community outreach for programs

Administrative Coordinator, .25 FTE (.75 FTE over 3 years), \$36,000 manages camp office, fields family and camper questions, processing of scholarships, and program applications (and the paperwork that accompanies participants - medical, permissions, transportation as needed, etc.)

2 Program Managers, .3 FTE (.9 FTE over 3 years for each), \$48,000 x 2 = \$96,000, Direct program management for Interns, camper programs, wilderness trips, Gear Libraries, evaluation survey collection for each group. plus Fringe @ 25% \$60,000

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Personnel	June 30, 2028

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Creekstone Montessori, Red Wing MN	Schools	Sends Participants, many scholarship eligible	No
Como Park High School, Saint Paul, MN	School	Sends participants many eligible for scholarships	No
Prairie Seeds Academy, Brooklyn Park MN	School	Sends Participants, many eligible for scholarships	No
Wilder Foundation, Saint Paul, MN	Non-Profit	Sends program participants many eligible for scholarships	No
Laura Jeffrey Academy, St. Paul MN	School	Sends Participants, many eligible for scholarships	No
Chinese Heritage Foundation, Minneapolis, MN	Non-Profit	Sends participants, many eligible for scholarships	No
TORCH, Northfield, MN	Nonprofit, School	Sends participants, many eligible for scholarships	No
Hiawatha Academy, Minneapolis, MN	School	Sends Participants, many eligible for scholarships	No
Minnesota Transitions Charter School, Minneapolis, MN	School	Sends Participants, many eligible for scholarships	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?

The metrics and information we collect from participants, families/caregivers, staff and volunteers will help us to better serve marginalized populations to have access to environmental experiences, increase knowledge of nature and the relationship of health to the conservation and preservation of our wilderness (air, water and lands). We also provide a multi-dimensional approach to soliciting feedback, including regular calls with community partners, end of program evaluation, and surveys.

To sustain programs, we continually seek funding from individuals, corporate and foundation funders. As we build our programs' capacity and scope and we share our outcomes, we will gain the attention

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
375 Underserved Youth Learn Minnesota Ecosystems By Canoe	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 05f	\$375,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Beth Becker

Job Title: Director of Grants & Foundation Relations

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

Beth is the Director of Grants and Foundation Relations, providing support to the programs and funding for the YMCA of the North. She has worked on behalf of camps and adventure projects over her 9-year tenure with the YMCA, and previously has written and managed grants (including state and federal grants) for more than 20 years, and point person for this project.

Organization: YMCA of the North

Organization Description:

The YMCA of the North (YMCA) operating since 1856 in Minnesota and serves Minnesota residents across a 7-county area of the Twin Cities, Rochester, and six overnight camps and 10 day camps in rural Minnesota. We are the third largest YMCA in the country, remaining relevant to generations adapting to meet the needs of Minnesotans. The YMCA Camp Menogyn offers youth and individuals access to experiences and learning that broaden and enrich their world and to recognize the importance of preservation and conservation of outdoor spaces. The project will directly impress the preservation of Minnesota wilderness and understanding of the connection of clean water, air, and land to healthy lives of youth from marginalized populations.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Program Director		Program lead, program support, outreach and partnership support			25%	1.8		\$108,000
Administrative Coordinator		Office coordination of registration, invoicing scholarships, questions/issues of campers and families			25%	0.75		\$36,000
Program Manager		Manage on-site, day-to-day programs, work directly with participants			25%	0.9		\$48,000
Program Manager		Manages o-site, day-to-day programming, direct support of participants			25%	0.9		\$48,000
Youth Internships		Leadership development 45 paid youth internships, 3-week program @ \$2,000 per intern, \$30,000 per year, \$90,000 over 3 years			0%	0.06		\$90,000
							Sub Total	\$330,000
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Each of our family and leadership development sites are creating Gear Libraries containing necessary items to loan out to participants. The purpose is to ensure that everyone who participates has access to high-quality, industry supported outfitting options for safety and performance ability. In order to meet the needs of all participants, and to ensure a successful experience, we will restock and update our gear libraries annually to meet these needs and reduce barriers of underserved youth and families to participate. These items include but are not limited to: hiking gear, backpacks, sleeping bags, fleece, rain gear, footwear, canteens. \$15,000 per year for 3 Gear Library sites at wilderness trip launch locations (Ely, Gran Marias, and Babbitt), costs will include	YMCA outdoor leadership development programs operate year-round, serving a high volume of participants every year. One of our core beliefs is for programs to be accessible for anyone regardless of the resources (or lack of resources) to be able participate.					\$45,000

		purchase of items, catalogue and lending process, cleaning and replacement annually, \$5,000 per site x 3 sites(\$15,000) x 3 years, \$45,000						
							Sub Total	\$45,000
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Conference Travel, 2 staff presenters @ \$3,000/year, \$9,000 over 3 years. Presentation by 2 staff at national conference for the BOLD/GOLD Outdoor Leadership Development Conference	Annual presentation at national conference, dissemination of LCCMR project outcomes and impacts to a national audience.	X				\$9,000
							Sub Total	\$9,000
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		1500 Scholarships, 500 per year @ \$500 (average cost) = \$250,000 annually, \$750,000/3 yrs	Provide scholarships (full and partial) for access for participants from marginalized populations. The average cost per camper is \$500 based on which program and the length of the camper or camper/family stay, inclusive of activities, meals and lodging.					\$750,000

							Sub Total	\$750,000
							Grand Total	\$1,134,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Travel Outside Minnesota	Conference Registration Miles/Meals/Lodging	Conference Travel, 2 staff presenters @ \$3,000/year, \$9,000 over 3 years. Presentation by 2 staff at national conference for the BOLD/GOLD Outdoor Leadership Development Conference	The conference is expected to be held in Minnesota in 2025. Our Boys/Girls Outdoor Leadership Development program is recognized as one of the largest and leading programs nationally, due in great part by the support of a 2020 LCCMR grant that has built the capacity and reach of this program in Minnesota. This conference will bring the best practices, LCCMR goals, and the findings of this program and the internship program newly developed and funded by this grant to the attention of national outdoor programs and other camps and outdoor programs in Minnesota.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	YMCA fund to support overhead costs sources from annual fund raising	Camp indirect costs for heat, lights, water, septic maintenance and upkeep, pathways and beaches, docks upkeep for accessibility and safety, equipment upkeep and replacement (e.g. canoes and paddles, cabins, lodge, bathrooms), water.	Pending	\$113,000
Cash	Andersen Corporate Foundation	Supports scholarships for students from St. Paul and Eastern Minnesota to attend camp	Pending	\$13,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$126,000
			Funds Total	\$126,000

Total Project Cost: \$1,260,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [56dc0e3f-790.docx](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

3 pictures YMCA Intern teaching zip line, Family Camp and Wilderness Trip...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
YMCA 990	4a50cb31-b7b.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
YMCA Board Resolution Letter	49fe24a1-a10.docx

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
YMCA Wilderness Trips Photo	3f3621de-241.pdf
School, Bold/Gold Wilderness trip	a1b700a0-841.pdf
E. Fotsch Support Letter	fe951a5c-ff1.pdf
Internship Support Letter	39f719a4-ece.pdf
Intern, Zip Line Lessons, Photo	8cf9aa9f-14d.docx
Chinese Heritage Foundation Letter of Support	db40beb7-e4b.pdf
Hiawatha Collegiate High School Letter of Support	1ec03e4d-7b0.pdf

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")?

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

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

Meghan Cosgrove, Executive Director YMCA Camp Menogyn; Angela Wunderlich, Director of Community Development and Inclusion, Adventure Team