

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**

# M.L. 2021 Final Work Plan

## **General Information**

**ID Number:** 2021-042

**Staff Lead:** Corrie Layfield

**Date this document submitted to LCCMR:** August 3, 2021

**Project Title:** Increasing Outdoor Learning For Young Minnesotans

**Project Budget:** $383,000

## **Project Manager Information**

**Name:** Peter Smerud

**Organization:** Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center

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**Web Address:** https://wolf-ridge.org/

## **Project Reporting**

**Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR:**

**Reporting Schedule:** January 1 / July 1 of each year.

**Project Completion:** June 30, 2025

**Final Report Due Date:** August 14, 2025

## **Legal Information**

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 05a

**Appropriation Language:** $383,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center to provide scholarships for equitable access to hands-on learning experiences in the outdoors related to outdoor recreation, air and energy, water, habitat, and fish and wildlife. This appropriation is available until June 30, 2025, by which time the project must be completed and final products delivered.

**Appropriation End Date:** June 30, 2025

## **Narrative**

**Project Summary:** Wolf Ridge seeks scholarships for equitable access to authentic, hands on learning experiences in the outdoors that supports our Minnesota schools and achievement of the ENRTF strategic plan priority goals.

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

Wolf Ridge is seeking funds to provide scholarships that enable student learning outcomes that achieve the LCCMR's ENRTF Strategic Plan goals and support the environmental learning happening in classrooms throughout MN . Scholarship funds are necessary to sustain and enhance outdoor based teaching of thousands of Minnesotan school children from all economic backgrounds. Before the pandemic induced recession, WR was already seeing 40+% of our youth coming from low income homes. Even more children are now experiencing economic insecurity.   
  
No public schools use operating budget funds for the Wolf Ridge tuition.The cost to attend Wolf Ridge is $73 per day, with most schools attending for 3 -5 days, enabled through community based fundraising. Given that more than 1 in 10 Minnesotans applied for unemployment assistance due to COVID19, the ENRTF funds will ensure that students can attend on scholarships and Wolf Ridge can recover more strongly from COVID19 impacts.  
  
In addition, online learning is increasing the achievement gap in our student population due to access to resources such as internet and computers as well as learning support at home. We will help close that gap by creating customized learning support that can be done online or in the school communities.

**What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? i.e. What are you seeking funding to do? You will be asked to expand on this in Activities and Milestones.**

Each year Wolf Ridge serves approximately 12,000 students, teachers and adult chaperones. Due to the 2020 COVID19 outbreak, Wolf Ridge had to close it campus from mid March through December 2020. This means that 1000's of Minnesota youth missed the chance for outdoor learning experiences, a highlight of their school career. We are seeking funds to ensure a minimum of 2300 students/year are provided scholarship that enables a minimum of 3 days of outdoor learning at the center. Every student learning experience will include content on ENRTF Strategic Plan goals. This grant will increase access to Wolf Ridge programming onsite for the 2021-2024 school years. Scholarships would ensure that schools are able to provide all students the ability to participate in our unique hands-on learning experiences. Research from Stanford University shows that experiences at residential EE centers increases classroom learning.  
  
Scholarship funds may also provide tutoring naturalists who support students at most risk from falling behind. We will work closely with the teachers from the schools we serve to identify students in need of extra support. Our schools are our valued partners and this funding will help both Wolf Ridge and Minnesota schools as we recover from COVID19.

**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?**

Providing over 30,000 students over the course of the grant period, throughout Minnesota, with immersive outdoor learning experiences rooted in our mission, Wolf Ridge outcomes align perfectly with the goals of public protection, conservation, preservation and enhancement of the state's natural resources. A minimum of 6900 students will be provided scholarships for a 3 day learning experience at the center. Scholarships will only be provided to students who take coursework that directly aligns with LCCMR's ENRTF strategic goals for developing skills and knowledge in Outdoor Recreation and Open Space; Air and Energy, Water; or, Habitat, Fish, and Wildlife.

## **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 and In the Future

## **Activities and Milestones**

### **Activity 1: Locate Schools, Award Scholarships**

**Activity Budget:** $383,000

**Activity Description:**We will communicate to school representatives via email, website, and phone to announce the ENRTF funded scholarship opportunities. For tutoring support we will work closely with the lead teachers to identify the students in need and connect them with Wolf Ridge tutoring support.   
  
We maintain a database of dozens of schools that have interest in such experiences but lack the funding to enable such a trip. Wolf Ridge maintains a relationship with 180+ schools and will reach out to those districts to reach underserved populations.   
  
Wolf Ridge will provide scholarships to school students based on need, as determined by Free/Reduced % of the attending students, identified through an application process. An average of $55/student will be awarded yet the exact amount will vary dependent upon need and other sources of financial support held by the school. Provision of scholarships will leverage an entire group of students to attend, not just those of financial means.  
  
The award, both the quantity of scholarship students and financial amounts, will be documented with the invoicing of the school. This documentation will also note the leveraged number of total attending students, thereby the equity provided in the accessibility for all.

**Activity Milestones:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Completion Date** |
| Send scholarship information and application to schools that we serve and new audiences. | October 31, 2021 |
| Work with schools to identify students who need extra learning support to pair tutors | December 31, 2023 |
| Receive application materials from schools annually ending in 2023 | December 31, 2023 |
| A minimum of 6900 students experience 3-5 days of outdoor learning at Wolf Ridge. | July 31, 2024 |

## **Dissemination**

**Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.**Wolf Ridge ELC will acknowledge the support provided by the ENTRF for outdoor learning in achievement of ENTRF Strategic Plan Goals to the more than 150 Minnesota schools that attend Wolf Ridge ELC each year. This school attendance represents attendance from approximately 100 Minnesota communities. Each school will learn of the ENTRF goals and the coursework opportunities at Wolf Ridge ELC that will address the goals.   
Wolf Ridge ELC will publicize the award of the ENTRF funds on our social media channels and in our newsletter. Wolf Ridge ELC will publish two stories in our newsletter, the Almanac.  
All such acknowledgements will be per the ENTRF Guidelines and with use of the Trust Fund logo and language attributed in publications, signage, print and electronic media.

## **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 be funded?**Over the course of our nearly 50 year history, Wolf Ridge has served over 700,000 students, teachers and parents from more than 120 communities in MN. Accessibility has always been a core value when providing our environmental education experiences. These grant funds will allow us to increase our accessibility over the course of our project and aligns well with our goal of increasing available scholarship dollars for the long term. Wolf Ridge will use the success and stories that arise from this grant to establish a scholarship endowment fund that secures long term, sustainable funding.

## **Budget Summary**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category / Name** | **Subcategory or Type** | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Gen. Ineli gible** | **% Bene fits** | **# FTE** | **Class ified Staff?** | **$ Amount** |
| **Personnel** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **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** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | Educational Program Scholarships for 6900 students | Provision of scholarship funding, averaging $55/student, to underserved youth for a multi-day environmental learning experience. |  |  |  |  | $383,000 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$383,000** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Grand Total** | **$383,000** |

### **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** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **State Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Non-State** |  |  |  |  |
| Cash | Schulze Foundation | Scholarships for Catholic Schools to attend Wolf Ridge | Secured | $24,000 |
| Cash | Weesner Yellow Bus Funds | Scholarships for travel to Wolf Ridge | Secured | $20,000 |
|  |  |  | **Non State Sub Total** | **$44,000** |
|  |  |  | **Funds Total** | **$44,000** |

## **Attachments**

### **Required Attachments**

#### ***Visual Component***

File: [ec2379eb-be4.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/map/ec2379eb-be4.pdf)

#### ***Alternate Text for Visual Component***

The visual we have provided includes highlights from our Wolf Ridge school brochure, including what does a day look like at Wolf Ridge, sample daily schedule & examples of focused curriculum tracks, including Science, Team Building & Personal Growth, Sustainability, & Outdoor Skills. Also included in this visual is Wolf Ridge by the Numbers, which are some interesting stats that represent the Wolf Ridge school program....

#### ***Financial Capacity***

File: [a48b7516-621.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/financial_capacity/a48b7516-621.pdf)

#### ***Board Resolution or Letter***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **File** |
| Wolf Ridge Board ByLaws | [cf9b235f-c2a.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/cf9b235f-c2a.pdf) |
| Authorization Letter | [3ecc5b7e-626.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/3ecc5b7e-626.pdf) |

### **Optional Attachments**

#### ***Support Letter or Other***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **File** |
| 2019 Financial Audit | [c56f51c5-ed8.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/c56f51c5-ed8.pdf) |
| Background Check Form, Signed 7-29-2021 | [fde9d145-5d4.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/fde9d145-5d4.pdf) |

## **Difference between Proposal and Work Plan**

#### ***Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage***

Adjustments were made to the amount of students served as the funding award recommendation was lower than the application amount. Clarity was provided to Activity 1 as to how scholarships would be funded and distributed. Adjustments were made to the budget in reflection of the lower amount recommended for funding. Dates of completion for some tasks were edited. The Board Authorization Letter was added as an attachment. Dissemination language and outcomes were added.

## **Additional Acknowledgements and Conditions:**

The following are acknowledgements and conditions beyond those already included in the above workplan:

**Do you understand and acknowledge the ENRTF repayment requirements if the use of capital equipment changes?**   
 N/A

**Do you agree travel expenses must follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?**   
 N/A

**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