



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2021 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2021-097

Staff Lead: Michael Varien

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: July 21, 2021

Project Title: Minnesota Green Schoolyards

Project Budget: \$250,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Eric Weiss

Organization: The Trust for Public Land

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Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: July 20, 2021

Reporting Schedule: December 1 / June 1 of each year.

Project Completion: July 31, 2023

Final Report Due Date: September 14, 2023

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08g

Appropriation Language: \$250,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with The Trust for Public Land to assess, promote, and demonstrate how schoolyards can be adapted to improve water, air, and habitat quality and to foster next-generation environmental stewards while improving health, education, and community outcomes.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2024

Narrative

Project Summary: Minnesota Green Schoolyards pilot project will assess, promote, and demonstrate how schoolyards can improve water, air, and habitat quality; foster next generation stewards, while improving health, education, and community outcomes.

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

Across Minnesota, there are approximately 2,500 primary and secondary schools. The land on which these schools sit accounts for tens of thousands of acres of publicly owned land. Unfortunately, the typical schoolyard includes turf grass, impervious surface, and aging playground equipment and athletic facilities, which provide little to no benefit to Minnesota's environment and natural resources. Current schoolyard conditions - unintentionally - contribute to storm and groundwater issues, loss of pollinator habitat, and heat island impacts. Additionally, a lack of nearby natural amenities limits the ability of schools to better integrate environmental education, use the outdoors as a classroom, and foster next generational environmental stewards.

Green schoolyards are a solution to this problem. What's missing is a supportive infrastructure and group of committed partners to: further understand schoolyards' hidden potential; organize community leaders; coordinate efforts across multiple jurisdictions, agencies, and groups; generate on-the-ground green schoolyard examples specific to Minnesota; and create avenues to support the expansion of green schoolyard efforts statewide.

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.

Minnesota Green Schoolyards pilot project imagines, funds, and builds schoolyards packed with trees, native plants and grasses, gardens, and other features that capture and treat stormwater. Green schoolyards reduce the risk of flooding, and combat the heat island effect, keeping our communities cooler. They're places where birds and pollinators find refuge, and double as outdoor classrooms where kids can learn about the natural world all year long. And since every green schoolyard is open to the public outside of regular school hours, green schoolyards serve as neighborhood parks, where anyone is welcome to pause, breathe, and experience nature's benefits. Additionally, green schoolyards have shown to improve physical and mental health, increase community resilience, improve student educational outcomes, reduce behavioral issues, and increase community access to natural spaces.

Through an investment from LCCMR, we will set the stage to advance statewide green schoolyard efforts. This work includes building a broad-based green schoolyards network; assessing the need, potential impact of, and interest in pursuing green schoolyard improvements at each of Minnesota's schools; constructing on-the-ground green schoolyard demonstration projects; and growing local leadership, skills, and capacity through direct support to school staff, and creation and dissemination of resources and data.

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?

Collectively, this pilot project aims to create and support the long-term structures, information, and capacity needed to launch and sustain a statewide effort to improve Minnesota's schoolyards, foster thousands of new environmental stewards across our state, and restore and permanently conserve natural resources. This LCCMR-funded work will result in innovative methods to utilize schoolyards as a means to create, protect, restore and conserve publicly-owned natural land. As a result of this pilot effort, one schoolyard will be renovated to address issues of air, water, and habitat. Lessons learned will be disseminated for additional impact.

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: Advisory Committee Leadership: information dissemination, cross-sector project oversight, and efforts for a long-term impact, statewide policy, and funding

Activity Budget: \$8,000

Activity Description:

Establishing the Minnesota Green Schoolyards pilot project will begin with creation of a Advisory Committee representing conservation and natural resource organizations; public health; education and academia; nonprofit and community organizations; youth organizations; and state agencies. The Advisory Committee will support and advance local, regional, and statewide schoolyard programs, policies, and initiatives, and disseminate learnings from the project. The Advisory Committee will help break down the institutional barriers, red tape, and siloed efforts that currently limit green schoolyard efforts. This group will meet regularly to ensure that all aspects of the program receive collective input from cross-sector partners. Once available, Advisory Committee members will disseminate data and evaluation results to decision makers and the public through websites, journalism, presentations, and resource creation with the aim of longer term statewide implementation of green schoolyards. Ultimately, the Advisory Committee will produce an action plan to sustain and expand the pilot's impact, leading to longer term statewide implementation.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Formalize Advisory Committee membership, structure, and create work plan, timeline, and goals	September 30, 2021
Develop long-term action plan	December 31, 2022
Support data analysis, demonstration schoolyard transformation, resource dissemination, and technical assistance	June 30, 2023
Hold regular Advisory Committee meetings	June 30, 2023

Activity 2: Statewide Assessment: survey and analysis of schoolyards across the state

Activity Budget: \$4,000

Activity Description:

To better understand the existing green schoolyards landscape and the potential impact, we will be completing a baseline assessment of schoolyards throughout Minnesota, and the potential environmental impact of schoolyard interventions and improvements. Site assessment will include school and community health, student achievement and behavior, local parks and open space access, environmental stewardship education, and community socioeconomic and demographic data. A survey of school leadership will provide data on existing green schoolyard amenities, programs, use of outdoor classrooms, project readiness, and administrator support, and community interest. Collectively, the baseline data will help inform the selection of the demonstration site by identifying schools with high need, high potential, project readiness, and administrator support. Other funds will be used to complete the majority of the statewide assessment and as originally proposed. The assessment will be completed in spring and summer of 2021. LCCMR funds will help assess, map, and disseminate information. The Advisory Committee will explore opportunities for long-term evaluation and assessment including the possible integration and adoption of the survey for recurring administration and evaluation by a state agency. Finally, the demonstration project will be assessed and evaluated.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Create and share statewide report, maps, and data	September 30, 2021

Activity 3: Demonstration Project: one demonstration project to provide proof of concept, learning opportunities, and on-the-ground environmental improvements

Activity Budget: \$221,000

Activity Description:

To provide local examples and improve the environment, one school will be selected for construction and demonstration of green schoolyard improvements. The site will be selected through an open application process using a set of criteria including but not limited to high potential environmental and natural resource impact; school administration-supported projects; project readiness; and commitment of matching funds from a combination of school, watersheds, and local government. The school will be expected to secure local commitments to ensure long-term maintenance, teacher support for use of outdoor classrooms and space, and will agree to provide community access to green schoolyards outside of regular school hours. Information from the statewide schoolyard assessment will help provide guidance in determining final selection criteria. ENRTF funds will support construction and design of green schoolyard infrastructure including but not limited to trees, landscaping, stormwater improvements, outdoor classrooms, gardens, nature play, walking paths, and educational signage. Local partners will design the site and address site-specific issues. TPL and C&NN will support the project through technical assistance, facilitation of participatory design and community engagement, integration of natural resources and use of the outdoors in school curriculum and programming, and general project management.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Open RFP demonstration project application to school site	August 31, 2021
Using statewide assessment, gauge demonstration project interest amongst high need and opportunity sites	August 31, 2021
Review and score proposals, select demonstration project site	October 31, 2021
Finalize school site work plans, timeline, and budgets	December 31, 2021
Prepare and execute curriculum development and site programming plans	January 31, 2022
Conduct community participatory planning and design efforts	April 30, 2022
Complete and secure green schoolyard designs, budgets, and approvals	May 31, 2022
Complete construction of demonstration project	August 31, 2022
Hold grand opening celebration	September 30, 2022
Collect and share lessons learned, evaluation, and success stories	June 30, 2023

Activity 4: Capacity Building and Technical Assistance – provide technical assistance, training support, capacity building, and resource creation

Activity Budget: \$17,000

Activity Description:

The Minnesota Green Schoolyards project will share and disseminate findings to partners, schools, and community organizations. TPL and C&NN will host trainings and webinars, deliver conference presentations, provide limited on-call technical assistance, and create project resources. Technical assistance efforts will guide additional school sites in their local efforts while building long-term green schoolyard delivery by supporting local leaders, expanding the number of schools planning for eventual capital improvements, and building integration of environmental stewardship into school curriculum.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Offer trainings and conference sessions to share resources and lessons learned	June 30, 2023

Create and share program resources, guides, and how-tos	June 30, 2023
Provide limited technical assistance to additional school and community partners	June 30, 2023

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Jaime Zaplatosch	Children & Nature Network (C&NN)	Children & Nature Network will be on the Steering Committee, and will co-lead the dissemination of data collection and evaluation findings, resource creation, technical assistance and trainings at the local and state level with the Trust for Public Land. C&NN leads a global movement to increase children's access to nature.	Yes
Jeremy Vann	Minnesota Department of Health - SHIP	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Health Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). SHIP supports community-driven solutions to expand opportunities for active living, healthy eating and commercial tobacco-free living, working directly with local SHIP staff who represent 41 Community Health Boards, covering all 87 counties.	No
Shelli-Kae Foster	Youth Eco Solutions (YES!)	Steering Committee member representing Youth Eco Solutions, a youth-led natural resources and environment group. YES! will also support school planning and engagement activities.	Yes
Jonee Bingham Kuhlman	University of Minnesota - GreenStep Schools	Steering Committee member representing GreenStep Schools which is a free and voluntary statewide best practices framework and recognition program for public and private K-12 schools and districts to reduce environmental impact and costs, and provide effective environmental and sustainability education. GreenStep Schools is housed at the University of Minnesota.	Yes
Karen Harrison	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - School Forests	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - School Forests Program. The Minnesota School Forest Program is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota schools. The program provides a variety of benefits to increase outdoor education activities.	No
Kristin Raab	Minnesota Department of Health	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Health - Environmental Health division.	No
Anna Lynn	Minnesota Department of Health	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Health Child and Family Health (CFH) division. CFH provides collaborative public health leadership that supports and strengthens systems to ensure healthy families and communities.	No
Jill Chamberlain	Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN - Center for Prevention.	Steering Committee member representing a community-oriented business perspective, preventative health expert with deep statewide connections and experience with Safe Routes to School work. The Center for Prevention works statewide tackling the leading causes of preventable disease to increase health equity, transform communities, and create a healthier Minnesota.	No
John Olson	Minnesota Department of Education	Steering Committee representing education, will bring deep statewide connections and network, and curriculum development skills.	No
Dave Cowan	Minnesota Department of Transportation	Steering committee member representing Minnesota Department of Transportation - Safe Routes to School	No

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.

Our multi-faceted and well-connected steering committee will help to ensure project findings, data, and lessons learned are disseminated within Minnesota and nationally. Both The Trust for Public Land and Children & Nature Network as non-profits with a national reach have the infrastructure to share and disseminate information easily. Project partners such as state agencies, Blue Cross, and other education- and environment-focused organizations will be engaged as well.

The long-term intent of project partners is to scale Green Schoolyards across the state, so dissemination of information and the benefits of the work is crucial to our success. We hope to share findings through social media, print and web-based resource creation, webinars, and network building.

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?

A primary goal of the pilot project is to institutionalize a model for green schoolyards across the state of Minnesota, including making the case for public and private funding. With baseline data and demonstration projects, we aim to raise awareness of the multiple benefits and collective impact of green schoolyards. Project partners will add knowledge and capacity to their respective organizations to ensure capacity exists to support Minnesota green schoolyards efforts long-term. Data and evaluation will be disseminated to decision makers and the public through websites, statewide trainings, journalism, and resource creation.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII - Strategic Lands Protection	M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09f	\$750,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Research & Innovation Staff		Schoolyard Mapping and Analysis			48%	0.1		\$8,000
Project Assistant		Project and community engagement support			10%	0.6		\$36,000
Project Staff		Project management and support, technical assistance provider, steering committee coordination, data analysis support			48%	0.4		\$51,000
							Sub Total	\$95,000
Contracts and Services								
Children & Nature Network (C&NN)	Sub award	Capacity building, steering committee and network support, technical assistance, communications support, resource creation.				0.2		\$20,000
Undetermined	Sub award	Community Engagement Partner. Support to a community and/or environmental organization to support school demonstration sites in community engagement and education, curriculum development, and site design.				0.1		\$5,000
Landscape Architecture	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Design-build landscape architecture consultant to support site-specific schoolyard design.				0.5		\$45,000
Undetermined	Sub award	Demonstration school staffing. Support to selected demonstration project school sites to cover staff time during planning, engagement, and programmatic efforts.				0.1		\$5,000
							Sub Total	\$75,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								

							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
		Green Schoolyards Capital	Green Schoolyards construction and infrastructure	X				\$75,000
							Sub Total	\$75,000
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Travel expenses	Travel to school site for partner meetings, events, and engagements. Travel expenses will be dependent on selected location and reflect the potential need for mileage and overnight stays. Costs may be reallocated if nearby site is selected.					\$2,500
							Sub Total	\$2,500
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Green schoolyards resource printing hard copies	Print and share statewide assessment findings, school resources, and environmental curriculum.					\$2,500
							Sub Total	\$2,500
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-

							Grand Total	\$250,000
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Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Capital Expenditures		Green Schoolyards Capital	<p>This is funding to support construction of green schoolyards infrastructure and improvements. The outdoor schoolyard improvements will be used continuously by students, teachers, and community members through curriculum integration, programming and activation, and stewardship. If expenses are deemed generally ineligible, we will seek explicit exception from LCCMR as these expenses are directly related to and necessary for the project.</p> <p>Additional Explanation : Funding to support construction of green schoolyards infrastructure and improvements. The outdoor schoolyard improvements will be used continuously by students, teachers, and community members through curriculum integration, programming and activation, and stewardship.</p>

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Trust for Public Land	Staff time, foundational analysis work	Secured	\$150,000
Cash	School demonstration site local match minimum. School will be expected to bring at least \$25,000 in capital expense match to be eligible.	Capital expenses	Potential	\$25,000
Cash	Trust for Public Land	Community engagement minigrant support to community groups	Secured	\$5,000
In-Kind	Children & Nature Network	Staff time	Secured	\$60,000
Cash	Children & Nature Network	Travel to Minnesota	Secured	\$2,250
In-Kind	Blue Cross Blue Shield	Steering Committee participation	Secured	\$15,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$257,250
			Funds Total	\$257,250

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [14c347ac-ddc.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Minnesota Green Schoolyards - The Trust for Public Land (with image of green schoolyard)

Minnesota's schoolyards hold endless untapped potential. Green Schoolyards - school properties redesigned to be packed with trees, gardens, stormwater improvements, pollinator gardens, outdoor classrooms, and nature play - can improve the local environment while fostering new environmental stewards and improving health, learning, and community outcomes.

Immediate Impact, Long-Term Strategy (image of befo...

Financial Capacity

File: [00442494-8f0.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
TPL Letter of Authorization	90e1ad8d-0be.docx

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
Letter of Support - Minnesota Department of Health	c051d3f8-7ac.pdf
Letter of Support - Blue Cross Blue Shield	8b3752bc-98a.docx
Letter of Support - Children & Nature Network	b4e06d6d-5a2.pdf
Letter of Support - GreenStep Schools	48393dc0-a89.pdf
Letter of Support - University of Minnesota Extension	a1fe5f27-9b1.pdf
Letter of Support - Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	09a2a9f2-d22.docx
Letter of Support - Minnesota Department of Education	90725fa3-63a.pdf
ENRTF Background Check Certification Form	69f30f9a-cdf.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

Given the large budget revision we've had to make several cuts to our program, most notably a reduction in demonstration sites from six to one, reduced support for our steering committee, cancellation of plans for the Green Schoolyards Summit, staffing and technical assistance reductions, and removal of the creation of a website. Given the budget and timeline, we've been able to fund the majority of the statewide assessment through other funding sources, which will allow us to reduce our project timeline from three to two years. Conducting the statewide assessment during the spring of 2020 will set us up for demonstration site selection sooner, allowing us the opportunity to be ready to go with schoolyard renovation planning and engagement beginning in the fall of 2021.

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?

Yes

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?

Yes, I agree to the Commissioner's Plan.

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?

Yes

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

MINNESOTA GREEN SCHOOLYARDS

The Trust for Public Land

Minnesota's schoolyards hold endless untapped potential. Green Schoolyards - school properties redesigned to be packed with trees, gardens, stormwater improvements, pollinator gardens, outdoor classrooms, and nature play - can improve the local environment while fostering new environmental stewards and improving health, learning, and community outcomes.



IMMEDIATE IMPACT, LONG-TERM STRATEGY



THE PROJECT

- **PARTNER** - Bring together a group of cross-sector leaders
- **ASSESS** - Gather statewide schoolyard data, identify high need, high impact opportunities
- **DEMONSTRATE** - Improve six schoolyard sites which will serve as models while improving local outcomes
- **SHARE** - Build the knowledge base of school and local leaders across Minnesota
- **REPLICATE** - Build a strategy for long-term success, leveraging of resources, and statewide implementation

THE BENEFITS

