



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2024 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2024-129

Staff Lead: Noah Fribley

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 10, 2024

Project Title: YES! Students Step Up To Reduce Carbon Footprint

Project Budget: \$199,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Kalley Pratt

Organization: Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center

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Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: June 20, 2024

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

Project Completion: June 30, 2026

Final Report Due Date: August 14, 2026

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2024, Chp. 83, Sec. 2, Subd. 05m

Appropriation Language: \$199,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center to empower Minnesota youth to reduce their carbon footprints through education from local experts and completion of student-driven and community-based team projects.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2027

Narrative

Project Summary: YES! (Youth Eco Solutions) will empower Minnesota youth to reduce their carbon footprints by losing 5,000 pounds of CO₂ per YES team each school year.

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

In "Minnesota's Climate Action Framework," Governor Tim Walz states: "Climate change is an existential threat for all people in Minnesota." As carbon dioxide emissions increase, the state of Minnesota warms causing more frequent and intense storms, record-breaking floods, and an increase in wildfires - resulting in community and individual property damage, poor air quality, and harm to our beloved wildlife and habitat. Thankfully Minnesota is taking action concerning this climate crisis; the proposed project will enable Minnesota's youth to actively participate in achieving the climate vision for our state by reducing their carbon footprints.

Oftentimes, our youth feel disconnected not only from what is happening in their community, but also statewide. With your support, YES can continue to offer an opportunity to change this by providing resources and guidance for students to take responsibility for their own carbon footprint, actively build relationships in their communities, help achieve Minnesota's Climate Action Framework, and create a cleaner Minnesota for the future generations.

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.

Youth Eco Solutions (YES!) is a student-driven, award-winning program that empowers students to solve ecological challenges through hands-on projects. Since 2007 YES has supported over 4,910 students in working with over 7,303 businesses, organizations, and community members, cultivating connected and action-oriented future citizens. Our project goal is to mobilize Minnesota youth to shrink their carbon footprint through team projects that reduce CO₂ emissions by at least 5,000 pounds per team. YES will also connect these students with local experts through workshops that both teach about climate change and introduce students to related careers.

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center (PWELC) is seeking \$199,000 to build on our past success by supporting youth-led ecological projects. Projects may include: conserving energy by installing LED lights or motion sensors in classrooms; promoting renewable energy by designing a solar boat or building a wind generator; growing food in a community garden or school greenhouse; composting organic waste; reducing plastic waste by improving recycling systems or upcycling used items; protecting water quality by testing stream or lake clarity; conserving water by installing low-flow showerheads in locker rooms; and planting native prairie, trees, or pollinator garden to create habitat and improve soil health.

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?

Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center seeks to accomplish the following project-specific outcomes over two years:

- Students shrink their annual carbon footprint through YES team projects that reduce CO₂ emissions by at least 5,000 pounds per team.
- YES youth actively help our state achieve targets described in "Minnesota's Climate Action Framework".
- Connect students with local experts to deliver 20 customized workshops and trainings on climate change related topics.
- Educate and encourage students to implement at least 40 climate change action projects in and with their communities.

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: Recruit, Educate, and Connect YES! Students to Climate Change Experts and Careers

Activity Budget: \$79,600

Activity Description:

YES students in grades 6 through 12 will learn from local and state climate change experts while completing up to 40 ecological projects over 2 years. YES Staff from various locations in Minnesota will recruit new YES Teams and retain existing teams to gain statewide participation; recruitment will take place via email campaigns, school visits and tabling at fairs/conferences. We will partner with local climate change experts to host a Fall Summit and up to 10 workshops per year. Education will include hands-on training for topics students are interested in pursuing for their community projects as well as strategies for creating S.M.A.R.T. goals, managing projects, and engaging community members. YES students will receive education in conserving energy through use of LED lights or motion sensors in classrooms, promoting renewable energy by designing a solar boat or building a wind generator, growing food in a community garden or school greenhouse, composting organic waste, reducing plastic waste by improving recycling systems or upcycling used items, protecting water quality by testing stream or lake clarity, conserving water by installing low-flow showerheads in locker rooms, and planting native prairie, trees, or pollinator garden to create habitat and improve soil

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Kick-off the YES Season with 100+ students at the annual Fall Summit	October 31, 2024
Recruit 150 students to join YES Teams in year 1	December 31, 2024
Connect 150 students to regional and state climate change experts and careers in year 1	June 30, 2025
Provide 10 climate change workshops and teachings to educate YES! students in year 1	June 30, 2025
Kick-off the YES Season with 100+ students at the annual Fall Summit	October 31, 2025
Recruit 150 students to join YES Teams in year 2	December 31, 2025
Connect 150 students to regional and state climate change experts and careers in year 2	June 30, 2026
Provide 10 climate change workshops and teachings to educate YES! students in year 2	June 30, 2026

Activity 2: Students Implement 40+ Hands-on Climate Action Change Projects and Annually Reduce CO2 Emissions by 5000 pounds per YES Team

Activity Budget: \$119,400

Activity Description:

In collaboration with Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center, YES aims to deploy 30 teams over two years, inspiring students to adopt sustainable lifestyles and engage in outdoor activities that enhance local environments. This initiative aligns with the goals outlined in "Minnesota's Climate Action Framework." The dedicated YES Staff will strengthen ties with local entities, supporting YES Teams, organizing community events, and providing equipment for outdoor education.

Projects undertaken by YES Teams throughout the seasons include energy conservation, renewable energy, healthy food initiatives, composting, plastic waste reduction, wildlife habitat creation, and water conservation. The primary focus is on empowering students to reduce their carbon footprint, collectively aiming for a minimum reduction of 5,000 pounds of CO2 emissions. In collaboration with CERTS, YES will guide teams in calculating individual and overall CO2 emissions across Minnesota.

As Minnesota youth trim their carbon footprints, they actively contribute to the state's climate vision—achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, fostering resilient communities, businesses, and natural environments, and promoting an equitable

society for present and future generations. Youth achievements will be celebrated at the annual Spring Competition and Awards Ceremony. Support from ENRTF funds aids YES Staff, project seed funds, and school-related expenses, ensuring cost-effective participation

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Engage 15 YES Teams to select and develop climate change projects in year 1	December 31, 2024
Mobilize 150 students to implement 20 new ecological projects in year 1	May 31, 2025
Recognize student achievements at our annual YES Spring Celebration and through Team Accomplishments Publications	June 30, 2025
Reduce CO2 emissions by 5,000 pounds per YES Team in year 1	June 30, 2025
Engage 15 YES Teams to select and develop climate change projects in year 2	December 31, 2025
Mobilize 150 students to implement 20 new ecological projects in year 2	May 31, 2026
Recognize student achievements at our annual YES Spring Celebration and through Team Accomplishments Publications	June 30, 2026
Reduce CO2 emissions by 5,000 pounds per YES Team in year 2	June 30, 2026

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Becky Pollack	Ney Nature Center, Henderson, MN	Becky Pollack serves as Executive Director of Ney Nature Center(NNC). NNC will be a program supporter in both education and location - potentially being available to host YES events in the southern Minnesotan region.	No
Students and Teachers	School Districts in Minnesota	School Districts will be key project partners in supporting youth in participating in natural resource projects. Funds will help support project seed funds and enable students and teachers to attend events as indicated in the budget.	Yes
Volunteers	Lake Associations, Community Groups	Lake associations and other community groups are a big part of our resource base for volunteers who support our youth-led projects.	No
Jacob Selseth	Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs)	Jacob will work with YES! students on energy efficiency projects as expert, presenter, and collaborator.	No
Beth Mercer-Taylor	Institute on the Environment - University of Minnesota	Beth and her colleagues will be a resource for both YES! staff and students concerning "How To Lose 5,000 lbs of CO2"; she will also serve as an expert, presenter and collaborator.	No
Kristen Iverson Poppleton	Climate Generation	Kristen will serve as an expert, presenter and collaborator, as well as connect YES! staff to other climate change experts.	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.

Communicating the YES teams' amazing accomplishments are a top priority. We deliver information via Bi-Weekly updates with our YES Coaches to create a sense of community and encouragement between the teams along with sending our quarterly e-newsletter to our YES Supporters highlighting individual team accomplishments, YES Events, website, new blog posts and our social media platforms. Social media platforms allow YES to share team achievements in a quick and relevant way. We are proud to announce that YES has a healthy online presence that continues to steadily grow. Along with our online presence, we produce our annual YES Team Accomplishments Brochure that features the year's teams and highlights. Externally, YES continues to participate in the MN Science Teachers conference, the Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center Earth Day and building relationships with local media and politicians. As always, the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund is accredited throughout as a major funder.

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?

YES is completing its 16th year of working with Minnesota's youth by leveraging over \$1.4 million in local support of projects in the form of in-kind contributions, matching funds, major grants, and volunteer hours. In addition, YES will seek private and public partnerships, individual donors and sponsorships to continue the work. But it is the projects themselves that will have everlasting results.

One student commented, “Our YES Team is leaving a legacy.” The results from this project will leave a lifetime legacy of improved waterways, preserved and restored natural environments, and informed citizens throughout Minnesota.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Youth-Led Sustainability Projects in 50 Minnesota Communities – Phase III	M.L. 2016, Chp. 186, Sec. 2, Subd. 05c	\$400,000
YES! Students Take on Minnesota Water-Quality Challenge	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 05b	\$213,000
Yes! Students Take On Water Quality Challenge II	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 05g	\$199,000
YES! Students Take Action to Complete Eco Projects	M.L. 2022, , Chp. 94, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 05g	\$199,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Project Manager		To manage project budget, reporting and staff to achieve desired project outcomes, and provide strategic and collaborative leadership in carrying out the mission of the statewide Youth Eco Solutions (YES!) program.			25%	1.2		\$86,560
Team Manager		To coordinate and support student-driven teams to complete natural resource and CO2 reduction initiatives..			25%	1		\$53,100
Office Manager/Administrator		To provide bookkeeping, process payroll, project seed fund distributions and other office duties.			25%	0.14		\$12,800
							Sub Total	\$152,460
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Supplies for YES educational events and workshops: Fall Summit, Workshops, Awards Ceremony. Environmental Education workshop supplies approximately \$10 per students X \$150 students per year X 2 years = \$3,000.	Materials and supplies will enable outdoor natural resource experiences for students across Minnesota.					\$3,000
							Sub Total	\$3,000
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Coordinators & Project Manager travel: approximately 200 miles/month x 24 months x .655 = \$3,040	Travel required to support and meet with Statewide teams and					\$3,040

			coordinate activities in communities.					
							Sub Total	\$3,040
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Project Seed Funds; Up to \$200 per team x 15 teams = \$3,000 x 2 years = \$6,000.	Allows for teams to purchase materials and services necessary to initiate projects for natural resource conservation and restoration related projects & educational events.					\$6,000
		School District (Substitute Teacher Pay)/Community Expense Allowance	To facilitate student participation, funds will be available for reimbursement to support: 1. coaches/adult advisors to attend YES! events during the school day, and 2. transportation expenses for buses. \$150 per team X 15 teams = \$2,250 X 2 years = \$4,500.					\$4,500
		Stipends for Liaisons (YES! Coaches and Advisors)	To offset costs and support student roles in YES! Up to \$1000 per Liaison X 15 = \$15,000 X 2 years = \$30,000.					\$30,000
							Sub Total	\$40,500
							Grand Total	\$199,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	Each participating YES! team pays a fee of \$600. 15 Teams x 2 years = 30 teams x \$600 = \$18,000.	Participation fees cover costs not eligible for reimbursement from ENRTF such as food, t-shirts, Award plaques, Twins Game tickets and other additional costs.	Pending	\$18,000
In-Kind	In-kind from Prairie Woods Environmental Learning Center (PWELC) and our partner Ney Nature Center (NNC). Also includes student volunteer time, teacher/coach volunteer time, and professional/expert volunteer time.	In-Kind (phone, computer, maintenance, heating, electric, copies, professional service, etc.) PWELC \$24,000 + NNC \$ 12,000 for 2 years = 36,000 Student volunteer time average is 200 hours per team x 15 teams x 2 years = 6,000 x \$14.56/hr = \$87,360. Teacher/Coach volunteer time average is 80 hours per team x 15 teams x 2 years = 2,400 x \$35/hr = \$84,000. Professional/expert volunteer time average is 10 hours per team x 15 teams x 2 years = 300 x \$45/hr = \$13,500. Above in-kind is based on past history of previously quantified data.	Secured	\$184,860
Cash	Prairie Woods Environmental Center Income (Cash Reserves, Small Grants & Gifts)	Cash reserves are intended for staff, travel, office support and other items as required to maintain the program (Website Hosting, Constant Contact, Email, Technical Support, Printing, Marketing, etc.).	Secured	\$20,000
Cash	National Science Foundation (NSF) through Regents of the University of Minnesota. Empowering Youth to Become 21st Century Energy Leaders: A STEM Workforce Development Initiative	National Science Foundation (NSF) through Regents of the University of Minnesota has committed funds to YES! for Empowering Youth to Become 21st Century Energy Leaders: A STEM Workforce Development Initiative. YES! will develop and acquire program resources and content for hands-on energy projects, school-based energy and STEM training, and provide logistical support for workshops and projects.	Secured	\$9,975
			Non State Sub Total	\$232,835
			Funds Total	\$232,835

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [a4e809d6-821.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

A Statewide map of YES!, testimonials from participants, photos of environmental education, proposed projects....

Financial Capacity

File: [f71369d4-e21.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
PWELC Board Resolution 2023-01	cbe03599-058.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support - Discovery Woods	4cf4b128-53c.pdf
Letter of Support - Harbor City	f93cc8c4-f7a.pdf
Letter of Support - Institute on the Environment	78c7bffa-589.pdf
Letter of Support - Lac Qui Parle	6d2e310f-4c1.pdf
Letter of Support - MACCRAY	52cbb9ca-cb4.pdf
Letter of Support - Sleepy Eye	26dc139a-fed.pdf
Letter of Support - Westbrook Walnut Grove	851a5703-00a.pdf
Letter of Support - Royalton	e838db87-3bb.pdf
Project Concept - How to Lose 10,000 Pounds (of CO2) in Just 10 Weeks	d1279def-055.pdf
Report - Minnesota's Climate Action Framework	11bd1cb0-fc1.pdf
YES! Team Accomplishments 2021-2022	8c592314-5c3.pdf

Media Links

Title	Link
YES! Website	https://yesmn.org/
YES! Instagram	https://www.instagram.com/youth_eco_solutions/

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

YES has enhanced our operational efficiency over the past year. As part of our streamlining efforts in staffing structure, we've made the decision to amicably dissolve our subcontracted staffing partnership with Ney Nature Center. Due to this change, "Professional and Technical Contact" Ney Nature Center" has been removed from our work plan; the \$32,000 in this category was dispersed. \$17,000 was shifted to the "Personnel" category; \$7,000 was added to Program Manager (now totaling \$86,560), \$5000 was added to Regional Coordinator (now totaling \$53,100), and \$5000 was added to Office Manager (now totaling \$12,800). The other \$15,000 was added to the "Other" category - specifically to "Stipends for Liaisons (YES! Coaches and Advisors), which now totals \$30,000.

"Activity 1 - Recruit, Educate, and Connect YES! Students to Climate Change Experts and Careers" now incorporates

recruitment details: "recruitment will take place via email campaigns, school visits and tabling at fairs/conferences."

"Activity 1: Recruit, Educate, and Connect YES! Students to Climate Change Experts and Careers" remains unchanged. However, Activity 2 and 3 have been consolidated. The revised Activity 2 is now titled: "Activity 2: Students Implement 40+ Hands-on Climate Action Change Projects and Annually Reduce CO2 Emissions by 5000 pounds per YES Team." Furthermore, additional milestones have been introduced for both Activity 1 and Activity 2, enhancing clarity and specifying tasks to be accomplished earlier in the grant timeline.

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?

Yes, I agree to the Commissioner's Plan.

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