



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2025 Approved Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2025-125

Staff Lead: Michael Varien

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 26, 2025

Project Title: River Bend Nature Center Outdoor Diversity Initiative

Project Budget: \$247,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Brad Bourn

Organization: River Bend Nature Center

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Email: Bourn@RBNC.org

Web Address: <https://rbnc.org>

Project Reporting

Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR: June 24, 2025

Reporting Schedule: March 1 / September 1 of each year.

Project Completion: June 30, 2028

Final Report Due Date: August 14, 2028

Legal Information

Legal Citation: M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 05j

Appropriation Language: \$247,000 the first year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with River Bend Nature Center to lead a coalition of educational partners and culturally specific organizations to expand recognized environmental education curriculum and provide conservation-based career exploration and job placement opportunities for diverse communities in southern Minnesota.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2028

Narrative

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.

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, U of M Extension, the Owatonna and Faribault Community Education departments and local cultural ambassadors will provide culturally specific environmental education, career exploration, and job placement support for East African and Latinx youth and young adults ages 14-27 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 for New Minnesotans paired with culturally specific outreach and paid training opportunities, we'll develop BIPOC participants with meaningful appreciation of natural resources who will possess highly sought-after skills that meet the needs of employers in local, regional, and state natural resource management.

Participants will participate in up to 12 weeks of educational programming 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, and more. As part of the 12 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 partners.

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 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

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.”

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

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
Finalize MOUs, partner roles, and confirmations	July 31, 2025
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 embedded in River Bend and partner organizations will assist with culturally specific recruitment of participants.

By having ambassadors 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.

Ambassadors will target recruitment with recent highschool graduates, participate in local career fairs, advertise on local Somali/Latinx media, engage in 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 career 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 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.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
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Up to 5 track 1 participants are recruited to participate in seasonal paid training	July 31, 2025
Up to 13 track 2 unpaid participants recruited to obtain conservation based employment training credentials	November 30, 2025
Up to 5 track 1 participants are recruited to participate in seasonal paid training	April 30, 2026
Up to 13 track 2 unpaid participants recruited to obtain conservation based employment training credentials	January 31, 2027
Up to 5 track 1 participants are recruited to participate in seasonal paid training	April 30, 2027

Activity 3: Provide paid culturally specific training for up to 14 participants gaining a greater understanding and appreciation of Minnesota's natural resources

Activity Budget: \$140,500

Activity Description:

Objective: Provide up to 14 young adult BIPOC participants with a paid career training track over 12 weeks comprised of approximately 80-120 hours of classroom time and approximately 360 hours of field experience at RBNC's campus and limited job sampling opportunities at participating employer partners. Track 1 participants will be engaged during summers of 2025, 2026, and 2027. Participants will earn a set of industry recognized credentials in the natural resource management field while engaging in natural resource management and conservation work at River Bend and other local public green spaces.

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

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.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Up to 5 track 1 (paid participants) complete seasonal 12 week cohort and obtain credentials	December 31, 2025
Up to 5 track 1 (paid participants) complete seasonal 12 week cohort and obtain credentials	October 31, 2026
Up to 4 track 1 (paid participants) complete seasonal 12 week cohort and obtain credentials	June 30, 2027

Activity 4: Provide unpaid culturally specific training for up to 26 participants gaining a greater understanding and appreciation of Minnesota's natural resources

Activity Budget: \$66,500

Activity Description:

Objective: Provide up to 26 young adult BIPOC participants with unpaid career training (26 people) and industry recognized certifications to expose and prepare them to pursue careers in natural resource management.

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

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.

Program track 2 (unpaid work experience) will serve up to 26 participants in a learn-at-your pace program where participants.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Up to 13 track 2 participants obtain certifications towards conservation based employment	May 31, 2026
Up to 13 track 2 participants obtain certifications towards conservation based employment	May 31, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Faribault Community Education	Faribault Public Schools	Curriculum design, co-facilitation, participant recruitment	Yes
Owatonna Community Education	Owatonna Public Schools	Curriculum design, co-facilitation, participant recruitment	Yes

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.

While not a research project, we are partnering with the University of Minnesota to conduct an evaluation of the program. This work is in early stages and we will share with LCCMR during progress reports.

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 begin 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.

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		\$2,537
Director of Programs and Engagement (Molly Dulka)		Overall project mgt, curriculum adaptation, and course instruction			3%	0.3		\$12,487
Director of Environmental Stewardship (Brittany Smith)		Coordinate and supervise participants in paid work experience/internship components			3%	0.3		\$12,488
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%	1		\$24,500
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		\$12,488
Youth participant wages		Youth participants receive 640 hours of paid training and internship opportunities. $14 \times 640 \times \$18 = \$161,280 + 12,337 \text{ (Fringe \& tax)} = \$173,617$. LCCMR Share \$70,000			3%	8.6		\$70,000
							Sub Total	\$139,000
Contracts and Services								
Faribault Public Schools	Subaward	Approximate Budget: Program Coordinator \$75/hr Activities:				0.5		\$20,000

Community Education		Curriculum development and adapt or modify existing curriculum, and program oversight- 110 hrs x \$75/hr = \$8250 Instructor/Mgr \$44/hr Activities: Register students, administer assessments, prep, evaluate data, deliver curriculum, student support- 267.05 hrs x \$44/hr = 11750						
Owatonna Public Schools Community Education	Subaward	Director \$125/hr Activities: curriculum development- 40hrs \$5000 Coordinator \$80/hr Activities: General project oversight, communication, and documentation 70hrs \$5600 Mgr 1: \$75/hr Activities co-teaching, instructional prep, material development and meeting participation, 100hrs \$7500 Instructor 1 \$50/hr Activities Register students, administer assessments, evaluate data 38hrs \$1900				0.5		\$20,000
TBD / State of Minnesota	Service Contract	Non-Commercial Pesticide License study materials and exam fees for up to 14 track 1 participants.				0		\$550
University of Minnesota / State of Minnesota	Service Contract	Minnesota Shade Tree Inspector License and course for 40 track 1 and 2 participants. \$50 per participant				0		\$2,000
Blue Heron LLC (chainsaw training) / TBD	Service Contract	Industry recognized chainsaw training certifications for up to 40 track 1 and 2 participants. 4 sessions X \$2000 per session				0		\$8,000
Red Cross / TBD	Service Contract	Wilderness first aid / CPR training for 14 track 1 participants. \$124 and certificates for 26 track 2 participants				0		\$2,176
TBD vendor	Service Contract	OSHA 10 certifications for 14 track 1 participants \$90 x 14 participants				0		\$1,260
University of Minnesota Extension	Subaward	UM extension fees. Negotiated rate for UofM to provide a menu of trainings ranging from Master Naturalist, Shade Tree Inspector, Pesticide lic. more. Anticipated rate \$500/participant.				0.5		\$20,000

							Sub Total	\$73,986
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	General program supplies, PPE, tools, and gear: Grounds supplies: \$4221 PPE and gear \$5793 Project tools (chainsaws, shovels, etc) \$1000	Items necessary for experiential learning and demonstration projects					\$11,014
							Sub Total	\$11,014
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								
		Culturally Specific Partners	Local culturally ambassadors / organizations will receive stipends and will primarily be responsible for recruitment of participants, ongoing support, translation, co-facilitation of classes, and case mgt for job seekers. Ambassadors and organizations will make 1:1 contact with potential					\$23,000

			<p>participants to suggest enrollment in the program, go into culturally familiar locations like mosques, community centers, and other locations where English may not be a prevalent language to conduct outreach activities with potential participants and their families to overcome potential and perceived barriers to participation, and walk participants through the enrollment process as well as provide ongoing support to RBNC staff. We anticipate partnering with between 1-4 ambassadors/partners including individual community members and local organizations like Faribault Somali Youth Empowerment, Somali Community Resettlement Services, Community Action, Healthy Community Initiative, and more. Stipend amounts will be negotiated with each ambassador/organization. The budget number was determined using historical data for similar agreements RBNC has utilized along with preliminary conversations with potential ambassadors/orgs.</p>					
							Sub Total	\$23,000
							Grand Total	\$247,000

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				
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 received a DEED targeted community grant. The grant will supplement participant wages, purchase laptops, supplement tuition allowances, and provide transportation stipends. Additionally funds will help support multiple program staff.	Secured	\$600,000
			State Sub Total	\$800,000
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	\$850,000

Total Project Cost: \$1,097,000

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 resoltuion	6201db3e-97b.pdf
Revised board resolution per email	73a8503d-d05.pdf
Board Letter - President and Secretary Signatures	6898db1f-f92.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

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

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

- 1) Removed references and funding for the project partner we discussed.
- 2) We expanded the participant age range from 18-27 to 14-27
- 3) In the period between application and approval, one of our pending funders become secured (DEED). Their funding covers a much larger portion of participant training wages that first estimated but does not cover as much of the necessary training materials, certification fees, and supplies and program staff. I can walk you through those if you'd like.
- 4) Clarified the program model and duration including expanding the milestones for each.

MAY 2025 REVISIONS ADDRESSED. Revision regarding U of M extension curriculum was challenging given the 15 word limit.

June revision completed per conversation

Final revisions to Faribault and Owatonna school districts made. Multiple acronyms removed.

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 understand that travel expenses are only approved if they 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, 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 project:

None

Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements

Yes, I understand