



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Approved Work Plan

## General Information

**ID Number:** 2026-578

**Staff Lead:** Mike Campana

**Date this document submitted to LCCMR:** May 19, 2026

**Project Title:** Explore Minnesota with COPAL

**Project Budget:** \$392,000

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Geanella Ochoa

**Organization:** Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Accion Latina

**Office Telephone:** (612) 478-2901

**Email:** geanellao@copalmn.org

**Web Address:** <https://copalmn.org/>

## Project Reporting

**Date Work Plan Approved by LCCMR:** June 17, 2026

**Reporting Schedule:** April 1 / October 1 of each year.

**Project Completion:** June 30, 2029

**Final Report Due Date:** August 14, 2029

## Legal Information

**Legal Citation:** M.L. 2026, Chp. 104, Sec. 2, Subd. 05II

**Appropriation Language:** \$392,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Accion Latina (COPAL) to expand community partnerships, provide environmentally focused programming and outreach focused on Latine and BIPOC communities, support youth environmental and outdoor leadership and engagement, and conduct an evaluation on the accessibility and inclusivity of Minnesota public lands.

**Appropriation End Date:** June 30, 2029



## Narrative

**Project Summary:** COPAL will provide outdoor programming and leadership opportunities for 600+ BIPOC families and youth, and produce a report recommending improvements to enhance natural outdoor spaces that are inclusive and accessible.

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

Routinely visiting parks and engaging in outdoor activities increases peoples' commitment to water and land conservation (DeVillie et al., 2021). Yet according to the DNR's most recent State Parks Visitor Survey, only 11% of visitors to Minnesota's state parks identify as BIPOC, compared to the overall population of 22% (Minnesota DNR, 2022). Barriers include cost, transportation, knowledge of outdoor spaces, and language access.

Parks and outdoor activities hold a special significance in diverse cultures. Many cities and towns throughout the Caribbean, Central America, and South America host outdoor festivals in town squares, and many cultural traditions include connections to the natural world. For BIPOC families, the lack of culturally-relevant educational and language resources in Minnesota's natural spaces can make it difficult to navigate the outdoors.

ENRTF funding will allow COPAL to expand programming to create accessible and inclusive avenues to Minnesota's parks and outdoor activities for English- and Spanish-speaking BIPOC communities. Through evidence-based, hands-on, and engaging curriculum, a diversity of youth and families will learn about wetland and native grassland restoration and careers in environment and natural resources.

**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.**

In 2024, COPAL engaged 345 BIPOC youth and families in natural outdoor recreation. We collaborated with the Land Stewardship Project to host a farm tour in Austin and worked with colleges, universities, and community groups for a total of 15 events across the state. We addressed barriers to participation by hosting events in English and Spanish, providing transportation, and covering any fees. Each event was created in collaboration with naturalists to ensure an evidence-based curriculum.

ENRTF funding will allow COPAL to hire an Outdoor Specialist to create engaging bilingual youth programming focused on wetland and native grassland restoration and careers in the environment and natural resources. We will tie this work into our Environmental Justice Committee – a volunteer-led group that meets monthly to inform COPAL's programming - to ensure clear, consistent processes of youth engagement and leadership. COPAL will work closely with naturalists, state park rangers, DNR staff, and event participants to produce a report detailing ways the DNR can enhance natural resources-based outdoor recreational spaces in communities across the state.

Through this work, COPAL will contribute to all Minnesotans, especially young people, having access to and taking advantage of opportunities to connect to the lands and waters of Minnesota.

**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?**

COPAL will connect 600+ predominantly BIPOC families and youth with the outdoors while producing clear next steps to increase the accessibility and inclusivity of Minnesota's natural spaces. Specifically, we will expand partnerships, engage BIPOC youth and families in outdoor spaces, and increase participants' knowledge about wetland and native grassland restoration and careers in the environment and natural resources. Our work with our Environmental Justice Committee, particularly youth members, will result in 50 new attendees participating in programming. Finally, we will develop a report with recommendations for the DNR to enhance natural resources-based outdoor recreational spaces.

## 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: Innovative, culturally-relevant youth and family programming that addresses social, economic, and physical barriers to natural outdoor recreation

**Activity Budget:** \$259,807

**Activity Description:**

Objective: Provide evidence-based, hands-on, and engaging programming to bring a diversity of youth and families to outdoor experiences

Tasks & How They're Accomplished: Host monthly outdoor events (24 total) that engage BIPOC youth and families throughout the state. The events will occur in outdoor spaces, such as local farms and state parks. Activities will include evidence-based curriculum focused on topics such as careers in the environment that engages participants in creative expression and outdoor activities. Participants will receive giveaway items such as reusable grocery bags and water bottles. COPAL will work closely with BIPOC groups to co-host several events.

Outcomes: Expand partnerships, engage BIPOC youth and families in outdoor spaces, and increase participants' knowledge about careers in the environment and natural resources

Impact: Everyone, especially youth, have access to and take advantage of opportunities to connect to the lands and waters of Minnesota

Evaluation: Registration forms and verbal/written post-event surveys

ENRTF funds will be used for educational purposes but not to encourage the public to contact members or employees of the legislature or a state agency for the purpose of proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation or policy, or for directly advocating the adoption or rejection of legislation or policy.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Work closely with 2-3 naturalists to incorporate wetland and native grassland restoration curriculum into programming	December 31, 2026
Engage 1-2 training partners to create curriculum focused on careers in environment and natural resources	January 31, 2027
Continue existing partnerships with 3 predominantly BIPOC organizations	June 30, 2028
Form 4 new partnerships with BIPOC groups to reach more participants throughout Minnesota	June 30, 2028
Engage at least 600 BIPOC youth and families throughout Minnesota	June 30, 2028
In post-event surveys, 80% of participants will name ways they will engage with the outdoors	June 30, 2028
Provide a summary of survey results for all events supported by ENRTF funding	June 30, 2028

### Activity 2: Create leadership opportunities for youth participants of COPAL's Environmental Justice Committee

**Activity Budget:** \$58,800

**Activity Description:**

Objective: Create avenues for youth participants of COPAL's member-based Environmental Justice Committee to serve as leaders in COPAL's outdoor programming

Tasks & How They're Accomplished: The Environmental Justice Committee meets monthly to inform COPAL's work. With a focus on youth members, the committee will be invited to serve as engagement ambassadors who will conduct outreach to increase participation in outdoor events. Staff will train engagement ambassadors in outreach techniques and will provide mentorship throughout year 1 with the goal that engagement ambassadors will lead at least 2 events in year 2.

Outcomes: At least 50 new attendees will participate in COPAL's outdoor programming

Impact: Committee members will become representatives of COPAL's work, gaining the skills to serve as leader advocates in conservation, preservation, and protection of Minnesota's outdoors.

Evaluation: Individual conversations and listening sessions with committee members

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Hire an Outdoor Specialist to increase staff capacity to focus on the Environmental Justice Committee	October 31, 2026
Engage 40 people in COPAL's Environmental Justice Committee throughout programming	June 30, 2028
Mentor 3 youth committee members to serve as engagement ambassadors	June 30, 2028
Engage 50 new attendees in outdoor events by mentoring engagement ambassadors	June 30, 2028
Support engagement ambassadors in leading at least 2 outdoor events during year 2 of funding	June 30, 2028

**Activity 3: Craft a report with recommendations to enhance natural resources-based outdoor recreational spaces that are inclusive and accessible to all**

**Activity Budget:** \$73,393

**Activity Description:**

Objective: COPAL will develop a report detailing specific ways in which the DNR can enhance natural resources-based outdoor recreational spaces in communities across the state

Tasks & How They're Accomplished: COPAL will evaluate our outdoor programming to determine success in expanding availability of outdoor spaces to all. Specific tasks may include developing a logic model, conducting focus groups, analyzing post-event surveys, and interviewing participants, naturalists, and DNR staff.

Outcomes: COPAL will present report findings to the DNR and collaboratively determine steps to increase the accessibility and inclusivity of public lands

Impact: All Minnesotans will have access to and take advantage of opportunities to connect to the lands and waters of Minnesota

Evaluation: Evaluation may include focus groups, post-event surveys, and interviews

ENRTF funds will be used for educational purposes but not for any lobbying for policy changes.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Draft and sign an MOU with an evaluation firm	January 31, 2027
Create a logic model	April 30, 2027

Conduct focus groups and/or interviews with at least 10 participants, naturalists and DNR staff	September 30, 2027
Write the report	March 31, 2028
Publicize the report through events and communications channels	May 31, 2028

## 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.**

To assess our impact and learn from our mistakes, COPAL uses Airtable and EveryAction CRM (constituent relationship management) software to track participant demographic information, the number of participants served, the number of events and committee meetings, and data about outcomes achieved. This allows us to understand what community members need, where we are consistently meeting these needs, and where we can improve. We also evaluate our services through 1-1 conversations and event surveys. These conversations support staff in understanding strengths and areas of improvement in implementation.

For this specific project, we will also use COPAL's established communication channels—social media, newsletters, YouTube, and our radio station -- to regularly share project updates, conservation tips, and success stories. This will ensure that our findings reach a broad audience, including those who are directly impacted by the project's activities. Results will be shared with key partners such as our Environmental Justice committee, local environmental organizations, park staff, and BIPOC groups via 1:1 conversations, joint events, and presentations. Such interactions will foster collaboration and ensure that our findings are utilized to enhance resource management practices and outreach efforts. We will work closely with our contracted evaluation firm to determine project successes and how to address continual barriers faced by Latine and BIPOC communities in accessing the outdoors and preserving Minnesota's land and resources.

We will acknowledge the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund through use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on project print and electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications and outreach.

## 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?**

COPAL will evaluate our outdoor programming to produce a report with recommendations to enhance outdoor spaces. We will share the report with DNR staff, community groups, and on our communications platforms, which reach over 65,000 people per month. After project completion, COPAL will utilize our strong partnerships - which we expect to grow throughout the outdoor events - to determine the needs of BIPOC communities in preserving and conserving Minnesota's natural resources. We will utilize our report to demonstrate the need for continued funding, which we will present to the many funders with whom we already have strong relationships.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Environmental Justice Coordinator		Planning, leading logistics for, and working closely with the Environmental Justice Committee, engagement ambassadors, project partners, and participants for the outdoor events			20%	0.5		\$31,200
Environmental Justice Director		Project lead overseeing strategic direction and implementation of ENRTF-funded work, with a focus on community engagement and empowerment.			20%	0.6		\$86,400
Outdoor Specialist		Executing outdoor activities and programs, fostering a connection between communities and the environment.			20%	2		\$124,800
Communications Coordinator		Managing promotion of events and the final report through social media, targeted emails, newsletters, COPAL's website, and COPAL's in-house 24/7 radio station			20%	0.3		\$19,655
Videographer & Photographer		Capturing visuals and testimonials during events, creating compelling videos to showcase community involvement and impact.			20%	0.4		\$25,958
Podcast/Radio Tech		Hosting and producing podcasts, radio broadcasts, and/or radio spots aimed at increasing community participation and engagement.			20%	0.2		\$12,480
Health and Wellness Navigator		Connecting community members to outdoor events when they call COPAL's hotline for assistance			20%	0.5		\$33,696
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$334,189</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Baztec Fishing	Subaward	Engage Baztec Fishing for sustainable fishing practices and knowledge sharing within the project scope. \$6,750 for personnel, \$2,250 for supplies (e.g., fishing rods, etc.)				1		\$9,000
Huellas Latinas	Subaward	Huellas Latinas is an organization that promotes outdoor events and activities, particularly hiking. COPAL will partner with Huellas Latinas to co-host 3 hiking events. \$6,650 for personnel, \$2,250 for				1		\$9,000

		travel, to cover bus or van transportation for community participants who require transportation						
Contracted report design and analysis	Service Contract	Contract with an evaluation firm to design surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups, collect data, and analyze results to assess the project's impact on the community and conservation efforts.				2		\$10,000
Cultural Performance Per Year	Subaward	Partner with an organization to host a yearly performance through music, dance, or art. This cultural performance will help participants connect to the land and will promote conservation and preservation of the state's air, water, and natural resources. \$3,000 for personnel, \$1,000 for travel.				2		\$4,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$32,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	360 reusable grocery bags (15 per event)	Collaborate with local grocery stores or markets to offer reusable bags as an alternative to single-use plastic bags, reducing plastic waste and promoting sustainable shopping practices.					\$2,500
	Tools and Supplies	360 reusable water bottles (15 per event)	Distribute reusable water bottles as giveaways at events, workshops, or community gatherings, promoting sustainability.	X				\$2,800
	Tools and Supplies	Paint, chalk, paper, pencils, extra supplies	Invest in arts and crafts supplies for creative expression workshops that integrate art with nature, fostering personal connections with the environment through activities like painting, sculpture, and photography.					\$1,500
	Equipment	2 bikes, fishing rods, or other equipment	Purchase or rent outdoor recreation equipment like bikes or fishing gear to provide hands-on experiences for participants, promoting outdoor engagement and active lifestyle choices. The equipment is natural-resource based outdoor recreation equipment.					\$2,500

							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$9,300</b>
<b>Capital Equipment</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	1 outdoor event per month to different areas in MN, so 24 events to report mileage	Cover expenses for staff members to attend outdoor events or to report findings at events.					\$2,500
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
	Printing	600 event flyers, 300 brochures, 50 posters, & 300 comic pages (instead of comic books)	Budget for printing event flyers, brochures, posters, comic pages, and educational materials in both English and Spanish					\$5,000
	Printing	600 multilingual trail maps	Print trail maps and guides in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity and accessibility of outdoor recreation opportunities for non-English speakers.					\$2,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$7,000</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
		Parking, entrance fees, for at least 200 participants	To reduce barriers to participating in the outdoors for predominantly BIPOC communities	X				\$3,011
		Transportation for participants by van or bus to and from outdoor events across Minnesota. These funds will only be used for group transportation arranged by COPAL or its partners, ensuring accessibility for	To reduce barriers to participation in outdoor activities for predominantly BIPOC and Spanish-speaking communities, ensuring equitable	X				\$4,000

		participants who otherwise lack reliable transportation.	access to state and regional parks where events are held.					
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$7,011</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$392,000</b>

## Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>		360 reusable water bottles (15 per event)	Water is not always present at outdoor areas. Having water on hand reduces the financial barrier of participants having to purchase their own refreshments and ensures participants do not become dehydrated or get heat stroke.
<b>Other Expenses</b>		Parking, entrance fees, for at least 200 participants	Cover entrance fees, parking fees, and transportation (e.g., vans or buses) at state and city parks for participants of the outdoor events, including engagement ambassadors. Many participants of COPAL's outdoor events cannot afford parking and entrance fees, which preclude them from enjoying outdoor spaces. Therefore, covering entrance and parking fees, and providing transportation such as vans, removes barriers for community members to attend events, ensuring inclusivity and participation. COPAL determines which participants receive this benefit through a question on the outdoor event registration form.
<b>Other Expenses</b>		Transportation for participants by van or bus to and from outdoor events across Minnesota. These funds will only be used for group transportation arranged by COPAL or its partners, ensuring accessibility for participants who otherwise lack reliable transportation.	<p>It is directly related to and necessary for the success of this project. Lack of reliable transportation is one of the most frequently cited barriers preventing BIPOC communities from engaging in outdoor and conservation-related activities. Providing organized transportation ensures that participants can safely and collectively attend educational events and activities where they learn about conservation, sustainability, and Minnesota's natural resources.</p> <p>Determination of Need:            Transportation will be provided only when events occur in locations not accessible by public transit or when a significant portion of registered participants indicate that they do not have personal vehicles. COPAL will confirm need during registration and coordinate group travel accordingly.</p>

## Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
Cash	Climate & Clean Energy Equity Fund	Covers ineligible & prohibited expenses plus part of the remaining personnel costs. All other personnel costs are covered by grants for programming unrelated to outdoor events.	Potential	\$60,700
Cash	McKnight Foundation	Covers ineligible & prohibited expenses plus part of the remaining personnel costs. All other personnel costs are covered by grants for programming unrelated to outdoor events.	Potential	\$168,334
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$229,034</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$229,034</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$621,034**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [730325ff-88d.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Demonstrates several of the areas where COPAL's outdoor events are held....

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
COPAL Certificate of Good Standing	<a href="#">6d66f7dd-7d6.pdf</a>
COPAL 2023 Audit	<a href="#">4de0307d-b13.pdf</a>
COPAL Form 990 2023	<a href="#">950021c6-1ae.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
COPAL Board Resolution Letter	<a href="#">c27e55cd-32f.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Photos from COPAL's outdoor events	<a href="#">82d41663-9e4.pdf</a>

## Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

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

COPAL deleted the comic book line item for \$9,500 and allocated an additional \$1,500 to printing comic pages.

COPAL updated descriptions in the following areas: Activities 1, 2, and 3, Personnel, Services and Subawards, and in Capital, Equipment, Tools, and Supplies. COPAL updated the budget in Travel and Conferences and Other.

## 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?**

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

**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 project:**

Geanella Ochoa (Environmental Justice Director), COPAL

**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