



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Final Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2026-027

Staff Lead: Erin Barton

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: May 26, 2026

Project Title: Inspiring and Connecting the Next Generations with Nature

Project Budget: \$3,085,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Sara Miller

Organization: YMCA of the North

Office Telephone: (612) 900-0127

Email: saramiriam.miller@ymcamn.org

Web Address:

Project Reporting

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. 05d

Appropriation Language: \$3,085,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the YMCA of the North to increase access for Minnesota youth to outdoor camp and environmental learning experiences through scholarships, transportation assistance, and free equipment rentals.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2029

Narrative

Project Summary: Engage 28,000 Minnesota youth in outdoor experiences that create a love for the environment.

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

The projects proposed remove barriers for young people to connect them to meaningful outdoor experiences through YMCA of the North camp programs which include day camp (ages 5-17), overnight camp (ages 7-17), wilderness trip experiences (ages 12-17); and outdoor learning experiences for schools (grades 1-12) and youth-serving community partners. These experiences range from one-day experiences, week-long experiences and multi-week wilderness trips for older youth (ages 12-17).

Many Minnesota youth do not access engaging nature-based opportunities that build academic and social growth, resiliency and a love of the environment for reasons of program fees, transportation, knowledge of opportunities and/or fear of physical and psychological safety in nature-based settings. Additionally, as we have increasing concerns for the conservation and preservation of pristine wilderness, clean water and unpolluted air we need to include the next generations in the experiences and appreciation of nature and knowledge of the global impact of losing these.

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.

The YMCA will expand access to outdoor experiences for youth and families across Minnesota through our 16 camp locations. We propose increasing youth access to outdoor experiences through scholarships (overnight, day, or wilderness camps), field trips, classroom/homeschool engagement, and community group/family events. These scholarships will expand access to structured outdoor experiences at no cost to under resourced children and families. These programs are available year-round, allowing us to service Minnesota communities beyond the traditional summer camp model. We will introduce new generations of youth to the outdoors, fostering an understanding of the importance of conserving our wilderness. We will create a welcoming outdoor experience through the development of gear libraries, allowing us to loan critical, and potentially prohibitively expensive gear to our campers. We recognize that transportation to and from camps can be a barrier to entry for some families. Thus, we propose a transportation scholarship which will allow us to transport campers at no cost. This will eliminate the distance barriers for financially under resourced families. These programs mold lifelong stewards of nature, helping participants feel safe and supported as they explore the outdoors, enhancing hands-on learning opportunities (science in nature) and engaging science and math learning.

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?

- 1) Equip younger generations (28,000 youth) with knowledge and care for the environment. This includes 600 young people attending YMCA camps in Minnesota with scholarships and approximately 27,400 youth attending YMCA outdoor programming trips.
- 2) Support equitable access to Minnesota's natural resources for youth through the utilization of the YMCA's extensive scholarship program and transportation network.
- 3) Lessen the impact of YMCA camp programming on Minnesota's natural environment through the implementation of new gear libraries. With the cataloguing of gear, we can guarantee that all equipment entering the environment is returned, and nothing is left behind.

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: Development of Gear Libraries YMCA overnight camps, day camping and for wilderness camping trips

Activity Budget: \$405,000

Activity Description:

Lending gear to meet the needs of participants from low-income communities who are ready in spirit and not ready with the right equipment and gear. A Gear Library removes barriers for participation and increases safety and meaningful experiences. The Gear Libraries will be located at six overnight camps where they are accessible to programs statewide and will be maintained. Funding Gear Libraries will include:

Funding for development of Gear libraries. 2026 \$150,000; 2027 \$100,000; 2028 \$80,000, 3 yr Total: \$330,000

Camp Gear Libraries include but are not limited to: Sleeping bags (\$20), hiking boots (\$80), rain jackets (\$20), snow shoes (\$100), backpacks (\$20), and seasonal consumables (\$10) (e.g. sunscreen, bug repellent, water bottle). Fully 35% of our summer campers and 65% of our wilderness campers receive financial aid to be able to participate. Schools have limited budgets, not equipped to provide the extras that allow students to fully experience (day or overnight) outdoors. Equipping Gear Libraries in Year 1 will allow us better purchase economy as we buy in bulk for camps. The YMCA favors local businesses for camping gear and equipment to support local economy and will work with vendor partners.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Hire Program Manager at .5 FTE, Gear Libraries	September 30, 2026
Implement Gear Libraries for six overnight camp and wilderness trips	June 30, 2029
Complete audit of gear library at conclusion of grant period to evaluate efficacy of program	June 30, 2029

Activity 2: Financial aid to remove barriers for youth to access camp experiences at overnight, day and wilderness camp

Activity Budget: \$2,680,000

Activity Description:

YMCA will provide day, overnight, and wilderness camp experiences across Minnesota for approximately 28,000 youth. Youth participate through school group trips and individual camp experiences, and all will receive transportation assistance through this grant. Transportation assistance to and from camps will be provided to campers and school groups through contracted busses funded by this grant. The YMCA will select and contract bus providers based on location and cost.

35% of individual campers also require scholarships to participate. We will provide full or partial scholarships for 200 campers per year. Our scholarship application is accessed online where campers use an estimator tool to see if they qualify for aid and submit income documentation. Applications are reviewed for completeness, accuracy, and approval. If a scholarship is denied, families can pursue an exception process for further consideration. We track all of awards, allowing us to document information provided including household size, income, the award amount, additional notes, and whether it's an exception.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
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Hire a Partnership Manager at 1 FTE	September 30, 2026
Hire Project Lead, Camps at .10 FTE	September 30, 2026
Year 1: 9,333 students attend camp through transportation support	June 30, 2027
Year 2: 9,334 students attend camp through transportation support	June 30, 2028
600 campers receive financial aid to attend camp programs	June 30, 2029
Year 3: 9,333 students attend camp through transportation support	June 30, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Minnesota Outreach Grants, No Child Left Inside	Minnesota DNR	Funder for YMCA of the North Adventure in the Neighborhood Day Camp	Yes
Partnership with Minnesota Forestry Service, Day Camps & Overnight Camps	Minnesota Forestry Service	In-kind service providing in-depth learning experiences for youth for each age and stage and modeling careers in the outdoors.	No
Funding in support of YMCA Wilderness Trips	Save the Boundary Waters Foundation	Funder for YMCA Wilderness Trips, provides \$3,000 annually for two of the base camps for these trips.	Yes
Minnesota Horse Council Trust	Minnesota Horse Council	Provides small grants to camps that provide horseback riding as part of the camping experience.	Yes
YMCA of the USA Camp grants	YMCA of the USA	Grants made for both Day Camp and Overnight Camp scholarships annually	Yes
Hennepin County Green Partners	Hennepin County	Grants to support recycling at camps	Yes
EQIP Grant	St. Louis County	Supporting the preservation of the Forest Canopy for Camp Widjiwagan	Yes
EQIP Grant	St. Louis County	Preservation of water quality at Camp Menogyn	Yes
YMCA Beacons Program	Beacons programs work directly in Twin Cities metro schools: Anne Sullivan Middle School, Anishinabe Academy, Edison High School, KIPP North Star Academy, Roosevelt High School from Minneapolis Public Schools; John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary,	Connects students to opportunities of Camps/Wilderness camps and provides staff to accompany students to and at camp assuring these first time campers have staff they know to feel safe and help engage and encourage them. So many students who want to attend camp and still need financial aid.	No

	Maxfield Elementary from St. Paul Public Schools; Richfield High School from Richfield Public Schools all of which serve students where on average 94% receive free/reduced lunch 95%.		
American Diabetes Association, Minnesota	ADA Minnesota	Partner for specialty Diabetes Camp for staffing medical station, developing menus and training staff about diabetes and recognition/management of diabetic issues that may arise.	No
American Red Cross, Minnesota	American Red Cross, Minnesota	Trains camp staff and lifeguard in CPR and First Aid	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.

The YMCA of the North will provide all required reporting and include samples of how we have featured ENRTF/LCCMR acknowledgements. In addition, the YMCA of the North will recognize the ENRTF/LCCMR in branch and program materials along with signage featuring approved ENRTF branding and logos, on our webpage and social media platforms, and with key stakeholders. We strive to make all contributions known at both the local level of our camps and at the organizational level at the YMCA of the North.

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?

The YMCA is committed to providing all individuals access to opportunities that promote positive youth development, health and wellness, and social responsibility. To do this within our camps, we will provide expanded opportunity to underserved populations and increase the capacity of our camps and programs to provide gear and transportation in addition to financial aid. Establishing gear libraries, transportation to and from camp and supporting costs of schools to access Science in Nature programming removes barriers for high needs youth. Outcomes demonstrating the positive impact of these outdoor experiences will provide evidence for future funders and our sustainability.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
375 Underserved Youth Learn Minnesota Ecosystems By Canoe	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 5, Sec. 2, Subd. 05f	\$375,000
Unlocking Minnesota Wilderness for Youth	M.L. 2024, , Chp. 83, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 05i	\$705,000

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Partnership Manager		Oversight of LCCMR projects and connection to schools and community partners, data collection and progress/financial reporting			25%	3		\$210,000
Project LEAD		Project Lead over all camps for LCCMR projects oversight			25%	0.75		\$90,000
Program Manager, Gear Libraries		Manage purchasing, lending, returns, maintenance/upkeep and data for reporting			25%	1.5		\$75,000
							Sub Total	\$375,000
Contracts and Services								
TBD Bus Provider(s)	Service Contract	Bussing with private coach/school bus company(s) to transport groups of students to and from camps. This transportation will remove barriers for campers from working/low income families to be able to attend camp. This will serve approximately 28,000 youth.				0		\$1,630,000
							Sub Total	\$1,630,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Sleeping Bags/Pads (440/\$150 each), Hiking Boots (412/\$80 each), Backpacks (1650/\$40 each), Rain Gear (330/\$200 each), Snow Gear (214/\$200 each), Snowshoes (132/\$100 each), Seasonal Consumables (3300/\$10 each), Headlamps (165/\$20 each), Water Bottles (3300/\$2 each)	Gear Libraries for 6 camps - Provide campers with financial barriers with camp gear to have needed gear to maintain safety and meaningful experiences					\$329,000
							Sub Total	\$329,000
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-

Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Camper financial aid for Overnight Camps. The minimum/ maximum range of scholarships is 10 - 100%. The scholarships cover 100% of program fees. The approximate cost of an individual overnight scholarship is \$1600 which will allow for 252 scholarships over the 3 year grant period.	Camper scholarships for financially challenged to remove this barrier to attending camp	X				\$403,558
		Camper financial aid for Wilderness Camps. The minimum/ maximum range of scholarships is 10 - 100%. The scholarships cover 100% of program fees. The approximate cost of an individual overnight scholarship is \$2600 which will allow for 90 scholarships over the 3 year grant period.	Camper scholarships for financially challenged families to remove monetary barrier to attending camp	X				\$234,712
		Camper financial aid for Day Camps. The minimum/ maximum range of scholarships is 10 - 100%. The scholarships cover 100% of program fees. The approximate cost of an individual overnight scholarship is \$425 which will allow for 265 scholarships over the 3 year grant period.	Camper scholarships for financially challenged families to remove monetary barrier to attending camp	X				\$112,730
							Sub Total	\$751,000
							Grand Total	\$3,085,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Other Expenses		Camper financial aid for Overnight Camps. The minimum/ maximum range of scholarships is 10 - 100%. The scholarships cover 100% of program fees. The approximate cost of an individual overnight scholarship is \$1600 which will allow for 252 scholarships over the 3 year grant period.	Camper scholarships for financially challenged families to remove monetary barrier to attending camp
Other Expenses		Camper financial aid for Wilderness Camps. The minimum/ maximum range of scholarships is 10 - 100%. The scholarships cover 100% of program fees. The approximate cost of an individual overnight scholarship is \$2600 which will allow for 90 scholarships over the 3 year grant period.	Camper scholarships for financially challenged families to remove monetary barrier to attending camp
Other Expenses		Camper financial aid for Day Camps. The minimum/ maximum range of scholarships is 10 - 100%. The scholarships cover 100% of program fees. The approximate cost of an individual overnight scholarship is \$425 which will allow for 265 scholarships over the 3 year grant period.	Camper scholarships for financially challenged families to remove monetary barrier to attending camp

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$3,085,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [a69370f2-d34.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

YMCA Camps pictures of youth campers....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
990	a8f2e5c3-84a.pdf
Audited Financials	df3cf7d9-c12.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
YMCA Board Letter of Resolution	33c8e2b5-381.docx
Board Letter of Resolution 2026 LCCMR YMCA Application, amended Received LATE 04-10-2025	26830913-586.pdf
Secretary of State certified audit report of good standing	cb83cb1d-f59.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
YMCA of the North Camp Descriptions	a9c37356-35c.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

1. Budget has been broken into line items and additional information added out to provide details as requested by LCCMR staff
2. Requested narrative revisions completed
3. Activities and milestones adjusted per LCCMR staff feedback
4. Full Certified audit report has been attached/updated.
5. Dissemination information and how the YMCA will meet this requirement has been amended.
6. Description of camps added as attachment

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")?

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:

Sean Lofton (Director of Grants and Foundation Relations), Betsy Grams (Vice President of Adventure)

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