



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Final Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2026-039

Staff Lead: Michael Varien

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: June 3, 2026

Project Title: River Bend Nature Center's Inclusive Interpretive Plan Implementation

Project Budget: \$293,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Brad Bourn

Organization: River Bend Nature Center

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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. 05e

Appropriation Language: \$293,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the River Bend Nature Center to design and install interactive multilingual interpretive and educational exhibits that provide culturally relevant and accessible information on the environment and natural resources and increase accessibility to nature for multilingual, blind, and deaf communities.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2029

Narrative

Project Summary: River Bend’s Outdoor Diversity Initiative will incorporate multi-lingual/cultural, interactive interpretive and educational exhibits providing culturally relevant and accessible nature connections with Faribault’s Somali, Latinx, and Blind & Deaf communities.

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

River Bend Nature Center is an 823 acre nature preserve and environmental education center located in Faribault. We host over 100k visits per year and our educational programs serve over 10k people.

Faribault is one of the most diverse “micropolitan” areas in Minnesota. Over half of the school district’s population are BIPOC and speak a language other than English at home. The city also has a disproportionate number of Deaf and Blind as the home of the Minnesota Academies for the Deaf and Blind. The nature center is on the site of the Faribault Regional Center- Minnesota’s first state institution for individuals with disabilities. Many former patients, staff, and their descendants still live in the area.

Minnesota faces real barriers to building meaningful nature connections with non-white or disabled Minnesotans. These are exacerbated in Faribault. In addition to the diversity of cultures, our nature center is still marked with scars of trauma inflicted on communities by the State of Minnesota’s former regional center like dump sites and unmarked graves.

We haven’t had the ability to significantly invest in educational, culturally inclusive exhibits. This leaves many Minnesotans feeling excluded from nature or invisible to our efforts to build more inclusive experiences.

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, we hired 106 Group to develop an inclusive interpretive plan to improve how Faribault’s uniquely diverse community can build culturally relevant and accessible nature. We plan to install multi-lingual/cultural interactive educational displays in our educational building and on select outdoor areas.

LCCMR funding supports installation of exhibits in the Interpretive Center building and one outdoor node identified in the plan.

Exhibits focus on the site’s natural history and current ecology to support educational programming. Multi-lingual exhibits are designed to engage school/youth groups, children, and families from multiple cultures in learning about Minnesota biomes while encouraging stewardship. Designs draw parallels and differences in natural environments of different countries of visitors’ origins to Minnesota’s natural environment, aiding in contextual understanding.

Exhibits include interactive, tactile, large print, and audio-visual media and a low-sensory area to provide comfortable spaces for visitors with conditions that make them overwhelmed in highly stimulating environments.

An outdoor exhibit will be installed highlighting Dakota history in the region and impacts of the Faribault Regional Center. The node will acknowledge the trauma connected to the land for some Minnesotans and their descendants while welcoming everyone to access nature as a way to help heal from trauma.

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?

Minnesota’s Outdoor Recreation Taskforce identifies “improving cultural relevance and increasing accessibility” of outdoor and nature experiences as a key strategy to increase participation in the outdoors and to foster “growth in

outdoor recreation from untapped users in BIPOC and other historically underrepresented communities.” Creating more inclusive visitor experiences through the installation of culturally affirming, interactive exhibits will allow BIPOC Minnesotans, Minnesotans with disabilities, and families who experienced State sponsored trauma at the regional center to see themselves reflected, visible, and welcome in nature. This will enhance RBNC’s work in creating current and future generations of more diverse environmental stewards.

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

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Designer selection and contract negotiations

Activity Budget: \$13,000

Activity Description:

We have received preliminary commitments from several vendors interested in the project and will continue engaging with them throughout LCCMR’s decision-making process. However, since project execution is set for 2027, we have built in flexibility to identify alternative vendors if needed.

Confirmed implementation partners include:

-Justin Hooper Designs (Ind. Contractor): A regional designer with 20 years of experience in theater sets, retail displays, and interpretive exhibits. Hooper will adapt 106 Group’s interpretive plan into interchangeable displays.

-Fardosa Hassan (Ind. Contractor): With over a decade of experience in immigrant community engagement, Hassan will support display design and Somali translation.

-Evelyn Rosas (Ind. Contractor): A Minnesota Master Naturalist and lifelong Faribault resident, Rosas will assist with Spanish translation, outreach, and programming.

-Carleton College (Vendor): The Indigenous Community Liaison will incorporate Dakota and Wahpekute narratives, while students will help develop exhibits.

-Caitlin Juvland Video Production (Ind. Contractor): A Minnesota Master Naturalist and Twin Cities film producer, Juvland will create embedded video content.

-Minnesota State Academies for the Deaf and Blind: Will support accessible display creation and translation

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Compose RFP/RFQ & Scope for any potential replacement vendors	July 31, 2026
Vendor selection from received bids	September 30, 2026
Contract negotiation and execution with selected vendors	September 30, 2026

Activity 2: Design of interpretive display nodes and locations based on interpretive plan

Activity Budget: \$64,000

Activity Description:

Project team members and selected vendors will review the 106 Group’s 62-page interpretive plan to design “interpretive nodes” that reinforce River Bend’s environmental education goals. Exhibits will be interactive, multilingual, and located in three key areas:

9 Interior Interpretive Nodes will showcase the site’s natural history and ecology, connecting southern Minnesota’s ecology to the homelands of immigrant. They’ll include tactile, audiovisual, and interactive elements, with audio descriptions, spanish & Somali print and transcripts for accessibility. A low-sensory area will provide a calming space for visitors sensitive to high-stimulation environments.

Two outdoor interpretive nodes:

-Nature Trails Near the Interpretive Center: A ¾-mile loop will receive updated wayfinding, etiquette, and feature ID signs to enhance field trips and guided and self walks

-Human Impact/History Node: Located at the intersection of River Bend’s trails and remnants of the Faribault Regional Center / cemetery, this exhibit explores human trauma, highlighting Faribault’s role in the Dakota diaspora and the experiences of the center’s residents.

Cost estimates developed by the 106 Group and the US Forest Service’s Center for Design and Interpretation.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Selected vendors led by lead designer present concept for approval by RBNC staff	December 31, 2026
Design revisions from RBNC staff and project ambassadors from communities	February 28, 2027
Final drafts of interpretive displays are ready with a map of locations	April 30, 2027

Activity 3: Fabrication and installation of interpretive nodes

Activity Budget: \$216,000

Activity Description:

Once design work is complete, exhibit nodes will be constructed and installed between May and November of 2027.

Interior node materials and components will consist of interpretive panels and interactive physical features, with modest A/V and technological components installed to aid accessibility. Panels and features will primarily be constructed from high-grade plywood, MDF panels with vinyl wrapping, and high-density fiberglass panels. Some interactive features will be made from materials like “mock rock” to emulate natural features found at the nature center.

There are 9 anticipated indoor interpretive nodes, including but not limited to natural history, the 3 major biomes of MN, a kids sensory space, and a learning 3D Sandbox. There will be two outdoor interpretive zones. The first, located along a nature loop, will feature updated wayfinding, etiquette, and feature-identification signage. The second will highlight human impacts on the land, emphasizing the intersecting histories of the Dakota people and the Faribault Regional Center, with signage installed along an accessible trail leading to one of two cemeteries. Material costs range from approximately \$500–\$4,500 per element, including large-format interchangeable panels, display stands, and interactive features.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Finalize design of landing page to host QR codes, multi lingual audio descriptions of exhibits	May 31, 2027
Exterior nodes-offsite fabrication of interpretive panels and exhibits	June 30, 2027
Exterior nodes- installation	July 31, 2027
Interior nodes-offsite fabrication of interpretive panels and exhibits	September 30, 2027
Interior nodes-installation	November 30, 2027
Open House to celebrate the completion of displays	December 31, 2027

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.

This project improves interpretive displays and education at a physical location. Approximately 100,000 annual visitors from the southern Minnesota region will have access to information in the form of interpretive displays. The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund will be acknowledged through the use of the trust fund logo or attribution language on any print or electronic media, publications, signage, and other communications per the ENRTF Acknowledgement guidelines. This includes but not limited to each node/or signage, accessible multi-media, and any press that might cover the project.

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?

River Bend Nature Center maintains an endowment fund (supported by individual philanthropic contributors) to provide for the maintenance and upkeep of the interpretive center. Each year, we release approximately \$10-\$20,000 from the endowment to maintain the center ensuring that we will be able to continue to care for and update new interpretive features once acquired.

We anticipate needing to overhaul interpretive features again in approximately 10 years. River Bend will create a dedicated fund for the planned obsolescence of equipment funded through this project.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Molly Dulka		project management, vendor selection, designer coordination, coordination of interior node installations			0%	0.4		\$34,000
Brad Bourn		Grant compliance and reporting			0%	0.04		\$5,750
Brittany Smith		Coordination of exterior node installation			0%	0.04		\$3,750
Katy Anderegg		Interpretive graphic design			0%	0.14		\$11,500
							Sub Total	\$55,000
Contracts and Services								
Justin Hooper	Service Contract	Independent contractors- Interpretive display construction and design				0		\$50,000
Carleton College	Service Contract	Indigenous Communities liaison, Dakota translation, gathering of oral stories about Dakota land use				0		\$10,000
Fardosa Hassan	Service Contract	Somali translation, design consultation				0		\$10,000
Minnesota Academies for the Deaf and Blind	Service Contract	audio and visual adaptation services				0.1		\$10,000
Evelyn Rosas	Service Contract	Spanish translation				0		\$10,000
Caitlin Juvland	Service Contract	Local film maker will lead the creation of accessible video elements incorporated into interior interpretive nodes.				0.5		\$25,000
TBD	Service Contract	This Entity will be creating a website accessibility page with multi lingual translations, audio descriptions.				-		\$15,000
							Sub Total	\$130,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								

	Equipment	Indoor Interpretive signage and/or displays across 9 zones	This funding will be used to create environmental and natural history interpretive displays and interactive exhibits inside the interpretive center. The topics may include but are not limited to: natural resources, interpretive animals, natural history, the 3 biomes of MN, kids sensory space and a learning 3D sandbox. Funding will also cover multimedia equipment to support accessibility.					\$76,500
	Equipment	2 Exterior Interpretive zones (5-15 unique signs/displays for each zone)	This funding will support two outdoor interpretive zones. The first, located along a nature loop, will feature updated wayfinding, etiquette, and feature-identification signage. The second will highlight human impacts on the land, emphasizing the intersecting histories of the Dakota people and the Faribault Regional Center, with signage installed along an accessible trail leading to one of two cemeteries. Material costs range from approximately \$500–\$4,500 per element, including large-format interchangeable panels, display stands, and interactive features. Estimates are based on the square footage of each zone and mid-range interpretive materials. Funding will also cover multimedia equipment to support accessibility.					\$27,500
							Sub Total	\$104,000
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								

							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Accessible and multi-lingual program brochures, trail maps, and handouts	Printing expenses for misc. accessible handouts including braille, large format, and spanish.					\$4,000
							Sub Total	\$4,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$293,000

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	River Bend Nature Center / City of Faribault cash match	Philanthropic and municipal tax dollars for capital cash match for permanent improvements to the building (flooring/walls/lighting), trail grading, and trail improvements to happen simultaneously with interpretive displays.	Secured	\$100,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$100,000
			Funds Total	\$100,000

Total Project Cost: \$393,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [e267a28d-5fc.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

River Bend Nature Center Interpretive Concept Plan by 106 Group Page 8 of 56 (existing conditions and opportunities). Full plan included as optional attachmentment....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Certificate of Good Standing	f2a8a827-c1c.pdf
2023 River Bend 990	c661e7a9-1e6.pdf
2023 River Bend Audit	8c12a17a-c22.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board resolution and letter	b1b57256-d4f.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
River Bend Interpretive Concept Plan	c0ced163-457.pdf
Faribault Public School Support Letter	c603f54d-3e7.pdf
Faribault Chamber of Tourism Letter of Support	d03f61f6-036.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

None at this time.

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:

Brad Bourn, Molly Dulka, Brittany Smith- River Bend Nature Center staff.

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