



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

M.L. 2026 Final Work Plan

General Information

ID Number: 2026-065

Staff Lead: Tiffany Schaufler

Date this document submitted to LCCMR: May 24, 2026

Project Title: Fostering Environmental Stewardship Through Art

Project Budget: \$298,000

Project Manager Information

Name: Lori Forshee-Donnay

Organization: Watermark Art Center

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Web Address: www.watermarkartcenter.org

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. 05f

Appropriation Language: \$298,000 the second year is from the trust fund to the commissioner of natural resources for an agreement with the Watermark Art Center, in partnership with the Headwaters Science Center, to engage underserved youth in northern Minnesota in art-related experiences, with regional artists and culture bearers, that integrate art and science to deliver culturally relevant hands-on environmental learning experiences. Before costs for this appropriation are incurred, a fiscal management plan must be approved in the work plan, unless otherwise determined by the commissioner.

Appropriation End Date: June 30, 2029

Narrative

Project Summary: Project will enhance environmental education to underserved youth in Northern Minnesota through art related experiences with regional artists, culture bearers and Headwaters Science Center, delivering culturally relevant hands-on learning experiences.

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

Northern Minnesota students face significant barriers to accessing environmental education through art. The Watermark Art Center (WAC) in Bemidji offers free programming but remains geographically out of reach for many rural and tribal communities. The region's isolation from major urban centers, coupled with a lack of transportation options, prevents students from engaging with hands-on art experiences that connect them to their environment.

WAC serves a vast region, including Becker, Beltrami, Cass, Clearwater, Hubbard, Itasca, Lake of the Woods, Mahnommen, Roseau, Red Lake Nation, White Earth Nation, and Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe. However, as a small organization with limited outreach capacity, WAC struggles to bring its programming to students in these communities.

This proposal leverages the Headwaters Science Center's (HSC) LCCMR-recommended initiative, set to launch in summer 2025, which will use a mobile network to deliver hands-on environmental education to Boys & Girls Club sites across Northern Minnesota. By building on this infrastructure, we will integrate environmental education through art, using local and Native artists to connect students with their landscapes and cultures in meaningful ways. Without intervention, these students remain disconnected from both art and environmental learning, missing critical opportunities to explore the relationships between nature, culture, and self-expression.

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.

Watermark will collaborate with Headwaters to develop place-based programming integrating art and science, providing environmental programming to underserved youth.

Through collaborations with Indigenous organizations and artists, WAC has been able to develop environmental art programming emphasizing cultural narratives as well as the use and preservation of these vital resources. Working with a regional network of artists and environmental educators, WAC can provide youth at area Boys & Girls Clubs, and other after-school programs, opportunities to explore their connection to the environment with cultural art activities through a scientific lens.

HSC's science expertise and transportation infrastructure maximizes impact, ensuring students gain both artistic and scientific perspectives on Minnesota's environment. With the support of HSC, Watermark staff and artists will travel to BGCA sites, while additional artists will work with students in their own communities.

Combining WAC's strength in arts-based education with Headwaters expertise in environmental science education and LCCMR-funded transport network, will ensure efficient program delivery, creating a sustainable model for reaching youth in remote areas with meaningful experiences. And by integrating "Art" into STEM based programming, students gain a greater understanding of nature, recognizing the need for conservation and the importance of environmental stewardship.

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?

This project will expand access to STEAM programming for students in Minnesota's most economically and geographically disadvantaged counties through over 360 visits to BGCA sites and other after-school programs over two years. By integrating diverse cultural perspectives, local artists, and culture bearers, Watermark Art Center, Headwaters

Science Center, and Boys & Girls Clubs will collaborate to deliver inclusive, natural-resource-based curricula. Hands-on experiences will engage students in environmental stewardship, connecting them to their landscapes in meaningful ways. This scalable model ensures that rural and underserved communities gain lasting access to high-quality, culturally relevant environmental education focused on ecology, conservation, and sustainability.

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): NW, Central, NE,

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): NW, Central, NE,

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Hire and onboard Project Staff

Activity Budget: \$37,500

Activity Description:

Activity 1 involves recruiting and training additional staff, including integrating a new Executive Director and hiring a Program Assistant for the project. The Art Education Program Director and Artist Liaison will coordinate with BGCA partners, artists, and educators to efficiently implement the program. With support from the WAC Executive Director, the AE Director and Artist Liaison will work to ensure effective communication, resolve logistical issues, and develop community resources. The Program Assistant will prepare art kits for instructors, manage supplies, and maintain inventory making the most efficient use of budgeted income. Having dedicated staff is essential for building a sustainable and effective educational model for rural and underserved students.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Create clear job descriptions for each position outlining duties and responsibilities for each role.	August 31, 2026
Complete recruitment and hiring of Program Assistant and onboarding of Executive Director to support project.	September 30, 2026
Create program evaluation to assess effectiveness of staff, support systems and program impact.	October 31, 2026

Activity 2: Preliminary and Ongoing Project Coordination & Communication

Activity Budget: \$144,600

Activity Description:

This activity ensures seamless communication, collaboration, and effective management across all project partners, between the Watermark Art Center, the Headwaters Science Center, regional artists and culture bearers, and Boys & Girls Clubs of America sites. This activity spans the full three years of the project and is designed to address the challenges of coordinating a complex project with multiple partners across a wide geographic area.

WAC will request reimbursement from the DNR at least monthly when expenses are being incurred or send notification for months where no spending occurred.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Set up effective channels and protocols for regular updates and information sharing among key stakeholders.	November 30, 2026
Identify logistical challenges and solutions for rural and underserved areas, to support program delivery.	November 30, 2026
Assess the effectiveness of dedicated staff and support systems to ensure sustainability & impact for 2026.	February 28, 2027
Assess the effectiveness of dedicated staff and support systems to ensure sustainability & impact for 2027.	February 28, 2028
Assess the effectiveness of dedicated staff and support systems to ensure sustainability & impact for 2028.	February 28, 2029
Fiscal Management Plan is to request reimbursement at least monthly for expenses incurred per contingency.	June 30, 2029

Activity 3: Teaching at the Boys and Girls Clubs of Northern Minnesota

Activity Budget: \$109,500

Activity Description:

WAC staff will conduct an average of 60 sessions per program year, primarily at Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) sites within the Headwaters Science Center (HSC) network (HSC received LCCMR funding beginning Summer 2025), utilizing HSC's transportation infrastructure and Bemidji-based staff.

WAC's extensive network of regional artists and staff will visit approximately 60 times a year, directly engaging with youth at BGCA sites located near their homes and studios when possible. This dual approach leverages local artists' connections to foster strong, culturally relevant relationships within their communities and local environments. By prioritizing local resources, WAC ensures that programming is culturally relevant and responsive to the unique needs of each community. Environmental art kits and natural resource supplies will be provided for students during each visit. These visits aim to inspire creativity, foster environmental awareness, and strengthen community ties among participating youth. And by connecting artists with their community, we can develop relationships that support ongoing programming.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Community relationship building to prep for teaching visits.	December 31, 2026
Approximately 40 visits completed to BGCA sites in 2026 - 2027 program year	June 30, 2027
Utilization of local resources	September 30, 2027
Approximately 70 visits completed to BGCA sites in 2027 - 2028 program year	June 30, 2028
Approximately 70 visits completed to BGCA sites in 2028 - 2029 program year	June 30, 2029

Activity 4: Attendance 8 WAC representatives to Annual Meetings with Project Stakeholders

Activity Budget: \$6,400

Activity Description:

Activity 4 is designed to ensure that the Watermark Art Center (WAC) staff and regional artists are actively involved in the annual meetings of the Headwaters Science Center (HSC) project beginning in July 2026. The primary aim is to facilitate a seamless transition from STEM to STEAM programming by incorporating WAC's art-based offerings into the existing project structure.

These annual meetings serve as a vital forum for high-level coordination, effective communication, and collaborative planning among all project partners, including HSC, BGCA and Watermark. The meetings lay the groundwork for a unified approach to STEAM education, ensuring that all partners are aligned in their goals and strategies.

By participating in these annual meetings and through ongoing community involvement, artists and WAC staff work to build and maintain strong connections with both youth and community members. These relationships are essential for supporting and enhancing future programming initiatives.

Regular information exchange during the annual meetings is crucial for the continued success of the project throughout the grant period and beyond. This ongoing communication ensures that all partners can adapt, grow, and sustain collaborative efforts, supporting the evolution of STEAM programming for the benefit of regional communities.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Attendance at Year 1 Meeting	August 31, 2027
Attendance at Year 2 meeting	August 31, 2028
Attendance at Year 3 Meeting	June 30, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Lee Furuseh	Headwaters Science Center	Provider of Science Education, Logistics Support and Environmental Educational Network	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.

Plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, for WAC’s portion of “STEAM” programming with artists and culture bearers.

WAC will create a data management and sharing plan (DMSP), to document data gathering during the project, what data will we collect, how we will make the data available, and to whom, after the project is completed.

Proper acknowledgement of ENRTF funding and LCCMR grant funds will staff amplify your outreach efforts and ensures that LCCMR members can learn about your project’s progress through a variety of formats. Acknowledgement of the ENRTF will be included in all project communications and outreach including in press releases, media interactions, interpretive displays, publications, event advertisements & invitations, websites, newsletters, printed materials, presentations, and social media. Acknowledgement can be made through use of the ENRTF logo, attribution language, or by tagging the ENRTF on social media.

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?

Watermark Art Center will sustain and expand this initiative beyond the grant period through its diversified funding model, which includes government support, memberships, admissions, and contributions from individuals, foundations, and corporations. By leveraging partnerships with Headwaters Science Center, local organizations, and cultural community members, we aim to create a self-sustaining network that connects artists with communities. Expanding WAC’s outreach capabilities will ensure continued access to environmental and art education resources, fostering long-term regional collaboration and positioning local artists as a lasting educational and cultural resource.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
WAC Art Education Program Director		Project Manager and provides teaching at B&GCA sites and oversees the hiring of environmental artists and culture bearers.			7.65%	1.5		\$75,000
Artist Liaison		Provides support to WAC Art Ed Program Director, acts as liaison for instructors/cultural bearers, coordinating between WAC, HSC, and B&G Clubs for programming.			7.65%	1.5		\$60,000
Program Assistant - 3 year position		Purchasing and Coordination of Art Kit assembly			7.65%	0.75		\$54,000
Executive Director		Assisting with status updates, project reporting.			7.65%	0.3		\$12,520
							Sub Total	\$201,520
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	1,800 Natural Resource Environmental Art Kits will cost \$10/kit x 1,800 kits = \$18,000. Purchased art supplies will be made up of the following: paint, brushes, special art papers and canvas, natural fibers, journal books, pens, pencils, cyanotype materials for sun printing, etc.	These materials are purchased art supplies and needed to create the student environmental art.					\$18,000
							Sub Total	\$18,000
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-

Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Bring 4 Watermark staff to the annual 2-day All Hands Meeting at HSC. Includes 4 meal per diem \$140/each over two days x 3 annual meetings = \$1,680.00	This is travel designated to HSC Annual Stakeholders Meetings. It is not for outreach to BGCA sites but to bring Watermark staff most active in the program to the 3 annual All-Hands Meetings arranged by the Headwaters Science Center at BGCA sites.					\$1,680
							Sub Total	\$1,680
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Printing of curriculum and instructions	Instructions for teachers and students					\$4,500
							Sub Total	\$4,500
Other Expenses								
		Teaching Stipend: 180 teaching stipends, \$300 each, provided to culture bearers and environmental artists each year to deliver environmental education to BGCA members at clubs in the region. Assumes each teaching visit includes 4 hours for time to teach and travel to each BGCA site at \$75/hour = \$300. \$300 x 180 = \$54,000.	Purpose is to deliver environmental education through creative hands-on learning led by regional artists and culture bearers in partnership with the Headwaters Science Center in Bemidji. This partnership not only supports youth engagement but also fosters the transmission of cultural practices and environmental stewardship knowledge from experienced practitioners to the next generation. The consistent scheduling and fair compensation of instructors ensure both high-quality educational experiences for BGCA	X				\$54,000

			children and a sustained relationship between regional experts and the community. By investing in these collaborative learning opportunities, the program strengthens local capacity to appreciate, protect, and enhance Minnesota's natural and cultural assets.					
		Activity Kit Assembly Stipend: 90 activity kit assembly stipends, \$150 each, provided to culture bearers and environmental artists to gather and prepare natural materials for arts and culture science activity kits for 600 kits/year. Assuming it takes 2 hours to build 20 kits (90 hours total for 1,800 kits). Assumes 2 hours at \$75/hour = \$150 x 90 hours = \$13,500.	Many of the activities will involve using natural materials and resources either as components of the projects or as sources of inspiration. Natural kits will be made up of harvested birchbark, porcupine quills, tanned leather, natural plants and prepared materials for sessions and collected/curated by culture bearers.	X				\$13,500
		All Hands Meeting Stipend: 12 all hands meeting stipends, \$400 each, provided to environmental artists and culture bearers to attend and travel to the Headwaters Science Center for the annual 2-day, All Hands Meeting. Stipends includes travel time and hotel stay. \$400 x 4 = \$1,600/year x 3 years = \$4,800.	Travel to annual All Hands Meetings arrange by the Headwaters Science Center in Bemidji. This is travel designated to HSC Annual Stakeholders Meetings. It is not for outreach to BGCA sites. Mileage to bring Watermark artists and culture bearers most active in the program to 3 annual All-Hands Meetings arranged by the Headwaters Science Center.	X				\$4,800
							Sub Total	\$72,300
							Grand Total	\$298,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Other Expenses		Teaching Stipend: 180 teaching stipends, \$300 each, provided to culture bearers and environmental artists each year to deliver environmental education to BGCA members at clubs in the region. Assumes each teaching visit includes 4 hours for time to teach and travel to each BGCA site at \$75/hour = \$300. $\$300 \times 180 = \$54,000$.	Teaching stipend is needed to pay environmental/naturalist artists and culture bearers responsible for providing the educational content for the LCCMR grant funded program, "Fostering Environmental Stewardship Through Art". Artists and culture bearers are selected based on qualifications set forth by the Art Education Program. General Standards; knowledge and expertise in (artistic) medium; knowledge of/background in environmental education; proof of teaching background; experience in youth (k-12) instruction. Rates for artist honorariums and instruction come from the Region 2 Arts Council Grant Application policy page, under Grant Budget Policy for Arts Organizations in our region states that "Artist Fees" – artists' labor \$/hour, honoraria, etc. suggests payment for artists-in-residence = \$300 per 4 contact hours or approximately \$75/hr.
Other Expenses		Activity Kit Assembly Stipend: 90 activity kit assembly stipends, \$150 each, provided to culture bearers and environmental artists to gather and prepare natural materials for arts and culture science activity kits for 600 kits/year. Assuming it takes 2 hours to build 20 kits (90 hours total for 1,800 kits). Assumes 2 hours at \$75/hour = $\$150 \times 90 \text{ hours} = \$13,500$.	Some activity kits will use natural materials and resources, as opposed to store bought supplies, for their class instruction. Natural kit items include harvested birchbark, porcupine quills, tanned leather, natural plants and other resources found in nature. These supplies, when collected/curated by culture bearers or naturalists, have a cost and the fees are based on time spent to gather and prepare materials for use in activity kits. Rates for artist honorariums come from the Region 2 Arts Council Grant Application policy page, under Grant Budget Policy for Arts Organizations in our region states that "Artist Fees" – honorarium for artists' labor be paid at a rate \$75/hour.
Other Expenses		All Hands Meeting Stipend: 12 all hands meeting stipends, \$400 each, provided to environmental artists and culture bearers to attend and travel to the Headwaters Science Center for the annual 2-day, All Hands Meeting. Stipends includes travel time and hotel stay. $\$400 \times 4 = \$1,600/\text{year} \times 3 \text{ years} = \$4,800$.	WAC will select 2 environmental scientists/naturalists and 2 culture bearers to attend the All Hands Meetings to share their experiences at the annual meetings hosted by Headwaters Science Center. Participants will be selected based on their participation as instructors delivering content and interacting with students at the BGCA for the WAC project. They will attend the meetings along with the WAC Staff.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	\$ Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Watermark core funding	Administrative costs.	Secured	\$15,000
In-Kind	Watermark core funding	Director's Salary	Secured	\$23,500
In-Kind	Watermark Volunteers (100 hours x 30)	Support of project through kit assembly, classroom support and organization.	Secured	\$6,500
In-Kind	Watermark core fnding	Background checks for all staff, volunteers and hired consultant/instructors who will be in direct contact with youth/students at BGCA sites. \$29 per check, for 50 checks.	Secured	\$2,500
			Non State Sub Total	\$47,500
			Funds Total	\$47,500

Total Project Cost: \$345,500

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [4e8c533a-7a8.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Locations of services sites and artists. Photos of kids and the art they made at the Watermark Art Center....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
2023 990	618fd633-ddb.pdf
Certificate of Good Standing	2f56f750-2b8.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution Letter	c1192f86-0f4.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support - Lee Furuseh, Headwaters Science Center	35035b06-581.pdf
Letter of Support - Patrick Calder-Carrier, R2 Arts Council	6032766e-86b.pdf
Letter of Support - Sarah Nassif, Botanist and Artist	72225978-73d.pdf
Letter of Support - Susanna Gaunt, Artist	33a7849b-fc7.jpe
Letter of Support - Carol Thompson, BGC of White Earth	a2e71188-883.pdf
Letter of Support - Andrea Kent, BGC of Bemidji	b467c90f-874.pdf
Visual Element - Regional Map with photos	80d7dce3-b45.pdf

Difference between Proposal and Work Plan

Describe changes from Proposal to Work Plan Stage

On budget page artist stipend numbers were moved from Services and Subawards tab to Other tab. Each Stipend was then broken out by use of funds to include description of stipend, purpose and amount.

A Dissemination Plan of goals, data collection, information sharing and fund acknowledgement was added to the Work Plan.

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:

Paul Morin, Watermark Art Center Volunteer

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

N/A