

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
2010 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

LCCMR ID: 186-F

Project Title:

Minnesota WolfLink

LCCMR 2010 Funding Priority:

F. Environmental Education

Total Project Budget: \$ \$231,576

Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested: 2 years, 2010 - 2012

Other Non-State Funds: \$ \$0

Summary:

The International Wolf Centers Minnesota WolfLink brings the wolfs world to people of all ages and needs through compelling onsite outdoor programs and live wolves inside through distance learning.

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Location:

Region: Statewide

County Name: Statewide

City / Township:

_____ Knowledge Base	_____ Broad App.	_____ Innovation
_____ Leverage	_____ Outcomes	
_____ Partnerships	_____ Urgency	_____ TOTAL

International Wolf Center MAIN PROPOSAL

PROJECT TITLE: “Minnesota WolfLink” Brings the Charismatic Wolf to a Statewide Audience

I. PROJECT STATEMENT: The International Wolf Center’s project goal is to expand access to its outdoor public education about the wolf and its place in the Minnesota ecosystem. Building on our existing strengths, we propose to create “Minnesota WolfLink” to accomplish five important objectives:

1. to attract more visitors to participate in outdoor programs at the Wolf Center in Ely, MN;
2. to improve outdoor services to a growing and increasingly diverse audience;
3. to connect a statewide audience to the Wolf Center’s outdoor experiences through virtual media, thus reaching more classrooms, auditoria, parks, and recreation centers;
4. to create a pilot *Wolf Howl* exhibit at the Ely interpretive building bringing the outdoor experience inside to grow and develop audiences and to assess the development of a similar traveling exhibit;
5. to create marketing programs and incentives that raise awareness and keep fees accessible.

WOLVES, UP CLOSE AND NATURAL: The wolf is a keystone species that opens minds to the wonders of the natural world. Minnesota wolves, now under the protection of the Department of Natural Resources, are a vital part of a population now greater than that of any other contiguous state. **Minnesota WolfLink** will enable many more visitors to observe and learn about wolves, and how all components of the environment are interconnected. It will do this through lively and relevant opportunities to “link” to Minnesota’s wolves. The International Wolf Center’s educational interpretive site in Ely opened in 1993, and features an expansive outdoor wolf enclosure, pond and den site that is home to six resident ambassador wolves. A variety of outdoor educational programs are offered for adults, families and school groups: howling, radio tracking, snowshoe treks, dog-sledding, outdoor presentations, flights over wolf country, outdoor demonstrations, and hikes. We propose to develop and pilot interpretive programs that utilize the Center’s technical capability to bring a virtual outdoor experience to broader audiences including school groups and distance learners statewide – thus, the **Minnesota WolfLink**.

MINNESOTA’S VIRTUAL OUTDOORS: The Center’s current distance learning programs use state-of-the-art technology to put classrooms, libraries, service group meetings and nature centers in real-time, person-to-person contact with the outdoors, interpreted by expert wolf educators in Ely. About 2,000 people used this technology to view the Center’s ambassador wolves and talk directly to world-class educators in 2008, but there is a considerable opportunity to reach new statewide audiences. During the first year of the grant, we propose to build new partnerships with school districts, park and recreation centers, organizations, and companies statewide. **Minnesota WolfLink’s** distance learning technologies will offer virtual explorations of wolf habitat. Participants will learn to track, explore abandoned dens, and howl. The Wolf Center proposes to add another highly trained outdoor educator to its staff, improve language access, ensure physical access to the outdoor experience in Ely and purchase new equipment to provide the highest quality, most compelling virtual experience of Minnesota’s wolves.

SERVING ELY AND ALL OF MINNESOTA: We propose to serve a growing, increasingly diverse audience by adapting our outdoor environments and programs to accommodate older adults, people from different cultural backgrounds, and individuals with special needs. We will also develop and design an exciting innovative new *Wolf Howl* exhibit to surround the visitor, simulating a faint single wolf howl growing louder and ultimately erupting in a full pack howl. The new exhibit will debut at the International Wolf Center as we assess the feasibility of building a similar traveling exhibit. Funding will also make possible special marketing incentives that offer free or discounted fees (for outdoor and indoor Wolf Center experiences) to school districts and other partners throughout the state. The International Wolf Center has an important role to play for Minnesota – encouraging a future generation of aware, enlightened, and enthusiastic citizens, some of whom may be inspired to become tomorrow’s scientists. Minnesota’s natural resources can only be protected by an aware, educated public dedicated to its preservation. We can help lead the way, inspiring and educating tomorrow’s scientists as we reach out to serve a statewide public audience.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT RESULTS

Result 1: More Minnesotans learn about wolf habitat through compelling programs, enhanced access and focused marketing. Budget: \$201,576

Deliverable	Completion Date
1. Create multilevel outdoor education programs that engage, educate and inspire future scientists and design/build a <i>Wolf Howl</i> exhibit.	6/31/12
2. Add an outdoor education staff position and provide support for existing interpretive staff.	12/31/10
3. Improve access to the outdoors through additional equipment, materials and pathways for outdoor activities.	6/31/11
4. Develop a focused statewide marketing campaign to increase participation by 10% in each year of the project.	12/31/10

Result 2: Bring the wolf's habitat to life in remote locations through expanded access to distance learning. Budget: \$ 30,000

Deliverable	Completion Date
1. Reach 2,000 additional distance learning and video conferencing participants over a 2 year period - increasing the distance learning audience by 100% .	6/31/12
2. Engage potential partners such as Three Rivers Park District, Bell Museum of Natural History, Pillager School District (Cass County), Duluth Public Schools, and companies in distance learning programs.	6/31/11
3. Develop environment and program adaptations to accommodate older adults, people from diverse cultural backgrounds and individuals with special needs.	6/31/12

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

A. Project Team/Partners

The **Minnesota WolfLink** project leadership team is comprised of Mary Ortiz, Executive Director, project director Tara Johnson, Outdoor Education Specialist, Frances Nelson, Director of Development/Communications, and members of the Center's staff and board. Potential partners identified to date include Three Rivers Park District, the Bell Museum of Natural History, Pillager School District (Cass County), and the Duluth Public Schools, with more to be added. Additionally, we have already successfully identified our first host corporate site for distance learning and our first major individual financial pledge of support.

B. Timeline Requirements

During the first year of the program, we will establish the infrastructure to build audiences, including hiring another outdoor education staff member, building the statewide partnerships for learning through technology, designing and building a new exhibit, building special need access areas, purchasing special need materials and identifying partners for translations to other languages and learning modalities. Near the end of year one, we will have a targeted marketing plan in place. We will "pilot" a number of distance learning host sites toward the end of Year One. In Year Two, we will fully implement the statewide programs, including an active host site program (for distance learning) and the completion of the Wolf Howl exhibit at the Ely interpretive Center.

C. Long-Term Strategy

The proposed project is designed to bring a wider audience into the woods at the International Wolf Center, while stimulating the organization into an enlarged, more important role in statewide outreach and education. Concurrent to the inauguration of this proposed project, the Wolf Center will be developing broader plans to support its activities through further development of its income sources, both earned and contributed. The LCCMR funds will serve as incentive and inspiration for these efforts. In fact, significant new grant and gift support has already been indicated in response. Evaluation of our success in utilizing LCCMR funds will include monitoring and reporting of quantifiable results in attendance, earned revenue, and fund raising. The successful project will also attract new and increasing numbers of volunteers and advocates.

Project Budget

PROJECT MINNESOTA WOLFLINK WITH THE INTERNATIONAL WOLF CENTER

IV. TOTAL PROJECT REQUEST BUDGET (*two years*)

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
<u>Personnel</u>	\$ -
100% - hire one professional experienced outdoor educator in Ely, \$50,000 per year for 2 years & \$12,846 per year in benefits	\$ 125,692
50% - Support current wolf expert educator in Ely at \$19,000/yr/ x 2 years	\$ 37,884
<u>Contracts:</u>	\$ -
Marketing Consultant campaign to bring people to Ely and Distance Learning programs across the state; includes ads, promotional material production and mailing email campaigns to schools and others	\$ 15,000
<u>Additional Budget Items:</u>	\$ -
100 subsidized Distance Learning programs, wolf loan box materials and educational magazine subscription @ \$250 per program	\$ 15,000
Development, production, installation and additional materials for Wolf Howl exhibit	\$ 15,000
Purchase and develop Braille materials, closed caption software for films, and hire language interpreters for outdoor and Distance Learning programs/2	\$ 15,000
Improve access to the outdoors and programming with additional equipment, materials and pathways	\$ 8,000
TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET REQUEST TO LCCMR	\$ 231,576

V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>		
<u>Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</u>		
<u>Funding History:</u>		
Individual Donor Grant	\$ 25,000	Secured
	\$ -	
TOTAL OTHER FUNDS	\$ 25,000	

INTERNATIONAL WOLF CENTER LCCMR PROJECT MANAGER QUALIFICATIONS

Mary Ortiz, Executive Director, was named the organization's chief executive officer in 2008. She was, actually, the Wolf Center's first employee and has worked in various leadership roles since 1986, spanning the Center's organizational history. An experienced manager, fundraiser, and environmental education leader, she has been instrumental in the development of strategic initiatives for the organization, including the Ely interpretive center, which opened in 1993. Well known for successful collaborations, the Wolf Center – under Mary's leadership – has been recognized by the US Department of the Interior, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the MN Department of Natural Resources, the American Association of Museums, and the Minnesota Council of Non-Profits.

Tara Johnson, Program Specialist, develops and implements daily and distance wolf education programs at the International Wolf Center's Ely interpretive center. Tara is a certified elementary school teacher working on completion of her Masters Degree in Natural Sciences and Environmental Education at Hamline University. Her focus on wildlife and forest ecosystems and her hands-on teaching experience has contributed to the Wolf Center's reputation for creative educational experiences and life long learning opportunities.

Francie Nelson, Director of Development/Communications, has recently joined the Wolf Center's leadership team. She brings four decades of fundraising and non-profit governance and management experience to the Wolf Center; fundraising programs and campaigns under her management have generated more than \$300 million in community, state, and national support. Organizations she has served include the University of Minnesota, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and the Bell Museum of Natural History, most recently, where she exceeded the Bell's goals for private and federal support of its proposed new museum building and outdoor environments.

ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION

Located in the heart of wolf country near Ely, Minnesota, gateway to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, the International Wolf Center's sole mission is to provide accurate, unbiased information about wolves and related species to adults and children across the world. The Center is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) educational organization incorporated in 1985.

As the premier clearinghouse for wolf information the Center helps people make their own informed decisions. We pledge to educate the public by offering the most up-to-date, accurate wolf information possible. Education opportunities include on and off site outdoor programs, personal observations of live wolf ambassadors in Ely, printed classroom materials, membership program, quarterly *International Wolf* magazine and a Web site with live wolf cameras, a Wild Kids section and educator resources.

