

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2011-2012 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**LCCMR ID: 217-H**

**Project Title:** Social Evaluation Toolkit for Water Resources Projects

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**Category:** H. Other Ideas

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**Total Project Budget: \$**  \$291,451

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:**  3 yrs, July 2011 - June 2014

**Other Non-State Funds: \$**  0

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**Summary:**

Assist state agencies managing Minnesota's water resources to improve their capacity to measure project impacts on local communities, through applied research, inter-agency collaboration, and development of a social evaluation toolkit.

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**Name:**  Karlyn   Eckman

**Sponsoring Organization:**  U of MN - Water Resources Center

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**Location**

**Region:** Statewide

**Ecological Section:** Statewide

**County Name:** Statewide

**City / Township:**

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<u>      </u> Funding Priorities	<u>      </u> Multiple Benefits	<u>      </u> Outcomes	<u>      </u> Knowledge Base
<u>      </u> Extent of Impact	<u>      </u> Innovation	<u>      </u> Scientific/Tech Basis	<u>      </u> Urgency
<u>      </u> Capacity Readiness	<u>      </u> Leverage	<u>      </u> Employment	<u>      </u> TOTAL <u>      </u> %

## 2011-2012 MAIN PROPOSAL

### PROJECT TITLE: Social Evaluation Toolkit for Water Resources Projects

#### I. PROJECT STATEMENT

Key state agencies responsible for managing Minnesota's water resources (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Board of Soil and Water Resources, Department of Natural Resources) have limited capacity to assess impacts on target audiences. Agencies routinely collect project biophysical and financial data. However, social evaluation metrics (adoption and maintenance of a recommended practice, increased civic engagement, and improvement in audience knowledge) are seldom collected. Eckman *et al* (2008) found that 88% of Minnesota water quality projects are never evaluated, and few staff have competency in social impact evaluation.

In October 2009, the Office of Management and Budget issued a policy memorandum to Federal agencies requiring increased social impact evaluation. Projects funded through Section 319 of the Clean Water Act will soon be required to evaluate social outcomes. The Minnesota Legislature is focusing on more accountability and tracking of results of public resources invested in environmental programs. Such policy initiatives require increased agency competency, framing of key social evaluation priorities, and use of social impact evaluation to inform decision-making. Agencies do not yet have competency to fulfill these new mandates.

#### II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

##### **Activity 1: Assess social evaluation competencies of partnering agencies.**

**Budget:** \$ 72,862

We will assist agency partners to assess gaps in current practices in evaluating social outcomes and civic engagement. We will document best practices by consulting staff and local project audiences via focus groups. Regional and field staff in Greater Minnesota will be consulted on methods and best practices. Based on identified gaps and needs, we will draft a strategic report aimed at increased evaluation competency.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Social evaluation competencies of each agency are assessed; strategic report prepared documenting gaps, needs and priorities circulated.	July 2012
2. Training needs assessment and training plan for each collaborating agency completed; Mentoring provided for key agency staff.	December 2012

##### **Activity 2: Facilitate inter-agency working group on social impact evaluation. Budget: \$72,862**

We review evaluation practices across agencies to identify complementary strategies, practices and metrics. The Clean Water Council is developing inter-agency social evaluation indicators, but the means and methods to gather raw indicator data has not been determined. This activity aims at identifying shared, practical, cost-effective methods and metrics.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Consultative inter-agency discussions at HQ and regional offices lead to identification of practical means and metrics to share outcomes and results.	January 2012
2. Agency heads, LCCMR and legislative staff agree on ways to coordinate a joint social evaluation strategy, to better document results and outcomes	August 2013

##### **Activity 3: Prepare social evaluation toolkit Budget: \$ 72,862**

WRC will develop a web-based social evaluation toolkit for state agencies describing best practices, case studies, and self-learning modules on key social evaluation tools and methods. Toolkit builds on work already initiated through ENRTF, EPA, MPCA and DNR-sponsored projects.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. Case studies highlighting best practices for social evaluation are prepared and peer-reviewed	January 2012
2. Social evaluation tools and methods are prepared and pre-tested with partners	August 2013
3. Web-based modules featuring best practice social evaluation tools and case study examples become available on-line to agency staff	December 2013

**Activity 4: Convene inter-agency workshop and finalize report. Budget: \$ 72,862**

This activity brings staff from partner agencies together to present findings, recommendations and the toolkit. Recommendations will be made for next-step strategies to increase evaluation competencies, based on applied research and adaptive management.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1. Draft report with recommendations is prepared and discussed at inter-agency workshop; agencies adopt improve social evaluation practices	December 2013
2. Recommendations, next steps and follow-up strategy identified and discussed with agency heads, LCCMR and key legislators	December 2013

**III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

**A. Project Team/Partners**

This proposal complements the successful ENRTF-funded *Native Shoreland Buffer Incentives Project* and USEPA-funded *Social Indicators* project. Project Coordinator is Dr. Karlyn Eckman (WRC), assisted by a 50% graduate student. Dr. Deb Swackhamer is a co-investigator (cost-share) at 1% FTE. BSWR has committed to collaborating on this effort. MPCA and DNR will collaborate indirectly via the above-mentioned projects through shared learning. WRC to conduct applied research on agency best practices, facilitate interagency dialogue, synthesize results, and prepare toolkit and reports. Agencies will appoint staff to the inter-agency working group on building social evaluation competencies. Agency staff time will not be compensated. Toolkit content and format to be determined through adaptive research, and based on identified needs and gaps.

**B. Timeline Requirements**

Project duration is 30 months (2.5 years). Months 1-9: WRC staff assess existing evaluation practices at agency headquarters, field and community levels, and collect case studies and best practices. Months 10-18: working group identifies opportunities, constraints and strategies. Months 19-25: Prepare toolkit. Months 26-30: Test toolkit; circulate agency-specific recommendations; convene inter-agency consultative workshop; finalize recommendations for next steps.

**C. Long-Term Strategy and Future Funding Needs**

Recommendations may result in a future proposal for training of trainers, on-line tutorials or courses, or a possible mentoring effort. The long-term goal is to capture lessons and best practices from project experience to better inform decision-making. Ultimately, the result will be better accountability and reporting on outcomes and results of the investment of public resources.

**2011-2012 Detailed Project Budget**

*Social Evaluation Toolkit for Water Resources Projects*

**IV. TOTAL TRUST FUND REQUEST BUDGET - 2.5 YEARS**

<b><u>BUDGET ITEM</u></b> <i>(See list of Eligible &amp; Non-Eligible Costs, p. 13)</i>	<b><u>AMOUNT</u></b>
<b>Personnel:</b> UM-WRC Senior Research Associate . 0.5 FTE for 30 months to facilitate all project activities; lead evaluation assessment; develop toolkit content; and supervise Ph.D student @ \$40,000/year x 30 months + 33% FB x 30 months = 100,000 + 33,000 FB	\$ 133,000
<b>Personnel:</b> Ph.D. research assistant 0.5 FTE for thirty months to assist in evaluation assessment and development of toolkit content. Salary, FB/tuition at 75%	\$ 84,301
<b>Contracts:</b> Web designer to develop graphics, website and interactive learning modules for toolkit	\$ 50,000
<b>Misc. Equipment/Tools/Supplies:</b> (flipcharts, recorders for focus groups, CDs, etc.)	\$ 3,000
<b>Travel:</b> For all project staff for travel to/from regional and project sites to assess social evaluation practices, at estimated GAO rate. 15,000 miles @ .50 = \$7,500 + 25 meal-days @ \$ 31/day = \$775, + 25 overnight lodgings @ \$75/night throughout project life = \$1875	\$ 10,150
<b>Printing:</b> Printing of draft tools and worksheets for pretesting	\$ 3,000
<b>Workshops and focus groups:</b> Eight workshops with agency regional and project staff to identify evaluation needs and gaps. Eight focus groups with local partners (LGUs, community groups) to assess evaluation needs from perspective of civic engagement, and collect best practices. Allow \$500 x 16 workshops = 8,000	8,000
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT &amp; NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST</b>	\$ 291,451

**V. OTHER FUNDS**

<b><u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u></b>	<b><u>AMOUNT</u></b>	<b><u>Status</u></b>
<b>Other Non-State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b>	N/A	
<b>Other State \$ Being Applied to Project During Project Period:</b>	N/A	
<b>In-kind Services During Project Period: Deb Swackhamer's 1% effort will equal to \$1,810 in salary in account 700101 and \$602.73 in fringe benefits in account 710101 from account 1000-11054-20085.</b>	\$2,413	
<b>Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable):</b>	N/A	
<b>Funding History:</b> This proposal directly complements and builds upon work underway in the ENRTF-funded <i>Native Shoreland Buffer Incentives (NSBI)</i> project with MDNR, and the EPA/MPCA -funded <i>Social Indicators for Nonpoint Source Pollution</i> project.	\$ -	

## **Project Manager Qualifications & Organization Description**

### **SOCIAL EVALUATION TOOLKIT FOR WATER QUALITY PROJECTS**

#### **Project Manager:**

Karlynn Eckman, Ph.D., Senior Research Associate  
Water Resources Center (WRC), University of Minnesota  
173 McNeal Hall, 1985 Buford Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55108

#### **Project Manager Qualifications**

Karlynn Eckman is a researcher, evaluator and experienced project manager, and will be responsible for managing the proposed project. She will coordinate all activities with collaborators and stakeholders. She is responsible for executing contracts, tracking expenses, submitting program updates, facilitating meetings, and managing the overall progress of the project. She will be assisted by a Ph.D.-level graduate student research assistant. This U of M WRC team will carry out all project research, facilitate inter-agency meetings, prepare meeting notes and project reporting.

Dr. Eckman has thirty-years experience planning, managing and evaluating numerous international, federal, state and local grant projects. She has been the PI on grants from the United Nations, USEPA, MPCA, MN DNR, ENRTF and others. Prior to joining the WRC, Karlynn was the Chief Technical Advisor for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), directing an interdisciplinary \$4.1 million water project in Cambodia, Nepal and Zambia. She is an experienced professional evaluator, leading program evaluations in Ethiopia, Cambodia, Nepal, Cameroon, Italy, Zambia and in Minnesota. Karlynn has a B.E.S., M.S. and Ph.D. (forestry and watershed management) from the University of Minnesota, and an M.A. from Johns Hopkins University. Karlynn is trained in both the biophysical sciences and social science research. She is a member of the American Evaluation Association and the International Association of Impact Assessment.

#### **Co-investigator**

Deborah L. Swackhamer manages WRC's research and educational programs, including overseeing the Water Resources Research Institute grants program for the U.S. Geological Survey and developing research and educational opportunities for the center. She is a professor of environmental chemistry in the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health and holds the Charles M. Denny Chair of Science, Technology, and Public Policy in the University's [Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs](#).

#### **Organization Description**

The University of Minnesota Water Resources Center works to improve and protect the quality and value of water resources by increasing knowledge and understanding through the integration of interdisciplinary research, education, and public engagement. As the focal point for work related to water resources, the WRC links faculty and student researchers with practicing professionals and citizens to address water resources issues. This facilitates effective delivery of research results to citizens and decision-makers and opens new avenues for multidisciplinary and interagency partnerships.

#### **Project partners and collaborators**

- Angie Becker Kudelka, Statewide Training Program Coordinator, MN Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Civic Engagement team, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Indirect collaboration and shared learning with the MPCA social indicators project team, and DNR Native Shoreland Buffer Incentives (NSBI) project team.

