

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund  
2012-2013 Request for Proposals (RFP)**

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**Project Title:**

**ENRTF ID: 122-F**

Improving and Measuring Project Outcomes through Evaluation Training

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**Topic Area:** F. Outreach/Education/Training

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**Total Project Budget:** \$ 190,000

**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 2 yrs. July 2013 - June 2015

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

**Summary:**

Project managers are trained in project evaluation, accountability and efficacy. Improved evaluations result in correction of flawed project designs, measureable impacts, and better outcomes. Public resources are more efficiently used.

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**Name:** Karlyn Eckman

**Sponsoring Organization:** U of MN

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**Location**

**Region:** Statewide

**County Name:** Statewide

**City / Township:**

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



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) 2012-2013 Main Proposal

**PROJECT TITLE: Improving and Measuring Project Outcomes through Evaluation Training**

## I. PROJECT STATEMENT

**WHY this project needs to be done:** This training project meets a significant need to build the capacity of natural resource project managers in evaluation. Public agencies provide significant financial resources for projects to protect and manage Minnesota's natural resources. The Office of Management and Budget and other Federal agencies are now requiring outcome evaluation (for example, evidence of adoption of recommended practices). However, the measurement and evaluation of project outcomes in Minnesota has been very limited, in part because project managers do not know how to evaluate outcomes. Few staff of public agencies have professional competency in evaluation and efficacy analysis. For example, 88% of water quality projects in Minnesota are never evaluated, representing a lack of accountability for public resources. Training was ranked as the highest need by respondents to address this issue (Eckman *et al* 2008). Without the proposed training, projects will remain largely unevaluated, and the impact of public investments in natural resources projects will remain uncertain. With the proposed training, investments of public resources can be directly linked to measurable project results and outcomes. Flawed project designs can be corrected, and lessons can be captured for future projects.

**PROJECT GOAL:** To improve the capacity of public agencies to measure and evaluate project results and outcomes, and to improve accountability. The proposed training will provide project managers with practical hands-on evaluation tools and methods, and is based upon environmental evaluation standards and protocols of the American Evaluation Association.

**OUTCOMES:** Staff receiving the training will be able to conduct *ex post* evaluations and efficacy analysis of natural resources projects. Staff will also learn to design "evaluation-ready" project workplans. This project will be considered successful if:

- a. The training program is prepared and successfully implemented by June 2015
- b. Involved project managers have measurably increased and applied their skills and knowledge as a result of the training by June 2015
- c. State and local agencies can readily benefit from the evaluation tools and training provided through the project, after its completion
- d. Project managers are able to make corrections to projects when needed, and can complete evidence-based evaluations of their projects using the tools learned during training

A minimum of 200 trained agency staff will be able to conduct project evaluations using standard, professional methods, resulting in clear evidence of project success, and improved documentation of results and outcomes. The proposed training will be available to staff of federal, state and local public agencies, and for all project types (acquisition, restoration, education, invasive species, etc.).

**HOW the project will achieve its goal:** Project managers will be trained in basic evaluation methods, based on experience gained in the ENRTF-funded *Native Shoreland Buffer Incentives* (NSBI) and MPCA-funded *Social Indicators for Nonpoint Source Pollution* projects. Both projects have incorporated a strong evaluation component, along with "how-to" coaching/mentoring in interpretation of evaluation data. These projects have introduced a basic project evaluation tool (pre and post KAP surveys) that also enabled project managers to readily improve their outreach and educational messages at project midpoint. As a result, there were clear and measurable increases in adoption of recommended practices, improvement in knowledge, and increased civic engagement in watershed activities. The evaluations also documented reduced sediment and runoff, and improved quality of shoreland habitat.

**PROJECT TITLE: Improving and Measuring Project Outcomes through Evaluation Training**

**II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

**Activity 1: Preparation and pre-testing of training modules**

**Budget:** \$94,033

Three regional workshops with federal, state and local staff will ensure that the curriculum is in line with current agency project tracking systems. Thereafter, agency staff (BWSR, DNR, MDA, and MPCA) will contribute to module content, format, and delivery strategy on an uncompensated basis. Six training modules will be developed by U of M staff, to include:

- 1) Basic evaluation principles, methods and ethics
- 2) Evaluation logistics
- 3) Metrics and measurement
- 4) Efficacy analysis
- 5) Data analysis and interpretation
- 6) Reporting and presenting results.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<i>1. Three regional workshops with agency staff to define overall curriculum</i>	<i>July-August 2013</i>
<i>2. Six agency staff to advise on module content, format and delivery strategy</i>	<i>September 2014</i>
<i>3. Six training modules pre-tested and revised by U of M staff</i>	<i>February 2014</i>
<i>4. Training curriculum prepared by U of M staff for delivery in workshops</i>	<i>March 2014</i>

**Activity 2: Training workshops**

**Budget:** \$95,967

Eight statewide day-long, hands-on workshops (depending on specific audience demand) will be conducted, averaging 25 participants per workshop. Pre and post workshop surveys will be used to judge training effectiveness. Training modules and reference materials will be revised based on trainee survey results, and placed on the Web for open use.

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<i>1. 200 project managers trained in evaluation methods at eight outstate workshops (25 trainees per workshop)</i>	<i>May 2015</i>
<i>2. Coaching/mentoring to trainees provided by U of M staff on individual projects on an as-needed basis</i>	<i>May 2015</i>
<i>3. Training modules and evaluation tools available on U of M website</i>	<i>May 2015</i>
<i>4. Evaluation and final reporting</i>	<i>June-July 2015</i>

**III. PROJECT STRATEGY**

**A. Project Team/Partners**

Karlyn Eckman (University of Minnesota Water Resources Center), an experienced environmental project evaluator, will lead this effort. She will prepare the training curriculum and modules, and organize and deliver the workshops. Eckman will receive proposed ENRTF funding at 67% FTE, assisted by very limited U of M support staff. Technical advisors from MDA, BWSR, MDA and MPCA will review the training modules at no cost. Three regional planning meetings with public agency staff will ensure close fit with agency monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Thereafter, at least six staff from four agencies are willing to advise on an uncompensated basis on module preparation.

**B. Timeline Requirements**

Project duration: 24 months. Months 1-7: preparation of the training curriculum. Months 8-22: workshops and trainee mentoring. Months 23-24: evaluation and reporting.

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

The proposed training workshops will be funded by ENRTF within the project timeframe. Thereafter, future access to the training will be web-based unless specific agencies are willing to pay for hands-on workshops.

## 2012-2013 Detailed Project Budget

### Improving and Measuring Project Outcomes through Evaluation Training

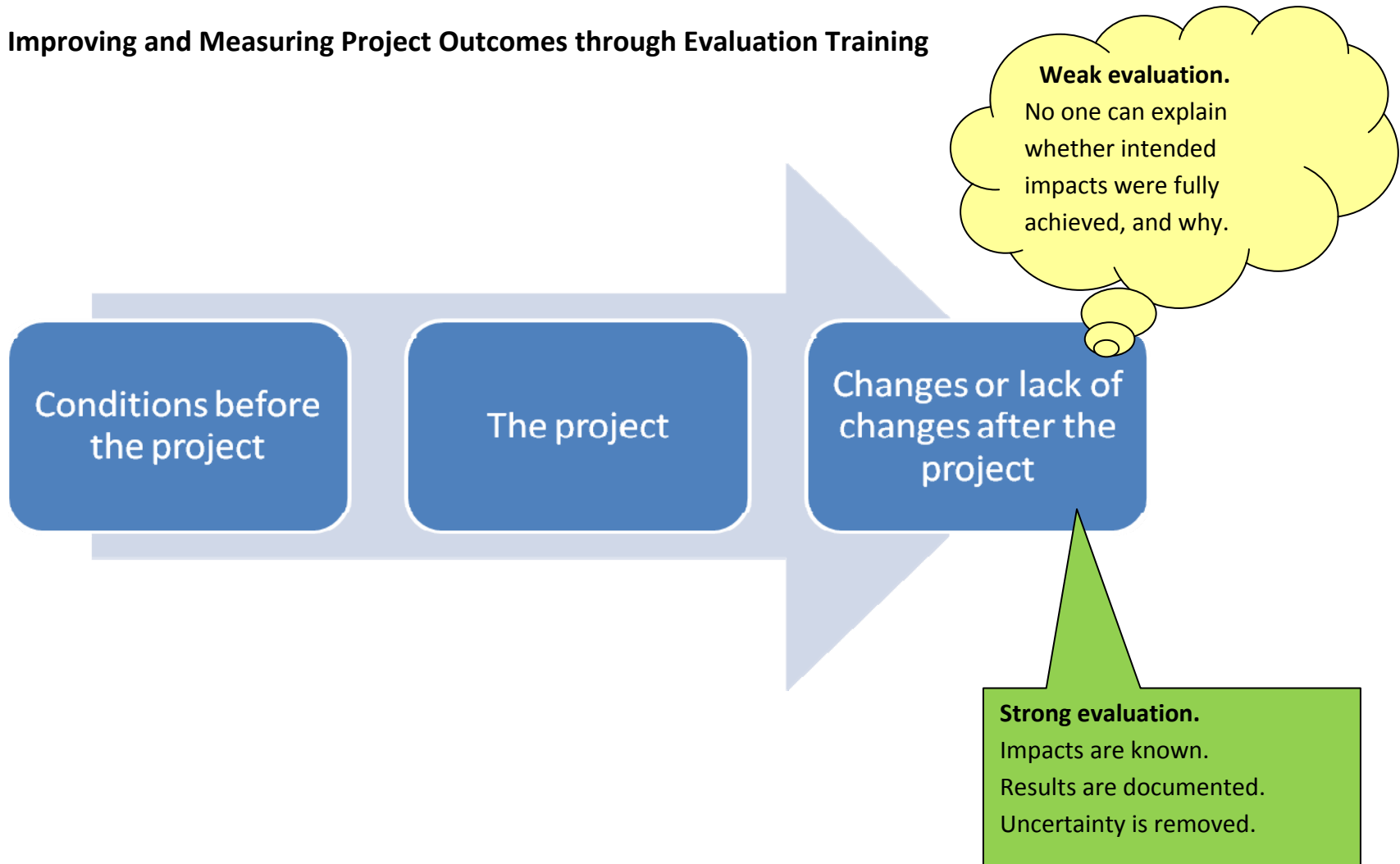
#### IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET - Two years

BUDGET ITEM	AMOUNT
<b>Personnel. All positions listed below are grant-supported without permanent funding.</b> One U of M staff/faculty to develop and deliver evaluation training @ 67% for 24 months (\$127,278 salary; \$45,820 fringe benefits = \$173,979).	\$182,718
One U of MN Accountant - administer grant @ 3% for 24 months (\$3,311 salary; \$1,409 fb = \$4,820).	
One U of M student worker to assist with workshop preparations @ \$10/hour, no fb, @ 20 hours/month x 24 months (\$4,800).	
<b>Equipment/Tools/Supplies:</b> Misc workshop supplies (\$318); Workshop handouts for 200 trainees at \$10 (\$2000)	\$2,318
<b>Travel expenses in Minnesota:</b> 8 outstate workshops x 300 miles/workshop x \$.55/mi or current UM rate (\$1,332). Three regional planning meetings @ 300/miles x \$.55/mi or current UM rate (\$500). Lodging/meals x 3 meetings reimbursed at actual expenses (\$348). Lodging/meals two days x eight outstate workshops (\$2,784).	\$ 4,964
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =</b>	<b>\$ 190,000</b>

#### V. OTHER FUNDS

SOURCE OF FUNDS	AMOUNT	Status
<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:</b>	N/A	
<b>Remaining \$ from Current ENRTF Appropriation (if applicable):</b>	N/A	
<b>Funding History:</b> The proposed project builds directly on the evaluation training developed for the ENRTF-funded Native Shoreland Buffer Incentives (NSBI) project (U of M subcontract for \$60,000); and project evaluation methods developed for the USEPA-funded Social Indicators for Nonpoint Source Pollution project (\$450,000).		\$510,000

## Improving and Measuring Project Outcomes through Evaluation Training



Source: Adapted from Real World Evaluation 2012

## **Improving and Measuring Project Outcomes through Evaluation Training Project Manager Qualifications & Organization Description**

### **Project Manager:**

Karlyn Eckman, Senior Research Associate  
Water Resources Center (WRC), University of Minnesota  
173 McNeal Hall, 1985 Buford Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55108  
[eckma001@umn.edu](mailto:eckma001@umn.edu)  
612/625-6781

### **Project Manager Qualifications**

Karlyn Eckman is an experienced educator, evaluator and project manager, and will be responsible for managing the proposed project. She will coordinate all activities with collaborators and stakeholders. She is responsible for implementing contracts, tracking expenses, submitting program updates, facilitating meetings, training, and managing the overall progress of the project. She will be assisted by a WRC undergraduate student worker. WRC accounting staff will administer the financial aspects of the grant. This team will carry out all project training activities, facilitate meetings, and provide accurate project accounting and reporting.

Eckman was a subcontractor on the ENRTF-funded *Native Shoreland Buffer Incentives* (NSBI) project. She is the Principle Investigator on the USEPA-funded *Social Indicators for Nonpoint Pollution* project, which focuses on the evaluation of nonpoint source pollution projects. She recently conducted project evaluations for the Capitol Region Watershed District, and Rock, Pipestone, Itasca and Otter Tail counties. In 2008 Eckman conducted a survey of nonpoint source pollution projects in Minnesota on their evaluation practices. Since then, Eckman has focused on designing practical evaluation tools and methods for project managers. Eckman is a member of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) and the International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA), and has presented a number of papers on project evaluation.

### **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. WRC also prepared the Minnesota Water Sustainability Framework authorized by the Minnesota State Legislature. WRC's administrative staff has long-standing experience administering state and federal grants, working in collaboration with the University of Minnesota's Sponsored Project Administration.

### **Project partners and collaborators**

Staff from several state agencies have agreed to advise the proposed project on an uncompensated basis. These include:

- Angie Becker Kudelka, Statewide Training Program Coordinator, MN Board of Water and Soil Resources
- Cindy Hilmoe, civic engagement coordinator, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Lynne Kolze, civic engagement coordinator, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
- Mark Hauck, DNR project manager, Native Shoreland Buffer Incentives (NSBI) project
- Margaret Wagner, Minnesota Department of Agriculture