

# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund 2016 Request for Proposals (RFP)

**Project Title:****ENRTF ID: 095-C**

Environmental Education Best Practices Review

**Category:** C. Environmental Education**Total Project Budget:** \$ 80,000**Proposed Project Time Period for the Funding Requested:** 1.5 years, July 2016 to December 2017**Summary:**

Environmental Education Best Practices Review will analyze Minnesotas investment in connecting youth to public lands and natural resources. Researchers will evaluate environmental education effectiveness and recommend best practices.

**Name:** Julie Storck**Sponsoring Organization:** Wilderness Inquiry**Address:** 808 14th Ave SE  
Minneapolis MN 55414**Telephone Number:** (612) 676-9400**Email** julie@wildernessinquiry.org**Web Address** www.wildernessinquiry.org**Location****Region:** Statewide**County Name:** Statewide**City / Township:****Alternate Text for Visual:**

The graphic highlights pictures of youth that represent the project process. Investment to impact to best practices. The project will analyze LCCMRs investment in environmental education and research and disseminate best practices to maximize future investment and impact.

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



**PROJECT TITLE: Environmental Education Best Practices Review**

**I. PROJECT STATEMENT**

In 25 years, LCCMR has dedicated \$132,138,143 to fund 257 environmental education outreach related projects in Minnesota. Environmental Education Best Practices Review (EEBPR) will analyze this investment and issue a report on best practices and effectiveness in connecting our youth to public lands and natural resources.

The research team will conduct an analysis of permanent products (annual reports, evaluation reports, etc.) of all funded projects to determine the impact and effective practices in Minnesota environmental education programs. Researchers will also conduct interviews and/or convene focus groups with organizational leaders and staff to collect detailed information about program outcomes.

The goal of this project is to provide comprehensive information about how to maximize the impact and effectiveness of environmental education in Minnesota. The research team will review 25 years of LCCMR-funded projects throughout the state of Minnesota, focusing primarily on projects that impacted youth with the intent of building awareness, connection, and commitment to natural resources and public lands. This project will help to inform future funding priorities and establish a framework for environmental educators to provide the greatest impact.

**II. PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES**

**Activity 1:** Research best practices from LCCMR-funded environmental education

**Budget: \$ 76,000**

Researchers will use a three-pronged approach for data collection for the best practices review. (1) Researchers will conduct a meta-analysis of the primary products of all LCCMR-funded environmental education programs to assess overall outcomes, impact, and effectiveness of environmental education programs funded through 25-years of LCCMR projects. (2) Researchers will survey organizational leaders of all 257 environmental education fund recipients. The survey will collect program data and leaders' perceptions of the outcomes and impacts on the youth they serve. (3) Researchers will conduct interviews and/or convene focus groups with a representative sample of the organizational leaders. The qualitative data collected will identify the essential elements of program success, common barriers to success, and long-term impact of these programs. Important topics of the analysis will include, but are not limited to:

- Program size, scope, and locus of activities
- The type and quality of organizational partnerships
- The curricula, content (subject matter), and program activities
- Characteristics of the youth served

Researchers will seek to answer the following questions:

- What elements of environmental education programs are effectively educating Minnesota's youth and meaningfully connecting them to natural resources?
- To what extent, and specifically how, does environmental education impact academic outcomes?
- What are best practices for maximizing effectiveness of environmental education and connecting Minnesota youth to their public lands and resources?
- What practices should be avoided?

Outcomes	Completion Date
1. <i>Online survey results from LCCMR educational outreach fund recipients</i>	12/30/16
2. <i>Interviews / focus groups with sample of organizational leaders</i>	4/1/17
3. <i>Investment and Impact - Analysis of 25 years of project outcomes in Minnesota environmental education funded through LCCMR, based on project reviews, surveys, and interviews</i>	6/30/17



**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)**  
**2016 Main Proposal**  
**Project Title: Environmental Education Best Practices Review**

4. Best Practices - Recommendations for most effective environmental education practices to connect Minnesota youth to their public lands and build a conservation ethic	6/30/17
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**Activity 2: Dissemination**

**Budget: \$ 4,000**

Dissemination of evaluative findings, research summation, and best practice recommendations will be accomplished through a comprehensive strategy to inform and involve stakeholders in the field. Activities will include:

- 1) Disseminate official report, including evaluative findings, research summation, and best practice recommendations.
- 2) Present findings to key stakeholders at conferences and venues throughout the state of Minnesota.
- 3) Create and implement a communications strategy to share best practices with educators, project managers, and policy makers.

Outcome	Completion Date
1. Key findings distribution, presentations, dissemination, and publication	12/30/17

### III. PROJECT STRATEGY

#### A. Project Team/Partners

This project is a collaborative effort between Wilderness Inquiry, the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI), and key stakeholders such as former and current environmental education funding recipients. Wilderness Inquiry will oversee the project and implementation with assistance and input from the University of Minnesota.

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) will utilize two researchers and one graduate research assistant to contribute to Environmental Education Best Practices Review. CAREI is an independent research and evaluation center at the University of Minnesota. CAREI was created in 1988 to conduct rigorous, impartial evaluation research of innovative practices and policies in education. CAREI has completed more than 200 evaluation and research studies funded by federal, state, district, and foundation grants in excess of \$25 million. CAREI's staff includes primary investigators with doctoral degrees in educational psychology, statistics and measurement, curriculum and instruction, educational policy and administration, and evaluation studies; master's-level staff; advanced graduate students; and specialized fiscal clerical support staff. CAREI has complete access to the full array of resources available at the university, including equipment, facilities, technology support, libraries, and faculty expertise. CAREI has an ongoing relationship with Minnesota school districts through its network with 30 public school districts.

#### B. Project Impact and Long-Term Strategy

In the past 25 years, LCCMR has significantly invested in connecting youth to the outdoors through environmental education. By researching project outcomes, evaluating impacts, and identifying best practices, we can better understand and implement effective strategies in the environmental education field. Findings regarding best practices will influence future project and policy decisions. Funding can be prioritized for proven effective strategies. To safeguard that Minnesota's environment and natural resources are cared for long-term, we must use identified best practices in environmental education to ensure that today's current youth are exposed to, connect with, and experience the benefits of these resources. Future projects and programs will be able to increase overall impact and cost-effectiveness, better cultivate sustainable lifestyles, and build greater connection between communities and public lands throughout Minnesota.

#### C. Timeline Requirements

18 months (1.5 years)

## 2016 Detailed Project Budget

**Project Title:** *Environmental Education Best Practices Review*

### IV. TOTAL ENRTF REQUEST BUDGET 1.5 years

<u>BUDGET ITEM</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>
<b>Personnel:</b> Wilderness Inquiry Program Manager (12% FTE for 1.5 years) <i>Oversee project management and implementation. Coordinate partners and assist with data analysis and project interviews. Lead for dissemination strategies including presentations, funders briefing, and website postings.</i>	\$ 10,000
<b>Professional/Technical/Service Contracts:</b> University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Educational Improvement 2 Researchers (22% FTE each for 1 year); 1 Graduate Research Assistant (50% FTE for 1 year) <i>Lead researchers to analyze, categorize, and summarize 25 years of educational outreach reports and outcomes; design and conduct surveys, focus groups, and interviews; and research and recommend best practices for environmental education.</i>	\$ 70,000
<b>TOTAL ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUND \$ REQUEST =</b>	<b>\$ 80,000</b>

### V. OTHER FUNDS

<u>SOURCE OF FUNDS</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>Status</u>
<b>Other Non-State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period</b>	\$ -	N/A
<b>Other State \$ To Be Applied To Project During Project Period</b>	\$ -	N/A
<b>In-kind Services To Be Applied To Project During Project Period</b>	\$ -	N/A
<b>Funding History:</b> <i>LCCMR has funded 6 educational outreach projects for Wilderness Inquiry. 1995 - Together Outdoors Minnesota (\$575,000). 1997 - Partners in Accessible Recreation and Environmental Responsibility (\$550,000). 1999 - Accessible Outdoor Recreation (\$400,000). 2010 - Urban Wilderness Youth Outdoor Education (\$557,000).</i>	\$ 2,082,000	Successfully completed
<b>Remaining \$ From Current ENRTF Appropriation:</b> <i>2013 - Youth Outdoors (\$25,549 unspent - on track for completion December 2015). 2014 - Urban Environmental Education (\$895,056 unspent - on track for completion June 2017)</i>	\$ 920,605	Unspent - on track for completion



Wilderness  
Inquiry



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Investment

Impact

Best Practices



*Analyze 25 years of LCCMR environmental education funding, including \$132,138,143 to fund 257 educational outreach projects.*



*Research most effective ways projects have developed a conservation ethic, cultivated sustainable lifestyles, and connected youth to natural resources and public lands.*



*Summarize and disseminate recommended best practices and strategies to maximize future investment and long-term impact.*



**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF)**  
**2016 Proposal**  
**Project Title: Environmental Education Best Practices Review**

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**PROJECT MANAGER QUALIFICATIONS – Julie Storck**

Julie Storck has been active in Wilderness Inquiry's education programming through a variety of roles since 2008. She currently oversees the fulfillment of the LCCMR project ending in 2017, Urban Environmental Education Engaging Students in Local Resources.

As project manager, Julie will work closely with a highly skilled research team from the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement to complete the project. Julie will be responsible for overseeing project partner collaboration, supervising project completion, assisting with data analysis and project interviews, and project outcome dissemination such as conference presentations, funders briefing, and website postings.

**ORGANIZATION DESCRIPTION – Wilderness Inquiry (WI)**

A non-profit organization based in the Twin Cities, WI has provided opportunities for outdoor recreation for our most underserved and at-risk populations since 1978. WI serves more than 25,000 people annually on canoe, kayak, horsepack, dogsled and hiking trips. The Urban Wilderness Canoe Adventures (UWCA) is WI's youth program that connects thousands of Minnesota youth to their public lands and natural resources through hands-on outdoor learning experiences. The program works with federal, state, and local entities to engage youth – addressing the achievement gap and fostering the next generation of environmental stewards. WI has 16 full-time and 65 part-time staff.

**CONTRACTEE DESCRIPTION – The University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement**

The Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement (CAREI) is an independent research and evaluation center at the University of Minnesota. The center was created in 1988 to conduct rigorous, impartial evaluation research of innovative practices and policies in education. CAREI has completed more than 200 evaluation and research studies funded by federal, state, district, and foundation grants in excess of \$25 million. CAREI's staff includes primary investigators with doctoral degrees in educational psychology, statistics and measurement, curriculum and instruction, educational policy and administration, and evaluation studies; master's-level staff; advanced graduate students; and specialized fiscal clerical support staff. CAREI has complete access to the full array of resources available at the university, including equipment, facilities, technology support, libraries, and faculty expertise. CAREI has an ongoing relationship with Minnesota school districts through its network with 30 public school districts.