



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2021 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2021-097

Proposal Title: Minnesota Green Schoolyards

Project Manager Information

Name: Eric Weiss

Organization: The Trust for Public Land

Office Telephone: (651) 999-5306

Email: eric.weiss@tpl.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Minnesota Green Schoolyards pilot project will assess, promote, and demonstrate how schoolyards can improve water, air, and habitat quality; foster next generation stewards, while improving health, education, and community outcomes.

Funds Requested: \$1,997,000

Proposed Project Completion: 2024-06-30

LCCMR Funding Category: Methods to Protect, Restore, and Enhance Land, Water, and Habitat (F)

Project Location

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

Statewide

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

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project and In the Future

Narrative

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

Across Minnesota, there are approximately 2,500 primary and secondary schools. The land on which these schools sit accounts for tens of thousands of acres of publicly owned land. Unfortunately, the typical schoolyard includes turf grass, impervious surface, and aging playground equipment and athletic facilities, which provide little to no benefit to Minnesota's environment and natural resources. Current schoolyard conditions - unintentionally - contribute to storm and groundwater issues, loss of pollinator habitat, and heat island impacts. Additionally, a lack of nearby natural amenities limits the ability of schools to better integrate environmental education, use the outdoors as a classroom, and foster next generational environmental stewards.

Green schoolyards are a solution to this problem. What's missing is a supportive infrastructure and group of committed partners to: further understand schoolyards' hidden potential; organize community leaders; coordinate efforts across multiple jurisdictions, agencies, and groups; generate on-the-ground green schoolyard examples specific to Minnesota; and create avenues to support the expansion of green schoolyard efforts statewide.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? i.e. What are you seeking funding to do? You will be asked to expand on this in Activities and Milestones.

Minnesota Green Schoolyards pilot project imagines, funds, and builds schoolyards packed with trees, native plants and grasses, gardens, and other features that capture and treat stormwater. Green schoolyards reduce the risk of flooding, and combat the heat island effect, keeping our communities cooler. They're places where birds and pollinators find refuge, and double as outdoor classrooms where kids can learn about the natural world all year long. And since every green schoolyard is open to the public outside of regular school hours, green schoolyards serve as neighborhood parks, where anyone is welcome to pause, breathe, and experience nature's benefits. Additionally, green schoolyards have shown to improve physical and mental health, increase community resilience, improve student educational outcomes, reduce behavioral issues, and increase community access to natural spaces.

Through an investment from LCCMR, we will set the stage to advance statewide green schoolyard efforts. This work includes building a broad-based green schoolyards network; assessing the need, potential impact of, and interest in pursuing green schoolyard improvements at each of Minnesota's schools; constructing on-the-ground green schoolyard demonstration projects; and growing local leadership, skills, and capacity through direct support to school staff, and creation and dissemination of resources and data.

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?

Collectively, this pilot project aims to create and support the long-term structures, information, and capacity needed to launch and sustain a statewide effort to improve Minnesota's schoolyards, foster thousands of new environmental stewards across our state, and restore and permanently conserve natural resources. This LCCMR-funded work will result in innovative methods to utilize schoolyards as a means to create, protect, restore and conserve publicly-owned natural land. As a result of this pilot effort, six schoolyards will be renovated to address issues of air, water, and habitat. Additionally, dozens of other interested schools will benefit from additional support and technical assistance.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Steering Committee Leadership: information dissemination, cross-sector project oversight, and efforts for a long-term impact, statewide policy, and funding

Activity Budget: \$162,000

Activity Description:

Establishing the Minnesota Green Schoolyards pilot project will begin with creation of a Steering Committee representing conservation and natural resource organizations; public health; education and academia; nonprofit and community organizations; youth organizations; and state agencies. The Steering Committee will support and advance local, regional, and statewide schoolyard programs, policies, and initiatives, and disseminate learnings from the project. The Steering Committee will help break down the institutional barriers, red tape, and siloed efforts that currently limit green schoolyard efforts. This group will meet regularly to ensure that all aspects of the program receive collective input from cross-sector partners. Once available, Steering Committee members will disseminate data and evaluation results to decision makers and the public through websites, journalism, presentations, and resource creation with the aim of longer term statewide implementation of green schoolyards. Ultimately, the Steering Committee will produce an action plan to sustain and expand the pilot's impact, leading to longer term statewide implementation.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Formalize Steering Committee membership, structure, and create work plan, timeline, and goals	2021-09-30
Launch Minnesota Green Schoolyards website	2022-01-31
Develop long-term action plan	2023-12-31
Support data analysis, demonstration schoolyard transformation, resource dissemination, and technical assistance	2024-06-30
Hold regular Steering Committee meetings	2024-06-30

Activity 2: Statewide Assessment: survey and analysis of schoolyards across the state

Activity Budget: \$25,000

Activity Description:

To better understand the existing green schoolyards landscape and the potential impact, we will complete a baseline assessment of schoolyards throughout Minnesota, and the potential environmental impact of schoolyard interventions and improvements. Each school site will be assessed for its tree canopy, impervious surface percentage, heat index, flood risk, air pollution, and traffic. Site assessment will also include school and community health, student achievement and behavior, local parks and open space access, environmental stewardship education, and community socioeconomic and demographic data. A survey of school leadership will provide data on existing green schoolyard amenities, programs, use of outdoor classrooms, project readiness, and administrator support, and community interest. Collectively, the baseline data will help inform the selection of six demonstration sites by identifying schools with high need, high potential, project readiness, and administrator support. Once established, the baseline data will provide background information to inform policymakers of the need for and potential impact of a long-term statewide implementation of Green Schoolyards. To track progress and impact over time, the Steering Committee will explore opportunities for long-term evaluation and assessment including the possible integration and adoption of the survey for recurring administration and evaluation by a state agency.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Finalize metrics, data sources, and survey questions	2021-08-31
Complete school leadership survey	2021-11-30
Complete quantitative GIS data gathering	2021-11-30
Analyze and map data, identify highest need and opportunity sites	2021-12-31
Create and share statewide report, maps, and data	2022-01-31

Activity 3: Demonstration Projects: six demonstration projects to provide proof of concept, learning opportunities, and on-the-ground environmental improvements

Activity Budget: \$1,424,000

Activity Description:

To provide local examples and improve the environment in six communities, six schools will be selected for construction and demonstration of green schoolyard improvements. Sites will be selected through an open application process using a set of criteria including but not limited to high potential environmental and natural resource impact; school administration-supported projects; geographic mix including rural, suburban, and urban settings; project readiness; and commitment of matching funds from a combination of school, watersheds, and local government. Schools will be expected to secure local commitments to ensure long-term maintenance, teacher support for use of outdoor classrooms and space, and will agree to provide community access to green schoolyards outside of regular school hours. Information from the statewide schoolyard assessment will help provide guidance in determining final selection criteria. ENRTF funds will support construction and design of green schoolyard infrastructure including but not limited to trees, landscaping, stormwater improvements, outdoor classrooms, gardens, nature play, walking paths, and educational signage. TPL and C&NN will support the six demonstration projects through a combination of technical assistance, facilitation of participatory design and community engagement, integration of natural resources and use of the outdoors in school curriculum and programming, and general project management support.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Using statewide assessment, gauge demonstration project interest amongst high need and opportunity sites	2021-12-31
Open RFP demonstration project application to school sites	2022-01-31
Review and score proposals, select demonstration project sites	2022-04-30
Secure school demonstration project partnership agreements and contracts	2022-06-30
Finalize school site work plans, timeline, and budgets	2022-07-31
Prepare and execute curriculum development and site programming plans	2022-08-31
Conduct community participatory planning and design efforts	2023-02-28
Complete and secure green schoolyard designs, budgets, and approvals	2023-03-31
Hold grand opening celebration	2024-05-31
Complete construction of six demonstration projects	2024-05-31
Collect and share lessons learned, evaluation, and success stories	2024-06-30

Activity 4: Capacity Building and Technical Assistance – provide technical assistance, training support, capacity building, and resource creation

Activity Budget: \$386,000

Activity Description:

The Minnesota Green Schoolyards pilot project will provide capacity building and technical assistance for school and

community leaders, teachers, parents, students, facility managers, local governments, watershed districts, parks departments, and environmental nonprofits. This will happen in two ways. First, by supporting local cross-agency and cross-sector partnership development to develop green schoolyards programs. And second, by supporting local leaders - above and beyond selected demonstration project sites - in capacity building for localized schoolyard efforts. TPL and C&NN will host trainings and webinars, deliver conference presentations, provide on-call technical assistance, create project resources, develop website and email communications, and host Minnesota's first Green Schoolyards Summit - a mini-conference and convening for schools, school districts, environmental groups, and state agencies interested in pursuing green schoolyard initiatives. Technical assistance efforts will guide additional school sites in their local efforts while building long-term green schoolyard delivery by supporting local leaders, expanding the number of schools planning for eventual capital improvements, and building integration of environmental stewardship into school curriculum.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Host Green Schoolyards Summit	2024-06-30
Offer trainings and conference sessions to share resources and lessons learned	2024-06-30
Create and share program resources, guides, and how-tos	2024-06-30
Provide technical assistance to dozens of additional school and community partners	2024-06-30

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
John Olson	Minnesota Department of Education	Steering Committee representing education, will bring deep statewide connections and network, and curriculum development skills.	No
Jill Chamberlain	Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN - Center for Prevention.	Steering Committee member representing a community-oriented business perspective, preventative health expert with deep statewide connections and experience with Safe Routes to School work. The Center for Prevention works statewide tackling the leading causes of preventable disease to increase health equity, transform communities, and create a healthier Minnesota.	No
Anna Lynn	Minnesota Department of Health	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Health Child and Family Health (CFH) division. CFH provides collaborative public health leadership that supports and strengthens systems to ensure healthy families and communities.	No
Kristin Raab	Minnesota Department of Health	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Health - Environmental Health division.	No
Karen Harrison	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - School Forests	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - School Forests Program. The Minnesota School Forest Program is a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and Minnesota schools. The program provides a variety of benefits to increase outdoor education activities.	No
Jonee Bingham Kuhlman	University of Minnesota - GreenStep Schools	Steering Committee member representing GreenStep Schools which is a free and voluntary statewide best practices framework and recognition program for public and private K-12 schools and districts to reduce environmental impact and costs, and provide effective environmental and sustainability education. GreenStep Schools is housed at the University of Minnesota.	Yes
Shelli-Kae Foster	Youth Eco Solutions (YES!)	Steering Committee member representing Youth Eco Solutions, a youth-led natural resources and environment group. YES! will also support school planning and engagement activities.	Yes
Caryn Mohr	University of Minnesota Extension - Regional Sustainable Development Partnership	Steering Committee member representing UMN Extension. Extension's Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships (RSDP) connect Greater Minnesota communities to the University of Minnesota to support local sustainability projects in rural Minnesota.	No
Jeremy Vann	Minnesota Department of Health - SHIP	Steering Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Health Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP). SHIP supports community-driven solutions to expand opportunities for active living, healthy eating and commercial tobacco-free living, working directly with local SHIP staff who represent 41 Community Health Boards, covering all 87 counties.	No
Jaime Zaplatosch	Children & Nature Network (C&NN)	Children & Nature Network will be on the Steering Committee, and will co-lead the dissemination of data collection and evaluation findings, resource creation, technical assistance and trainings at the local and state level with the Trust for Public Land. C&NN leads a global movement to increase children's access to nature.	Yes

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 be funded?

5/15/2020

A primary goal of the pilot project is to institutionalize a model for green schoolyards across the state of Minnesota, including making the case for public and private funding. With baseline data and demonstration projects, we aim to raise awareness of the multiple benefits and collective impact of green schoolyards. Project partners will add knowledge and capacity to their respective organizations to ensure capacity exists to support Minnesota green schoolyards efforts long-term. Data and evaluation will be disseminated to decision makers and the public through websites, statewide trainings, journalism, and resource creation.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Metro Conservation Corridors Phase VIII - Strategic Lands Protection	M.L. 2015, Chp. 76, Sec. 2, Subd. 09f	\$750,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Eric Weiss

Job Title: Program Director

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

As a certified city planner, Eric's natural ability is to identify problems, seek solutions, bring people together, and view a topic from a holistic and future-oriented perspective. Eric brings with him a wealth of experiences, including experience in the public sector, nonprofits, philanthropy, and private consulting. Much of his work has been in project and program management with special attention paid to long-range planning, community engagement, parks planning, active living and healthy eating, grants management, zoning, and public policy. Eric has managed a number of large-scale projects including the Minnesota Food Access Planning Guide and the American Planning Association-Minnesota Chapter "Planning for People" initiatives. Both initiatives involved managing statewide work groups from diverse fields, with a focus on advancing a statewide movement. Eric has been a member of countless collaborative initiatives, both as a committee member, staff member, and chair. Additionally, Eric has had the pleasure of working with communities of all types and geographies, and in all corners of the state. As program director of TPL's Community Powered Parks program, Eric is leading the launch of a Green Schoolyards Program in the Twin Cities, through the generous support of Blue Cross Blue Shield. Through LCCMR support, TPL and its partners will be able to leverage the work happening in the Twin Cities and expand the scale of the project to incorporate rural communities.

Organization: The Trust for Public Land

Organization Description:

The mission of The Trust for Public Land is to create parks and protect land for people, ensuring healthy, livable communities for generations to come. We partner with local communities to plan their conservation priorities, fund their visions for landscapes, create the parks and trails they value, and protect the lands and waters critical to community health. While TPL places a major focus on improving public access and protecting land for people, we also take very seriously the critical environmental benefits our work provides. Since 1972, TPL has preserved more than 3.5 million acres, created or transformed close to 2,000 parks, playgrounds, and gardens, and developed more than 2,000 miles of trails across the United States. TPL has also helped states and local communities generate over \$79 billion in new public funds for parks and open space. Among many other achievements, our organization, which is now comprised of 25 offices, led the 400-acre expansion of Yosemite National Park and recently reinvigorated the 200th playground in our Green Schoolyards initiative in New York City. In Minnesota, TPL has completed more than 200 projects since 1986, permanently protecting and providing public access to nearly 200,000 acres of land.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Project Staff		Project management and support, technical assistance provider, steering committee coordination, data analysis support			48%	2.1		\$255,000
Project Support Staff		Project, community engagement, and summit support, technical assistance provider			48%	0.6		\$65,000
Public Ally Support Intern		Project and community engagement support			10%	3		\$54,000
Research & Innovation Staff		Schoolyard Mapping and Analysis			48%	0.3		\$25,000
							Sub Total	\$399,000
Contracts and Services								
Children & Nature Network (C&NN)	Sub award	Capacity building, steering committee and network support, technical assistance, communications support, resource creation.				1.65		\$150,000
Landscape Architecture	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Design-build landscape architecture consultant to support site-specific schoolyard design.				3		\$360,000
Undetermined	Sub award	Steering Committee Support. Funding for additional program partners (up to five) to cover staff time associated with steering committee and network involvement.				0.75		\$75,000
Undetermined	Sub award	Community Engagement Partner. Support to a community and/or environmental organization to support school demonstration sites in community engagement and education, curriculum development, and site design.				0.6		\$60,000
Undetermined	Professional or Technical	Steering Committee Facilitation. Support to facilitate steering committee meetings, action planning,				0.3		\$36,000

	Service Contract	networking, capacity building, and implementation efforts.						
Undetermined	Sub award	Demonstration school staffing. Support to each of the six selected demonstration project school sites to cover staff time during planning, engagement, and programmatic efforts.				0.6		\$60,000
Undetermined	Sub award	School Capacity Building Minigrants. Small support will be provided to six schools to aid in their green schoolyard capacity building and planning efforts. This is intended for schools in the pre-implementation phase and will not include demonstration site schools..				0.6		\$60,000
							Sub Total	\$801,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
		Green Schoolyards Capital	Green Schoolyards construction and infrastructure					\$750,000
							Sub Total	\$750,000
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Travel expenses	Travel to school sites for partner meetings, events, and engagements					\$15,000
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Conference travel and registration	Dissemination of findings, resources, and presentations					\$5,000
							Sub Total	\$20,000

Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Publication	Green schoolyards website	Website to electronically share statewide assessment findings, school resources, and environmental curriculum. Also, an opportunity network with partners and expand scope of the project.					\$6,000
	Printing	Green schoolyards resource hard copies	Print and share statewide assessment findings, school resources, and environmental curriculum.					\$6,000
							Sub Total	\$12,000
Other Expenses								
		Green Schoolyard Summit	Expenses related to hosting schoolyards summit					\$15,000
							Sub Total	\$15,000
							Grand Total	\$1,997,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	Trust for Public Land	Staff time, foundational analysis work	Secured	\$100,000
Cash	School demonstration site local match minimum. Each school will be expected to bring at least \$25,000 in capital expense match to be eligible.	Capital expenses	Potential	\$150,000
Cash	Trust for Public Land	Community engagement minigrant support to community groups	Secured	\$25,000
In-Kind	Children & Nature Network	Staff time	Secured	\$60,000
Cash	Children & Nature Network	Travel to Minnesota	Secured	\$2,250
In-Kind	Blue Cross Blue Shield	Steering Committee participation	Secured	\$15,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$352,250
			Funds Total	\$352,250

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [14c347ac-ddc.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Minnesota Green Schoolyards - The Trust for Public Land (with image of green schoolyard)

Minnesota's schoolyards hold endless untapped potential. Green Schoolyards - school properties redesigned to be packed with trees, gardens, stormwater improvements, pollinator gardens, outdoor classrooms, and nature play - can improve the local environment while fostering new environmental stewards and improving health, learning, and community outcomes.

Immediate Impact, Long-Term Strategy (image of before and after project, with previous all-asphalt playground later improved with pervious surfaces, trees, landscaping, and gardens)

The Project

PARTNER - Bring together a group of cross-sector leaders

ASSESS - Gather statewide schoolyard data, identify high need, high impact opportunities

DEMONSTRATE - Improve six schoolyard sites which will serve as models while improving local outcomes

SHARE - Build the knowledge base of school and local leaders across Minnesota

REPLICATE - Build a strategy for long-term success, leveraging of resources, and statewide implementation

The Benefits (featuring the benefits wheel)

Environment - water management, wildlife habitat, urban heat island reduction, environmental literacy

Community - community cohesion, family engagement

Health and Wellness - mental health, physical health

Learning - social-emotional learning, increased attention and attendance, academic performance

Financial Capacity

File: [00442494-8f0.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
TPL Letter of Authorization	90e1ad8d-0be.docx

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
Letter of Support - Minnesota Department of Health	c051d3f8-7ac.pdf
Letter of Support - Blue Cross Blue Shield	8b3752bc-98a.docx
Letter of Support - Children & Nature Network	b4e06d6d-5a2.pdf
Letter of Support - GreenStep Schools	48393dc0-a89.pdf
Letter of Support - University of Minnesota Extension	a1fe5f27-9b1.pdf
Letter of Support - Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	09a2a9f2-d22.docx
Letter of Support - Minnesota Department of Education	90725fa3-63a.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Does your project have patent, royalties, or revenue potential?

No

Does your project include research?

Yes

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

MINNESOTA GREEN SCHOOLYARDS

The Trust for Public Land

Minnesota's schoolyards hold endless untapped potential. Green Schoolyards - school properties redesigned to be packed with trees, gardens, stormwater improvements, pollinator gardens, outdoor classrooms, and nature play - can improve the local environment while fostering new environmental stewards and improving health, learning, and community outcomes.



IMMEDIATE IMPACT, LONG-TERM STRATEGY



THE PROJECT

- **PARTNER** - Bring together a group of cross-sector leaders
- **ASSESS** - Gather statewide schoolyard data, identify high need, high impact opportunities
- **DEMONSTRATE** - Improve six schoolyard sites which will serve as models while improving local outcomes
- **SHARE** - Build the knowledge base of school and local leaders across Minnesota
- **REPLICATE** - Build a strategy for long-term success, leveraging of resources, and statewide implementation

THE BENEFITS



