



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2021 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2021-300

Proposal Title: Changing Yards and Minds: Overcoming Barriers to Ecoscaping

Project Manager Information

Name: Chris Lord

Organization: Metro Conservation Districts

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Influence perceptions, practices, and policies in the 11-county metro to encourage ecoscaping by launching multi-pronged outreach campaigns, elevating demonstration project educational value, and engaging local leaders to adopt eco-friendly policies.

Funds Requested: \$546,000

Proposed Project Completion: 2023-06-30

LCCMR Funding Category: Environmental Education (C)

Project Location

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

Region(s): Metro

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.

Ecoscaping – landscaping to reduce irrigation, provide habitat, and protect lakes and streams – is slowly growing more popular in the 11-county metropolitan area. However, social norms hinder widespread adoption of nonconventional landscaping, whether it's in neighborhoods, public open spaces, or commercial districts.

Abundant research concludes that turf lawns are unsustainable for the long-term health of our waters and wildlife. According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, traditional turf grass lawns are the most irrigated, fertilized, and managed, non-edible crop in the United States, covering approximately 30 million acres. The vast majority of lawns are irrigated with drinking water. On average, 40-60 percent of residential water use is for lawn irrigation. Roughly 1.4 million pounds of pesticides, which have been shown to leach into groundwater, are purchased each year in Minnesota for use on lawns.

Property owners transitioning away from expensive and deleterious lawn care practices must overcome barriers including social pressure, restrictive ordinances, and misinformation that fuels community-wide resistance to pollinator and wildlife-friendly planting and turf conversion.

To achieve systemic change and create more resilient communities, an intensive and sustainable public education and outreach campaign is needed.

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.

SWCD employees across Minnesota's metro counties are collaborating to positively affect public perceptions, practices, and policies on ecoscaping. By engaging communities throughout the 11-county metropolitan area, this project will stimulate widespread change on the land through public education campaigns, revitalization and promotion of demonstration projects, and the development of model policy packages.

There are many existing tools to modify social norms around landscaping; this project will broadly and consistently implement strategies throughout the 11-county metro area. Specifically, we will: research how existing barriers limit the acceptance of ecoscaping; develop resources to assist communities in adopting programs and policies that encourage ecoscaping; and conduct workshops and mount a multi-pronged media campaign to influence the public and local leaders.

To build community acceptance of these beneficial practices, we will revitalize existing demonstration projects with effective outreach components and/or elevate the educational value of new projects at high-visibility, public spaces. Only by addressing the public's perception of ecoscaping, the policies related to preserving and restoring native landscapes, and the practices at all levels of the community will we be able to eliminate barriers and motivate large-scale behavior change. This will inspire and empower local communities to adopt conservation-minded social norms.

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?

Research on barriers to behavior change will be conducted to inform the following components in each of the 11 counties: host 1-3 public workshops annually in each county on the benefits of ecoscaping compared to traditional turf; showcase turf alternatives with high-visibility demonstration projects to facilitate buy-in from local leaders; introduce native plants essential for at-risk pollinators, including the endangered rusty patched bumblebee; develop and disseminate materials and model policy packages to promote ecoscaping with community leaders; and mount a multi-pronged media campaign utilizing print, audio, social media, and video platforms to reach the general public.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Perception - Public education, outreach, and engagement

Activity Budget: \$281,500

Activity Description:

We will employ a program manager and a cadre of educational professionals to mount a public outreach campaign throughout the 11-county metro in ecoscaping. The campaign will be informed by a scientific survey to identify barriers to transitioning to ecoscaping, which will be the first work product of this program. The campaign will inventory available outreach programming; develop standardized outreach materials; host virtual and live informational workshops; and engage with residents and community leaders. Each participating county will hold 1-3 workshops per year to ensure continuous momentum. Target audiences will include but are not limited to suburban homeowners, lakeshore residents, school districts, business, and local elected officials. Outreach will also include 3-5 news articles per county, 10-15 social media posts, promotional flyers and fact sheets, and a radio campaign. These activities will help create a conservation ethic and improve knowledge of ecoscaping. Outreach materials will be available for statewide distribution.

Event participation will be tracked and effectiveness determined with surveys. Engagement benefits extend beyond the program, as participants leave with new perspectives, motivation to change behaviors, and openness to accept changes made by neighbors and peers. This program's reach will expand into adjoining communities through word of mouth.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Hire a program manager to manage the public outreach campaign	2021-09-30
Identify behavior change barriers using a custom survey designed, implemented, and analyzed by a consultant	2021-10-31
Inventory existing native landscaping outreach programming, resources, and tools	2021-11-30
Hire part time staff to assist with design and implementation of public outreach campaigns	2022-01-31
Design detailed multi-pronged campaign including materials, workshops, videos, social media, print, radio, and direct outreach	2022-03-31
Implement campaign	2023-05-31
Analyze and report outcomes	2023-06-30

Activity 2: Practice - Elevate educational value of demonstration projects at high-visibility public locations

Activity Budget: \$82,000

Activity Description:

Educational professionals will work with partners to elevate the educational value of new or revitalized demonstration projects such as pollinator plantings, rain gardens, and riparian buffers in high-visibility locations to serve as teaching tools in each of the 11 metropolitan counties. This program will elevate project exposure with signage, community events or tours, highlight videos, and social and print media features to increase educational value. Matching funds will cover project installation or revitalization costs. High-visibility public locations such as schools, city halls, libraries, and parks will be targeted to ensure project benefits are widespread and long term.

To support the educational value of the demonstration projects, the educational professionals will assist in the development of programs and tools to create outdoor community gathering spaces and involve the community in volunteer events at project sites to share in maintenance of projects. By incorporating education from the early stages of projects, this program will elevate awareness of, and appreciation for projects. In the long term, this will improve

project maintenance and ensure projects are long-term assets to the community. As partners experience firsthand the value of this type of engagement, it is more likely to become a standard element of future projects.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Identify demonstration sites in each county	2021-12-31
Develop outreach campaign and outreach programming to promote demonstration projects to the public and community partners	2022-08-31
Install or revitalize demonstration sites with signage	2022-09-30
Ensure operation and maintenance standards for each project are in place	2022-10-31
Support community events, tours, and volunteering at each completed demonstration project site	2023-05-31
Analyze and report outcomes	2023-06-30

Activity 3: Policy - Develop and promote model policy packages to encourage ecoscaping

Activity Budget: \$141,500

Activity Description:

Local government ordinances and policies from throughout the metro area related to ecoscaping will be researched and inventoried. This inventory will be drawn upon by natural resource professionals to develop a model policy package for local governments, and to adapt custom policies for those requesting assistance. This policy package will be formatted for use statewide.

Locally respected and trusted natural resource specialists will engage community leaders throughout the 11-county metropolitan area to identify and promote opportunities to adopt programs and policies that support ecoscaping both through the establishment of new native landscapes in existing development or by preserving them in new developments. Outreach may include presentations at city council meetings, informational gatherings with local focus groups, and demonstration plot tours.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Research and inventory existing native plant ordinances and policies throughout the eleven county metro region	2021-12-31
Host informational talking sessions between focus groups and local leaders	2022-06-30
Create a model policy package that can be adapted for use statewide	2022-12-31
Encourage communities in 11-county metropolitan area through direct outreach to adopt policies that promote ecoscaping	2023-05-31
Analyze and report outcomes	2023-06-30

Activity 4: Grant & Project Administration

Activity Budget: \$41,000

Activity Description:

Through a separate joint powers agreement, the Anoka Conservation District will assume the role of host and project manager for this project. The host organization will be responsible for all aspects of project administration including contracts management, personnel management of the project coordinator, and ensuring timelines, outcomes, and reporting requirements are met.

Through a separate joint powers agreement, the Scott Soil and Water Conservation District will assume the role of fiscal agent and oversee, track, reconcile, and report all financial transactions in accordance with LCCMR requirements.

The project coordinator and education professionals will ensure complete and accurate documentation of all expenses and projects outcomes maintained and reported as well as all educational programming and demonstration project logistics are completed and grant objectives are met.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Project expenses and milestone progress will be tracked and routinely reported following LCCMR reporting requirements	2023-06-30

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Chris Lord	Anoka Conservation District	In addition to the role identified for all MCD members, ACD will serve as the project manager and ensure delivery of all project elements is completed and reported in a timely manner in accordance with LCCMR requirements.	Yes
Troy Kuphal	Scott SWCD	In addition to the role identified for all MCD members, SSWCD currently serves as MCD's fiscal agent and as such is anticipated to fulfill that role for this grant. The fiscal agent will manage all financial transactions in accordance with LCCMR requirements.	Yes
Mike Wanous	Carver SWCD	Install or revitalize a demonstration project in their district and assist with outreach to local governments. Engage local partners to secure additional matching funds for elements such as signage and video production. Up to four MCD members (TBD) to serve as hosts for educational professionals will receive funds.	Yes
Craig Mell	Chisago SWCD	Install or revitalize a demonstration project in their district and assist with outreach to local governments. Engage local partners to secure additional matching funds for elements such as signage and video production. Up to four MCD members (TBD) to serve as hosts for educational professionals will receive funds.	Yes
Brian Watson	Dakota SWCD	Install or revitalize a demonstration project in their district and assist with outreach to local governments. Engage local partners to secure additional matching funds for elements such as signage and video production. Up to four MCD members (TBD) to serve as hosts for educational professionals will receive funds.	Yes
Karen Galles	Hennepin County Environmental Services	Install or revitalize a demonstration project in their district and assist with outreach to local governments. Engage local partners to secure additional matching funds for elements such as signage and video production. Up to four MCD members (TBD) to serve as hosts for educational professionals will receive funds.	Yes
Tiffany Determan	Isanti SWCD	Install or revitalize a demonstration project in their district and assist with outreach to local governments. Engage local partners to secure additional matching funds for elements such as signage and video production. Up to four MCD members (TBD) to serve as hosts for educational professionals will receive funds.	Yes
Ann WhiteEagle	Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Division	Install or revitalize a demonstration project in their district and assist with outreach to local governments. Engage local partners to secure additional matching funds for elements such as signage and video production. Up to four MCD members (TBD) to serve as hosts for educational professionals will receive funds.	Yes
Francine Larson	Sherburne SWCD	Install or revitalize a demonstration project in their district and assist with outreach to local governments. Engage local partners to secure additional matching funds for elements such as signage and video production. Up to four MCD members (TBD) to serve as hosts for educational professionals will receive funds.	Yes
Jay Riggs	Washington Conservation District	Install or revitalize a demonstration project in their district and assist with outreach to local governments. Engage local partners to secure additional matching funds for elements such as signage and video production. Up to four MCD members (TBD) to serve as hosts for educational professionals will receive funds.	Yes
Luke Johnson	Wright SWCD	Install or revitalize a demonstration project in their district and assist with outreach to local governments. Engage local partners to secure additional matching funds for elements such as signage and video production. Up to four MCD members (TBD) to serve as hosts for educational professionals will receive funds.	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?

The project objective is to increase adoption and implementation of ecoscaping by overcoming barriers to behavioral change, improving understanding, and building the capacity of project partners to duplicate the process in the future. To the extent that this project successfully removes barriers and improves understanding during the grant term, the affected individuals will aid in long-term success both by implementing ecoscaping and by promoting ecoscaping concepts with peers. Project partners will be better equipped to promote ecoscaping with scientifically based insight into barriers, model ordinance/policy packages, signage, videos, print materials, and techniques to showcase projects as demonstration sites.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Chris Lord

Job Title: District Manager

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

Chris Lord has 29 years of project management experience with the Anoka Conservation District (ACD), including multi-year projects in excess of \$1,000,000. Chris oversees all aspects of ACD operations including financial, personnel, policy, and programmatic details for an annual operating budget of \$1.5-\$2M encompassing over 60 distinct programs and services. Chris will hire, train, and manage staff; manage contracts for services, see to the accurate tracking and reporting of all expenses, and see to the timely and accurate delivery of all work products. Chris has a BS in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences. ACD is a special purpose local government unit established in 1946 and supports a staff of 10-15 regular and seasonal natural resource professionals with project management experience.

Organization: Metro Conservation Districts

Organization Description:

Metro Conservation Districts (MCD) is a joint powers board formed under authority of Minnesota Statutes section 471.59. MCD is composed of eleven members, including: Hennepin and Ramsey counties, and the Soil and Water Conservation Districts of Anoka, Carver, Chisago, Dakota, Isanti, Scott, Sherburne, Washington, and Wright counties. MCD serves as an entity under which its members can jointly plan, develop, and implement programs and activities for resource conservation. Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which make up the bulk of the membership, are non-regulatory county-level subdivisions of state government formed under Minnesota Statutes Chapter 103C. Professional SWCD staff conserve and enhance the natural resources of their counties under the supervision of locally elected boards of supervisors.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Project Coordinator		Project development, outreach, research, project coordination, and grant administration			33%	1.8		\$179,500
Fiscal Agent		Manage all financial transactions in accordance with LCCMR requirements			33%	0.06		\$9,000
Project Manager		Ensure delivery of all project elements is completed and reported in a timely manner in accordance with LCCMR requirements.			33%	0.16		\$25,000
Natural Resource Specialist		Local government unit outreach & demonstration site recruitment			33%	0.44		\$38,500
Education Professional		Project development and outreach			33%	0.53		\$38,000
Education Professional		Project development and outreach			33%	0.53		\$38,000
Education Professional		Project development and outreach			33%	0.53		\$38,000
							Sub Total	\$366,000
Contracts and Services								
Professional Videography	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Professional videographer for video editing to highlight demonstration sites and landowners stories				0		\$11,500
Action Research	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Social media marketing research professional to conduct market survey and research on local barriers to adopting ecoscaping behaviors and practices.				0		\$50,000
Video Animator	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Development of a series of six on-line tutorial videos on a range of ecoscaping topics				0		\$10,500
Radio Campaign	Professional or Technical	Air 30 second spots on drive time radio with audience tailored messaging				0		\$36,000

	Service Contract							
Landscape Contractor	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Remove and dispose of accumulated sediment, mulch and detritus during demonstration site revitalization. \$27,500 covered as match				0		-
Sign Graphic Designer	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Professional design services for ecoscaping practice signs of six different types of installations				0		\$9,000
							Sub Total	\$117,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Plant materials, mulch, weed treatment for up to 22 sites - \$33,000 covered as match	Items are needed to revitalize formerly installed projects that are beyond their operations and maintenance agreements.					-
	Equipment	Camera, lighting, microphone, and video editing software	Enable staff to gather footage for professional videographer to compose project promotion videos	X				\$3,000
							Sub Total	\$3,000
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Primarily mileage, but also may include meals, lodging and conference registration	Covers general personal vehicle usage for project purposes as well as conference and training related direct expenses.					\$4,600
							Sub Total	\$4,600

Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Outreach materials including factsheets, policy packages, post cards, flyers, tabling materials, and displays for up to 66 workshops, 6 ecoscaping practices, and 22 demonstration sites	Provide an array of materials needed promote a variety of ecoscaping techniques to a variety of audiences across the 11-county metro area					\$9,000
	Printing	Survey questionnaire mailing for 2500 residential properties	The survey is needed to complete analysis of social barriers to adoption of ecoscaping techniques					\$2,500
	Printing	33 custom interpretive outdoor full color signs printed for demonstration sites	Provide interpretive information at demonstration sites showcased as part of this project					\$17,500
							Sub Total	\$29,000
Other Expenses								
		Event expenses - facility rental, registration fees, tables	Each of the 66 workshops, 11-22 demonstration site events, and 11 other tabling events have an anticipated cost of \$200.					\$19,800
		Social media campaign including stories, articles, blurbs, quizzes, blogs, and Facebook Boosts	This category is intended to cover myriad miscellaneous expenses associated with the social media campaign and was calculated at \$600 per county over the course of the grant					\$6,600
							Sub Total	\$26,400
							Grand Total	\$546,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies		Camera, lighting, microphone, and video editing software	We intend to complete landowner interviews. Staff from local offices who worked with the landowner to install their projects are better equipped to do this than a hired professional. Each interview will take a lot of time to produce a short amount of usable footage. By spending \$3,000 on equipment, we will be able to save \$15,000 over the cost of hiring a professional with the necessary equipment. Furthermore, districts will be equipped to continue gathering and using high quality footage after the term of the grant.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
In-Kind	10 of the 11 MCD members have indicated a willingness and ability to provide matching funds or secure match from local partners	Cover all demonstration site revitalization contract expenses.	Pending	\$27,500
In-Kind	10 of the 11 MCD members have indicated a willingness and ability to provide in-kind match or secure match from local partners	Cover all demonstration site revitalization supply costs	Pending	\$33,000
In-Kind	8 of the 11 MCD members have indicated a willingness and ability to provide matching funds	Cover 30% of the cost of Natural Resource Professional salary to conduct local government outreach and demonstration site recruitment	Pending	\$16,500
In-Kind	6 of the 11 MCD members have indicated a willingness and ability to provide matching funds or secure match from local government partners	Cover 30% of the cost of signage purchase	Pending	\$7,500
In-Kind	6 of the 11 MCD members have indicated a willingness and ability to provide matching funds or secure match from local government partners	Cover 30% of the cost of demonstration site testimonial videos	Pending	\$5,000
In-Kind	7 of the 11 MCD members have indicated a willingness and ability to provide matching funds or secure match from local government partners	Cover 30% of the cost of tutorial video production	Pending	\$4,500
			Non State Sub Total	\$94,000
			Funds Total	\$94,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [6a2140c9-95a.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Changing Yards and Minds: Overcoming Barriers to Ecoscaping is a public outreach and education campaign in the 11-county metropolitan area to promote the benefits of ecoscaping and create widespread conservation ethic, particularly in suburban Minnesota. The project will engage metro communities through a multi-pronged public outreach and media campaign informed by a rigorous barriers and benefits analysis using the Community Based Social Marketing framework. The project will also elevate the educational value of demonstration projects throughout the 11-county metro and directly engage local leaders to adopt eco-friendly policies. The project will be jointly implemented by the 11 metro counties represented by the Metro Conservation Districts. All aspects of the project will be modeled for statewide dissemination.

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
MCD Resolution Supporting LCCMR Application Supporting Ecoscaping	39d7fb45-8fb.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
LOS Coon Creek WD	0b0c5593-f43.pdf
LOS Andover Pollinator Awareness Project	917c20af-c5d.pdf
LOS City of Andover	732ce216-024.pdf
LOS City of Blaine	794bd29f-bba.pdf
LOS City of Elk River	ea010268-eb8.pdf
LOS Lower Rum River WMO	3f50789c-c76.pdf
LOS Pollinator Friendly Alliance	60acc79-08e.pdf
LOS Rice Creek WD	34128cb3-1f7.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?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

Yes, Scott SWCD



Changing Yards and Minds

Overcoming Barriers to Ecoscaping

Influence perceptions, practices, and policies in the 11-county metro to encourage ecoscaping by launching multi-pronged outreach campaigns, elevating demonstration project educational value, and engaging local leaders to adopt eco-friendly policies.

Perception

- Inventory existing outreach resources
- Implement multi-pronged public outreach and media campaign
- Host up to 99 educational workshops for the public and community leaders

Practice

- Elevate educational value of 11-22 highly-visible demonstration projects
- Provide educational signage and promotion
- Support community events or tours at project sites

Policy

- Inventory existing native plant policies
- Directly engage local leaders and community groups
- Create model policy packages for adaptation statewide

Investigate barriers to behavior change using Community Based Social Marketing, surveys, and focus groups to inform all aspects of outreach campaign

Conservation Ethic & Ecoscaping

Project will be modeled for statewide dissemination

Traditional lawn is the most irrigated, fertilized, and managed, non-edible crop in the U.S.



