



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2021 Request for Proposal

## General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2021-385

**Proposal Title:** 375 Underserved Youth Learn Minnesota Ecosystems by Canoe

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Kurt Simer

**Organization:** YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities

**Office Telephone:** (612) 465-0552

**Email:** kurt.simer@ymcamn.org

## Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Increase opportunity for 375 underserved, diverse teens, from urban and first-ring suburbs, to experience and connect to environmental sciences in the natural world through YMCA canoeing/learning expeditions with experienced

**Funds Requested:** \$375,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** 2024-06-30

**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

## Narrative

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

We propose to EXPAND this leadership and environmental education program to an additional 375 disadvantaged teens (most from YMCA after-school and teen programs) who, without funding, might never see the Minnesota wilderness. Youth will live immersed in nature with goals that they gain an appreciation of the Minnesota Wilderness and then use their knowledge and future leadership to use and preserve outdoor spaces.

The program was born of a recognition that youth were facing an equity gap in the cities and not participating in outdoor activities, and had little access the true Minnesota wilderness. A survey conducted in 2013 of youth through non-profit organizations in the cities indicated that 89% of youth stated they did not participate in outdoor activities, but they wanted to. In 2015 the YMCA began operation of this program to give underserved, diverse youth experiences in the wilderness. Today the program has grown to serve over 300 teens each summer, and is the second largest YMCA program of its kind in the nation.

Providing this opportunity for urban teens will advance the understanding of environmental ethics in our diverse communities and build community-wide integration of conservation, as well as ongoing participation in stewardship of

### **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.**

We are expanding this program because many any underserved youth are unaware of the value of our Minnesota wilderness, or how the loss of habitats will affect their future lives. They have had little or no experience in the outdoors. These at risk and underserved kids do not have the means to travel in nature without financial assistance.

On these expeditions youth will have some fun and an opportunity to experience nature firsthand, and see the world that exists beyond the sights, sounds, and smells of the city. Using the YMCA curriculum, they will:

- Learn camp craft and how to leave a small footprint in nature.
- Study wildlife and its natural habitat.
- Learn about native plants as pollinators and food sources.
- Learn about careers in natural resources, ecotourism, and environmental science.
- Gain experiences that will inspire further support, study, and volunteer service for the preservation of Minnesota wilderness.
- Develop lifelong leadership skills.

Expanding this program for an additional 375 underserved youth ages 12-17 will allow a total of 675 youth to camp and canoe through the natural laboratory of Minnesota's lakes, rivers, and forest areas investigating bio-systems and seeing firsthand both pristine and environmentally impacted areas.

### **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?**

Our goal is to expand our program to add an additional 375 teens who have few opportunities to experience nature, camping, or gain knowledge of Minnesota's wilderness. These youth would not be able to participate without financial assistance. Minnesota benefits as youth participants from underserved communities, who would not have this opportunity without financial aid, will understand the impact they have on the environment and gain a lifelong conservation ethic.

## Activities and Milestones

**Activity 1: An additional 375 youth from underserved communities will access and explore Minnesota wilderness**

**Activity Budget:** \$187,500

**Activity Description:**

The YMCA will provide scholarships for youth from underserved communities so they can have the opportunity to access a wilderness experience. Staff will work with area programs to invite and encourage participation of the target population.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
An additional 375 youth from underserved communities will access and explore Minnesota wilderness	2023-08-31

**Activity 2: Staffing of the project**

**Activity Budget:** \$187,500

**Activity Description:**

Support for the program staff point person who will manage all staff support and campers and camper family needs, program operations, and evaluation collection.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Completion Date
375 youth indicate increase understanding of ecosystems, pollutions, and environmental stewardship	2023-07-31
Project Staffing	2023-07-31

## 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?**

Program outcome evaluation will provide the YMCA a solid basis for leveraging sustainable funding going forward. The YMCA will use the outcome data to engage funders through foundation and corporate grants, annual giving, events and sponsorships to help sustain this program at the greater capacity.

Note\* this application is not in any way related to our 2021 application.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Kurt Simer

**Job Title:** Project Manager, BOLD & GOLD

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

We propose to expand the program to an additional 375 urban teens (most from YMCA after-school and teen programs) who, without funding, might never see Minnesota wilderness. For six days they live immersed in nature where they gain connection and learn the worth of preserving habitats, reducing their footprint, and practicing life-long conservation ethics.

**Organization:** YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities

**Organization Description:**

Established in 1856, the YMCA of the Greater Twin Cities is a nonprofit dedicated to strengthening communities through youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Our IT infrastructure supports 29 YMCA branches and program sites, 8 overnight camps, 10 day camps, and 90 childcare locations serving 322,000 participants annually, including public access to WiFi (important in the rural communities), and supporting the safety (emergency phone systems, cameras, and the ability to push out security windows updates to all the branch devices) of everyone at the Y – preschool to silver sneakers.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
1 program staff		Project support staff to manage operations and support campers and camper families			0%	1.8		\$187,500
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$187,500</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-

<b>Other Expenses</b>								
		Scholarships for youth from underserved communities	Provide access to environmental canoeing/camping experience					\$187,500
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$187,500</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$375,000</b>

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				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-



## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [8d556997-dda.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

The YMCA camping program will provide scholarships to youth from underserved populations who will have the opportunity to canoe and camp in pristine Minnesota wilderness. The map indicates the three launching sites for the trips.

#### *Financial Capacity*

File: [63cf51e9-baa.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?**

No



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# YMCA ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION BY CANOE



Engaging urban teens from the 7-county Twin Cities area to experience outdoor learning to build life-long conservation ethics.

