

**Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund**

# 2021 Request for Proposal

## **General Information**

**Proposal ID:** 2021-042

**Proposal Title:** Increasing Outdoor Learning For Young Minnesotans

## **Project Manager Information**

**Name:** Shannon Walz

**Organization:** Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center

**Office Telephone:** (218) 353-7414

**Email:** development@wolf-ridge.org

## **Project Basic Information**

**Project Summary:** Wolf Ridge seeks scholarships for equitable access to authentic, hands on learning experiences in the outdoors that supports our Minnesota schools and achievement of the ENRTF strategic plan priority goals.

**Funds Requested:** $450,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** 2024-08-31

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Environmental Education (C)

## **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.**

Wolf Ridge is seeking funds to provide scholarships that enable student learning outcomes that achieve the LCCMR's ENRTF Strategic Plan goals and support the environmental learning happening in classrooms throughout MN . Scholarship funds are necessary to sustain and enhance outdoor based teaching of thousands of Minnesotan school children from all economic backgrounds. Before the pandemic induced recession, WR was already seeing 40+% of our youth coming from low income homes. Even more children are now experiencing economic insecurity.   
  
No public schools use operating budget funds for the Wolf Ridge tuition.The cost to attend Wolf Ridge is $73 per day, with most schools attending for 3 -5 days, enabled through community based fundraising. Given that more than 1 in 10 Minnesotans applied for unemployment assistance due to COVID19, the ENRTF funds will ensure that students can attend on scholarships and Wolf Ridge can recover more strongly from COVID19 impacts.  
  
In addition, online learning is increasing the achievement gap in our student population due to access to resources such as internet and computers as well as learning support at home. We will help close that gap by creating customized learning support that can be done online or in the school communities.

**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.**

Each year Wolf Ridge serves approximately 12,000 students, teachers and adult chaperones. Due to the 2020 COVID19 outbreak, Wolf Ridge had to close it campus from mid March through August 2020. This means that 1000's of Minnesota youth missed the chance for outdoor learning experiences, a highlight of their school career. We are seeking funds to ensure a minimum of 3000 students/year are provided scholarship that enables a minimum of 3 days of outdoor learning at the center. Every student learning experience will include content on ENRTF Strategic Plan goals. This grant will increase access to Wolf Ridge programming onsite for the 2021-2024 school years. Scholarships would ensure that schools are able to provide all students the ability to participate in our unique hands-on learning experiences. Research from Stanford University shows that experiences at residential EE centers increases classroom learning.  
  
Scholarship funds would also provide tutoring naturalists who support students at most risk from falling behind. We will work closely with the teachers from the schools we serve to identify students in need of extra support. Our schools are our valued partners and this funding will help both Wolf Ridge and Minnesota schools as we recover from COVID19.

**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?**

Providing over 30,000 students over the course of the grant period, throughout Minnesota, with immersive outdoor learning experiences rooted in our mission, Wolf Ridge outcomes align perfectly with the goals of public protection, conservation, preservation and enhancement of the state's natural resources. A minimum of 9000 students will be provided scholarships for a 3 day learning experience at the center. Scholarships will only be provided to students who take coursework that directly aligns with LCCMR's ENRTF strategic goals for developing skills and knowledge in Outdoor Recreation and Open Space; Air and Energy, Water; or, Habitat, Fish, and Wildlife.

## **Activities and Milestones**

### **Activity 1: Locate Schools with Highest Need**

**Activity Budget:** $450,000

**Activity Description:**Wolf Ridge has fantastic relationships with our more than 180 partnered schools, many whom have been attending Wolf Ridge for decades. Additionally, we are continuously communicating with new schools about how to access our programs. To locate schools in need of scholarships we will send an email to school administrators about scholarship opportunities, including a short application to apply. For tutoring support we will work closely with the teachers in the schools. The teachers will identify the students who need support and connect them with the Wolf Ridge tutoring support. Our schools are our invaluable partners. These scholarship funds are intended to strengthen our ability to work with them, close the learning achievement gaps they are experiencing and make sure the experience is accessible.  
  
We give scholarships to schools based on need. 40+% of the students that attend Wolf Ridge programming qualify for free and reduced lunch and 18% identify as non-white.

**Activity Milestones:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Description** | **Completion Date** |
| Send scholarship information and application to schools that we serve and new audiences. | 2021-07-31 |
| Work with schools to identify students who need extra learning support to pair tutors | 2021-12-31 |
| Receive application materials from schools annually ending in 2023 | 2023-12-31 |
| A minimum of 9000 students experience 3-5 days of outdoor learning at Wolf Ridge. | 2024-07-31 |

## **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?**Over the course of our nearly 50 year history, Wolf Ridge has served over 700,000 students, teachers and parents from more than 120 communities in MN. Accessibility has always been a core value when providing our environmental education experiences. These grant funds will allow us to increase our accessibility over the course of our project and aligns well with our goal of increasing available scholarship dollars for the long term. Wolf Ridge will use the success and stories that arise from this grant to establish a scholarship endowment fund that secures long term, sustainable funding.

## **Project Manager and Organization Qualifications**

**Project Manager Name:** Shannon Walz

**Job Title:** Associate Director

**Provide description of the project manager’s qualifications to manage the proposed project.**Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center is the largest accredited residential environmental learning center in the nation. The Project Manager is also the center's Associate Director & Education Director who currently manages more than $2 Million of annual programmatic funds used in operation of the center. They also manage up to 100 staff providing multi-day learning experiences for more than 12,000 participants annually, through seven different educational programs of the center.

**Organization:** Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center

**Organization Description:**Founded in 1971, Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center is a 501(c)(3) and was the first environmental learning center in the nation to be accredited as a K-12 school. It is recognized nationally and internationally as a leader in environmental education.  
  
The Wolf Ridge campus is located in Finland. MN and sits atop a high ridgeline overlooking Lake Superior It includes 2,000 acres of forests, inland lakes, and streams. Our overnight school program serves approximately 12,000 middle school students, their teachers and parent chaperones every year. Students come from all over the state of Minnesota to study environmental science for 3 to 5 days during the school year. During the summer, our camp programs run from 1 day to 4 weeks. 600+ young people and families experience outdoor adventure with components of environmental education woven into all of the activities.

## **Budget Summary**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category / Name** | **Subcategory or Type** | **Description** | **Purpose** | **Gen. Ineli gible** | **% Bene fits** | **# FTE** | **Class ified Staff?** | **$ Amount** |
| **Personnel** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Naturalists |  | Educating students |  |  | 20% | 36 |  | $250,000 |
| Administrative Staff |  | Organizational oversight, management and office duties |  |  | 20% | 13.5 |  | $40,000 |
| Custodians |  | Facility Cleaning |  |  | 20% | 12.75 |  | $55,000 |
| Food Service |  | Meal service for participants |  |  | 20% | 13.5 |  | $70,000 |
| Maintenance |  | Facility Maintenance |  |  | 20% | 10.5 |  | $35,000 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **$450,000** |
| **Contracts and Services** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Equipment, Tools, and Supplies** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Capital Expenditures** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Acquisitions and Stewardship** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Travel In Minnesota** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Travel Outside Minnesota** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Printing and Publication** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Other Expenses** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Sub Total** | **-** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **Grand Total** | **$450,000** |

### **Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category/Name** | **Subcategory or Type** | **Description** | **Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request** |

### **Non ENRTF Funds**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Specific Source** | **Use** | **Status** | **Amount** |
| **State** |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **State Sub Total** | **-** |
| **Non-State** |  |  |  |  |
| Cash | Schulze Foundation | Scholarships for Catholic Schools to attend Wolf Ridge | Secured | $24,000 |
| Cash | Weesner Yellow Bus Funds | Scholarships for travel to Wolf Ridge | Secured | $20,000 |
|  |  |  | **Non State Sub Total** | **$44,000** |
|  |  |  | **Funds Total** | **$44,000** |

## **Attachments**

### **Required Attachments**

#### ***Visual Component***

File: [ec2379eb-be4.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/map/ec2379eb-be4.pdf)

#### ***Alternate Text for Visual Component***

The visual we have provided includes highlights from our Wolf Ridge school brochure, including what does a day look like at Wolf Ridge, sample daily schedule & examples of focused curriculum tracks, including Science, Team Building & Personal Growth, Sustainability, & Outdoor Skills. Also included in this visual is Wolf Ridge by the Numbers, which are some interesting stats that represent the Wolf Ridge school program.

#### ***Financial Capacity***

File: [a48b7516-621.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/financial_capacity/a48b7516-621.pdf)

#### ***Board Resolution or Letter***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **File** |
| Wolf Ridge Board ByLaws | [cf9b235f-c2a.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/cf9b235f-c2a.pdf) |

### **Optional Attachments**

#### ***Support Letter or Other***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **File** |
| 2019 Financial Audit | [c56f51c5-ed8.pdf](https://lccmrprojectmgmt.leg.mn/media/attachments/c56f51c5-ed8.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