



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2022 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2022-007

Proposal Title: Cultivating Minnesota's Next Generation of Natural Heritage Protectors

Project Manager Information

Name: David Remucal

Organization: U of MN - Landscape Arboretum

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Create a long-term appreciation for Minnesota's natural heritage through immersive leading-edge research in diverse grade school classrooms, brought together across MN to engage and work with professional conservation researchers.

Funds Requested: \$480,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30 2025

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.

An increasing number of plant and animal species are becoming endangered, and fewer people are pursuing botany and ecology degrees as well as careers in science, natural resources and environmental advocacy necessary to study and preserve these species. There is an urgent need to educate and develop citizens with a conservation ethic and direct hands-on experiences and knowledge from working with native plants and landscapes. Engaging a diversity of students across Minnesota's socioeconomic spectrum with authentic plant science experiences is an important strategy to address this problem. Grade school science experiments are not often considered true research; students are walked through experiments with known outcomes, often only inspiring those students who are already science-minded. To engage and inspire more students, we must have students perform innovative, authentic research – addressing questions with no known answers, where they interact with other student scientists doing similar work and can be mentored by established scientists working in their fields of study. We can expand the science-based conservation ethic of students and communities across Minnesota with authentic conservation research experiences, challenging student scientists to collect, analyze, share results, confront potentially inconclusive outcomes or opportunities for further study and propose future research questions.

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.

This project brings an immersive semester or year-long research program to young students around the state, offering a depth of experience with Minnesota's natural heritage rarely available at middle school levels. Project Orchid is offered by the University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum (UMLA), leveraging expertise and infrastructure of the Native Orchid Conservation Program, in which students grow native orchids and collect data in their classrooms, seeking answers to real-time discovery research questions. This proposal will expand Project Orchid across Minnesota. Students will interact with UMLA staff and other classrooms to compare results and share ideas for future conservation research. They will also interact with students in similar programs based at the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center in Maryland and Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Florida. Project Orchid will connect Minnesota grade school students with vital botanical research being conducted in their state and region, highlighting local environmental connections while inspiring students and positively impacting the natural world. This partnership is designed to 1) give students the confidence to implement scientific inquiry, 2) provide access to real-time research for local plant species, and 3) demonstrate how their work can make a difference in today's research and conservation of native plants.

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?

This project will cultivate deep, sustained interest in Minnesota's natural heritage in the next generations of scientists, educators, leaders and citizens.

- Engage 24 classrooms by the end of the granting period, immersing students in semester or year-long research and curricula that will focus on protection, conservation and preservation of Minnesota's native flora.

- Bring a scientifically-based conservation ethic to classrooms across the state, addressing schools in metro, suburban and rural locations, across the full spectrum of school resource availability. Specifically, classrooms reaching different economic and cultural backgrounds will be engaged (for example, diverse metro schools and tribal schools).

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Host annual student symposium to bring together diverse classrooms in a meaningful, professional-style scientific conference setting.

Activity Budget: \$139,000

Activity Description:

Convene students at an annual student symposium at the end of each school year to present their results in a scientific conference and interact with each other and plant science professionals. Parents will be encouraged to attend to see the results of their children's work. Similar to a professional scientific conference, students will have the opportunity to participate in poster sessions or through presentations. There may also be opportunities to send students to a national orchid research conference hosted by UMLA, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center or Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Organize gathering of students and teachers in a professional-style conference for school year 2022-2023.	June 30 2023
Organize gathering of students and teachers in a professional-style conference for school year 2023-2024.	June 30 2024
Organize gathering of students and teachers in a professional-style conference for school year 2024-2025.	June 30 2025

Activity 2: Collect and produce ecologically appropriate native orchids relevant to each classroom's geography

Activity Budget: \$71,000

Activity Description:

Grow native orchids for classroom projects and expand curricula as well as the suite of species for additional regions of the state. Background research will be carried out to establish classroom research questions. Some travel will be required as the program grows, with efforts made to bring regionally appropriate plant materials to schools (i.e. for a Duluth school, seedlings will be brought to a classroom from seed collected within 20 miles of Duluth). This will allow each class to plant their orchids in local protected natural areas, parks, or botanic gardens at the end of each semester.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Collect seed and begin propagation of plant material one year prior to classroom experiments.	September 30 2022
Collect seed and begin propagation of plant material one year prior to classroom experiments.	September 30 2023
Collect seed and begin propagation of plant material one year prior to classroom experiments.	September 30 2024

Activity 3: Hold workshop for teacher training and annual evaluation of program and curriculum.

Activity Budget: \$58,000

Activity Description:

Convene teachers at an annual workshop at UMLA to discuss further curricula refinement, classroom engagement improvements, and identify species and research questions to be further addressed. Teachers already engaged in the program will assist in leading discussions to onboard new teachers. All teachers will work with UMLA staff to learn about

orchid biology, plant ecology and Minnesota landscapes. Experienced teachers and UMLA staff will lead evaluations and develop continued improvements to the Project Orchid curriculum, expanding its application to additional grade levels and school resource levels.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Organize and host annual teacher workshop.	August 31 2022
Organize and host annual teacher workshop.	August 31 2023
Organize and host annual teacher workshop.	August 31 2024

Activity 4: Implement Project Orchid in the classroom, bringing Minnesota conservation and cutting-edge research to 24 diverse classrooms across the state

Activity Budget: \$212,000

Activity Description:

To facilitate research-based science learning, trained teachers, with assistance from UMLA research and education staff, will oversee the setup of classroom experiments, weekly data measurements taken by students, and results analysis. Students will engage in all aspects of this process, from setup and planting to final analyses and data sharing. Project Orchid offers a growing library of resources relating to conservation strategies, botany, ecology, and Minnesota habitats that will allow individual classrooms to customize and enhance their understanding of data collection, analyses, and processes for determining viability of results and future research pathways. Project Orchid classroom research will expose student scientists to authentic experiences in each of the four strands identified in the 2019 MN State Academic Standards for Science. This comprehensive research experience covers the experiment itself and the analysis and sharing of data as well as the students' communication of results to communities and other students. Expanding to 24 classrooms over 3 years, Project Orchid will reach 2,400 Minnesota students in both rural and metro area schools. Students will interact, in person and through technology, with UMLA research scientists and other schools around the state and country performing similar experiments, sharing and analyzing data together.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Implement Project Orchid participation in 10 classrooms, providing equipment and training to teachers.	November 30 2022
Increase participation of classes to 24, again providing equipment and training to teachers at new locations.	November 30 2023
Increase participation of classes to 18, again providing equipment and training to teachers at new locations.	November 30 2024

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Million Orchids Project	Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden	Exchange and share parallel expansion of curricula. Support and exchange of ideas relating to program development of logistics and management. Coordination of their program's students/classrooms in interactions with Project Orchid students/classrooms.	No
Orchids in the Classroom	Smithsonian Environmental Research Center	Exchange and share parallel expansion of curricula. Support and exchange of ideas relating to program development of logistics and management. Coordination of their program's students/classrooms in interactions with Project Orchid students/classrooms.	No

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?

UMLA is committed to the Project Orchid model and its expansion as it uniquely combines vital research with conservation and education programming. The experience and success of Project Orchid will continue to be leveraged for diversified funding and will continue as funding is available. It will be funded and supported similar to other UMLA programs – through a combination of volunteer work, fundraising, earned income, and endowment support. In other words, external funding sources (grants, individual giving, corporate support) will continue to be pursued to sustain and grow this program.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: David Remucal

Job Title: Curator of Endangered Plants

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

Dr. Remucal is the Curator of Endangered Plants at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum where he has developed and managed the Plant Conservation Program since its inception in 2013. A graduate of Carleton College, he received his PhD in plant reproductive ecology and evolution from the University of Colorado. He will provide overall project direction. As manager of the Plant Conservation Program, he has demonstrated the ability to manage and develop budgets, direct volunteers and staff, work with stakeholders, coordinate with remote and local partners, communicate program information and results to a variety of audiences, and expand the scope and influence of the MLA Conservation Program. As part of outreach and education for the program, he teaches and presents to multiple groups every year and works to reach a broad audience around the state. The Plant Conservation Program strives to work with a broad coalition of partners for its work, engaging with regional NGOs, federal, state and local governmental agencies and researchers and groups nationally and internationally-based. Remucal and the Plant Conservation Program has parlayed two previous LCCMR grants into a nationally-recognized orchid research and conservation program.

Organization: U of MN - Landscape Arboretum

Organization Description:

The U of MN Landscape Arboretum, founded in 1958, is a 1,200-acre premier northern garden that includes 28 specialty gardens, 45 plant and tree collections, 18 model landscapes and natural areas, and an extensive collection of northern hardy plants. Located 35 minutes west of Minneapolis-St. Paul, the Arboretum's 12.5 miles of garden paths and hiking trails welcome 500,000 visitors each year who are inspired by their explorations of nature, the many seasonal displays and exhibits, and hands-on educational programming. The Arboretum's mission is to welcome, inform and inspire all

through outstanding displays, protected natural areas, horticultural research and education. Its vision is to be the premier northern landscape arboretum, welcoming all to enjoy, learn from and connect with nature.

The U of MN Landscape Arboretum was born out of the University of Minnesota's Horticultural Research Center and is an established, nationally recognized research institution that includes a Plant Conservation Program focused on developing and implementing conservation strategies for imperiled native plants of the upper Midwest region.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
UMLA Education Staff		Work with program manager and classrooms to ensure MN science standards are being addressed, assist in development of new program participants			26.7%	0.3		\$36,000
UMLA Greenhouse Technician		Manage plant propagation and production for all Project Orchid classrooms, work with students as needed			24.1%	0.3		\$15,000
Plant Conservation Program Botanist		Help refine curricula and work with individual classrooms and students, and collect necessary seeds for propagation material			24.1%	0.6		\$43,500
Project Orchid Manager		Central point person for Project Orchid - Manage and coordinate implementation and expansion of Project Orchid with classrooms and UMLA staff, assist in prep of classroom plant material, including collection of necessary seeds			24.1%	3		\$190,000
Curator of Endangered Plants		Principal Investigator and Project Coordinator - work with students, develop research question directions, manage plant material development and selection for classrooms, and collect necessary seeds			26.7%	0.6		\$56,000
							Sub Total	\$340,500
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Field, lab and greenhouse supplies to propagate classroom material	Supplies needed at UMLA for orchid seed collection and propagation in support of classroom experiments.					\$6,000
	Equipment	Classroom greenhouse setup - for 28 classrooms	Light shelf/greenhouse setups used by classrooms to perform Project Orchid research. Each setup includes growing material as well as equipment to collect					\$13,000

			data. 28 classroom setups are going to be provided in anticipation of losing a few classrooms over the course of the granting period and recruiting replacement classrooms.					
							Sub Total	\$19,000
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Bus transportation - and average of \$850/roundtrip. For participation 10 schools in 2023, 18 schools in 2024 and 24 schools in 2025	Travel for students for annual symposium at UMLA (or potential other location)					\$45,000
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	UMLA staff travel to classrooms. Mileage estimated based on 2021 UM mileage reimbursement rate of \$0.56/mi. Assuming 5 trips to each classroom on average and travel to sites all around the state can be averaged to 150 miles roundtrip.	Regular travel for UMLA staff (Program Coordinator and Plant Conservation staff and Education staff) to classrooms to engage with students and teachers in person.					\$22,000
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Mileage for one UMLA staff who will travel to collect locally appropriate seed material for propagation for each classroom, with remaining seed placed in UMLA long-term seedbank. Mileage estimated based on 2021 UM mileage reimbursement rate of \$0.56/mi. Average of 150 miles roundtrip, and an estimated half of schools each year will need seed we can not already provide.	Travel is needed to collect seed for material for participating Project Orchid Classrooms.					\$2,500
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Lodging and per diem for one UMLA staff who will travel to collect locally appropriate seed material for propagation for each classroom, with remaining seed placed in UMLA long-term seedbank. Estimated that about 1/3 of all trips each year will require overnight stay (3 in 2022, 6 in 2023 and 8 in 2024)	Travel is needed to collect seed for material for participating Project Orchid Classrooms.					\$3,000

							Sub Total	\$72,500
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Conference expenses for the annual student symposium, these include venue rental, food, scholarships for students to attend, and a stipend for potential chaperones if needed. The expectation is that over the three years 16 students will represent each participating classroom for a total of 832 students over the 3 years.	Conference expenses are necessary to host the annual symposium and to ensure that all students, regardless of their economic situation, would be able to attend.					\$45,000
		Stipend for teachers for annual workshop, the stipend will average \$60 for each teacher. The expectation is that over the three years one teacher will represent each participating classroom for a total of 52 teachers over the 3 years.	Stipend is to help enable teachers to attend the annual workshop. Returning teachers can learn new skills, help review and enhance curricula, and share experiences with each other and with teachers new to Project Orchid.					\$3,000
							Sub Total	\$48,000
							Grand Total	\$480,000

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				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [4bb94ea1-35f.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Graphic depiction of four proposed activities, photographs of young orchids and Project Orchid students measuring and planting orchids in pots. Icon representations of classrooms learning about orchids and exchanging ideas and information between other Project Orchid classrooms, as well as teachers attending annual workshops and students attending annual symposium....

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
Letter of Support from Project Orchid teacher at Wayzata - Kristine Swartchick	07f97fda-e2c.pdf
Letter of Support from the North American Orchid Conservation Center	868c614b-d7c.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, or sale of products and assets?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

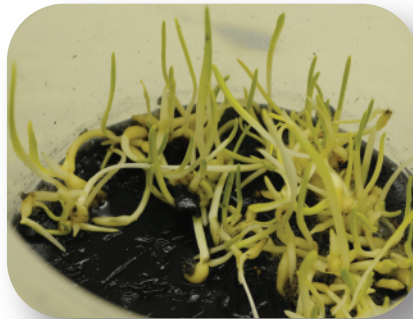
N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

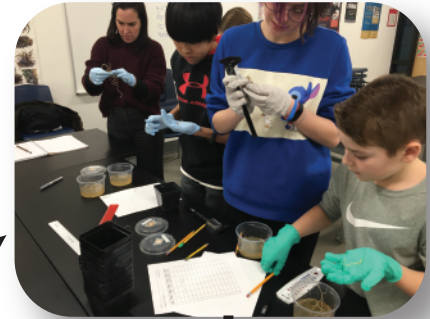
No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

Yes, Sponsored Projects Administration

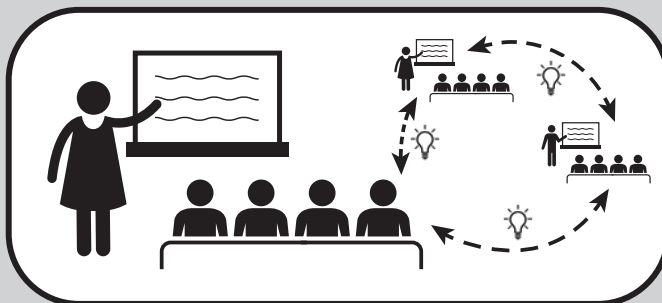


Grow ecologically appropriate native orchids for each classroom



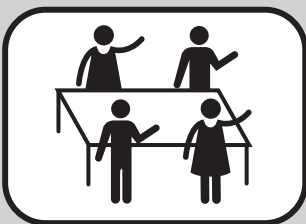
Photos by Kris Swartchick

Project Orchid Classroom



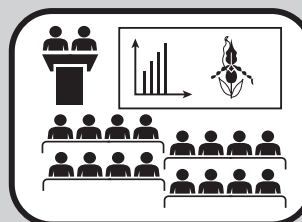
- Set up experiment in 24 diverse classrooms around the state
- Record, share and analyze data
- Prepare to communicate results

Teacher Workshop



- Orchid conservation basics
- Project overview
- Materials, curriculum and timeline

Student Symposium



- Share research findings with other student scientists
- Propose ideas for new/next research questions
- Share learning with community

