



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2022 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2022-146

Proposal Title: Minnesota Green Schoolyards

Project Manager Information

Name: Eric Weiss

Organization: The Trust for Public Land

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Environmentally-focused renovation of three schoolyards, designed through student- and community-centered design process, to be park-like spaces that demonstrate water, air, and habitat improvements and foster next-generation stewards.

Funds Requested: \$1,088,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30 2024

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.

Our schoolyards are packed with potential. And yet, too few schoolyards are designed with the kinds of green space and play features that the school and greater community need, desire, and deserve. Unintentionally, conventional schoolyard design can contribute to ground and stormwater issues, loss of pollinator habitat, and exacerbate heat island impacts. Additionally, aging infrastructure, outdated schoolyard design, traffic, safety issues, and the lack of outdoor classrooms limit the potential of these outdoor spaces. Due to budget restraints, schools struggle to update aging infrastructure, much less reimagine schoolyards as environment-centered spaces.

Minnesota's 3,000 schools are logical sites to protect and enhance our environment and natural resources. A burgeoning collection of research proves the vital benefits of outdoor play for kids—including boosting physical and mental health, reducing behavior issues, improving academic achievement, and fostering next-generation environmental stewards. Green Schoolyards are park-like outdoor places designed by students and the community and open to the public. A popular and well-tested model nationally, many other states are rapidly expanding the number of green schoolyards. The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and its partners are working to advance schoolyard efforts across Minnesota.

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 imagines, funds, and builds schoolyards packed with trees, native plants and grasses, gardens, and infrastructure 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. Since every green schoolyard is open to the public outside of regular school hours, they serve as neighborhood parks, where anyone is welcome to experience nature's benefits.

Nationally, TPL has helped to reimagine schoolyards for more than 30 years at over 250 sites. Through an investment from LCCMR, we are setting the stage to address this problem, unlock the potential of Minnesota's schoolyards, and advance a statewide green schoolyard effort unique to the climate and culture of Minnesota. We are seeking support to complete renovations at three additional school sites. Together with existing funding sources, this would allow us to renovate at least one schoolyard in the urban core, a suburban community, and rural communities in northern and southern Minnesota. We strongly feel geographic representation is paramount to establishing a long-term program that meets communities' needs across Minnesota.

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 project aims to create and support the infrastructure, 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 renovate schoolyards to address air, water, and habitat issues. The schoolyards will serve as replicable local examples to interested school districts and stakeholders, helping to spur additional projects and program support. Each site will be evaluated to identify best practices and outcomes, which will guide future renovation projects.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Schoolyard Renovation Projects: facilitate participatory design process and project-based learning, serve as project manager for three schoolyard renovation projects

Activity Budget: \$1,083,500

Activity Description:

Three schools will be selected for construction and demonstration of green schoolyard improvements through an open application process using a set of criteria including but not limited to: high potential environmental and natural resource impact; geographic mix; project readiness and support; and commitment of matching funds. Selected schools will partner with TPL to integrate project development and design into school activities, including classroom lessons on water, air, habitat, and environmental stewardship. Schools will be expected to secure local commitments to ensure long-term maintenance, use of outdoor classrooms, and community access outside of regular school hours. 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 Children & Nature Network will support the 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. The three demonstration sites will benefit from lessons learned at proceeding Minnesota pilot projects, advancing during the summer and fall of 2021.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Review and score proposals, select demonstration project sites	August 31 2022
Finalize school site work plans, timeline, budgets, partnership agreements, and contracts	September 30 2022
Prepare and execute curriculum/project-based learning and site programming plans	October 31 2022
Conduct participatory planning and design efforts	March 31 2023
Complete and secure green schoolyard designs, budgets, and approvals	April 30 2023
Complete construction of demonstration projects, celebrate schoolyard grand opening	August 31 2023
Foster and support schoolyard stewardship group	May 31 2024
Collect and share lessons learned, evaluation, and success stories	June 30 2024

Activity 2: Cross-sector efforts to build statewide program: advisory committee leadership, information dissemination, program oversight, and increased visibility

Activity Budget: \$4,500

Activity Description:

The Minnesota Green Schoolyards program is supported through a multidisciplinary group of advisory committee members representing conservation and natural resource organizations; public health; education and academia; nonprofit and community organizations; youth organizations; and state agencies. The Advisory Committee supports schoolyard programs, policies, and initiatives, disseminates resources to program partners, and connects interested individuals and organizations. The Advisory 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. Committee members will disseminate data and evaluation results to decision-makers and the public through websites, presentations, and resource creation. Ultimately, the Advisory Committee will pursue efforts to sustain and expand the program's impact, leading to long-term statewide implementation. Finally, the group, led by TPL and Children & Nature Network, will provide technical assistance and guidance to schools and districts interested in pursuing renovation projects. 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 integrating environmental stewardship into school curriculum.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Hold regular Advisory Committee meetings	June 30 2024
Develop and implement a long-term action plan	June 30 2024
Support data analysis, demonstration schoolyard transformation, resource dissemination, and technical assistance	June 30 2024
Maintain Minnesota Green Schoolyards website	June 30 2024
Provide technical assistance to nascent green schoolyard programs	June 30 2024

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Jaime Zaplatosch	Children & Nature Network (C&NN)	Children & Nature Network will be on the Advisory Committee. Jaime will provide technical assistance to the three school districts undergoing schoolyard renovations. She will help facilitate the advisory committee and other statewide planning efforts alongside TPL. C&NN leads a global movement to increase children's access to nature.	Yes
Jeremy Vann	Minnesota Department of Health - SHIP	Advisory 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
Caryn Mohr	University of Minnesota Extension - Regional Sustainable Development Partnership	Advisory 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
Shelli-Kae Foster	Youth Eco Solutions (YES!)	Advisory Committee member representing Youth Eco Solutions, a youth-led natural resources, and environment group. YES! will also support school planning and engagement activities.	No
Jonee Bingham Kuhlman	University of Minnesota - GreenStep Schools	Advisory 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.	No
Karen Harrison	Minnesota Department of Natural Resources - School Forests	Advisory 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
Kristin Raab	Minnesota Department of Health	Advisory Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Health - Environmental Health division.	No
Anna Lynn	Minnesota Department of Health	Advisory 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
Jill Chamberlain	Blue Cross Blue Shield of MN - Center for Prevention.	Advisory 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
John Olson	Minnesota Department of Education	Advisory Committee representing education, will bring deep statewide connections and network, and curriculum development skills.	No
Dave Cowan	Minnesota Department of Transportation	Advisory Committee member representing Minnesota Department of Transportation - Safe Routes to School.	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?

A primary goal of the project is to promote green schoolyards as a standard practice across our state. With baseline schoolyards data and local demonstration projects, we aim to raise awareness of the multiple benefits and collective impact of green schoolyards, garner local interest in a model proven to work in other parts of the country, and make the case for public and private funding. Data, evaluation, and success stories will be disseminated to decision-makers and the public through websites, statewide trainings, 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. He has over 15 years of professional experience and has enjoyed working with communities in rural, suburban, and urban settings. He has taken his community planning background to roles in the public, nonprofit, private, and philanthropic sectors. Much of his work has been in project and program management, with particular attention paid to long-range planning, community engagement, parks planning, grants management, zoning, and public policy. Eric has been a member of countless collaborative initiatives, both as a committee member, staff member, and chair. As program director of TPL's Community Powered Parks program, Eric leads The Trust for Public Land's Green Schoolyards Program in Minnesota. Eric holds an M.A. in Urban Planning from Minnesota State University, Mankato. In addition to his community planning career, Eric has paid and volunteer experience in the youth development field. He is supported by Susan Schmidt, Minnesota State Director, who has been with TPL for more than 20 years, and the many other TPL green schoolyards program managers across the country.

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. Our schoolyards program has helped to renovate hundreds of schoolyards across the country, with dozens of projects currently in process of completion in cities like Atlanta, Dallas, and Denver and rural communities like Chiloquin, Oregon. Our Minnesota office has completed more than 200 land protection and park creation projects since 1986, permanently protecting and providing public access to nearly 200,000 acres of natural resource-rich land.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Research & Innovation Staff		Evaluation of schoolyard site projects			48%	0.04		\$3,000
Public Ally Support Intern		Project and community engagement support			10%	1		\$21,000
Project Staff		Project management and support, technical assistance provider, advisory committee coordination, data analysis support			48%	1.08		\$143,000
Project Assistant		Project and community engagement support, technical assistance			48%	1.16		\$120,000
Legal Staff		Legal documents and agreements			48%	0.05		\$7,500
Finance Staff		Finance support, invoicing			48%	0.1		\$9,000
							Sub Total	\$303,500
Contracts and Services								
Children & Nature Network (C&NN)	Sub award	Capacity building, advisory committee and network support, technical assistance, communications support, resource creation.				0.1		\$13,500
Undetermined	Sub award	Community Engagement Partner. Support, at each site, to a community and/or environmental organization to support school demonstration sites in community engagement and education, curriculum development, and site design.				0.1		\$15,000
Landscape Architecture	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Design-build landscape architecture consultant to support site-specific schoolyard design.				1.2		\$195,000
Undetermined	Sub award	Demonstration school staffing. Support to selected demonstration project school sites to cover staff time during planning, engagement, and programmatic efforts.				0.1		\$15,000

Undetermined	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Permits, surveys, and approvals				0.5		\$75,000
							Sub Total	\$313,500
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
		Green Schoolyards Capital	Green Schoolyards construction and infrastructure					\$450,000
							Sub Total	\$450,000
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Travel expenses	Travel to school sites for partner meetings, events, and engagements. Travel expenses will be dependent on selected location and reflect the potential need for mileage and overnight stays. Costs may be reallocated if sites selection reduces need for long travel.					\$3,750
							Sub Total	\$3,750
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								

	Printing	Green schoolyards resource printing hard copies	Print and share statewide assessment findings, school resources, and environmental curriculum.					\$2,250
							Sub Total	\$2,250
Other Expenses								
		Stewardship and Activation	Schoolyard maintenance, activation, and programming					\$15,000
							Sub Total	\$15,000
							Grand Total	\$1,088,000

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	General operating funds and Blue Cross Blue Shield	Project management	Secured	\$47,500
In-Kind	General operating	Advisory Committee membership and project support	Secured	\$20,000
Cash	Capital budget	Schoolyard site matching funds	Pending	\$75,000
In-Kind	General operating	Webpage management	Secured	\$1,500
In-Kind	JPB Foundation	Capacity building and technical assistance	Secured	\$20,000
In-Kind	General operating	School staff involvement	Pending	\$15,000
In-Kind	Grant funds	Capacity support	Potential	\$50,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$229,000
			Funds Total	\$229,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [8c6b886f-5b6.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

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

Minnesota Green Schoolyards builds schoolyards packed with trees, native plants and grasses, gardens, and infrastructure that capture and treat stormwater.

- Are designed to be park-like places
- Designed to improve and protect the environment
- Foster next-generation stewards
- Designed by the community, for the community
- Shared spaces that are open and welcoming to the public

Images of menu of poss...

Financial Capacity

File: [bc052eac-41b.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Authorization Letter	78b14a4f-885.docx

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
Minnesota Department of Health Letter of Support	7bfbba08-86c.pdf
Minnesota Safe Routes to School Letter of Support	7ae53a68-c4f.pdf
Children and Nature Network Letter of Support	dbb9aaad-dd8.pdf
Blue Cross Blue Shield Letter of Support	eff2f50e-6b4.doc

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?

No

MINNESOTA GREEN SCHOOLYARDS

THE
TRUST
FOR
PUBLIC
LAND

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CLASSROOMS



PLAY



STEWARDSHIP



GARDENS



WATER CAPTURE

