



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2022 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2022-283

Proposal Title: • Dodge Nature Center Naturalist for Outreach and Inclusion

Project Manager Information

Name: Pete Cleary

Organization: Dodge Nature Center

Office Telephone: (651) 789-5205

Email: pcleary@dodgenaturecenter.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Through a new naturalist position for outreach, Dodge Nature Center will improve inclusive practices and extend environmental education to students and communities we've not previously engaged.

Funds Requested: \$210,000

Proposed Project Completion: July 31 2025

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?

Region(s): Metro

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.

Everyone deserves quality, equitable environmental education—our mission is to provide that. Yet for people of color and people with disabilities there are real barriers to opportunities and access. These can include a lack of financial and transportation resources, and feeling excluded and unwelcomed in outdoor spaces.

The Twin Cities are culturally, racially and socioeconomically diverse. According to Wilder Research, demographics are shifting toward greater racial and ethnic diversity, particularly of younger people. More Minnesotans will have a diagnosed disability. Expected population growth centers in Ramsey and Washington counties, near Dodge properties.

Scientists say Minnesotans will soon experience more impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affect those living with socioeconomic inequalities, including many people of color. It's imperative that environmental educators support current and future generations as they prepare for and mitigate climate change.

We know outdoor time is vital to children's development and to foster their environmental ethic. Researchers confirm numerous physical, psychological and cognitive benefits to children when they spend time outdoors. The American Academy of Pediatrics says the average 8-12-year-old spends 4.5 hours on screens daily—the pandemic has only exacerbated that. Excessive screen use limits children's non-electronic learning, playtime and outdoor exploration.

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 will fund a new naturalist position dedicated to community outreach and inclusion. With current staffing, Dodge programs are near full capacity. Our strategic plan calls for greater outreach and access for new audiences. By developing relationships with new schools and organizations, we can help address inequities in environmental education on a larger scale. The recent closures of nature centers in the Metro present an opportunity for Dodge to develop relationships with new students, deepen their knowledge of the natural world, and fill a gap in environmental opportunities.

Particularly after this last year, all children can benefit from outdoor time and interaction with naturalists and animals. This naturalist will offer nature programs at community sites, traveling with educational animals to offer more immersive, minds-on experiences, as well as bring more students to Dodge by facilitating scholarships and busing support.

The naturalist will augment our inclusive and culturally relevant practices by examining our curriculum to ensure lessons connect to the lives of all students and present a range of perspectives—not just Western and white perspectives.

They will initiate and foster new relationships with school districts, community organizations, English Language Learner and Early Childhood Family Education programs, among others.

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?

A new naturalist will increase the number of outreach sites and people we engage by 20% each year of the three-year grant period. From a baseline of 60 community sites and 5,000 people, we will reach over 100 sites and reach 8,600 people yearly by 2025. These new visits are possible because the naturalist will forge relationships with community organizations we have not yet engaged with and deepen our connections to existing partners. We commit to funding this position after the grant period, so that the inroads we make in providing equitable environmental education will be sustained.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Expand Equitable and Inclusive Environmental Education Programs to New Students with a Naturalist Dedicated to Community Outreach

Activity Budget: \$210,000

Activity Description:

The objective of this activity is to hire and enable a new naturalist to focus on community outreach and inclusion for the three-year grant period. The naturalist will utilize Dodge's expansive environmental education curriculum of more than 40 topics that are aligned to Minnesota state standards in science and social studies. They will examine this curriculum and ensure it is culturally relevant and inclusive of the broad diversity of students in the Twin Cities. At our four properties and at other community sites, they will teach classes that connect nature to learners' lives and build their environmental ethics. The naturalist will foster children's comfort in the natural world and build their science proficiency through hands-on inquiries in the field.

They will leverage our Teacher-Naturalist volunteers to reduce the student:teacher ratio in outreach classes by training and empowering them to co-teach classes, set up engaging spaces for learning, handle animals, and utilize visual aids and natural objects.

We will track the number of participants, sites, class topics, and scholarships accessed. Through participant surveys, we will evaluate the impact of these classes on student's understanding of the natural world and their responsibility to it.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
Post job description and conduct broad-based recruiting, interview candidates and hire for position	August 31 2022
Naturalist will complete 3 professional development courses in environmental education, diversity, equity and inclusion	September 30 2023
Review Dodge curriculum for cultural relevancy and inclusiveness	September 30 2023
Train 3 Teacher-Naturalist volunteers to co-lead outreach programs	September 30 2023
Increase outreach programs by 20% year-over-year from baseline of 60 sites & 5,000 people	June 30 2025

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools (ISD 197)	West St. Paul-Mendota Heights-Eagan Area Schools (ISD 197)	As our longtime partner, ISD 197 will facilitate our naturalist bringing frequent, regular classes and outdoor experiences to students in programs like Building Bridges, that serves children and parents that are non-native English speakers. The diverse voices of their Advisory Councils will help improve our inclusive practices in environmental education.	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?

We commit to permanently funding this position following the initial grant period. This is possible through “Nourishing Everyone’s Need for Nature,” a comprehensive campaign to secure the health and stability of Dodge Nature Center for the future. Access and equity are central tenets of the campaign and represent our commitment to extending environmental education to students that we have not previously engaged. As we make new connections with schools, organizations and individuals, we will also scale up our fundraising for scholarships and busing support, so that ability to pay is never a barrier to full participation in nature learning.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Pete Cleary

Job Title: Director of Environmental Education

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

Pete has served as Director of Environmental Education at Dodge Nature Center since 2016, but his work as an educator at Dodge dates back to 1993. From intern to seasonal naturalist, to buildings and grounds staff, to full-time naturalist, Pete’s initial work at Dodge was as varied as the seasons. After a short stint at Springbrook Nature Center, Pete returned to Dodge in 2000 as Naturalist/Intern Coordinator. He then moved to Curriculum Coordinator and acted as the naturalist liaison coordinating Dodge’s involvement in the award-winning Garlough Environmental Magnet School in West St. Paul.

As director, he oversees a team of naturalists with a combined 100-plus years of experience in providing quality nature-based education. He oversees interns as well as the Naturalist Fellows program that gives college graduates an intensive year of living, learning and teaching at Dodge.

Pete received his undergraduate degree in natural sciences at St. John’s University and completed graduate work in science education at The Ohio State University. He is an active member and former president of the Minnesota Naturalists’ Association (MNA). Pete has presented at professional conferences of the MNA, Minnesota Association for Environmental Education and the National Association for Interpretation. He has also served as a member of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s Environmental Advisory Board.

Organization: Dodge Nature Center

Organization Description:

Founded in West St. Paul in 1967, Dodge is one of the first nature centers in Minnesota and continues to be a pioneer in environmental education. The main property is the closest nature center to the core of St. Paul and is accessible by car, Metro Transit bus lines, bicycle and the River-to-River Greenway. Dodge opened one of the first nature-based preschools in the U.S. in 2000, which has inspired the creation of similar schools.

4/7/2021

As the Twin Cities metropolitan area continues to develop, Dodge remains a green refuge. We conserve more than 460 acres of forest, wetlands and restored prairie at four sites in the metro area (Cottage Grove, West St. Paul, and Mendota Heights). These sites provide rich habitat for native plants and animals, and let visitors learn firsthand about the importance of conservation. Across these landscapes, we maintain eight miles of hiking and snowshoeing trails. They are free to use and open to the public 365 days of the year.

Our mission is to provide exceptional experiences in nature through environmental education. Through programs for people of all ages, the preschool, camps, field trips, outreach, visits, and events, we provide 60,000 nature experiences yearly.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Naturalist for Outreach and Inclusion		The naturalist will expand equitable and inclusive environmental education programs by engaging new students and community partners.			20%	3		\$175,000
							Sub Total	\$175,000
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Equipment	Vehicle (1)	A hybrid minivan to transport naturalists, volunteers and educational animals to community sites in the 7-county metro area to conduct environmental education classes					\$35,000
							Sub Total	\$35,000
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	\$210,000

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	Gifts to the annual fund from individuals, foundations and corporate donors.	As part of our comprehensive campaign, Dodge aims to fundraise \$250,000 yearly for general operations; Over three years, \$13,000 of those funds would support this naturalist's training, professional development, workstation and supplies.	Pending	\$13,000
In-Kind	Teacher-Naturalist volunteers will contribute their time and expertise to co-teaching outreach classes with the Naturalist for Outreach and Inclusion and other staff. We approximate that they will volunteer for a combined total of 60 classes per year, for two hours each time, and contribute the equivalent of \$29.44 per hour as estimated by the Independent Sector.	Teacher-Naturalist volunteers will contribute to the work of the Naturalist for Outreach & Inclusion by traveling with them and other staff to co-teach outreach classes. They will reduce the student:teacher ratio in outreach classes, set up engaging spaces for learning, handle animals, and utilize visual aids and natural objects. They will be training on inclusive practices, environmental education curriculum, classroom management and animal handling.	Potential	\$10,500
Cash	Outreach program fees paid by schools and community organizations at full rate of \$150/hour.	Program fees support teaching by naturalists, educational animal care, class materials and visual aids, and transportation.	Potential	\$27,450
Cash	Outreach program fees paid by schools and community organizations at scholarship rate of \$30/hour.	Program fees support teaching by naturalists, educational animal care, class materials and visual aids, and transportation.	Potential	\$2,340
			Non State Sub Total	\$53,290
			Funds Total	\$53,290

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [260680b8-729.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Logo:

The silhouette of a flying Egret over the words "Dodge Nature Center"

Text:

A new Naturalist for Outreach and Inclusion

- Founded in 1967, Dodge is one of the first nature centers in Minnesota
- Created one of the first nature-based preschools in the U.S. in 2000
- Provides 60,000+ experiences in environmental education to people of all ages yearly
- Conserves 460+ acres of wildlife habitat at 4 sites (West St. Paul, Mendota Heights and Cottage...

Financial Capacity

File: [76412ec6-9ce.pdf](#)

Optional Attachments

Support Letter or Other

Title	File
Letter of Support from Dodge Nature Center Board of Directors	17cfdd54-0e7.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?

No



A new Naturalist for Outreach and Inclusion



www.DodgeNatureCenter.org

- Founded in 1967, Dodge is **one of the first nature centers in Minnesota**
- Created **one of the first nature-based preschools** in the U.S. in 2000
- Provides **60,000+ experiences in environmental education** to people of all ages yearly
- Conserves 460+ acres** of wildlife habitat at 4 sites (West St. Paul, Mendota Heights and Cottage Grove). **Trails are free and open to the public 365 days of the year**



This project will fund for three years a **new Naturalist dedicated to Community Outreach** who will:

- build our **inclusive and culturally relevant practices** in environmental education
- extend nature learning to students we have not yet engaged**
- address gaps in opportunities and access** to our outdoor classrooms
- initiate and foster new partnerships** with school districts, community groups, EL and ECCE programs



- Dodge is a trusted provider of **high-quality, affordable field trips** in the Twin Cities, teaching 24,000+ students a year
- 40+ class topics are tailored to the seasons and **aligned to state standards in science**
- In a typical year, naturalists travel to **60+ sites in the 7-county metro area** and reach 5,000 people. A new naturalist will **increase these efforts by 20% year-over-year for the grant period**
- Scholarships and busing support** offered to qualifying schools, families and community sites

