



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2023 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2023-062

Proposal Title: Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers

Project Manager Information

Name: Mimi Daniel

Organization: MN DNR - Operational Services Division (OSD)

Office Telephone: (651) 259-5308

Email: mimi.daniel@state.mn.us

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: This collaborative project creates a college to workforce pathway for underrepresented students interested in pursuing Natural Resources careers by reducing barriers that inhibit successful educational attainment.

Funds Requested: \$787,000

Proposed Project Completion: December 31, 2027

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?

In the Future

Narrative

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

The Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) project provides a college to workforce pathway for under-represented students (women, racial and ethnic minorities, and individuals with disabilities) who are pursuing STEM degrees at state and tribal colleges and technical schools. Through a strategic partnership between the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), and Conservation Corps Minnesota and Iowa (CCMI), this project intends to reduce and eliminate barriers that inhibit under-represented students from completing STEM degrees and obtaining environmental employment post-graduation.

This project initially received three appropriations totaling \$1,287,000 to serve three cohorts totaling 45 students. Appropriations to serve a fourth cohort of 15 students is underway. The COVID-19 pandemic triggered program changes, such as shifting to a virtual experience. However, students have remained engaged, and the project continues to move forward. There has been an increased demand for the program now that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been mitigated.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

Due to the increased demand for the program, MNDNR is seeking additional funding to serve a fifth cohort of second and third-year college students. The students will gain invaluable skills and direct work experience in areas such as water resources and wildlife management, recreation, conservation practices, surveying, engineering, habitat restoration, and management. In addition to a fifth cohort, the program is seeking funds to provide one paid summer learning experience for first-year college students. This experience will assist first-year college students with identifying a major in the environmental and natural resources field and learning about the various career pathways in the field.

The new requested funds will be used for program staffing, fellowships, summer learning experience, training and final project results. MNDNR, MPCA and BWSR will provide in-kind support.

The MNDNR is the project lead; in consultation with the partners, MNDNR will administer and evaluate the overall project. MNDNR will contract with CCMI to administer the fellowship program and provide outreach and training to students in the third cohort. The state agencies will provide in-kind funding for mentors and state-sponsored internships.

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?

As a result of this work effort, students are prepared for natural resources careers within the public sector upon graduation.

This project's long-term goal is to share these students' experiences within their communities in ways that further awareness of and interest in environmental careers. As students embark on career planning, they will seek experiential opportunities within state agencies, ultimately resulting in broader diversity among Minnesota citizens engaged in natural resources and environment.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Fellowship Program Administration

Activity Budget: \$243,700

Activity Description:

The fellowship program helps students in the IDEC program overcome barriers to academic success and equip them with professional skills and certifications that contribute to career success. IDEC student participants or “fellows” are provided with a supportive community, yearly academic scholarship, and professional development. They work with the CCMI program manager, who coordinates resources and helps them navigate challenges during the journey. Fellows attend in-person cohort sessions every other month during the academic school year to stay connected to their peers and participate in professional development opportunities. Fellows receive a financial award of \$1,000 for each academic school year of the program. Fellows remain in the program until they graduate and obtain their STEM degrees.

CCMI’s program manager, in collaboration with the project manager, will coordinate and manage the outreach, fellowship payments, support services, cohort meetings, and professional development opportunities.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
8 fellows in cohort 5 will graduate and obtain their STEM degrees.	June 30, 2026
15 fellows in cohort 5 will develop professional skills and certification for future career use	May 31, 2027
7 fellows in cohort 5 will graduate and obtain their STEM degrees.	June 30, 2027

Activity 2: CCMI Contracted Internship and Agency-Sponsored Internship Program Administration

Activity Budget: \$443,850

Activity Description:

The internship program, which runs from June to August, allows fellows to learn more about environmental and natural resources career paths through paid, on-the-job experience. The internship includes a first-year summer rotational experience and second and third-year summer agency-internships.

After completing the first-year summer rotational experience, fellows choose one of the three agencies (MNDNR, MPCA or BWSR) to intern for their second and third summer. Through the second and third-year summer agency-internships, fellows gain more work experience in their desired career fields before graduating from college.

In consultation with its partners, MNDNR will coordinate paid summer agency-internships' administration. MNDNR, MPCA, and BWSR will provide in-kind funding for these internships. In total, MNDNR and its partners will provide 30 full-time agency-internships to fellows in cohort 5.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
15 College Freshmen will increase their knowledge of environmental majors and careers	August 31, 2024
15 College Sophomores and Juniors will increase their knowledge of environmental careers within state agencies	August 31, 2025
15 Fellows will gain work skills and accumulate 880 hours of work experience	August 31, 2027

Activity 3: Mentorship Program Administration

Activity Budget: \$99,450

Activity Description:

Fellows are paired with MNDNR, PCA, or BWSR employees who serve as their mentors. The mentorship program enhances college success, encourages personal and professional development, and promotes fellows' career advancement. Through regular interactions with their mentors, fellows gain knowledge, skills, and resources to achieve academic and career success. Mentors also benefit from the mentoring relationship by building mentoring skills, translating them back to their workplace and job. The program offers a structured framework to help ensure productive conversations between mentors and fellows. The program uses a one-on-one mentoring approach that includes in-person meetings (while practicing social distancing), video conferencing, email, and phone communication. All mentors receive ongoing training and regular support.

MNDNR, CCMI, MNPCA, and BWSR will continue to work collaboratively to administer the overall mentorship program. The project manager and CCMI's program manager will continue to provide leadership and support services to the mentors for the program's duration.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Completion Date
15 fellows will develop personally and increase their ability to navigate education and career space	June 30, 2027

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Mark Murphy	Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa	Conservation Corps of Minnesota and Iowa will receive ENRTF funding for this project via contract for program administration to include the fellowship program and on-going student support.	Yes
Katrina Kessler	MN Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)	MPCA provides mentors and intern supervisors funds agency internships	No
John Jaschke	MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR)	BWSR provides mentors and intern supervisors funds agency internships	No
Sarah Strommen	MN Department of Natural Resources	MNDNR will receive funding through the appropriation to coordinate the inter-agency mentorships and internships and overall project administration and evaluation.	Yes

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 work be funded?

This project breaks down barriers that inhibit under-represented students from pursuing post-secondary STEM education and careers. The project's results and data will be used to identify how to refine our diversity recruitment efforts using the experience-based college-to-careers pathways model. In the years to come, we hope that this becomes our standard model for how we do business and not just a "program." The ultimate objective is that this program's results serve as a model that continues to attract students from under-represented communities to natural resources careers in greater numbers and provides sustainable and meaningful long-term careers.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers	M.L. 2017, Chp. 96, Sec. 2, Subd. 05b	\$487,000
Increase Diversity in Environmental Careers to Serve Minnesota's Changing Demographics	M.L. 2018, Chp. 214, Art. 4, Sec. 2, Subd. 05l	\$550,000
Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers	M.L. 2019, First Special Session, Chp. 4, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 05d	\$250,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Mimi Daniel

Job Title: Project Manager

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

Mimi Daniel is a resourceful collaborator with over 14 years of progressive experience working in private, non-profit, and state and local government units, particularly in HR, diversity and inclusion, workforce development, and adult education contexts. Currently, she works for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, where she is the project manager for the current LCCMR project- Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers.

Mimi's expertise includes grant administration, project management, career pathways programming, and training. She has led initiatives to design, plan and manage career and education programs and consulted on workforce development initiatives for several organizations. Some of her past leadership roles include Minnesota Fasttrac Consultant for DEED, GED Supplemental Services Grant Coordinator for the Minnesota Department of Education, and Consultant for Minnesota State Colleges and Universities.

Mimi holds a Master of Education in Human Resource Development from the University of Minnesota. Also, she holds a Minnesota teaching license in Adult Basic Education and is a certified Project Management Professional.

Organization: MN DNR - Operational Services Division (OSD)

Organization Description:

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR) works to integrate and sustain the interdependent values of a healthy environment, a sustainable economy, and livable communities. DNR's integrated resource management strategy shares stewardship responsibility with citizens and partners to manage for multiple interests. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources' mission is to work with citizens to conserve and manage the state's natural resources, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and provide for commercial uses of natural resources in a way that creates a sustainable quality of life.

MNDNR is committed to providing equitable access to outdoor spaces so all Minnesotans can enjoy the benefits afforded by a healthy and thriving environment. We are also committed to attracting and retaining a workforce that reflects Minnesota's diversity.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
1 Project Manager		To manage overall project including administration and evaluation			30%	2.45		\$237,000
							Sub Total	\$237,000
Contracts and Services								
Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa	Professional or Technical Service Contract	1FTE Program Manager to administer the project with the following components: Recruitment, Yearly fellowship; Training & Professional development; Outreach; Wrap-around services and Support; Travel				3.5		\$532,000
							Sub Total	\$532,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging		Travel related expenses to visit potential and existing program sites statewide.					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$1,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								

							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Direct and Necessary	Direct and Necessary for MNDNR's costs to administer the program					\$17,000
							Sub Total	\$17,000
							Grand Total	\$787,000

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				
In-Kind	MN DNR, MPCA, BWSR	Award 30 summer agency-internships for 15 students. Provide mentors for program participants.	Pending	\$470,440
			State Sub Total	\$470,440
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	\$470,440

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [ef3d5be4-f38.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

A graphic showing a brief overview of the Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) program. The graphic says “Working Together to Increase Diversity in Environmental Careers: The Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) program provides a unique college-to-careers pathway for under-represented STEM college students who want to pursue careers in the environmental and natural resources field. Partnership includes: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Poll...

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

Working Together to Increase Diversity in Environmental Careers

The Increasing Diversity in Environmental Careers (IDEC) program provides a unique college-to-careers pathway for under-represented STEM college students who want to pursue careers in the environmental and natural resources field. Partnership includes: Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, Conservation Corps Minnesota & Iowa.

Find more information at: www.conservationcorps.org/idec



A Fellowship, Mentorship, and Internship Program

Fiscal Years 2024- 2028

Paid Summer Rotational
June 2024- August 2024

15 College Freshmen complete a paid rotational learning internship to learn about careers in the environmental field

Cohort 5 September
2024 - August 2027

15 College Sophomores and Juniors move as a cohort to participate in a fellowship program during the school years, have access to mentors, and complete one paid rotational learning summer internship and two paid agency-sponsored summer internships.