



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2024 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2024-084

Proposal Title: Pilot Recycling Economy, Climate, and Plastics Outreach

Project Manager Information

Name: Lori Nelson

Organization: Recycling Association of Minnesota

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Email: lori@recycleminnesota.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Pilot outreach to selected Minnesota households will boost recycling participation based on data-driven behavior change research and updated natural resources, climate, and economic benefit data.

Funds Requested: \$500,000

Proposed Project Completion: December 31, 2026

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.

Minnesotans are under-utilizing recycling services that could provide additional environmental and economic benefits using infrastructure we are already paying for. Recycling is effective but the public is often not aware of its environmental and natural resource benefits. Minnesotans (according to the MPCA) still are throwing away an estimated 1.2 million tons of recyclable material valued around \$285 million, at a disposal cost of more than \$200 million. National media shares occasional bad news without including the benefits. Environmental groups are also skewing information on plastics recycling, leading Minnesotans to “under-recycle” plastics that are in demand. In recent years, China’s restrictions on imports of recyclables led to coverage casting doubt on recycling’s future. Meanwhile, there is little to no coverage of how these restrictions have spurred an industrial Renaissance in America, as new U.S.-based paper and plastics plants take more recycled material than they have in years. This is in addition to existing recycling-related manufacturing jobs in Minnesota. On climate (using MPCA data), in 2019 “Minnesota saved roughly 4.1 MMTCO₂E using current waste management practices. This equates to removing annual emissions from 891,000 vehicles.”

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.

RAM proposes to strategically target 125,000 selected Minnesota households in an equitable fashion using lessons learned from The Recycling Partnership's Recycling Confidence Index project and environmental behavior change research. The Recycling Partnership, the state’s Recycling Education Committee, and their members from local units of government, nonprofits, and waste companies would be key advisors to ensure that the statewide effort does not conflict with local conditions and that definitions of materials are uniform. Benefits highlighted would include carbon emission reductions, natural resource savings (e.g., trees conserved, gallons of fresh water avoided, etc.), demand from manufacturers in the U.S., and value added to the state’s economy by recycling instead of disposal. The MPCA has produced studies on the economic value added to the state’s economy by recycling, but the information is now dated and would need to be updated. In addition, the project would also update climate and natural resource benefit data using the U.S. EPA’s WARM model (with some modifications). Finally, the campaign would raise the issue of contaminants in recycling streams that increase costs and reduce productivity and safety.

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?

The project work plan would measure increases in recycling tonnage by 2027 in targeted areas. The state currently requires counties to submit this data annually, although there is more emphasis on recycling rates rather than natural resource benefits, of which there are many. Making new products from recycled materials uses less water, fewer chemicals, and less energy than using virgin materials, and the project will quantify those reductions from increased tonnage. For example, recycled aluminum in new cans conserves 90 percent of the energy required to make the can. Recycling a ton of paper conserves 17 mature trees.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: The project will produce updated environmental and economic benefit data.

Activity Budget: \$50,000

Activity Description:

This first component will include updating of economic and environmental benefits. Using annual SCORE recycling and disposal data from counties that are compiled by the MPCA, RAM will update the most recent economic “value-added” report from MPCA, and update the climate and natural resource conservation benefits of current recycling and costs of foregone recycling.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Updated value-added economic report completed.	December 31, 2024
Updated climate benefit data assembled.	December 31, 2024
Updated natural resource savings data assembled.	December 31, 2024

Activity 2: The project will develop strategies and objectives for the awareness campaign.

Activity Budget: \$50,000

Activity Description:

There is considerable expertise in Minnesota on recycling communications for local use. A Recycling Education Committee has met under the aegis of the MPCA and has determined definitions on materials as well as what materials are under-recovered or problematic. This group includes professionals from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. In addition, The Recycling Partnership, a national 501(c)(3) organization that has data-driven educational materials for use nationwide, will be consulted. Other entities such as Eureka Recycling and local governments have expertise with communities that traditionally have “under-recycled” (including Environmental Justice areas) and their expertise will be tapped. The group will identify key objectives, audiences, and geographies, culminating in the completion of an RFP.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Convene the state’s existing Recycling Education Committee to build consensus on key objectives.	March 31, 2025
Import material from The Recycling Partnership and others.	March 31, 2025
Develop expectations for media impressions, target audiences, and target geographies, and an RFP for contract communications	March 31, 2025

Activity 3: Execute the pilot outreach effort.

Activity Budget: \$400,000

Activity Description:

RAM would contract with a communications firm to carry out the campaign. Using agreed-upon objectives and data-driven collateral material in Activities 1 and 2, the firm would design a campaign that includes focus groups and a narrow pilot effort, followed by large scale information dissemination with a focus on digital advertising. Several evaluation tools would be used to determine success, including the annual MPCA SCORE report and the Minnesota Survey from the University of Minnesota Center for Survey Research.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Issue RFP for contract communications assistance.	March 31, 2025
Develop campaign strategy with contractor and partners.	July 31, 2025
Carry out the strategy	July 31, 2026
Evaluate the strategy.	November 30, 2026
Work with MPCA on 2026-2027 SCORE data for evaluation.	December 31, 2026

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Mark Rust	Minnesota Pollution Control Agency	The MPCA's solid waste section oversees the Recycling Education Committee described in the proposal.	No
Louise Bruce	The Recycling Partnership's Center for Sustainable Behavior and Impact	Director	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 work be funded?

While local recycling education is common, a large-scale effort is not. Pilots in urban, suburban, and rural communities will provide lessons learned for other communities in future years. Project elements that work can be incorporated by local, regional, and state government, as well as private and nonprofit entities that provide collection and recycling services for years to come. We expect industries that use recycled materials as a feedstock as well as recycling haulers and processors to multiply the effect of the pilot.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Lori Nelson

Job Title: Executive Director

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

Lori brings a diverse background to the Recycling Association of Minnesota. She is a licensed attorney who has over 25 years of experience as an executive leader in the nonprofit sector, most recently as the Executive Director for the Woodbury Community Foundation. Lori has worked extensively with conservation organizations, foundations and philanthropic organizations, business interests, and political advocacy groups. She has served as President of the Richfield Chamber of Commerce, CEO of the Richfield Tourism Promotion Board, Executive Director of Friends of the Minnesota Valley, and as the Heartland Regional Director of the National Parks Conservation Association. Lori also has her own nonprofit consulting business.

Throughout her career, Lori has provided leadership in the areas of fundraising and donor development, strategic planning, marketing and branding, board development, membership growth, program evaluation, implementing best management practices, and ensuring compliance. She has worked in start-up situations as well as working with growing organizations and those in crisis.

Lori has a Juris Doctorate from Hamline University School of Law, a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science (summa cum laude) from St. Cloud State University, and a Mini-MBA from the University of St. Thomas School of Executive Education.

Organization: Recycling Association of Minnesota

Organization Description:

The Recycling Association of Minnesota provides leadership, advocacy, and education to encourage the responsible use of resources through recycling and supporting modes of waste reduction.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Executive Director		Provides strategic direction and oversight of the project			20%	0.5		\$43,000
Program Director		Implements the project and works with contractor, partners			20%	1.25		\$75,000
							Sub Total	\$118,000
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Communications strategy development and execution				0		\$85,000
TBD	Professional or Technical Service Contract	Climate, Natural Resources, and Economic Data Analysis Update				-		\$40,000
							Sub Total	\$125,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								

	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	20 in-state trips at 200 miles each for two staff plus 10 overnight stays at \$125/night x 2 nights x 2 staffin Greater MN	Mileage, meals, lodging for engaging pilot Minnesota communities					\$7,000
							Sub Total	\$7,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	125,000 targeted households @ \$2 per household	Recycling flyers, hang-tags, mailers					\$250,000
							Sub Total	\$250,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$500,000

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				
Cash	Federal Bipartisan Infrastructure Law--U.S. EPA Recycling Education and Outreach Grant Program; would help scale program to more households	MPCA is applicant, RAM seeks to be subcontractor	Potential	\$200,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$200,000
			Funds Total	\$200,000

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [2521395b-5c5.docx](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Examples of Audience Segmentation Research from The Recycling Partnership...

Financial Capacity

File: [8c8ef977-92b.pdf](#)

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution to Submit Proposal to LCCMR	d0d60176-c14.pdf

Optional Attachments

Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Recycling Confidence Index Blog Post	171b2b1e-ad8.pdf
Recycling Partnership Support Letter	82e6b00b-51e.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

Does your project include the design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other capital asset costing \$10,000 or more?

No

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services, as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7?

No

