



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2025 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2025-023

Proposal Title: Nature-Centric Education: Bridging Gaps for Families

Project Manager Information

Name: Michelle Wille

Organization: Project Wild Rooted

Office Telephone: (651) 214-0763

Email: projectwildrooted@gmail.com

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: This proposal seeks funding to expand our nature education program, ensuring equity by providing families opportunities throughout the year. We aim to foster environmental stewards through place-based, multi-aged classes.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$418,000

Proposed Project Completion: July 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?

During the Project

Narrative

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

In recent years, children's detachment from the natural world, known as nature-deficit disorder, has led to behavioral issues and a diminished sense of community. This lack of connection results in a deficit of essential environmental knowledge. Our initiative, Project Wild Rooted, addresses this by providing experiential learning to counter nature-deficit disorder and nurture curiosity in children. We aim to bridge the educational gap by fostering an appreciation for nature, creating responsible community stewards. Additionally, we prioritize affordability to ensure all families can access our programs, democratizing nature-based education and empowering children from diverse backgrounds. Through these efforts, we seek to cultivate a generation that values and respects their environment, fostering a sustainable future.

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.

The funding we seek not only supports nature-based education but also ensures our teachers receive the necessary training and competitive salaries. This comprehensive approach is crucial in providing quality education, starting with dedicated professionals who guide students on their educational journey. Furthermore, the proposal addresses the financial barrier by allocating funds for scholarships, making the program more affordable and equitable for all families in the area. The overarching goal is to build a solid foundation for learning, instill environmental stewardship, and create a sense of community connection, ultimately addressing the deficit in background knowledge needed for children to become responsible stewards of their communities.

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 proposal supports the state's goal of preserving natural resources by fostering environmental stewardship in diverse communities. Through expanding our homeschool collaborative, we plan to increase elementary school year enrollment from 90 to 130 students and summer camp capacity from 432 to 648 seats. PreK enrollment will rise from 42 to 56 students during the school year and from 252 to 378 seats for summer camps. Additionally, we intend to offer scholarships to all students and campers, with amounts tailored to individual needs. This initiative aims to cultivate environmentally conscious individuals contributing to sustainable resource management.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: School Year Programs- Homeschool Collaborative and Early Childhood

Activity Budget: \$305,000

Activity Description:

By increasing our staffing in both the homeschool collaborative and early childhood programs, we aim to enhance program offerings. This expansion will facilitate an increase in elementary school year enrollment from 90 to 130 students. Additionally, PreK enrollment is set to grow from 42 to 56 students during the school year. Examples of nature-based education within our programs include outdoor exploration, wildlife observation, gardening activities, and hands-on environmental science experiments.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Fill 6 staffing positions for 2025-2026 school year programs	July 31, 2025
Fill 6 staffing positions for 2026-2027 school year programs	July 31, 2026

Activity 2: Educational Camps and Field Trips

Activity Budget: \$61,000

Activity Description:

By strengthening our staffing for field trips and summer camps, we aim to enrich our program offerings. This expansion will boost elementary summer camp capacity from 432 to 648 seats and PreK summer camp availability from 252 to 378 seats. With additional staff, we can increase field trip opportunities, extending available days from 13 to 30. Nature-based education within our programs encompasses outdoor exploration, wildlife observation, agricultural connections, and hands-on environmental science experiments. Field trip themes include environmental stewardship, ecosystems, life cycles, agriculture, and earth's systems, fostering immersive learning experiences for participants.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Fill 6 staffing positions for 2025 summer programs	April 30, 2025
Fill 6 staffing positions for 2026 summer programs	April 30, 2026

Activity 3: Scholarships for Nature-Based Experiential Learning

Activity Budget: \$52,000

Activity Description:

Project Wild Rooted will allocate scholarship funds based on needs for student tuition fees, covering a minimum of 10% of tuition for all children aged 3.5-14. Applicants will be assessed for additional scholarships, with potential coverage of up to 75% of tuition costs. To gauge environmental awareness development, pre-departure surveys will be conducted for students and teachers. These evaluations will assess changes in awareness, appreciation, and interest in the environment. Scholarship applications will be reviewed individually to determine need, ensuring equitable distribution of funds among program participants.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Scholarships will serve up to 1,000 children in summer camp programs	August 31, 2025
Scholarships will serve up to 190 students in school year programs	May 31, 2026
Scholarships will serve up to 1,000 children in summer camp programs	August 31, 2026
Scholarships will serve up to 190 students in school year programs	May 31, 2027

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?

Upon receiving funding, the project will adopt a multi-faceted strategy, harnessing community partnerships, fundraising events, and private donations to guarantee its sustainability. Subsequent endeavors will be sustained by revenues generated from registrations, existing grant funds, business sponsorships, public fundraising events, and pursuit of additional grant opportunities. This comprehensive approach ensures ongoing financial support, enabling the program to thrive and continue providing valuable educational experiences to homeschool families.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Michelle Wille

Job Title: Co-Founder of Project Wild Rooted

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

Michelle Wille is the Co-owner of Project Wild Rooted.

Organization: Project Wild Rooted

Organization Description:

Project Wild Rooted is a program that offers hands-on, experiential, nature based learning for kids ages 2-14 years old. We want our community to experience the remarkable world around us. We offer experiential learning, nature exploration and skill building opportunities, and we foster new connections through camps, workshops, and a homeschool collaborative.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Staff- Summer Programs and Field Trips		Increased staffing allocation for field trips and summer camps will enhance program offerings. This adjustment will elevate elementary summer camp capacity from 432 to 648 seats and PreK summer camp availability from 252 to 378 seats. Augmenting our staff will enable us to broaden field trip opportunities, extending available days from 13 to 30.			8%	6		\$61,000
Staff- School Year Programs		To support program growth, additional staffing will be allocated to both the homeschool collaborative and early childhood programs. This staffing increase will enable the enhancement of program offerings, resulting in an expansion of elementary school year enrollment from 90 to 130 students and PreK enrollment is projected to rise from 42 to 56 students. Nature-based education components, such as outdoor exploration, wildlife observation, gardening activities, and hands-on environmental science experiments, will be integrated into program curriculum.			8%	8		\$305,000
							Sub Total	\$366,000
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
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								
		Scholarships	Project Wild Rooted will allocate scholarship funds based on needs for student tuition fees, covering a minimum of 10% of tuition for all children aged 3.5-14. Applicants will be assessed for additional scholarships, with potential coverage of up to 75% of tuition costs. To gauge environmental awareness development, pre-departure surveys will be conducted for students and teachers. These evaluations will assess changes in awareness, appreciation, and interest in the environment. Scholarship applications will be reviewed individually to determine need, ensuring equitable distribution of funds among program participants.					\$52,000
							Sub Total	\$52,000
							Grand Total	\$418,000

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	Tuition and Registration Fees for 2025-2027	Each camp and class requires a registration fee, which is allocated to cover expenses related to supplies and overhead charges for 2025-2027	Potential	\$444,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$444,000
			Funds Total	\$444,000

Total Project Cost: \$862,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [3d5e6e93-716.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Our visual component outlines Project Wild Rooted's mission to preserve natural resources. It highlights our unique nature education approach and long-term vision for sustainability. It lists our programs, showcases budget summary, growing revenue, and waitlist data. Maps detail our locations and features of each campus, underlining our educational opportunities....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Financial Capacity Note	3e3375e1-bc8.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

Capital Project Questionnaire, Budget Supplements, Support Letter, Photos, Media, Other

Title	File
Itemized Budget Request	aa51f7ad-577.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

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

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 pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

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 as "the provision of care, treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

Yes

Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?

Yes

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:

Laura Greene