



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

## 2025 Request for Proposal

### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2025-200

**Proposal Title:** Cooperative Energy Futures: Energy Efficiency Program

### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Audrey Pallmeyer

**Organization:** Cooperative Energy Futures

**Office Telephone:** (612) 208-7687

**Email:** [audrey@cooperativeenergyfutures.com](mailto:audrey@cooperativeenergyfutures.com)

### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Cooperative Energy Futures will implement a coordinated community-based home energy upgrade program, providing behind-the-scenes program, funding, and technical coordination to increase uptake of residential energy efficiency in the Twin Cities.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$249,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30, 2027

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Small Projects (H)

**Secondary Category:** Air Quality, Climate Change, and Renewable Energy (E)

### 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.**

Residential building efficiency upgrades are essential to reducing Minnesota's reliance on fossil fuels. However, there are significant barriers to widespread adoption of such upgrades:

Current approaches to paying for home energy upgrades are based on individual means:

- Limited free programs for low-income people have onerous processes and provisions
- “Market rate” upgrades require upfront capital or personal debt, which is inaccessible or unattractive to many.

Program eligibility is uncoordinated and not user-friendly:

- Programs have different eligibility criteria, which makes it difficult to figure out what an individual household qualifies for, what is available, and what is the best deal for their situation.
- Customer hand-offs between programs frequently result in the ball being dropped.
- No one supports users through the details/process of completing a home energy upgrade with a comprehensive understanding of all parts.

Programs do not share participation data or impact data over time:

- Utilities will not provide billing and consumption data without a cumbersome individual consent process.
- Without billing and consumption data, it is impossible to accurately quantify energy or financial savings.
- Current programs do not include a plan for emergency or end-of-life equipment replacement for items that are currently in good working order.

### **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.**

We are designing a community-based home energy upgrade program to address the above-listed barriers. The program will focus on homes in disadvantaged communities in the Twin Cities, including the Minneapolis Green Zones, East and West of St Paul, and Frogtown/Rondo neighborhoods of St. Paul, and will include the following:

- A software platform enabling access to customer utility usage history and ongoing data.
- Energy upgrade plans, developed through home energy assessments and incorporating recommendations based on utility bill history and building specifications.
- Standardized pricing through bulk contracts with qualified contractors
- A coordinated capital stack which identifies funding sources for improvements including the following as applicable: Utility programs/rebates; City cost-shares; Income-eligible funding; Tax credits; and packaged options to cash-flow the balance (No-debt financing through a service contract based on energy savings, personal loans (if resident prefers) and other options TBD).
- Multilingual community navigators to support households in moving through the program.

Equitable implementation of this program at scale will require significant community outreach and engagement efforts, including relationship-building with community partners, affordable housing agencies, and more, community events to recruit participants, and support for community-based workforce development efforts, to ensure an adequate and diverse workforce.

### **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?**

Through this project, CEF will develop and implement a community engagement and outreach plan to enable the recruitment of 2000 homes per year for home upgrades. We expect outcomes will include:

- Reduced energy cost burdens for thousands of Minnesota households, usually without requiring upfront investment and always with verified net cost reductions.

- Reduced home health and safety risks and increased home comfort for participating households by addressing preexisting conditions (mold, lead, inadequate or excessive heating and cooling) and by reducing or eliminating in-home gas combustion.
- Reduced carbon dioxide emissions from housing.

## Activities and Milestones

**Activity 1: Create and implement a strategic community engagement and outreach program to enable smooth implementation of energy efficient upgrades.**

**Activity Budget:** \$249,000

**Activity Description:**

The successful implementation of Cooperative Energy Future’s Home Energy Upgrades program will require substantial outreach and relationship building with community partners, homeowners, renters, and landlords throughout the Twin Cities, with an emphasis on the Minneapolis Green Zones and the East Side, West Side, and Rondo/Frogstown neighborhoods of Saint Paul. Therefore, CEF will need to develop and implement a comprehensive outreach program. We anticipate that this will include hiring a staff person to lead the work, develop an outreach plan (with possible efforts including in-person event-based outreach, building relationships across the Twin Cities, launching a social media campaign, and other strategies TBD).

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Hire Community Engagement and Outreach Coordinator	September 30, 2025
Develop a comprehensive outreach plan	January 31, 2026
Build relationships with community-based organizations in Minneapolis and Saint Paul to promote energy assessments.	June 30, 2027

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Kyle Goertz	Community Power	Providing navigator support to interested community members, collaborating on developing outreach and marketing strategies.	No
Ulla Nilsen	Unidos	Leading community door-knocking and block by block recruitment for participation in energy upgrades.	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?**

Through a two-year grant, CEF will build the relationships and infrastructure needed to successfully recruit and support 2000 households through home upgrades annually. The upgrades funded by the work - often \$20,000+ per household - will include energy assessment and program service fees that will build in projected costs of engagement, assessment, and financing. As this work progresses, we will verify if these fees are sufficient or need to be adjusted or supplemented. Additionally, we will continue conversations with partners including the Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul to identify funding sources to supplement outreach and program administration costs.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Audrey Pallmeyer

**Job Title:** Program Developer

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

The Project Manager of this project will be Audrey Pallmeyer, Program Developer for Cooperative Energy Future’s Home Energy Upgrades program. Specific responsibilities associated with this program include supervising the Outreach and Engagement Coordinator hired with these funds and providing leadership and strategic partnership around developing outreach and engagement strategies and processes.

Audrey has several years of experience identifying, applying for, and coordinating implementation of government and private sector grants, ranging from several thousand dollars to \$1M+. She has experience in community outreach, engagement, and partnership development, and community organizing. She holds a Master of Science from the University of Michigan’s School for Environment and Sustainability, as well as a Master of Social Work from the University of Michigan’s School of Social Work.

Additionally, as detailed in our proposal, these funds will be used to support the hiring of a new position focused on Engagement and Outreach. While the specific job description has not yet been developed, we anticipate hiring someone with extensive experience in community organizing and community engagement.

**Organization:** Cooperative Energy Futures

**Organization Description:**

Cooperative Energy Futures (CEF) is a 308B Minnesota cooperative association that makes clean energy accessible to all. CEF’s mission is to empower communities across Minnesota to build energy democracy through solutions that are clean, local, and ours. We exist to create access to, benefit from, and provide ownership of clean energy for low-income households, communities of color, and renters. Our cooperative model ensures our projects are accountable to – and build wealth for – local communities.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Community Engagement and Outreach Coordinator		Research and implementation planning			25%	2		\$180,000
Program Developer		Supervise Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, attend events, recruit participants, troubleshoot barriers to participation			25%	0.4		\$47,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$227,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Software	Tracking Home Energy Use Data					\$13,000
	Tools and Supplies	LED Lightbulbs - \$8 per two-pack, 625 packs	Giveaways at events, recruitment materials					\$5,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$18,000</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-

<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
		Event Registration, approximately 80 events at \$50 per event	Participant engagement and recruitment					\$4,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$249,000</b>

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				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

**Total Project Cost: \$249,000**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [5fd66ad4-b77.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

A map of the Twin Cities, with primary communities of focus highlighted in green, other Disadvantaged Communities where we hope to expand highlighted in blue, and possible CBO partners noted....

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
Financial Capacity Note	<a href="#">232ff103-ff0.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Submission Approval Letter	<a href="#">ec9db5d9-bdb.pdf</a>

## 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")?**

No

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



