



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

### 2026 Request for Proposal

#### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2026-177

**Proposal Title:** Urban Farming Education to Increase Urban Environmental Stewardship

#### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Daniel Schmidt

**Organization:** East Phillips Neighborhood Institute

**Office Telephone:** (    )    -

**Email:** daniel@epnifarm.org

#### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** EPNI requests funding for hands-on, environmentally-focused urban farming education to reconnect residents of a diverse, environmental justice neighborhood to the land and water, and to foster interest in environmental careers.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$300,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** December 31, 2028

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

**Secondary Category:** Education and Outdoor Recreation (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.**

EPNI and the Urban Farm are located in the East Phillips neighborhood, an area with excessive pollution, without access to fresh nutritious food, and where people need knowledge, skills, hands-on experience, and support to safely grow healthy food on polluted land. There's inadequate outdoor natural spaces for people to gather, and residents lack access to information about sustainable land practices and water stewardship.

The EPA and MPCA designated East Phillips an Environmental Justice community. The City of Minneapolis designated the East Phillips neighborhood part of a Green Zone—defined as “a group of neighborhoods with high levels of pollution; [and] Racial, political and economic marginalization.” The area was designated a Superfund site by the EPA in 2007 due to a history of excessive residential soil and groundwater contamination by heavy metals, including arsenic and lead.

EPNI utilizes Indigenous and multicultural land stewardship practices to create natural outdoor spaces that showcase best environmental practices, engage the community in urban farming, create a greener neighborhood, and provide apprenticeship opportunities to young people who are interested in working in these fields.

EPNI is purchasing a 7.6-acre former industrial site to transform into a center of education on resilience, and sustainable environmental practices.

**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.**

EPNI is increasing access to healthy, biodiverse outdoor spaces for under-served residents in the urban Environmental Justice neighborhood through urban farming educational programming which uses stewardship practices derived from cultural traditions of the neighborhood. Diverse community residents gather in a natural environment to learn about land and water stewardship through culturally-relevant pedagogies.

Through creative outreach and monthly community workshops, EPNI shares a variety of cultural, agricultural, and ecological topics through hands-on activities. Participants receive seeds, plants and educational materials that enhance their knowledge of pollinators and vegetables. East Phillips residents are empowered to create more healthy and biodiverse spaces in their own backyards, which improves water quality, and increases the community's sense of connection to the land within a historically polluted and under-served urban landscape.

EPNI also provides paid apprenticeship programs so local youth and community residents have the opportunity to learn about careers in urban land stewardship and community resilience.

**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?**

Our project focuses on protecting, conserving, and enhancing Minnesota water and land resources within the urban landscape through transforming formerly polluted land into oases of native biodiversity. Through experiential education, EPNI increases local residents' ability to implement land and water stewardship practices in their own backyards using a variety of culturally relevant methods.

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Curriculum Design

**Activity Budget:** \$77,000

**Activity Description:**

Objective: Each year, design a series of workshops and apprenticeship programs which build on previous years' learning and are responsive to current community needs

**Tasks:**

- Annually, review the effectiveness of and engagement in previous years' workshops and programs
- Develop experiential learning modules that incorporate sustainable ecological land practices
- Research latest developments in land and watershed protection/preservation to inform curriculum
- Compile materials and tools to support learning outcomes
- Test grow spaces for heavy-metals and nutrient content to inform neighborhood residents about status of pollution in public gardens

**Methods:**

- Review testimonials, surveys, and/or focus groups of previous years' workshop attendees and apprentices to build on
- Staff research and write learning objectives and curriculum
- Work with Hennepin County and the University of Minnesota to conduct soil tests

**Outcomes:**

- Completion of a year-long land stewardship and urban farm curriculum and apprenticeship plan
- Completion of a heavy-metals and nutrient content test for edible food grow spaces

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete evaluation of workshop engagement through testimonials, surveys and/or community meetings	December 31, 2026
Complete year-long land stewardship and urban farm curriculum and apprenticeship plan	March 31, 2027
Complete heavy-metals and nutrient content soil tests for edible grow spaces	April 30, 2027
Complete second evaluation of workshop engagement through testimonials, surveys and/or community meetings	December 31, 2027
Complete second year-long land stewardship and urban farm curriculum and apprenticeship plan	March 31, 2028
Complete second heavy-metals and nutrient content soil tests for edible grow spaces	April 30, 2028
Complete third evaluation of workshop engagement through testimonials, surveys and/or community meetings	December 31, 2028

### Activity 2: Curriculum Implementation

**Activity Budget:** \$223,000

**Activity Description:**

Objective: Improve residents' knowledge of environmental stewardship and urban farming

**Tasks:**

- Conduct outreach throughout the year to foster participation and inspire local youth
- Host monthly outdoor community workshop during the growing season to teach environmental stewardship practices

through urban farming

- Host monthly indoor community workshop during the winter season to teach environmental stewardship practices through presentations and group activities
- Create and steward outdoor green spaces, grow food, increase pollinator habitat, and provide gathering places for local residents

**Methods:**

- Outreach at community events, through social media, and in partnership with other neighborhood organizations
- Incorporate outside speakers into the curriculum to ensure presenters have a variety of cultural backgrounds
- Host workshops in visible locations known to local residents, ensure sites are welcoming and accessible, and teach workshops in multiple languages
- Utilize sign-up sheets to record participant attendance and demographics

**Outcomes:**

- Teach 300-500 local residents how to grow healthy food and steward natural resources in a polluted urban landscape
- Create opportunities for youth to learn about environmental careers that increase resilience and protect natural resources
- Serve as a demonstration site to improve habitat and encourage environmental stewardship throughout Minnesota's urban communities

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete 2026 outreach efforts through events, flyers, partner organizations, and social media	December 31, 2026
Complete 12 workshops on environmental stewardship and urban farming	December 31, 2027
Complete 2027 outreach efforts through events, flyers, partner organizations, and social media	December 31, 2027
Complete 12 workshops on environmental stewardship and urban farming	December 31, 2028
Complete 2028 outreach efforts through events, flyers, partner organizations, and social media	December 31, 2028

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Kieran Morris	East Phillips Neighborhood Institute	Farm Coordinator	No
Forest Hunt	East Phillips Neighborhood Institute	Lead Educator and Land Steward	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?**

Curricula developed with LCCMR funding will be used to continue improving educational programming in future years. Hands-on experiences and take-home materials will support neighbors in creating backyard projects that support long-term, community-wide land and water stewardship.

The EPNI Urban Farm will be a demonstration site for other residents of Environmental Justice neighborhoods in Minnesota who seek information and inspiration on how to create healthy outdoor spaces.

To continue educational programming, EPNI will continue to apply for grants. EPNI has a strong history of securing funds for our programming, and is committed to providing environmental education for under-served residents.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Daniel Schmidt

**Job Title:** Finance & Development Director

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

Daniel Schmidt has been working with EPNI since the summer of 2023. He graduated with a BA in economics from Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts in 2022, and completed a course on Nonprofit Financial Leadership with Propel Nonprofits in the winter of 2024. Daniel also has experience in outdoor education as an outdoor guide with Wilderness Inquiry, a nonprofit which specializes in introducing under-served youth to Minnesota's natural environments. Daniel worked as a Green Corps member at the City of Minneapolis Department of Health with the Green Career Exploration Program where he facilitated youth solar training classes, and helped disburse grant funding to Minneapolis-based solar installers to hire local youth.

**Organization:** East Phillips Neighborhood Institute

**Organization Description:**

After generations of grassroots organizing in the East Phillips neighborhood, EPNI was formed in 2018 to support environmental justice, public health, and sustainable economic development. EPNI is leading the community's vision to increase urban food production, reduce pollution, create green jobs, and protect and improve the quality of the urban land and water.

EPNI has already made the East Phillips community a more healthy place to live by preventing the demolition of the Roof Depot building, a historic 230,000 sq ft warehouse on 7.6 acres in South Minneapolis. For this victory, and others, EPNI was recognized with awards, including: 2023 Attorneys of the Year from MN Lawyers; the 2024 Social Justice Award

from the National Lawyers Guild; the 2024 Unsung Hero Award from American Public Health Association and National Community Based Organization Network; and a Resolution (2024R-258) of Minneapolis' Mayor and City Council for its "outstanding contribution in seeking environmental justice for the East Phillips neighborhood and the whole of Minneapolis."

EPNI's board is 50% Black, Indigenous, or a Person of Color (BIPOC), and its staff is 72% BIPOC.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Farm Coordinator		Coordinator of EPNI farm operations, education programs, and partnerships			15%	2		\$138,000
Lead Educator and Land Steward		Leads curriculum design and implementation			15%	2		\$138,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$276,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
TBD	Service Contract	Testing soil for heavy-metals and nutrient content				0.2		\$2,000
TBD	Service Contract	Environmental stewardship experts with multicultural backgrounds who are able to give presentations and lead activities that enrich the environmental stewardship and urban farming curriculum				0.2		\$6,000
TBD	Service Contract	Translating workshops and educational materials to increase accessibility for residents who don't speak English				0.2		\$4,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Educational Supplies	Educational supplies allow EPNI to provide residents materials that improve educational experience, including: identifying and drawing plants, planning garden plots, recording medicinal uses of plants, and/or other uses.					\$5,000
	Tools and Supplies	Farm Supplies	Tools and supplies such as trowels, gloves, seeds, pots, soil, etc. are necessary to demonstrate environmental stewardship and urban farming concepts in a hands-on manner					\$4,000

							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$9,000</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>								
	Printing	Educational materials for workshops which is estimated to be 300 color pages per workshop at \$0.50 per page	Printed hand-outs allow participants to bring information home and share with their friends and family, and to remember information they learned					\$3,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$300,000</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: \$300,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [ee621770-626.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

An urban farm design overlaid on a parking lot which describes EPNI's 2025 land stewardship project of transforming a parking lot into a green educational space. An image of our Lead Educator and Land Steward teaching an East Phillips resident. A description of curriculum and impact in 2024....

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
Evidence of Good Standing	<a href="#">afb89924-ef6.pdf</a>
EPNI 2023 990	<a href="#">c71f4b3b-cef.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
EPNI Board Chair Letter	<a href="#">084c120c-290.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support from Neighborhood Organization	<a href="#">ae8631d9-79b.pdf</a>

## Administrative Use

**Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?**

No

**Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?**

N/A

**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:**

Donna McNamara, EPNI volunteer; Lucy Rogers, EPNI volunteer; Shane McCaffrey, EPNI volunteer; Kedar Deshpande, EPNI volunteer.

**Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements**

Yes, I understand