



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-185

Proposal Title: Reel Hope: Breaking Outdoor Recreation Barriers for Youth

Project Manager Information

Name: Laura Hudson

Organization: Fishing For Life

Office Telephone: (763) 203-8002

Email: laura@fishingforlife.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Fishing For Life is committed to providing at-risk youth access to fishing and other outdoor activities that invite connection with the lands and waters of Minnesota.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$149,000

Proposed Project Completion: July 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?

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.

There is an unmet demand for outdoor programs designed for young children, particularly underprivileged and at-risk youth ages 8-11. While outdoor activities offer significant benefits, limited access to such programs prevents many of these children from connecting with nature, developing outdoor skills, and learning to be good stewards of the environment. Funding constraints make it challenging for nonprofits to expand such programs.

When young people miss the chance to explore Minnesota's incredible natural resources—its lands and waters—they are less likely to develop a lifelong commitment to protecting the environment. The saying, "We don't inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children," holds true only if we teach children to engage with and appreciate the natural world. To ensure future generations value and care for the environment, we must give them early opportunities to experience and enjoy it.

Reel Hope: Breaking Outdoor Recreation Barriers for Youth aims to bridge this gap. Not all youth have access to Minnesota's natural resources, but they all deserve the chance. We are committed to making that access a reality by expanding our Reel Hope programming, currently funded for ages 11-17, to encompass youth ages 8-17.

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.

To address the lack of outdoor programs for at-risk youth, Reel Hope will implement a structured, multi-phase solution that expands access, deepens engagement, and builds a clear progression for participation.

First, we will develop new and deepen current resources, expanding our pipeline by collaborating with organizations that already serve at-risk youth. These partnerships will help bring children into programs while providing outdoor learning experiences not currently offered. By working together, we can extend our reach and introduce more young people to Minnesota's natural resources.

Next, we will establish a step-by-step program progression tailored to different age groups and skill levels. Youth will begin with hands-on activities like rod, reel, and tackle box rebuilding events (replacing lead tackle with eco-friendly items), followed by fishing experiences. Refurbished equipment will be used by youth in Phases 2 and 3, where they will work with skilled anglers in shore fishing and progress to one-day guided lake fishing.

To ensure more children benefit from these opportunities, we will expand our staffing. A dedicated staff member will oversee event and program quality. This role will ensure that each stage of the program is thoughtfully designed, effectively implemented, and impactful for the youth we serve,

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 project will bring in youth ages 8-11 and integrate youth ages 8-17 into a cohesive program, maximizing impact through streamlined Fishing For Life initiatives. By engaging underserved youth, we provide a pathway from to the outdoors, fostering confidence, life skills, and lasting mentorship connections. Hands-on experiences in nature will instill a deeper appreciation for Minnesota's natural resources, promoting conservation, preservation, and responsible stewardship. As participants progress through the program, they will develop the knowledge and values necessary to protect and enhance the state's lands and waters for future generations.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Phase 1—Build: Restoring and Distributing Fishing Gear

Activity Budget: \$32,190

Activity Description:

Objective: Establish a foundation for youth development by building relationships, fostering teamwork, and engaging participants in hands-on conservation efforts.

Tasks & Methods: Youth will participate in structured team-building activities, work alongside mentors to refurbish donated fishing equipment, and learn about conservation, particularly reducing lead-based tackle. These activities will be delivered through a minimum of 6 one-day events, with positive adult mentors guiding participants in problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. Conservation experts will provide education on sustainable fishing practices.

Outcomes: Participants will develop teamwork and leadership skills while gaining hands-on experience in fishing equipment restoration. Each youth participant will using the rod/reel they themselves refurbish for Phases 2 & 3 of the program. Youth will experience a sense of achievement, build confidence, and establish positive relationships with mentors. Additionally, the program will supply refurbished fishing gear to other youth programs, ensuring sustainability and continued impact.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Recruitment & Partnership Building: Establish connections with youth organizations to introduce participants to the program.	July 31, 2028
Hands-on Team Building & Conservation Efforts: Facilitate activities that promote collaboration, skill development, and environmental stewardship.	July 31, 2028
Equipment Distribution & Program Expansion: Provide refurbished fishing gear to youth while expanding partnerships and outreach.	July 31, 2028

Activity 2: Phase 2 — Explore: Shore, Dock, or Pier Fishing on Minnesota Lakes

Activity Budget: \$68,570

Activity Description:

Objective: Provide youth with immersive fishing experiences that enhance skill development, promote environmental awareness, and strengthen personal and social connections while continuing positive relationships with mentors.

Tasks & Methods: Youth will participate in 4-6 shore, dock, or pier fishing outings on accessible Minnesota lakes. Mentors will provide hands-on training with fishing techniques, safety protocols, and ethical angling practices. Youth will learn about local fish species (panfish), using a simple hook with a lead-free weight and a bobber, catch-and-release techniques, and the environmental impact of lead-free tackle. They will learn about how to bait hooks, how to cast with their rod/reel, how to read the water and where fish are at the time of the year, how to remove a fish so that it can survive and continue to thrive after release. Other topics addressed will include invasive species, the negative impact of littering, and pitching in to help cleanup local lakes. Teamwork, patience, and resilience will be demonstrated through guided discussions and peer interactions.

Outcomes: Participants will develop foundational fishing skills and confidence in their abilities. Youth will establish meaningful relationships with social connects, gaining awareness of responsible outdoor recreations on Minnesota lands and waters.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Event Planning & Recruitment: Identify lakes, secure necessary permits, recruit volunteers, and register youth participants.	July 31, 2028
Initial Fishing Events: Conduct initial (2) outings, gathering feedback from participants and volunteers.	July 31, 2028
Final Fishing Events: Complete remaining outings, assess participant growth, and identify youth for Phase 3.	July 31, 2028

Activity 3: Phase 3 — Transform: Reel Hope Youth Fishing Events on Minnesota Lakes**Activity Budget:** \$48,240**Activity Description:**

Objective: Offer an intensive fishing and outdoor experience in a boat with a guide that reinforces leadership, personal growth, and advanced skill development.

Tasks & Methods: Participants selected from earlier phases will attend a one-day immersive fishing experience on a boat. Hands-on training in boat fishing and sustainable fishing methods will be provided. Youth will be instructed about multiple fish species, lake ecology, drop-offs, weed beds, and other structures that affect fishing. There will be introduction to fish-finding equipment and motors, as well as various casting baits. Demonstrated examples of outdoor leadership and environmental stewardship will be displayed by the program coordinator and volunteers.

Outcomes: Participants will refine their fishing skills while developing leadership abilities, teamwork, and problem-solving skills. This experience is designed to build self-confidence and foster a deeper appreciation for nature. Through mentorship, participants will form meaningful connections and gain a sense of personal achievement. Mentors will also emphasize the importance of environmental stewardship, teaching responsible fishing practices that help protect lakes and fisheries.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Participation Selection & Day Camp Logistics: Identify participants, secure boats and volunteers, and secure necessary permits.	July 31, 2028
Fishing Camp Execution: Host the camp, delivering an intensive learning and bonding experience.	July 31, 2028
Post-Camp Reflection & Recognition: Gather participant feedback, highlight success stories, and recognize youth achievements.	July 31, 2028

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?

Fishing For Life's Reel Hope program will provide at-risk youth (ages 8–17) with meaningful outdoor experiences, fostering connections to Minnesota's lands and waters. Program results will be sustained through continued mentorship, progressive skill-building opportunities, and environmental stewardship education. During and after project completion, ongoing efforts will be funded through a combination of grants, private donations from individuals, businesses, and foundations, and broad community support. This diversified funding approach ensures the long-term viability of the program, allowing more youth to develop a lifelong appreciation for nature while reinforcing conservation and preservation efforts across the state.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Laura Hudson

Job Title: Project Manager

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

Laura Hudson brings extensive experience in grant management, program coordination, and community engagement, making her well-qualified to lead this initiative connecting youth with Minnesota's lands and waters.

With eight years of experience working on the OJP Abuse in Later Life Grant for Anoka County—serving as Acting Grant Manager for five—Laura has a strong background in managing large-scale programs. She ensured compliance with grant timelines, coordinated stakeholder meetings, and led public outreach initiatives. Her ability to build relationships across government agencies, nonprofits, and community organizations demonstrates her expertise in fostering partnerships critical to program success.

Laura has a proven track record of organizing and executing complex events, from large community engagement sessions to specialized training programs. She has successfully developed and implemented educational materials, managed logistics for multi-agency initiatives, and facilitated trainings that continue to benefit professionals in law enforcement, social work, and victim advocacy. Her experience securing professional accreditation for trainings further underscores her ability to navigate administrative and regulatory processes.

Additionally, Laura's leadership roles as Director of Administrative Services and Chief Operating Officer showcase her ability to oversee operations, manage budgets, and coordinate cross-sector initiatives. Her law enforcement background provides valuable insight into working with diverse populations, ensuring safety, and addressing community needs.

Laura's combination of project management expertise, community engagement skills, and administrative leadership makes her an ideal candidate to lead this effort in expanding youth access to outdoor activities and fostering meaningful connections with Minnesota's natural resources.

Organization: Fishing For Life

Organization Description:

Founded in 2004, Fishing For Life has dedicated over two decades to serving youth, families, veterans, and communities through eight plus fishing and outdoor programs, reaching over 63,000 youth and adults since its inception. Intentionally designed fishing and outdoor programs serve as avenues for building relationships with various groups across the state, including at-risk youth, families, veterans, and communities in Minnesota and throughout the Midwest.

Through its outreach efforts, Fishing For Life has positively impacted thousands of youth, veterans and families over the years, and it remains committed to expanding its reach and making a lasting difference in the community. In 2024 alone, Fishing For Life leveraged its robust programs to orchestrate over 175 community events and served 284 youth campers and 465 military veterans and active duty personell. We received donations of 1,410 rods/reels and 270 tackle boxes for our Reel 'Em In program, where we refurbish fishing equipment and work to remove lead tackle with more eco-eco-friendly items. Our events are made possible by the dedication of 830 volunteers, collectively contributing over 7,250 hours. Since our establishment, we've proudly extended the joy of recreational fishing and outdoor experiences to a vast community.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Program Coordinator		Managing volunteer team goals and schedules. Coordinating team members to ensure progress is made toward the project's milestones and ultimate completion.			0%	2		\$108,160
							Sub Total	\$108,160
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Chartered boats for four (4) lake fishing events. Fishing For Life will hire chartered boats to bring youth on 4 events for Phase 3: Transform: Reel Hope Youth Fishing Events on Minnesota Lakes. Participants will attend four (4) one-day immersive fishing events. These will cover 4/10 lake fishing events.				2		\$4,800
							Sub Total	\$4,800
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Equipment	Three event tents for youth fishing events.	Tents to support fishing events during all seasons (water and ice fishing) for registration, activities, and shelter.					\$750
	Equipment	Four (4) 6X6 portable tables for youth fishing events.	For use during fishing equipment refurbishing and fishing events.					\$240
	Equipment	Sixteen (16) folding chairs for youth fishing events.	For use at fishing equipment refurbishing and fishing events.					\$400
	Equipment	Six-pack of table cloths.	For use on 6X6 folding tables at youth events, refurbishing fishing equipment and fishing events.					\$60
	Tools and Supplies	Fishing bait.	For use by youth during fishing (water and ice) events for 2 years.					\$1,000
	Tools and Supplies	Rebuilding supplies: tips, line, cleaning rags, soaps, sandpaper.	For used during events for Phase 1 of Reel Hope during the refurbishment of fishing equipment.					\$1,500

	Equipment	Propane	For use in tents during Reel Hope ice fishing events.					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$4,950
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Mileage reimbursement for staff vehicle at standard federal mileage rate of \$.70/mile for 720 trips, 16,000 miles, 1-4 people.	Staff driving personal vehicle to all three phases of project events plus work surrounding all events for all phases (2 years).					\$11,200
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Mileage reimbursement for event transportation at standard federal mileage rate of \$.70/mile for 65 trips, 1,500 miles, up to 12 people.	Transportation for all youth events for all three phases of Reel Hope (2 years).					\$1,050
							Sub Total	\$12,250
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
		Food for one-day lake fishing camp events. There will be 10 lake fishing events with approximately 32 people at each. Total breakfasts: \$40 (per event) X 10 events; Total lunches: 320 at \$17/meal.	Breakfast and lunch for youth, staff, guides, and volunteers at 10 lake fishing events for Phase 3 of Reel Hope program.					\$5,840
		Wilderness Water Safety Training	Program Coordinator training for safety, including lodging and food.					\$600

		Volunteer Training	Hosting training for 25 volunteer Fishing For Life Ambassadors to include space, food, and materials.					\$2,500
		Program Coordinator Uniforms	Jerseys, sun shirts, and sweatshirts.	X				\$600
		Food for shore/pier fishing events. There will be 20 shore/pier fishing events with approximately 25 people at each. Total breakfasts: \$40 (per event) X 20 events; Total lunches: 500 at \$17/meal.	Breakfast and lunch for youth shore/pier fishing events, Phase 2 of Reel Hope program.					\$9,300
							Sub Total	\$18,840
							Grand Total	\$149,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Other Expenses		Program Coordinator Uniforms	Staff uniforms necessary for safety reasons, so staff campers can easily identify their leader in public and around lakes.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$149,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [c89e4363-c81.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

This map shows locations, counties and lakes, where shore/pier fishing, Phase 2, and one-day lake camp fishing events, Phase 3, will take place....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Certificate of Good Standing - Non Profit (Domestic)	eba311cd-ae0.pdf
FFL Audited Financial Statements 12.31.23	3bfbe8dc-9a3.pdf
2023 990	1491f8fb-00e.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Resolution Letter LCCMR Grant	66768951-7d7.pdf

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?

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

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:

Darla Swanson, Fishing For Life Development Coordinator

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

