



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-218

Proposal Title: Northwoods and Waters Community Resilience Collaborative

Project Manager Information

Name: Joshua Bergstad

Organization: Arrowhead Regional Development Commission

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The Collaborative will create a Regional Resilience Plan uniting NE and Central MN counties, Tribal Nations, and agencies to address climate adaptation with sustainable land, water, infrastructure, and energy solutions.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$1,516,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2029

LCCMR Funding Category: Resiliency (A)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): NE

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Region(s): NE

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.

Climate change impacts do not follow borders, yet our responses often do. Northern Minnesota communities face escalating climate challenges, including extreme weather, forest pests, shifting precipitation, and habitat changes that threaten infrastructure, natural resources, and Tribal cultural lifeways. These changes demand proactive planning and adaptation.

In northern Minnesota, average annual temperatures could rise 3.7–4.4°F by mid-century, with precipitation increasing up to 1.3 inches. However, seasonal shifts will bring wetter springs, drier summers, shorter snow seasons, intense rainfall, and prolonged dry spells. Extreme climate disruptions are already occurring—once-rare 500-year floods now happen regularly, while drought and wildfire risks continue to rise.

A major challenge to resilience is the siloed approach of counties, Tribal Nations, and local governments, which often focus on their own budgets and procedures rather than regional collaboration. Without coordinated planning, responses to large-scale threats like flooding, wildfires, and forest decline remain fragmented or reactive rather than strategic and preventative.

Further compounding these challenges, many local governments in the region face significant staffing and financial constraints. Many communities are economically or environmentally distressed, limiting their ability to implement conservation and resilience measures. Addressing these gaps requires cross-jurisdictional partnerships and long-term investment in regional

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 regional collaboration, we propose forming a Regional Resilience Collaborative uniting 20+ partners across north-central Minnesota. This initiative will develop a cohesive resilience plan to protect and enhance air, water, land, wildlife, infrastructure and community resources. While many valuable projects exist, a coordinated approach will maximize impact by aligning efforts, sharing resources, and fostering long-term resilience.

Regional collaboration is succeeding elsewhere. Recognizing this approach's value, NOAA has invested \$575 million in 19 projects nationwide through the Coastal Climate Resilience Regional Challenge. Northeastern Minnesota, including the North Shore, was selected to establish a regional climate resilience collaborative, resulting in a resilience plan for Tribes and counties along the coastline. This regional collaboration is to share and learn about both proven and new and innovative practices. (see Attachment)

Building on this momentum, our initiative will extend collaboration inland to the Headwaters and Arrowhead region, leveraging shared knowledge and resources to strengthen climate adaptation. To ensure direct local benefits, the collaborative will fund pilot projects, demonstrating effective long-term resilience strategies while empowering communities to implement adaptive measures tailored to their needs.

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?

Foster a united voice for climate resilience planning among 4 Tribal Nations, 8 counties, 2 regional development commissions, and 4 higher ed institutions.

Produce a Regional Resilience Plan, providing a strategic framework for climate resilience planning.

This high level of integration will position the region for grant opportunities.

Support innovative pilot projects to reduce the impacts of climate change, land use changes, or extreme weather events,

through both engineered and natural solutions targeted at critical areas. These projects will serve as models for other Minnesota communities.

MCAP will lead on technical assistance and resource sharing for public and private landowners.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Create Regional Resilience Plan

Activity Budget: \$1,037,684

Activity Description:

The Regional Resilience Plan will integrate climate science, Indigenous knowledge, and local expertise to enhance forest and water management. A dedicated working group within the collaborative will lead plan development, engaging the community to shape priorities and ensure regional needs are addressed. The collaborative will provide technical assistance, funding, and education to strengthen local capacity for climate adaptation. By fostering a long-term network of counties, Tribal Nations, universities, and environmental organizations, the plan will establish a unified approach to resilience. It will serve as a guiding framework for regional collaboration, prioritizing adaptation strategies and outlining pathways for implementation. The plan will also act as a roadmap for infrastructure improvements, environmental conservation, and economic resilience, equipping local governments and Tribal Nations with data-driven tools and increasing access to funding for resilience projects. Success will be tracked through milestone achievements, engagement metrics, and adaptation progress indicators, with built-in monitoring frameworks to assess long-term impact. The Plan will include youth program and curriculum recommendations based on working with the underserved communities.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Form working groups to create structured work plan, compile data, and identify gaps	June 30, 2028
Develop resilience tool kit with recommendations for policy, adaptation actions, and funding strategies	June 30, 2028
Engage stakeholders in multiple ways to insure inclusivity, including a youth advisory board	June 30, 2029
Leadership team will evaluate and refine prioritization and implementation pathways and develop monitoring strategies	June 30, 2029
Market and distribute finished plan to agencies, municipalities, and funding entities to drive action	June 30, 2029

Activity 2: Implement Pilot Projects

Activity Budget: \$258,083

Activity Description:

This grant activity will support the implementation of climate resilience and energy projects across northern Minnesota, focusing on nature-based solutions and sustainable energy practices that enhance environmental and community resilience. By leveraging pilot projects, the initiative will demonstrate effective strategies for adapting to climate change while promoting ecological health and long-term sustainability. Pilot projects will be solicited and selected by the Collaborative.

Pilot projects may include wetland restoration to improve water quality, mitigate flooding, and enhance biodiversity; sustainable forest management practices to protect critical habitats, sequester carbon, and strengthen local ecosystems; green infrastructure projects, such as stormwater management systems. Additionally, energy efficiency upgrades could be pursued to lower emissions, reduce energy costs, and promote renewable energy adoption in public and community buildings.

Collaboration with local governments, Tribal Nations, conservation organizations, and energy partners will ensure projects align with regional needs and priorities. These pilot efforts will serve as models for scaling up resilience and energy solutions, demonstrating the benefits of integrating land and water management with clean energy strategies to build a more sustainable and climate-resilient future for northern Minnesota.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Identify projects with partners	June 30, 2027
Implement projects and create maintenance and monitoring plan	June 30, 2029
Share early outcomes with partners	June 30, 2029

Activity 3: Regional Climate Education and Technical Assistance

Activity Budget: \$220,233

Activity Description:

This grant will fund 50% of the time for a new or existing MCAP Extension Educator, who will be fully dedicated to advancing climate resilience planning and capacity-building efforts across the region. Funded through the project, the educator will work closely with Resilience Planners and others to strengthen collaboration, facilitate training, and provide technical assistance to communities.

The educator will actively participate in bimonthly Collaborative Convenings, engaging with partners to support coalition-building and contribute MCAP expertise to the development of a comprehensive regional resilience plan. These convenings will provide a platform for sharing knowledge, aligning priorities, and fostering cross-sector collaboration. A key focus of the educator's role will be community capacity-building. They will help design and deliver at least eight group trainings and workshops, equipping partners and local leaders with the tools and knowledge needed to integrate climate resilience into planning and decision-making. Programs such as Community Climate Leaders and Climate Adaptation Specialist Training will be tailored to regional needs.

Additionally, the educator will provide direct technical assistance and develop an online Resource and Referral Hub, offering guidance on hazard assessments, adaptation strategies, funding opportunities, and best practices. These efforts will empower communities to implement effective climate resilience solutions.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Assist in developing workshop and training schedule to build capacity to create regional resilience plan	June 30, 2027
Participate in collaborative convenings and contribute MCAP expertise and resources to develop regional resilience plan	June 30, 2029
Help deliver trainings and workshops to help audiences understand climate and extreme weather and adaptation	June 30, 2029
provide vital resources and technical assistance to communities as needed	June 30, 2029
Assist in developing online Resource and Referral Hub to share resources, assistance and funding opportunities	June 30, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Naomi Carlson	Headwaters Regional Development Commission	An HRDC Resilience Planner will lead planning and coordination in the five-county HRDC region, co-lead Tribal Nation coordination, and serve on the staff leadership team alongside ARDC and MCAP to advance regional climate resilience efforts. HRDC will also contract with two colleges to provide intern and graduate assistants.	Yes
Nathan Meyer	Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership	A MCAP Extension Educator will work closely with ARDC and HRDC Planners to build community capacity, and provide resources and technical assistance to communities and contribute MCAP expertise and resources to develop a comprehensive regional resilience plan.	Yes

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?

This project provides three years of capacity building and technical assistance to prepare the region for future state and federal climate funding. It will unite stakeholders, deliver direct planning support, and connect collaborators with state-funded climate programs. By increasing local understanding of climate impacts and resilience strategies, the project fosters long-term climate action. Regional and local plans will enhance funding competitiveness by identifying clear actionable projects, while strengthened networks ensure continued collaboration. The Leadership Team will explore sustainable funding options to maintain the Collaborative, ensuring long-term resilience planning and adaptation efforts continue beyond the grant's duration.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Joshua Bergstad

Job Title: Principal Planner

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

Joshua has over 20 years experience working community and economic development for the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission. In that time he has led numerous planning efforts from the local to regional levels across a region covering one-quarter of Minnesota's land area.

Organization: Arrowhead Regional Development Commission

Organization Description:

The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) is a multi-disciplined planning and development organization serving the Northeast Minnesota counties of Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake, and St. Louis. Minnesota established regional development commissions in 1969 to assist in multijurisdictional issues, coordinate resources to meet jurisdictional needs, and coordinate planning activities within the regions. The mission of ARDC is to serve the people of the Arrowhead Region by providing local units of government and citizens groups a means to work cooperatively in identifying needs, solving problems, and fostering local leadership.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Resilience Planner (ARDC)		Co-Project Manager, ARDC Counties and Tribal Areas			35%	3		\$373,101
Principal Planner, ARDC		Senior Manager, Grant and Applicant Lead			35%	0.15		\$25,876
Planning Assistant, ARDC		General project support to ARDC team			25%	0.15		\$17,752
Finance		Provide finance and reporting oversight for grant including of subrecipients and pilot projects			35%	0.36		\$49,105
Planning Director, ARDC		Support grant work, partner relations, and compliance			35%	0.15		\$29,487
GIS Specialist, ARDC		Provide Geospatial analysis and map making for entire project team			35%	0.3		\$35,505
Resilience Planner, HRDC		C--Project Manager, Agency lead for HRDC, HRDC service area and Tribal Areas			47%	3		\$450,000
MCAP Extension Educator		Build community capacity, provide resources and technical support to communities and development of resilience plan			26%	1.5		\$156,056
MCAP Director,		Provide supervision for Extension Educator and provide overall program design and project management			26%	0.15		\$23,443
MCAP Research Project Specialist		Provide overall project and grant management and project reporting to University of Minnesota			26%	0.39		\$31,959
							Sub Total	\$1,192,284
Contracts and Services								
Bemidji State University	Subaward	2 undergraduate interns per year, each 20 hours per week for 12 weeks @ \$15/hr				1.5		\$7,200

Bemidji State University	Subaward	Graduate Assistant to support HRDC Resilience Planner				3		\$54,000
White Earth Technical College	Subaward	One Graduate Assistant to support HRDC activities				3		\$60,000
							Sub Total	\$121,200
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Room Rental , MCAP	Rent rooms to hold trainings and workshops					\$900
	Tools and Supplies	Room Rental, ARDC	Rent Rooms to hold Collaborative meetings, pubic meetings					\$900
	Tools and Supplies	ARDC, Meeting and Facilitation Supplies	Materials and resources needed for meetings, stakeholder engagement, and data collection..Expenses include office supplies and presentation materials to facilitate collaboration.					\$3,600
	Tools and Supplies	HRDC, Meeting and facilitation supplies	Materials and resources needed for meetings, stakeholder engagement, and data collection..Expenses include office supplies and presentation materials to facilitate collaboration.					\$5,000
							Sub Total	\$10,400
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Annually for one person at least - 10 day trips @ 200 miles at 70 cents/mile, 4 overnight trips @ 250 miles @ 70 cents/mile, lodging 5 nights, lunch or dinner at \$13/\$19 for each trip	ARDC staff will have to travel widely across a region that covers approximately 25% of the state in order to lead a regional collaborative. Due to distance and scheduling of					\$4,750

			meetings some trips will require overnight stays.					
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Mileage/Meals/Lodging for approximately 12 day trips and 5 overnight trips	HRDC staff will need to travel widely within HRDC and ARDC service areas, about 25% of state area. Due to distance and schedule, overnight trips will be required					\$7,500
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	MCAP staff will have to travel for 8 education trainings and workshops, plus collaborative meetings (3 per year)	HRDC staff will need to travel widely within HRDC and ARDC service areas, about 25% of state area. Due to distance and schedule, overnight trips will be required					\$7,866
							Sub Total	\$20,116
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	ARDC, Printing of General Project materials	Printing will support various project activities, including stakeholder engagement, public outreach, and documentation. Promotional materials such as flyers, posters, and informational brochures will be produced to raise awareness and encourage participation. Meeting materials, including agendas, handouts, presentation boards, and sign-in sheets, will facilitate discussions and ensure attendees have access to key information. Additionally, final reports and summary documents will be printed for distribution to partners, decision-makers, and the public, ensuring that project findings and recommendations are effectively communicated.					\$3,500
	Printing	HRDC, Printing	Printing will support various project activities, including stakeholder					\$7,500

			engagement, public outreach, and documentation. Promotional materials such as flyers, posters, and informational brochures will be produced to raise awareness and encourage participation. Meeting materials, including agendas, handouts, presentation boards, and sign-in sheets, will facilitate discussions and ensure attendees have access to key information. Additionally, final reports and summary documents will be printed for distribution to partners, decision-makers, and the public, ensuring that project findings and recommendations are effectively communicated.					
							Sub Total	\$11,000
Other Expenses								
		Project Website	Purchasing of domain and creation of a project website to promote, engage and distribute project works					\$1,000
		Pilot Projects	This grant activity will support the implementation of pilot climate resilience and energy projects across northern Minnesota, focusing on nature-based solutions and other sustainable practices that enhance environmental and community/energy resilience. By leveraging pilot projects, the initiative will demonstrate effective strategies for adapting to climate change.					\$160,000
							Sub Total	\$161,000
							Grand Total	\$1,516,000

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				
Cash	University of Minnesota Extension	1/2 FTE funds for Extension Educator to supplement 1/2 FTE funds from ENRTF. These could be state or local funds.	Pending	\$156,065
			State Sub Total	\$156,065
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	\$156,065

Total Project Cost: \$1,672,065

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [9355fd72-da9.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

ARDC Financial Documents...

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
NWWCRC Distressed Communities	7e7fdb1b-44a.pdf
NWWCRC NOAA Narrative	2148a287-aab.pdf
Partners and Letters of Support	a13e9cb9-ad4.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:

Dr. Nathan Meyer, Minnesota Climate Adaptation Partnership, Naomi Carlson, Headwaters Regional Development Commission

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

N/A