



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-400

Proposal Title: Nature for New Minnesotans

Project Manager Information

Name: Natalie Kennedy

Organization: U of MN - Bell Museum of Natural History

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Expanding the Nature for New Minnesotans program to increase understanding and appreciation for Minnesota's natural environment among English language learners statewide.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$300,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2029

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.

Nature for New Minnesotans (NFM) seeks to address practical and perceived barriers of access to the nature among immigrant communities, and strengthen connections between adult EL learners and outdoor spaces. Through a successful LCCMR pilot the UMN Extension Natural Resources developed NFM, a student centered adult ELL curriculum focused on familiarity with Minnesota's natural environments. The scope of the pilot was centered on the development of curriculum and delivery with partners in the Twin Cities, however, there was also great interest in the program expressed by adult ELL classes in greater Minnesota. NFM was unable to meet that demand due to capacity limitations.

In 2024 NFM was adopted under new stewardship by the Bell Museum, a previous NFM partner, and is now operated under the Bell's statewide engagement department. This shift helps to ensure the continuation of the program and makes expansion of NFM in greater Minnesota more feasible given the Bell Museum's extensive partners in greater Minnesota and statewide departmental administration structure.

The Bell seeks to ensure continuation of NFM, increase capacity for adult basic education ELL and environmental educators to deliver program content, and expand service to greater Minnesota.

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.

Nature for New Minnesotans (NFM) was created in consultation with ELL adult basic education professionals and the curriculum has undergone stages of evaluation and revision, resulting in a combination of in-class time to explore and learn about nature (Minnesota flora, fauna, phenology) with hands on specimens curated from Bell collections, and immersive experiences with the Bell, MN Valley Wildlife Refuge and other environmental education partners. These activities introduce participants to local natural spaces and outdoor activities, educate about relevant ordinances, how to obtain permits, and provide memberships/passes to the Bell without cost.

To increase capacity for adult basic education ELL instructors and environmental educators to partner and deliver program curriculum, NFM staff support classrooms, offers modest stipends, and provides trainings. Bell Museum has significant experience offering professional development for educators and will expand on these training experiences and offer them statewide. These professional development training opportunities will be held annually, one for environmental educators, and another for adult basic education English language learning professionals, tailored respectively, to increase capacity to provide Minnesota environmental education to English language learners. These two sessions will be held both in the twin cities as well as in the greater Minnesota local 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?

Nature for New Minnesotans aims to:

1. Empower, inspire, and increase capacity of Minnesotan immigrants across who are English language learners to understand, appreciate, and navigate with care for Minnesotan's natural resources.
2. Increase knowledge of how to access and provide Minnesota natural/environmental education to English language learners, for environmental and English language learning educators.
4. Increase access to Nature for New Minnesotans information and resources through operationalized communications and website where the existing curriculum modules and all additional written, video, and audio resources will be available to the general public.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Implement NFNM courses offered by ELL program partners with nature based experiences in Twin Cities and statewide.

Activity Budget: \$240,000

Activity Description:

Implement Nature for New Minnesotans using the developed materials with immigrants enrolled in ELL classes at our partner centers around the Twin Cities. We will offer Nature for New Minnesotans curriculum as part of existing adult basic education ELL courses, running about 6 weeks long per season, and will hold them at 6 centers in the first year and 10 centers in the following two years. With this effort, we estimate reaching an around 540 adult learners and their families.

Class objectives:

1. Use Nature for New Minnesotans curriculum to teach English.
2. Deepen learner's understanding of Minnesota's natural environments and resources.
3. Empower adult learners develop a sense of place in the natural environment.
4. Introduce learner's to natural spaces, outdoor activities, and how to navigate relevant ordinances.
5. Encourage learners to participate in public conservation practices.

Leverage the Bell Museum's statewide relationships to expand Nature for New Minnesotans program service areas. Working with adult basic education language learning programs through city and county community ed programs and social service organizations, as well as local environmental partners, launch Nature for New Minnesotans in Mankato, Saint Cloud, Worthington, and Faribault.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Offer Nature for New Minnesotans: fall 2026, spring and summer 2027.	June 30, 2027
Offer Nature for New Minnesotans: fall 2027, spring and summer 2028, include new statewide partners.	June 30, 2028
Offer Nature for New Minnesotans: fall 2028, spring and summer 2029 include new statewide partners.	June 30, 2029

Activity 2: Provide professional development for ELL instructors and environmental learning centers on Nature for New Minnesotans curriculum and materials.

Activity Budget: \$60,000

Activity Description:

Nature for New Minnesotans will offer professional development workshops for ELL instructors and environmental learning center staff. Specifically, we will deliver a day-long workshop that introduces the ELL teachers to the adapted curriculum materials and shows them how to work with them within their existing program structure, as well as a day-long workshop for environmental learning centers (in partnership with an ABE ELL consultant) on how to provide welcoming and meaningful programming to English language learners. Participants will be made up of existing and new relevant staff and volunteers at NFNM partner organizations, and opportunities will be held both in the Twin Cities as well as in statewide partner communities.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Offer professional development trainings for cohort of Adult Basis Education English language learning instructors.	July 31, 2026
Offer professional development trainings for environmental learning center staff.	July 31, 2026
Offer professional development trainings for cohort of Adult Basis Education English language learning instructors.	July 31, 2027
Offer professional development trainings for environmental learning center staff.	July 31, 2027
Offer professional development trainings for cohort of Adult Basis Education English language learning instructors.	July 31, 2028
Offer professional development trainings for environmental learning center staff.	July 31, 2028

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Renada Rutmanis(supervisor), Kris Klas (teacher), Marilyn Gjerde (teacher)	Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Laura Moyer (teacher), Joe Foss (teacher)	ABE Metro North	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Stacy Dietrich-Varney (program manager), Kaija Bergen (teacher), Danielle Saunders (teacher)	International Institute of Minnesota	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Anton Jones (president), Jessica Jones (teacher), Andy Francis, (teacher), Azul Kmicek (teacher)	Literacy Minnesota	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Cara Berger (program supervisor & teacher)	Neighborhood House	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Amy Kilgore (Outreach Coordinator), Jane Freeman (teacher)	Metro South Adult Basic Education	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Kara Zwickey (Visitor Services and Outreach Manager), Kelly Quain (Park Ranger)	Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service	Outdoor Environmental Education core partner providing access and programming for immersive hands on culminating experiences for Nature for New Minnesotans participants in the MN Valley refuge and with its network of environmental education partners.	Yes
Alisa Boswell (Adult Enrichment Coordinator)	Lincoln Community Center, Mankato	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Caroline Nerhus (Adult Basic Ed Supervisor)	Community Education, School District 742, St Cloud Area	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Stacy Everding (ABE Manager)	Southwest Community Education Worthington	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Cassandra Riopelle (Adult Education Coordinator), Sudi Muhidin (Family & Community Engagement Specialist)	Community Education, Faribault	Host organization that works with immigrant group sand teaches English for language learner classes.	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?

Since Nature for New Minnesotans was first developed and run through UMN Extension Natural Resources with the Bell as a project partner, the program has matured from a pilot into its next phase and the Bell is taking on the stewardship to operationalize it into a long term sustainable program under the Statewide Engagement dept of the Bell. Solidifying program operations and running the program with existing partners is first priority, followed by expansion to introduce the program Bell Museum's Statewide department's existing environmental and English language learning partners in greater Minnesota in order to increase outcomes statewide.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Natalie Kennedy

Job Title: Director of Statewide Engagement

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

Natalie Kennedy is the director of the department under which the proposed project is run and is part of the executive team for the Bell Museum. Natalie Kennedy has managed this department, programs, projects, and budgets at the Bell Museum for four years and prior to that was a program officer at the Minnesota State Arts Board where she stewarded an annual portfolio of 6 million public dollars in grant programs and ensuring grant dollars were making progress toward grantee and state agency outcomes, in service of the people of Minnesota. Natalie has hired a staff uniquely suited to serve the variety of needs of the departments and deliver programs in service of the vast array of people and environments across the state of Minnesota and is responsible for the collaborations and partnerships that enable the museum's programs to meet people where they're at, educate, and galvanize activity toward environmental appreciation and stewardship.

Organization: U of MN - Bell Museum of Natural History

Organization Description:

The Bell Museum is Minnesota's official natural history museum with a mission to ignites and sustains curiosity for nature and the universe, established by the legislature in 1872 and held in trust by the University of Minnesota. For over a century, the museum has preserved and interpreted our state's rich natural history and served learners of all ages. Additionally, our scientific collections contain over one million specimens, representing every county in Minnesota and various locales around the globe and is home to the Whitney and Elizabeth MacMillan Planetarium expanding the mission to the universe and points beyond.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Nature for New Minnesotans project coordinator		Coordinate program delivery & professional development, communicate with ELL, Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge and other program partners			32.3%	0.9		\$81,000
Nature for New Minnesotans program associate		Support program delivery and professional development, work in classroom with ELL educators, support delivery of professional development, schedule program experiences			36.6%	1.35		\$95,000
Statewide program staff support		provide program experience support including guided gallery experiences and additional support for outdoor activities, and other relevant project support as needed			36.6%	0.3		\$17,000
Statewide Programs Manager		Supervise and advise program coordinator, work to operationalize program at the Bell Museum, provide supervision to additional project staff			36.6%	0.3		\$29,000
Project Director		Project PI, oversees entire project, budget, and staffing, ensures program is meeting milestones and assesses for outcomes.			36.6%	0.15		\$21,000
							Sub Total	\$243,000
Contracts and Services								
TBD-English Language Learning Centers & Environmental Learning Centers	Service Contract	Stipend to program partners to support commitment, participation, and utilization of NFNM curriculum and to enable full learner participation through, as well as participation in professional development. (Stipends range between are approx \$2500 - \$3500 each depending on partner commitment level)				0		\$30,000
							Sub Total	\$30,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								

	Tools and Supplies	Tools and Supplies ELL Professional Development Materials	Materials for ELL Instructors including sample participant materials and instructor guides					\$6,000
	Tools and Supplies	Participant Materials	Supplies used by adult learners for nature-based activities (hand lenses, field guides, field notebooks)					\$4,000
	Tools and Supplies	Instructional supplies	Supplies used to teach courses (markers, post-its, demonstration materials, flip charts)					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$11,000
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Program staff local and statewide travel to program partner sites. (4 statewide mil + 2000 local mi	Based on two program staff traveling 6500 miles per year to and from partner sites. Funding allows for overnight lodging based on federally allowable travel expenses to statewide partner sites.					\$10,000
							Sub Total	\$10,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Instructional materials	Materials for adult English language learners. (Estimated \$15 per participant X 540 participants)					\$6,000
							Sub Total	\$6,000

Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$300,000

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				
			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: [b3bb28dd-d1a.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

The graphic showcases the three major phases of Nature for New Minnesotans including the four current curriculum modules:

1. Climate and Seasons of Minnesota
2. Birds and Migration in Minnesota
3. Fishing in Minnesota
4. Plants in Minnesota...

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
UMN Approval Letter	5b98e331-4aa.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 UMN Policy on travel 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:

Jennifer Olson (Bell Museum), Holly Menninger (Bell Museum), Lucas Rapisarda (Nature for New Minnesotans UMN)

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

