



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-420

Proposal Title: Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Education and Outreach Initiative

Project Manager Information

Name: Star Nelson

Organization: Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Association

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Education and Outreach Initiative proposal aims to expand resources, offer educational opportunities, and increase communication for farmers and ranchers interested in sustainable grazing practices.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$830,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2029

LCCMR Funding Category: Land (F)

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.

According to the USDA NRCS 2017 Natural Resource Inventory, there are approximately 4.63 million acres of grazing land in Minnesota, including grazed cropland, pastures, silvopasture and more. These lands are managed by farmers, ranchers, agencies, and state departments. However, many of these land managers could benefit from further knowledge and education on sustainable grazing land conservation practices.

A significant portion of these grazing lands are often overgrazed, with intensive management practices throughout the entire season. This overgrazing can lead to several negative effects, including reduced land productivity, decreased profitability, and deteriorating soil health. Over time, without proper management practices, the land becomes increasingly depleted, making it more difficult to restore or maintain its productivity.

Sustainable grazing practices, such as adaptive grazing management, proper stocking rates, and moves management, can help with these challenges. However, many producers may not have access to the necessary resources, information, or support to implement such practices effectively. Providing educational opportunities and outreach about grazing land conservation is crucial to ensuring the long-term profitability and sustainability of these important grazing lands. By creating an understanding of conservation techniques, producers can work toward improving land health, increasing profitability, and preserving Minnesota's grazing lands for future generations.

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.

The Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Education and Outreach Initiative aims to educate a diverse audience, including beginning and transitioning farmers, as well as those generally interested in conservation. Beyond farmers and ranchers, the initiative seeks to engage urban communities, youth, and underserved populations, ensuring accessible education on sustainable grazing land management.

A primary objective of the initiative is to provide producers with the knowledge to utilize grazing lands effectively to enhance soil health, reduce erosion, and promote long-term land conservation. These efforts align with the Legislative-Citizen Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) goals, which include increasing awareness of soil health, improving water quality, educating the public, and enhancing wildlife habitats.

The goals of the Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Association (MNGLCA)—to educate farmers, ranchers, and the general public about grazing land conservation—are closely aligned with LCCMR's mission. Through this initiative, MNGLCA will expand its education and outreach by using the grant funding to develop and deliver impactful conservation programs.

Additionally, the initiative will foster collaboration among government agencies, partner organizations, and underserved communities, creating a strong network dedicated to preserving Minnesota's grazing lands for future generations.

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?

Each year MNGLCA will host ten field days covering sustainable grazing land management and conservation topics. To engage the next generation, the organization will organize two youth camps or educational events to introduce young community members to sustainable grazing practices. Additionally, MNGLCA will conduct an annual Grazing School focused on soil health, water quality, and sustainability.

To further extend educational outreach, the association will produce two educational videos on grazing sustainability,

habitat conservation, and profitability. Through these initiatives, MNGPCA will engage 100 new farmers and ranchers annually, fostering greater awareness and adoption of sustainable grazing practices.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Hands-On Learning, On-Farm Events & Partner Outreach Opportunities

Activity Budget: \$164,000

Activity Description:

Creating hands-on learning experiences allows farmers to engage in multiple educational methods, ensuring accessibility for all types of learners. MNGLCA has found that farmers are more likely to ask questions, explore new ideas, and collaborate with peers in an outdoor, on-farm setting. Offering diverse opportunities—such as grazing schools, field days, and pasture walks—supports farmers at all experience levels in grazing conservation. Partnering with organizations to develop meaningful learning experiences helps reach new audiences, helps producers in transitioning their practices, and supports long-time conservationists.

Each year, MNGLCA will host ten on-farm field days and five pasture walks across Minnesota to educate producers on various grazing management topics. These events provide firsthand exposure to sustainable grazing practices and creates peer-to-peer learning. Additionally, MNGLCA will continue its annual tradition of hosting one grazing school, improving the experience each year.

To meet the needs of different farmer groups, MNGLCA will offer specialized programs such as Grazing Schools, GrazeHERs Schools, Beginning Farmer Schools, and Advanced Grazing Schools. These initiatives promote conservation education while creating valuable networking opportunities. By expanding outreach and hands-on experiences, MNGLCA strengthens its mission to support farmers in implementing sustainable grazing practices that benefit both their operations and the environment.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
10 Field Days, 5 Pasture Walks, and 5 Partner Events	June 30, 2027
1 Grazing School and 1 GrazeHERs School	June 30, 2027
10 Field Days, 5 Pasture Walks, and 5 Partner Events	June 30, 2028
1 Grazing School and 1 Beginning Farmer School	June 30, 2028
10 Field Days, 5 Pasture Walks, and 5 Partner Events	June 30, 2029
1 Grazing School and 1 Advanced Grazing School	June 30, 2029

Activity 2: Comprehensive Online Resources for Grazing Education and Outreach

Activity Budget: \$40,000

Activity Description:

MNGLCA has collaborated with MN NRCS for years, developing educational materials based on their video resources. Building on this foundation, MNGLCA plans to add content by introducing new topics, including Livestock Management Strategies, Profitability Long-Term Rotational Grazing, Weed Ecological Services, and more. These topics have been frequently requested by producers at events, field days, and educational sessions.

In addition to creating videos, MNGLCA will enhance its website with educational articles. These articles will be developed through interviews with producers, sharing firsthand experiences and practical insights. This approach will ensure that the information is relevant, applicable, and beneficial to a wide range of grazing operations.

To further expand its online resources, MNGLCA aims to launch a podcast series featuring knowledgeable producers,

agency staff, and partner organizations. Over the next three years, 15 episodes will be produced, with plans to grow the library of topics. Additionally, an online course will be created using materials from field days, schools, and more. This course will be publicly available, helping beginning producers build a strong knowledge base. All resources will be available in the Grazing Partners section on our website, accessible to partners such as Ducks Unlimited, the Sustainable Farming Association, Audubon, and more.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Purchase Materials, Create Detailed Plan, and Secure Speakers	June 30, 2027
Create and Publish 2 Videos, 10 Articles, and 5 Podcast Episodes	June 30, 2028
Add Resources and Content to Online Course and Grazing Partners Page	June 30, 2028
Create and Publish 2 Videos, 10 Articles, and 10 Podcast Episodes	June 30, 2029
Publish and Advertise Online Course and Grazing Partners Page	June 30, 2029

Activity 3: Engaging Grazing Education for Youth

Activity Budget: \$53,000

Activity Description:

MNGLCA has not previously focused on youth education, but as part of its commitment to expanding outreach, is incorporating a youth education component into its values. Over the next three years, MNGLCA will develop a Youth Day Camp for preschool through third-grade students, introducing basic grazing concepts, livestock needs, and conservation practices in a fun, hands-on environment. Building on this foundation, a Youth Grazing School will be created for fourth through eighth graders, offering more advanced education with hands-on activities, discussions, and on-farm tours to deepen their understanding of conservation grazing.

Minnesota's 4-H and FFA programs play a vital role in agricultural education, engaging students across schools and communities. To further support youth learning, MNGLCA will develop educational programs for agricultural classrooms, FFA chapters, and 4-H meetings statewide. These programs will introduce students to conservation techniques while demonstrating the career opportunities in agriculture.

Additionally, MNGLCA will launch a traveling fair booth to attend fairs across the state. This interactive exhibit will educate a broader audience about grazing land conservation and sustainable agriculture, reaching individuals who may not otherwise learn about these topics. Through these efforts, MNGLCA aims to inspire the next generation of conservation-minded agricultural leaders.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Purchase Materials, Create Outlines, and Set Goals for Camps	June 30, 2027
Visit 5 FFA/4H Programs	June 30, 2027
Host 1 Youth Camp(Pre-K-Third) and 1 Grazing School (Fourth-Eighth)	June 30, 2028
Visit 10 FFA/4H Programs and 2 Fairs	June 30, 2028
Host 1 Youth Camp(Pre-K-Third) and 1 Grazing School (Fourth-Eighth)	June 30, 2029
Visit 15 FFA/4H Programs and 4 Fairs	June 30, 2029

Activity 4: Implementation of a Grazing Mentorship Program for Success

Activity Budget: \$573,000

Activity Description:

Mentorship and networking opportunities are core values of MNGLCA, as producers learn best through peer connections and hands-on experiences. Establishing and managing a mentorship program is a top priority to ensure producers have access to valuable guidance and support. A well-structured mentorship program will help producers refine their grazing practices, share innovative ideas, and strengthen the sustainable agriculture community. However, successful implementation and expanded educational outreach require dedicated personnel and administrative support.

To meet these needs, MNGLCA will hire an Executive Director and a Coordinator to oversee all aspects of the initiative. These roles will be responsible for managing the website, CRM platform, event planning and execution, and the development of courses and educational content. Additionally, they will facilitate mentorship connections, ensuring experienced producers can effectively guide those looking to enhance their grazing management skills.

Given the size of Minnesota, travel will be necessary for staff to engage with producers statewide. Ensuring that mentorship and networking opportunities are accessible across all regions will be a key focus. By investing in leadership and infrastructure, MNGLCA aims to strengthen its mentorship program, expand its reach, and provide meaningful learning experiences for producers at every stage of their journey.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Hire Executive Director	August 31, 2026
Hire A Coordinator	October 31, 2026
Recruit Mentors and Build Webpage Platform	June 30, 2027
Host 1 Mentor Workshop to Improve Mentorship Program	June 30, 2028
Host 1 Mentor/Mentee Event to Improve Mentorship Program	June 30, 2029

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?

The Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Education and Outreach Initiative will track event attendance through registration numbers and evaluations from producers, agency staff, community members, partners, and youth. Evaluations will assess prior knowledge, key takeaways, and on farm implementation plans.

MNGLCA has developed an evaluation form to measure event effectiveness and determine improvements for future events and outreach. Data from these evaluations will inform performance reports presented at the MNGLCA Annual Meeting and published on the MNGLCA website. Reports will detail participant engagement, event impact, and partnerships formed, guiding future funding efforts and goals.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Star Nelson

Job Title: MNGLCA Coordinator

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

Star Nelson serves as the Coordinator of Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Association (MNGLCA), overseeing all aspects of program management, financial record-keeping, outreach, and organizational operations. As the sole employee, she is responsible for ensuring the smooth execution of all day-to-day activities as well as fiscally responsible execution of all grant funds.

Since joining MNGLCA two and a half years ago, Star has orchestrated all educational events, including field days and educational workshops. She also oversees the NRCS Grant under the EZFed system, managing financial records initially in Excel spreadsheets and currently in QuickBooks. Additionally, she created and manages MNGLCA's membership platform and website through Neon One, which includes communication via email, membership tracking, event and partnership documentation, and timely updating of website content.

Outreach is another key component of Star's role. Actively building and maintaining partnerships with natural resource organizations, sponsoring collaboration with stakeholders and supporting external events which align with MNGLCA's goals is vital to the continual establishment of healthy land use in Minnesota. Star regularly develops promotional materials to enhance the organization's visibility and engagement with Minnesota farmers. As the manager of MNGLCA's online educational resources, she writes articles and works with partners to create relevant content.

Beyond these primary responsibilities, Star handles all other operational requirements of MNGLCA. As the sole staff member, responsible for all administrative tasks and strategic planning, Star works with numerous organizations and builds her professional resume having recently attended a professional development conference hosted by the National Grazing Lands Coalition, where she gained insights on grant management, sponsor funding, board improvement, and event logistics.

Organization: Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Association

Organization Description:

The Minnesota Grazing Lands Conservation Association (MNGLCA) is a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit committed to promoting the health and sustainability of Minnesota's 4.63 million acres of grazing lands (USDA NRCS 2017 Natural Resources Inventory). Established in 2009 and granted nonprofit status in 2010, MNGLCA plays a crucial role in

advancing sustainable grazing practices that benefit both livestock producers and the environment.

Led by a diverse board of farmers from across Minnesota, MNGLCA encourages collaboration by providing leadership, educational resources, and guidance to grassland managers and producers. By building strong partnerships and sharing resources, the organization supports responsible land stewardship while promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

MNGLCA delivers educational programs, outreach initiatives, and mentorship opportunities, providing farmers with the knowledge, and tools needed to implement profitable conservation strategies that enhance land health and productivity. These efforts not only improve grazing land management but also improve Minnesota's rural economy, strengthen ecosystems, and ensure the long-term sustainability of the state's agricultural landscape.

By empowering producers and expanding education, MNGLCA plays a vital role in shaping the future of grazing land conservation in Minnesota, ensuring that both current and future generations can benefit from healthy, productive grasslands.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Executive Director- Managing all Educational Outreach and Specific Grant Management Needs				3		\$300,000
TBD	Service Contract	Coordinator- Managing All Grant Administrative Needs and Educational Event Planning				3		\$225,000
							Sub Total	\$525,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Items needed for Field Days	Rentals for field days such as venues, bathrooms, tables, chairs, grills, etc.					\$73,000
	Tools and Supplies	Items needed for Partner Field Days	Support for partner field days such as rentals; bathrooms, tables, chairs, grills, etc.					\$9,000
	Equipment	Online Resource Equipment	Items needed to create online resources such as cameras, tripods, microphones, etc.					\$14,500
	Tools and Supplies	Trailer Equipment	Materials needed for Traveling Fair Booth such as fencing supplies, reels, posts, watering system setups, etc.					\$15,000
							Sub Total	\$111,500
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-

Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Executive Director and Coordinator travel for educational events at the government rate.	The Executive Director and Coordinator will attend events such as the field days, schools, camps, pasture walks, etc.					\$21,000
							Sub Total	\$21,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Print for Schools, Camps, and Fairs	Materials needed for in person events such as schools, camps, and fairs to help aid in the educational outreach.					\$13,000
	Publication	Communications	Communications about grazing land conservation for newspapers, articles, etc.					\$23,400
							Sub Total	\$36,400
Other Expenses								
		Producer Honorarium	Fees for asking farmers to host participants at their farms or come to speak at events					\$98,500
		Event Logistics	Event needs such as liability insurance, background checks, and fair entry fees					\$13,100
		Mentorship Program Needs	Items to support the mentorship program such as a website page design					\$500
		Online Resource Needs	Items to support the online resource such as website fees, quickbooks, zoom and video editing software					\$21,000
		Accountant	Accountant fee needed to ensure grant needs are current and audits are run correctly					\$3,000
							Sub Total	\$136,100
							Grand Total	\$830,000

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				
In-Kind	In Kind Time	In Kind Time or Volunteer Time at \$35/hour from producers, board members, and community members. These hours will be spent mentoring, getting ready for field days and events, networking and attending partner events, etc.	Secured	\$126,000
In-Kind	In Kind Travel	The mileage from volunteers at the current GSA rate.	Secured	\$6,000
Cash	Donations from Outside Sources	Cash donations from supporters, businesses, and partners.	Potential	\$38,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$170,000
			Funds Total	\$170,000

Total Project Cost: \$1,000,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [5b470f9e-5ca.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Attached is a document with photos from field days, grazing schools, pasture walks, and agency trainings done in 2024. The photos show producers in pastures, touring infrastructure, and networking. These photos have a brief description of each event below them to show what attendees can expect....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
MNGLCA Good Standing Certificate	48541bc1-640.pdf
MNGLCA 2023 990 Form	389425d3-59b.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
MNGLCA Board Resolution	2863b85c-b48.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support- Audubon	545ba2f0-052.pdf
Letter of Support- Ducks Unlimited	84fac87d-a5d.pdf
Letter of Support- Dave Evans	4029d924-8ae.pdf
Letter of Support- Scott and Deb Thoof	40a2134b-92c.pdf
Letter of Support- Dean Thomas	57d1f5e1-9d9.pdf
Letter of Support- Tarah Young	4a2ebc3d-236.pdf
Budget Breakdown	2c3746ba-f75.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")?

Yes

Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to whom children's services are provided by your organization?

Yes

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

None

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

