



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

### 2026 Request for Proposal

#### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2026-436

**Proposal Title:** Outdoor Learning Center and Trails

#### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Chris Lindholm

**Organization:** Cook County Schools ISD 166

**Office Telephone:** (218) 387-2271

**Email:** clindholm@isd166.org

#### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** The project will improve and expand access to the outdoor environment, provide spaces for exploration and education through accessible trails, features, shelter and seating for students in Cook County Schools

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$250,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** September 30, 2027

**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): NE

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

Region(s): NE

**When will the work impact occur?**

In the Future

## Narrative

**Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.**

The mission of the Cook County School District is “Success for Each - Respect for All” (Niigaanosedaa – Manaaji’ididaa gekina awiya). The district is located along the north shore of Lake Superior and the people that choose to reside here truly embrace and respect the outdoors. This proposed outdoor learning center and trails will further expand the community’s connection with the natural environment.

Having this space and designing it properly for accessibility will ensure that no matter the age or physical disability, all will feel welcomed and have access to the amenities offered. With proximity to the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa it is also the hope for this space to incorporate culturally relevant features.

**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 project will improve and expand access to the outdoor environment, provide spaces for exploration and education through accessible trails, features, shelter and seating for the Cook County Schools students and north shore community.

**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?**

The goal is to provide easy access for all to a space that encourages appreciation and connects visitors with the natural environment thus leaving with a mindset that we are fortunate to have an abundance of these natural resources in Minnesota and it should be preserved.

## Activities and Milestones

**Activity 1: Development of an outdoor learning center/areas and trails in the school forest.**

**Activity Budget:** \$250,000

**Activity Description:**

The project will improve and expand access to the outdoor environment, provide spaces for exploration and education through accessible trails, features, shelter and seating for students in Cook County Schools and the north shore community.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Feasibility / Engagement (2 Months)	November 30, 2026
Design (3 Months)	March 31, 2027
Pre-Construction & Bidding (1 Month)	April 30, 2027
Construction (3 Months)	September 30, 2027

## 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?**

As mentioned, the implementation of this project would coincide with the other upgrades taking place to the facility and site. Once the project is completed, the School District is prepared to take on the responsibility of this space. However, there will be an ongoing effort to encourage donations and volunteerism to help maintain and enhance this outdoor area to limit the burden to the district.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Chris Lindholm

**Job Title:** Superintendent

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

The school district recently passed a \$24M referendum to provide needed additions, remodeling and repairs to the school district's facility and site. This project is under design and the implementation of the project would coincide with the proposed outdoor learning space and trails project funded by this grant. The district would negotiate with the same consultants already hired by the district (Architects, Engineers and Construction Managers) to design, bid and oversee the implementation of the project. The overall process, final scope/design would be monitored by the Superintendent with final approval by the School Board.

The superintendent has served as a MN school administrator since 2000 and as a district superintendent since 2013 managing many state and federal grants during that time.

**Organization:** Cook County Schools ISD 166

**Organization Description:**

The Cook County School District is situated along the North Shore in northeast Minnesota. The City of Grand Marais, where the school is located, is a community of approximately 1,340 residents with a total district population of approximately 5,600. Cook County is a small independent school district that includes the communities of Grand Marais, Lutsen, Tofte, Schroeder, Grand Portage, Hovland and the Gunflint Trail. The Cook County School serves a total land/water area of approximately 3,340 square miles. The district educates approximately 470 students along with providing resources and mixed-use spaces for the surrounding community as well.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
							Sub Total	-
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
ICS	Service Contract	Design, Pre-Construction, Project Management				-		\$37,250
TBD	Service Contract	Construction Services				0		\$212,750
							Sub Total	\$250,000
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
							Sub Total	-
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							Sub Total	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							Sub Total	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
							Sub Total	-
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							Sub Total	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								

							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$250,000

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				
Cash	ISD 166 Construction Fund and General Fund - Funds 06 and 01	Construction Budget from the 2024 District Bond Referendum for \$24 million	Secured	\$84,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$84,000
			Funds Total	\$84,000

Total Project Cost: \$334,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes



## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [1e8e9330-fe8.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

The ariel view of the school ground shows the two areas (in green) planned for landscaping improvements to facilitate outdoor environmental education. Improvements to the bridges and trails in the official school forest are also part of the proposal to improve accessibility and safety....

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
ISD 166 LCCMR Resolution	<a href="#">1824d943-8dc.pdf</a>
ISD 166 Budget Supplement	<a href="#">ce428197-781.xlsx</a>
ISD 166 Capital Project Questionnaire	<a href="#">55c81438-518.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?**

Yes

**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:**

Kevin Wormuth, ICS

**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