



## Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

### 2026 Request for Proposal

#### General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2026-556

**Proposal Title:** Enabling Local Ownership of Community Solar

#### Project Manager Information

**Name:** Keiko Miller

**Organization:** Minneapolis Climate Action

**Office Telephone:** (612) 805-6477

**Email:** keiko@mplsclimate.org

#### Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** This project expands equitable renewable energy access, reduces energy burdens for low- and moderate-income households, increases adoption of energy efficiency, and supports local community solar ownership by Minneapolis neighborhood organizations.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$1,653,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** June 30, 2029

**LCCMR Funding Category:** Energy (E)

#### Project Location

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

Region(s): Metro

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

Region(s): Metro

**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.**

Minnesota is experiencing an urgent need to expand renewable energy solutions as part of broader efforts to address climate change, yet a high cost of entry continues to exclude many low- and moderate-income households—particularly in communities that have historically been overburdened by environmental and social injustices. These households often face a disproportionately high energy burden, spending more than 15% of their income on energy costs (American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, 2024 City Energy Burden Policy Brief). At the same time, many local neighborhood organizations, which are often essential conduits for grassroots education, outreach, and engagement, are struggling to maintain financial stability. These dual challenges undercut both Minnesota’s environmental objectives and community-level capacity to participate in and benefit from the clean energy transition. By enabling neighborhood-owned community solar capacity, we aim to break down financial barriers, reduce carbon emissions, and empower local groups with a sustainable funding mechanism—thereby advancing equity, environmental stewardship, and climate resilience across Minneapolis neighborhoods.

**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.**

Minnesota’s community solar law allows residents to collectively subscribe to solar arrays and receive proportional utility bill credits, thus promoting renewable energy access without upfront costs, conserving natural resources, and addressing climate change and land use challenges.

Our project demonstrates a new neighborhood-based community solar ownership model in Minneapolis, where nonprofit neighborhood organizations promote, support, and co-own local community solar projects. It expands clean energy access and affordability, prioritizing low- and moderate-income (LMI) subscribers. MCA’s program exceeds state requirements, targeting 30% savings and 80% LMI participation—surpassing the state’s 10% savings and 35% LMI thresholds. ENRTF’s support for MCA’s programing will enable program growth, increasing subscriber opportunities.

ENRTF funding will also lower ownership costs for neighborhood organizations, enabling 100% local co-ownership. By expanding renewable energy use in homes and reducing household energy burdens, it ensures equitable access to clean energy while strengthening neighborhood organizations that provide education, advocacy, and community-building opportunities.

MCA is committed to delivering long-term energy savings and affordable clean energy access for historically overburdened communities. Beyond a one-time investment, this initiative generates a 25-year revenue stream for local organizations engaged in advocacy and organizing.

Additionally, subscribers will receive energy efficiency audits and implementation support, further maximizing benefits.

**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?**

1. 1 MW of Clean Energy Capacity Serving 150–200 Residential Subscribers (80% LMI):
  - o By expanding participation in renewable energy, we reduce reliance on fossil fuels, thereby lowering carbon emissions and improving air quality. This directly supports the conservation and preservation of Minnesota’s air, water, and land.
2. Neighborhood Led Community Education and Outreach (15 Events/Year)
3. 100–150 Home Energy Audits
4. 50–100 Energy Efficiency Actions
5. Growth of MCA Community Solar Program Staff from 1.5 to 3.0 FTE
6. Local Co-Ownership (80–100%) of 1 MW Community Solar

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: MCA Program Support

**Activity Budget:** \$685,000

**Activity Description:**

Support for personnel costs of MCA's community solar program to coordinate and manage the neighborhood co-ownership project. If approved, MCA will hire an additional 1.0 FTE engagement specialist to augment program staff. Existing community solar staff will be allocated 75% to this initiative. Ten percent of accounting and executive director are allocated as direct costs supporting the management and administration of this grant. A 3.0% salary increase is assume for personnel costs over the three year term of the project. The impact of this activity is provide stable and sufficient personnel to implement, execute, and support the activities of this proposal.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Hire Community Solar Engagement Specialist	August 31, 2026
Ongoing support of MCA Community Solar Co-Ownership Initiative Staff	June 30, 2029

### Activity 2: Support Local Co-Ownership

**Activity Budget:** \$750,000

**Activity Description:**

Much of the engagement, planning, and initial design work with neighborhood organizations will occur before ENRTF funds become available, supported by other funding sources. The majority of requested ENRTF funds will help lower the cost of equity ownership shares for neighborhood organizations in community solar projects. The exact structure of the co-ownership coalition is still in development.

As we build the coalition, we will collaboratively develop a financing model that aligns with community needs, priorities, and funding guidelines. Early engagement has revealed strong interest in community solar and co-ownership. This co-creation process fosters engagement and ensures community priorities are met. MCA will provide updates to the commission as more details emerge.

The timeline for ownership buy-in phases depends on site selection, MN Department of Commerce Community Solar Garden approval, and the Xcel interconnection process. Completion dates may vary, but greater clarity is expected before the final LCCMR recommendation, allowing for necessary workplan updates.

This support will expand neighborhood organizations' access to co-ownership, providing long-term financial and community benefits for 25 years. Additionally, their involvement will strengthen outreach and increase household participation in renewable energy within their communities.

(We estimate each wave will consist of 5 neighborhood orgs @\$50K per org)

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Wave 1: Reduce cost burden for Phase 1 n'hood participants	August 31, 2026
Wave 2: Reduce cost burden for Phase 1 n'hood participants (5 n'hood orgs at \$50Kper)	December 31, 2026

Wave 3: Reduce cost burden for Phase 1 n'hood participants (5 n'hood orgs at \$50Kper)	June 30, 2027
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### Activity 3: Subscriber Support; Support equitable access to renewable energy and energy efficiency through community engagement and subscriber support

**Activity Budget:** \$218,000

#### Activity Description:

There are three waves to the full implementation of the program, each following the same sequence of stages. Following neighborhood ownership / equity buy-in which ensures availability of subscription shares, each wave will have 3 stages within subscriber support activity: (1) enrollment of community solar subscribers, (2) Home Energy Audits conducted for 80% of subscribers, and (3) energy efficiency improvements implemented by 50% of audit recipients. This acknowledges that some subscribers may not be interested or able to receive a home energy audits, as well as that some of those who do receive an audit may not have energy efficiency improvement projects that are eligible for cost offsets.

The waves are staggered to allow for complete equity buy-in and subscriber enrollment before moving on to the subsequent wave of neighborhood buy-in.

The impact of this activity is to increase access renewable energy participation, reduce energy burden for LMI households, as well as evaluate and implement energy efficiency opportunities at a household level.

#### Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Enroll 50-60 community solar subscribers (80% LMI)	October 31, 2026
Conduct 40-50 home energy audits for wave 1 subscribers	March 31, 2027
Enroll additional 50-60 community solar subscribers (80% LMI)	May 31, 2027
Offset cost for 20-35 energy efficiency projects for wave 1 subscribers (\$1000 max offset)	July 31, 2027
Conduct 40-50 home energy audits for wave 2 subscribers	October 31, 2027
Enroll additional 50-60 community solar subscribers (80% LMI)	December 31, 2027
Offset cost for 20-35 energy efficiency projects for wave 2 subscribers (\$1000 max offset)	February 28, 2028
Conduct 40-50 home energy audits for wave 3 subscribers	June 30, 2028
Offset cost for 20-35 energy efficiency projects for wave 3 subscribers (\$1000 max offset)	October 31, 2028

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Robert Cooper	City of Minneapolis, NRP and Community Participation Manager	Advise and coordinate availability of and appropriate use of neighborhood NRP funds	No
Minneapolis Neighborhood Organizations (TBD)	various 501c3 neighborhood organizations within Minneapolis	Partner with MCA in outreach, engagement, and education of community members around community solar; Provide organizational resources for equity stake in co-ownership coalition	Yes
Jamez Staples / Michael Krause	Renewable Energy Partners	technical advisors on design, development & construction of community solar projects within this initiative	No

## 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?**

Ongoing management and administration of subscribers will be provided by MCA, supported through a portion of pay-as-you-go subscription fees paid by subscribers. MCA Community Solar program costs, beyond subscriber administration, will be supported by additional external funding sources. A portion of subscription fees are also set-aside for operation and maintenance costs to ensure efficient production of renewable energy and benefits to subscribers. The relationships and collaboration between MCA and co-owning neighborhood organizations will continue for education, outreach, and engagement to communities.

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Keiko Miller

**Job Title:** Director, Community Solar Program

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

Keiko Miller is highly qualified to manage the proposed project and grant award, bringing extensive experience in program development, project management, and stakeholder engagement within the renewable energy sector. As Director of the Community Solar Program at Minneapolis Climate Action, she oversees all aspects of community solar initiatives, including financial modeling, compliance, utility coordination, and community engagement. Her expertise in developing and managing renewable energy projects ensures the effective execution of complex, multi-faceted programs.

With a Master of Public Policy in Environmental Policy and extensive leadership experience, Keiko has successfully led strategic initiatives in nonprofit, public, and private sectors. Her previous role as Associate Director of Program Strategy and Development at another local renewable energy focused non-profit organization involved leading operational priorities, funding strategies, and public-private partnerships in workforce development and renewable energy —critical skills for managing large-scale grants.

Keiko's background in consulting further solidifies her ability to oversee financial management, stakeholder collaboration, and regulatory compliance. She has advised organizations on sustainability practices, strategic planning,

and public policy, demonstrating a strong ability to translate vision into action. Additionally, her experience as a Senior Consultant at a local strategic consulting firm involved managing budgets, workplans, and strategic execution for diverse clients, from Fortune 100 corporations to nonprofits.

Keiko's deep commitment to community engagement is evident through her leadership roles, including serving as chair and vice-chair on boards of directors for multiple non-profit organizations, where she provided oversight and management of multi-faceted budgets and community projects.

Her proven ability to secure funding, manage large-scale initiatives, and foster collaboration across sectors makes her exceptionally qualified to lead the successful implementation of this proposal.

**Organization:** Minneapolis Climate Action

**Organization Description:**

Minneapolis Climate Action (MCA), a Justice 40 Accelerator participant, was founded in 2007 to create effective equitable climate solutions built in partnership with communities. Our work addresses systemic injustices driving the climate crisis and those systems disproportionately affecting low income and communities of color. Through the development of community solar gardens, MCA is bringing local ownership of solar energy, household savings, and resilient benefits to community members and neighborhoods traditionally left out of renewable energy projects. In 2021, MCA formed a partnership with Renewable Energy Partners (REP), a minority owned solar development firm in Minneapolis, to develop community solar garden projects that include opportunities for low income households to become CSG subscribers. Recently MCA, broadened its strategic alliance with REP to manage the Regional Apprenticeship Training Center (RATC) facility and coordinate skills training and job placement programs at the RATC in emerging clean energy and climate economy career fields.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Community Solar Program Coordinator		Subscriber Education, Program Development, N'hood Coordination, Subscriber Engagement			15%	2.25		\$173,000
Community Solar Engagement Specialist (new)		Subscriber Education, Subscriber Engagement, N'hood Engagement			15%	3		\$195,000
Community Solar Program Director		Program Development, Supervise Program Coordinator & Engagement Specialist, Manage Grant			15%	2.25		\$253,000
Executive Director		Supervise Program Director, Provide Organizational support and oversight			15%	0.3		\$36,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$657,000</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Accountant Bookkeeper	Service Contract	bookkeeping support for management of grant funding				0.3		\$28,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$28,000</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								

							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
	Printing	Education and outreach materials	Print and web materials for targeted subscriber audiences					\$10,000
	Printing	Education and outreach materials	Print materials for neighborhood / local ownership organizations					\$10,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$20,000</b>
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
		Community Ownership	Reduction of n'hood orgs ownership/equity share (assumes 15 n'hoods x \$50K reduction)					\$750,000
		Energy Audits / Subscriber Benefit	Cover cost of home energy squad visit for all subscribers					\$18,000
		Energy Efficiency Improvements / Subscriber Benefits	Available funds for up to \$1000 per subscriber to implement energy efficiency recommendations					\$180,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$948,000</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$1,653,000</b>



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
<b>State</b>				
			<b>State Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Non-State</b>				
Cash	Neighborhood Organization Funds, from NRP or other funding sources	Contributions by participating neighborhood organizations for equity stake in co-ownership coalition	Potential	\$1,250,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$1,250,000</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$1,250,000</b>

**Total Project Cost: \$2,903,000**

**This amount accurately reflects total project cost?**

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [856edc67-d02.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

Visual Presentation of:

Project Benefits: equitable access to renewable energy, reduced energy burden, grassroots stewardship, community-led education, and energy efficiency improvements

Proposal Activity Areas: MCA Community Solar Program Support, Neighborhood-based Co-ownership, Energy Efficiency Supports for Subscribers

Outcomes: including 1 MW clean energy capacity and more...

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
SoS Certificate of Good Standing_MCA	<a href="#">e940d7ee-cc9.pdf</a>
MCA 2023 9909	<a href="#">42decd61-bcc.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
MCA Board Resolution re LCCMR 2026	<a href="#">13b00634-db3.pdf</a>

### Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Ltr of Support_Nhood Org_Jordan	<a href="#">fec0a4fd-b7e.pdf</a>
Ltr of Support_Mpls CM Palmisano	<a href="#">dd801019-f81.pdf</a>
Ltr of Support_Mpls Mayor Frey	<a href="#">ec2932f3-a75.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?**

Yes

**Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?**

Yes

**Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF? If so, describe here (1) the source and estimated amounts of any revenue and (2) how you propose to use those revenues:**

Yes, The resulting community solar projects will generate revenue through ongoing pay-as-you-go subscription fees paid by community solar subscribers. The net revenue will be distributed amongst the community organizations that comprise the co-ownership entity, in proportion to each organization's upfront contribution to the project, over the 25-year life of the community solar project.

**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:**

Akisha Everett (MCA Executive Director), Jeff Stites (MCA Board of Directors Chair)

**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