



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-066

Proposal Title: HEALL Hub: BIPOC Environmental Education on the Northshore

Project Manager Information

Name: Rebeka Ndosi

Organization: Maji ya Chai Land Sanctuary

Office Telephone: (612) 440-8714

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: HEALL Hub establishes the first BIPOC-led environmental education program on Minnesota's North Shore, training 75 Master Naturalists in culturally affirming, land-based learning and engaging 900+ participants as lifelong environmental stewards.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$300,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2030

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?

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.

Minnesota's North Shore is one of the state's most ecologically rich regions. Yet for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color (BIPOC), this landscape has remained largely inaccessible. BIPOC communities, who disproportionately bear the burdens of environmental degradation, are excluded from the spaces, networks, and credentials that shape environmental decision-making.

Systemic barriers — including lack of psychological safety in predominantly white outdoor spaces, geographic isolation, economic constraints, and absence of culturally affirming programming — prevent BIPOC Minnesotans from learning from and becoming stewards of these extraordinary natural resources.

The consequences extend beyond individual exclusion. Minnesota's environmental education, conservation, and natural resource fields remain overwhelmingly white, perpetuating a critical leadership gap at a moment when diverse perspectives and community-rooted stewardship are urgently needed. Indigenous ecological knowledge goes unhonored in mainstream environmental education.

Maji ya Chai Land Sanctuary sits on 40 acres of land on the Encampment River, the only BIPOC-centered nature sanctuary on Minnesota's North Shore. The August 2025 BioBlitz demonstrated what becomes possible when BIPOC participants experience nature-based learning in a space where they feel safe, seen, and celebrated. The infrastructure — the land itself, the relationships, the cultural grounding — exists. What is needed now is the programming capacity to sustain and scale it.

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 HEALL Hub — Home for Environment and Ancestral Learning and Leadership — is a first-of-its-kind environmental education ecosystem rooted on Maji ya Chai Land Sanctuary's 40 acres of boreal forest, river corridor, and nearby Lake Superior shoreline. Through a coalition of mission-aligned partner organizations including the Twin Cities, the North Shore, and Duluth, HEALL Hub delivers year-round, land-based programming that centers cultural relevance, ancestral wisdom, and community leadership alongside rigorous environmental science.

Programming spans six interconnected areas: wildlife and birding education; Minnesota Master Naturalist certification training — the first BIPOC-led cohort site in the program's history; dark sky astronomy integrating Indigenous star knowledge; nature photography and environmental storytelling; outdoor recreation and skill-building; and ancestral and place-based learning honoring both Native American land stewardship and African diaspora relationships to land.

Proof of concept is established. In August 2025, Maji ya Chai hosted a community BioBlitz — co-led with the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum — where participants identified over 100 distinct species using iNaturalist, contributing real data to global biodiversity science.

ENRTF funding will launch, staff, and sustain this programming for three years, reaching 300+ participants annually and producing 60-75 newly certified BIPOC Master Naturalists — a permanent corps of multigenerational environmental stewards.

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?

Over three years, the HEALL Hub will:

- *Engage 900+ BIPOC Minnesotans in hands-on, land-based environmental education on Minnesota's North Shore (300+ annually).
- *Certify 60–75 new Master Naturalists through the first BIPOC-led cohort site in program history (20–25 annually).
- *Document measurable increases in participants' sense of safety, belonging, and connection to the natural world through pre/post assessment.
- *Contribute community-generated biodiversity data to regional and global science through annual BioBlitz events and iNaturalist.

*Establish a replicable model for culturally affirming environmental education that can be adopted by BIPOC-centered organizations statewide and nationally.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Master Naturalist BIPOC Cohort Training

Activity Budget: \$66,025

Activity Description:

The objective of this activity is to recruit and train a total of 60 Black, Indigenous or People of Color (“BIPOC”) Master Naturalists over 3 years.

The tasks involved include collaborating with Bell Museum to

Creating program recruitment materials and plan

Conducting information sessions

Soliciting and reviewing applications

Notifying applicants

Launching First Cohort

Launching Second Cohort

Launching Third Cohort

Conducting trainings

First Cohort Graduation M4 Date November 2027

Second Cohort Graduation M5 Date November 2028

Third Cohort Graduation M6 Date November 2029

Soliciting and analyzing feedback from participants and instructors

Continuous improvement of curriculum and outreach based on feedback

How accomplished: in partnership with Bell Museum and MN Master Naturalist Program

Outputs: marketing distribution, estimating total of 60 Master Naturalists (graduates), 20 per cohort

Impacts: Master Naturalists each develop their own programmatic offerings to communities, impacting 10-20 participants each, cultivating hundreds of environmental stewards, educating BIPOC communities and inspiring careers in environmental stewardship (estimating a total of 600 community members impacted by Master Naturalists)

Evaluation methods: participant feedback on curriculum and experience; focus groups of graduates reflecting on outreach and impact

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Launching First Cohort	September 30, 2027
First Cohort Graduation	November 30, 2027
Launching Second Cohort	September 30, 2028
Second Cohort Graduation	November 30, 2028
Launching Third Cohort	September 30, 2029
Third Cohort Graduation	November 30, 2029

Activity 2: HEALL Hub Community BioBlitz

Activity Budget: \$34,450

Activity Description:

The objective of this activity is to engage up to 12 community members annually in collecting biodiversity data on Maji Ya Chai and contributing to a growing global database along with other BioBlitz participants in other communities.

The tasks involved include:

Creating promotional materials and marketing plan

Conducting information sessions

Participant Registration Process

Coordinating with school and community groups

Media contacts

Coordinating on-site hosting: registration, welcome, information stations

Recruiting and training volunteers

How accomplished: in partnership Bell Museum

Outputs: marketing distribution, identification and of hundreds of individual species, 200+ community scientists

Impacts: Three years of cumulative biodiversity data to iNaturalist and regional science partners. 200+ community members experience a collaborative, fast-paced citizen science event where volunteers, experts, and community members work together to identify as many species as possible in a specific area within a set timeframe (often 24 hours). This experience connects people with nature, providing valuable biodiversity data for researchers while fostering environmental stewardship and scientific education.

Evaluation methods: participant feedback and demographic data, survey feedback from volunteers and experts

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
First BioBlitz	August 31, 2027
Second BioBlitz:	January 31, 2028
Third BioBlitz	July 31, 2028
Fourth Bioblitz	October 31, 2028
Fifth BioBlitz	August 31, 2029
Sixth BioBlitz:	April 30, 2030

Activity 3: Nature Photography & Storytelling With Dudley Edmondson

Activity Budget: \$38,200

Activity Description:

The objective of this activity is to inspire BIPOC and community members of all ages to become more responsible environmental stewards through the practice of nature photography and field techniques.

Tasks involved include:

Creating promotional materials and marketing plan

Conducting information sessions

Participant Registration Process

Coordinating with school and community groups

Media contacts

Coordinating on-site hosting (and transportation as needed)

Creating agreement to hire for instructor

How accomplished: in partnership with acclaimed Nature Photographer Dudley Edmondson

Outputs: marketing distribution, # participants, # photographs

Impacts: 30 community members cultivate confidence as outdoor communicators, building skills in visual storytelling about the natural world and also in citizen science documentation. This depth of education and breadth in

communication capacity, along with the photographic imagery may be used to improve the efficacy of conservation advocacy and inspire greater environmental stewardship among the photographers themselves, their families, community members and audiences who view their photographs.

Evaluation methods: participant feedback and demographic data; samples of photography

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
First nature photography program	September 30, 2027
Second nature photography program	September 30, 2028
Third nature photography program	September 30, 2029

Activity 4: Birdwatching & Stargazing/Star Stories with Urban Bird Collective, Dudley Edmonson and Starry Skies North

Activity Budget: \$27,350

Activity Description:

The objective of this activity is to offer safe, welcoming gatherings for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ persons of all ages to gather, learn, and experience birdwatching and stargazing from different cultural lineages.

Tasks involved include:

Working with Urban Bird Collective, Dudley Edmonson and Starry Skies North:

Creating promotional materials and marketing plan

Supporting information sessions

Supporting Participant Registration Process

Coordinating with school and community groups

Identify and Invite Guest Stargazing/Star Stories Educators from Native American and African Diasporic backgrounds.

Media contacts

Hosting 1-2 Birdwatching events per year

Hosting 1-2 Stargazing/Star Stories gatherings per year

Coordinating on-site hosting (and transportation as needed)

How accomplished: in partnership with Urban Bird Collective and Starry Skies North

Outputs: marketing distribution, 135 participants total

Impacts: Participants cultivate confidence as birdwatchers and stargazers, learn histories and ways of Indigenous star knowledge and birding; Participants build connections with each other and with the outdoors; Participants are encouraged to continue experiencing nature and the outdoors on a regular basis through birding and stargazing; Participants feel more strongly connected to conservation and inspired to greater involvement in environmental stewardship;

Evaluation Methods: participant feedback and demographic data, partner feedback

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
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Host first Birdwatching gathering	October 31, 2027
Host first Stargazing/Star Stories gathering	December 31, 2027
Host second Birdwatching gatherings	May 31, 2028
Host third Birdwatching gatherings	October 31, 2028
Host second Stargazing/Star Stories gathering	December 31, 2028
Host fourth Birdwatching gathering	October 31, 2029
Host third Stargazing/Star Stories gathering	December 31, 2029
Create an ongoing calendar of birdwatching and stargazing gatherings	April 30, 2030

Activity 5: Project Administration

Activity Budget: \$133,975

Activity Description:

The objective of this task is to provide the infrastructure to support the programming for which we are seeking funding from ENTRF, and ensure successful integration with programming delivery and results funded by other sources.

Tasks involved in this activity include:

Hire and onboard Program Coordinator

Finalize partnership agreements with HEALL Hub partner organizations

Develop and integrate program curriculum for additional programming / partner activities

Expand outdoor recreation and ancestral/place-based learning programming based on Year 1 participant feedback

Communications: media and public speaking engagements

Ongoing collaboration and communication with partners

Develop and distribute participant pre/post assessment tools

Purchase and distribute field equipment to participants and partners

Strengthen Northland outreach through BIPOC Outdoors, Health Equity Northland and partnerships with other area non-profits

Conduct mid-project evaluation, analyzing pre/post assessment data across Year 1 and Year 2

Document and begin compiling replicable program model for statewide dissemination

Convene HEALL Hub partner summit to evaluate program model and plan for post-grant sustainability

Publish replicable program model and distribute to BIPOC-centered organizations statewide

Secure commitments for post-grant programming continuation through earned income, renewed philanthropy, and additional grants

Complete final participant assessment analysis across all three years

Submit final project report to LCCMR

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Program Coordinator hired and onboarded	August 31, 2027
Partnership agreements executed with first four partners	September 30, 2027
Partnership agreements with Starry Skies and Birders	October 31, 2027
Year 1 program report submitted	June 30, 2028
Mid-project evaluation report completed	January 31, 2029
Convene HEALL Hub Partner Summit	January 31, 2029
60–75 total Master Naturalists certified across three cohorts	June 30, 2030
900+ total participants reached	June 30, 2030
Post-grant funding commitments secured	June 30, 2030
Final project report submitted to LCCMR	June 30, 2030
Replicable program model published and disseminated	June 30, 2030

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Natalie Kennedy	Bell Museum	Director of Statewide Engagement	No
Monica Bryand	Urban Bird Collective	Founder	No
Sam Armacost	BIPOC Outdoors Twin Ports	Founder	No
Asha Shoffner	BIPOC Outdoors Twin Cities	Founder	No
Dudley Edmonson	Self	Birdwatching & Nature Photography Expert	Yes
Todd Burlet	Starry Skies North	President	No

Dissemination

Describe your plans for dissemination, presentation, documentation, or sharing of data, results, samples, physical collections, and other products and how they will follow ENRTF Acknowledgement Requirements and Guidelines.
n/a

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?

HEALL is built for durability through earned revenue, diversified philanthropy, and community ownership. Environmental education retreats and seasonal BioBlitz gatherings will generate direct income as Maji ya Chai's lodging comes online. Scholarship funding ensures participation is never contingent on ability to pay, supported by relationships with the Kataly, Blandin, Mortenson Family, and Lloyd K. Johnson Foundations. Most importantly, sustainability is embedded in the model itself: by certifying 60–75 BIPOC Master Naturalists over three years, HEALL Hub creates a growing cohort of trained educators who carry this work forward independently. The program's legacy is a community, not an institution.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Rebeka Ndosi

Job Title: Executive Director

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

Our project manager is the Founder and Executive Director of the nonprofit proposing the project.

Organization: Maji ya Chai Land Sanctuary

Organization Description:

Maji ya Chai Land Sanctuary is a Minnesota nonprofit organization founded in 2020 by Rebeka Ndosi on a bold and necessary premise: that rest, healing, and deep connection with the natural world are birthrights — particularly for Black, Indigenous, and communities of color who have been historically excluded from safe, affirming spaces in nature. The name Maji ya Chai means "water like tea" in Swahili, honoring the ancestral village of founder Rebeka Ndosi's family

in Tanzania, where generations lived in close relationship with land, water, and healing. Located on 40 acres of land near the Encampment River and Lake Superior outside Two Harbors, Minnesota, Maji ya Chai is the only BIPOC-centered nature sanctuary on Minnesota's North Shore. The Sanctuary sits within one of the state's most ecologically rich landscapes — boreal forest, prairie remnants, river corridor, and Great Lakes shoreline — and holds a Conditional Use Permit for phased development of lodging, wellness, and community gathering facilities. Governed by the Firekeepers Circle, a 100% BIPOC board of directors, Maji ya Chai brings together healing justice, ancestral wisdom, land stewardship, and environmental education in a model that is without parallel in the region.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Executive Director		Executive Director serves as the grants project manager for ENRTF and other grants, supervisor of all staff, administration, finance and operations manager, lead communications, report writer and spokesperson for Maji Ya Chai and lead fundraiser. (Note: fundraising activities are funded by sources other than ENRTF. We are requesting only 40% of ED staff funding from ENRTF.)			15%	3		\$110,000
Field Coordinator		Field Coordinator is responsible for land and building maintenance and operations, transportation, program co-design and participant support.			15%	3		\$95,000
Program Coordinator		Program Coordinator is responsible for recruiting and managing volunteers, collecting and analyzing program data, drafting project reports, purchasing and maintaining program equipment, marketing programs and supporting the Executive Director in coordinating with partner organizations.			15%	3		\$73,000
							Sub Total	\$278,000
Contracts and Services								
Dudley Edmonson - sole proprietor	Service Contract	design and delivery of nature photography and field trips				-		\$6,000
							Sub Total	\$6,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Binoculars (20 units @ \$150 each)	for participants to use in naturalist programs					\$3,000
	Tools and Supplies	Telescopes (2 units @ \$400 each)	to be used by participants in Starry Skies (night time) programming					\$800

	Tools and Supplies	Cameras (4 units @ \$200 each)	to be used by participants who do not have their own cameras in BioBlitz programs					\$800
	Tools and Supplies	Snowshoes (10 pairs @ \$120 each)	to be used by participants in winter field programs					\$1,200
	Tools and Supplies	Field guides and natural history references	to be used as resources by participants and volunteers in multiple programs					\$600
	Tools and Supplies	Training Materials	to be used by the Master Naturalist program participants					\$1,500
	Tools and Supplies	BioBlitz event supplies (clipboards, pens, registration table and chairs, nametags)	to be used by BioBlitz participants and volunteers					\$500
							Sub Total	\$8,400
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	2 trips per year x 3 yrs x 10 ppl x 54 miles (round trip between Duluth & Two Harbors) x .725 (IRS mileage rate for 2026)	For 2 Maji Ya Chai staff to travel to partners in Duluth 2 times per year, and for 4 partners to travel from Duluth to Maji Ya Chai 2 times per year					\$1,350
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	2 Maji Ya Chai staff to travel from Two Harbors to Minneapolis 4 times a year (362 miles RT) and 4 partner staff to travel from Minneapolis to Two Harbors 4 times a year @ 2026 IRS mileage rate of .725 cents per mile	partnership meetings, summit					\$3,150
							Sub Total	\$4,500
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								

	Printing	Participant welcome materials	maps and instructions for visitors and copies for meetings with partners @ \$500 per year					\$1,500
	Printing	Program Reports	Printing for program reports to be shared with ENRTF and partner organizations @ \$500 per year for Years 1 and 2, and \$600 for Year 3					\$1,600
							Sub Total	\$3,100
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				
Cash	Mortenson Family Foundation	Personnel costs, lodging stipends, admin costs	Secured	\$37,800
Cash	Mortenson Family Foundation	staff salaries not covered by ENRTF	Pending	\$37,500
Cash	Four Cedars - Borealis (grant)	staff salaries	Pending	\$25,000
Cash	earned income	staff salaries not covered by ENRTF, including fund raising salaries	Potential	\$52,000
Cash	additional donors (based conservatively on amount we have been able to raise this year, assumes we can raise the same amount in subsequent years.)	staff salaries	Potential	\$205,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$357,300
			Funds Total	\$357,300

Total Project Cost: \$657,300

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [3a18fe3d-75b.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

This is the site map for the Land Sanctuary's 40 acres, showing existing and future buildings, trails, the Encampment River and outdoor features....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Maji ya Chai 990 2023	6b280317-2da.pdf
Certificate of Good Standing	ff548792-031.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Maji ya Chai ENRTF Board Resolution	777e946f-845.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
2023 Birdwatching @ Maji ya Chai	bca55ce9-c00.jpe
2023 Birdwatching @ Maji ya Chai	b2890920-874.jpe
2025 BioBlitz @ Maji ya Chai Photo	cc22b76b-58a.jpe
2025 BioBlitz @ Maji ya Chai photo	62675a18-7ca.jpe
2025 BioBlitz Group @ Maji ya Chai Land Sanctuary	ed7bf421-3da.jpe

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:

Lars Benson, Maji Ya Chai volunteer

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