



# Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

## General Information

**Proposal ID:** 2027-161

**Proposal Title:** Sustainable Landcare Training and Career Readiness + Exploration Program

## Project Manager Information

**Name:** Mikaela Ayim

**Organization:** Metro Blooms

**Office Telephone:** (612) 801-4358

**Email:** mikaela@metroblooms.org

## Project Basic Information

**Project Summary:** Metro Blooms' Sustainable Landcare Training provides experiential education and career development for young adults from underserved communities to access local employment in green infrastructure and protect our natural resources.

**ENRTF Funds Requested:** \$295,000

**Proposed Project Completion:** December 31, 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.**

In our work with government and business partners, Metro Blooms identified the need for a skilled workforce that understands vegetated green infrastructure, native plants, invasive weeds and managing these effectively. Low-income and BIPOC communities disproportionately experience pollution burdens while lacking access and opportunities to engage with green spaces and jobs. Further, young people from these communities need jobs where they can work safely, earn a livable wage, and have career-building experiences. The Sustainable Landcare Training is for participants from diverse backgrounds with 52.5% identifying as Black, 14.8% as Native American, 8.2% as Asian, 4.9% as two or more races, 3.3% as Latinx and 16.4% as White. Almost half of participants attending our training are looking for employment, or looking for skills that will lead to employment with hopes to build a career.

After successfully implementing 3 years of Sustainable Landcare Training (SLC) cohorts in Minneapolis, we have identified that the SLC program is unique statewide. While other training programs focus on exposure to green careers, SLC is uniquely focused on green infrastructure for people entering the workforce for the first time.

### **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.**

To increase the impact of the training program, we identified needs for geographic expansion, career exploration support, and dissemination of our training framework and resources.

Metro Blooms will continue offering the Sustainable Landcare Training program in Minneapolis and create a St. Paul-based SLC program. The SLC program engages BIPOC young adults (ages 17–24) with accessible, culturally-relevant green infrastructure training. Participants engage in an empowering learning container and learn from community teachers who connect climate resilience strategies with cultural contexts.

Based on feedback from participants, we will implement a Career Readiness and Exploration program (CRE) program to support alumni from both programs to secure employment in the green infrastructure field. The CRE program guides them through the process of finding and securing employment, including workplace skills, exposure to green infrastructure jobs, and facilitated connections with potential employers.

We will develop a framework for education that can be disseminated and utilized across Minnesota, sharing our work with our statewide Blue Thumb partnership network. Online learning (10 hours of online content that accompanies in-person training) will be free for professionals and students to use.

This program contributes to quality of life for participants, their communities, and the success of green infrastructure in

### **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 SLC program removes barriers for young people to participate in protecting Minnesota's natural resources - they're paid to attend workforce trainings close to home. The outcome of our experiential, culturally-relevant programming is a diverse cohort of young people with lived experience of complex environmental challenges, with the skills to affect change through sustainable employment and community leadership. SLC trains a local workforce of young people to inspect and maintain green infrastructure and tangibly shifts how participants see themselves and the world around them, supporting a future generation of environmental stewards. Our online content and partnership support extends these outcomes across

## Activities and Milestones

### Activity 1: Sustainable Landcare Training Cohorts (SLC) + Geographic Expansion:

**Activity Budget:** \$144,850

**Activity Description:**

Our objective is to engage 80 training participants in Minneapolis and St. Paul annually. Each cohort (up to 20 people each) will attend 4 in-person sessions (6 hours each) and engage with 10 hours of online content. The curriculum has been co-developed by our statewide Blue Thumb Partners network, local government partners, and community partners. It covers stormwater and runoff best management practices, rain gardens and native habitat, diverse tree canopy, inspections of green infrastructure, maintenance of vegetated green infrastructure (weed and native plant identification and management) and plant selection. Instructors provide a breadth of experience and include Metro Blooms Design + Build landscape architects and professionals from the Blue Thumb Partners network, Public Works, engineering firms, organizations like Xerces Society, and community cultural leaders. Metro Blooms' Sustainable Landcare Program Director will coordinate training development and implementation. At the end of the training, participants will indicate progress towards key learning objectives and share qualitative feedback to evaluate success of the program. Each year, the training concludes with an end-of-year celebration where participants will receive certificates of completion. SLC currently runs in Minneapolis, Ramsey County, City of St Paul and Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District support this program's expansion to St. Paul.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Recruit a cohort of 20 participants annually who reside in St. Paul and surrounding suburbs	September 30, 2029
85% participants receive Certificate of Completion	September 30, 2029
Continue development and support of Minneapolis cohorts of 60 participants annually	October 31, 2029
50-75% of trainees engage in environmental stewardship activities within their communities: tracked annually	December 31, 2029

### Activity 2: Career Readiness and Exploration program

**Activity Budget:** \$119,650

**Activity Description:**

Our objective is to improve SLC trainees' success in securing employment in green infrastructure, including pursuing entrepreneurship. The Career Readiness and Exploration program (CRE) will engage an underrepresented workforce in a growing and expanding job field by providing hands-on learning opportunities. This program includes workplace soft skills, exposure to green infrastructure jobs, and facilitated connections with potential employers, with a focus on Blue Thumb partners, who we know share our values for local, equitable employment and planting for clean water. The CRE program will be managed by Metro Blooms' Sustainable Landcare program Director. Each cohort will include six meetings of 3 hrs each, divided between experiential field days with potential employers and discussion-based sessions on job application and career readiness skills. Participants will learn about culturally relevant financial planning, visit a native plant nursery and restoration site, participate in Aquatic Macroinvertebrate surveys, and work for a day on a landcare crew. The trainees will learn about a variety of roles in the green infrastructure workforce, identify their interests, build relationships with potential employers, and integrate knowledge gained from the SLC training. At the end of each cohort trainees will complete a post-survey to share their feedback on the program.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Create meaningful connections with potential future employers and host career day for continued engagement	March 31, 2028
25-40% trainees secure employment , pursue education, or engage in leadership activities in the environmental field	November 30, 2029
60-70% trainees report increased interest in green infrastructure careers	November 30, 2029
40% trainees participate in a 1:1 with a green infrastructure professional	November 30, 2029
Complete 3 cohorts with 10-15 participants annually, 2 in Minneapolis and 1 in St. Paul	November 30, 2029
10-15 employers commit to guaranteed interviews for SLC candidates when hiring	December 31, 2029

### Activity 3: Dissemination of Training Framework and Resources

**Activity Budget:** \$30,500

**Activity Description:**

We will develop a framework for education and workforce training to share with our Blue Thumb partnership network (60+ local governments and private companies across MN), SWCDs, counties, cities, and tribal governments across Minnesota. The objective is to encourage statewide implementation of this cohort model that provides context and culture-specific training for young adults from underserved communities to explore and secure employment in green infrastructure. Online content from the training will be made freely available for others to use. The Metro Blooms Education team will:

Refine online content for broad sharing. Content currently exists in online learning platform Thinkific and will be made accessible via bluethumb.org.

Prepare a written framework detailing course outline, agendas, associated activities and resources, guest speaker topics, and field trip recommendations.

Share the content and framework through our Blue Thumb newsletters, partner outreach to SWCDs, counties, and cities and presentation at 1-3 green infrastructure conferences each year.

Offer 2-3 online introductions to the content and training, and invitations for partners to experience the training in person. Invitations will be sent to Blue Thumb partners with a focus on rural partners and tribal governments.

Host quarterly community of practice check-ins to support next steps for implementation.

**Activity Milestones:**

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Online training and training framework with accompanying resources ready to disseminate	March 31, 2028
Develop communications campaign to disseminate with partners	June 30, 2028
Attend conferences, host online introductions and invite partners to attend trainings in person	November 30, 2029
Host quarterly community of practice check ins	December 31, 2029
Host final celebration	December 31, 2029

## Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Metro Blooms Design + Build	Metro Blooms Design + Build	Partner in Sustainable Landcare Training and Career Readiness and Exploration program, providing instruction support and experiential learning during field days.	Yes
Blue Thumb Partners Network	Blue Thumb Partners Network	Supporting instruction during Sustainable Landcare Training program, facilitating experiential field visits, and disseminating training framework statewide.	Yes

## 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.**

The SLC training curriculum will be developed into a freely available online resource on bluethumb.org. Metro Blooms will also share a detailed guide to replicate this training across the state, which will be shared through our Blue Thumb newsletters, partner outreach to SWCDs, counties, and cities and presentation at 1-3 green infrastructure conferences each year. Metro Blooms will host 2-3 online introductions to the content and training, and invite potential training partners to experience the training in person. Invitations will be sent to Blue Thumb partners with a focus on rural partners and tribal governments. When statewide partners have been identified, we will host a quarterly community of practice check-in to support next steps for implementation. Evaluation results from the trainings and statewide implementation will be annually available in the Metro Blooms Impact Reports.

## 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 the need and requirement for green infrastructure expands, this program will grow in impact. We will create a guide for implementing SLC training programs in other locales across Minnesota to prioritize local employment, diversity in green careers, and environmental stewardship. This green infrastructure training hub will be housed within our Blue Thumb partnership (60+ local governments and private companies). Online content from the training will be made freely available. Local governments are in need of this workforce and the services provided. We anticipate cities, counties, and watershed districts funding this work long-term will support their own green infrastructure and workforce

## Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

**Project Manager Name:** Mikaela Ayim

**Job Title:** Director of Sustainable Landcare Training

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

Mikaela Ayim is Metro Blooms' Director of Sustainable Landcare Training. She has brought the Sustainable Landcare Training to its current iteration as a well-respected, trauma-informed, and experiential learning space for young adults. She has successfully managed this program for the past two years, which includes running the trainings, coordinating partnerships, building 1:1 relationships with trainees, and responding to participants' needs and feedback. In 2025 she developed and piloted the Career Readiness and Exploration program and is ready to implement feedback from this first iteration.

Mikaela has a Bachelor's Degree in Gender and Women's Studies from Minnesota State University, Mankato. Prior to Metro Blooms, most of her work experience has consisted of case management and program coordination in the social

services field. Mikaela is passionate about accessibility to education and resources, and is enthusiastic about engaging with the community about best environmental practices in the green spaces that surround us.

Mikaela works closely alongside Metro Blooms education and community relations teams to implement the Sustainable Landcare Trainings, connect with employment and education partners, and support trainees through their next steps in environmental stewardship and employment.

**Organization:** Metro Blooms

**Organization Description:**

Metro Blooms partners with communities in Minnesota through educational programming, green infrastructure installation and maintenance, and collaborative design of outdoor space to nurture and support thriving ecosystems. We implement climate resilience and adaptation strategies to prevent further degradation of urban ecosystems, especially in areas where residents experience an inequitable burden of environmental harm. Our work protects clean water and native habitat, mitigates environmental pollution, and deepens people's connection to nature.

Metro Blooms' Blue Thumb educational programming is implemented via workshops, resources, and the Sustainable Landcare Training program. Our unique approach to accessible and experiential learning, supported by our Blue Thumb Partners network, ensures that communities across Minnesota receive up-to-date practical tools and resources to preserve, protect, and nurture their environments. Our workshops provide skills for all Minnesotans to increase pollinator habitat in their yards and implement stormwater management best practices. Our Sustainable Landcare Training program provides career development for young adults from underserved communities by training them to lead in the green infrastructure field and protect our state's natural resources. We believe that the protection and enhancement of local resources will be ensured by educating and employing local residents to lead in this work.

## Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
<b>Personnel</b>								
Training Manager		Lead project activities			26%	1.11		\$105,000
Training Support		Facilitation and content support			26%	0.57		\$46,300
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$151,300</b>
<b>Contracts and Services</b>								
Metro Blooms Design + Build	Service Contract	Green stormwater infrastructure and landcare experts present at trainings and develop interactive activities for SLC and career readiness exploration cohorts				0.09		\$21,000
Blue Thumb Partners	Service Contract	Community and private partners from the Blue Thumb network share their knowledge at trainings and support career pathways				0.03		\$7,500
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$28,500</b>
<b>Equipment, Tools, and Supplies</b>								
	Tools and Supplies	Food (12 meals+snacks, 4/year = \$1600/year for 3 years)	One meal per in person training day for one cohort of SLC; providing lunch is one way we support accessibility and connection during trainings.					\$4,800
	Tools and Supplies	Supplies for trainings (notebooks, field guides, compost bags, etc, \$500/year for 3 years)	General training supplies for one cohort of SLC, expenses cover one cohort/year for 3 years as we expand training into St. Paul					\$1,500
	Tools and Supplies	Safety equipment for trainees (water bottles, sun gear, boots, safety vests, \$1800/year for 3 years)	Safety equipment for one cohort of SLC. Expenses cover one cohort per year for 3 years as we pilot/expand training into St. Paul.					\$5,400
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$11,700</b>
<b>Capital Equipment</b>								

							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Acquisitions and Stewardship</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Travel In Minnesota</b>								
	Conference Registration Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Conference registration for up to 3 conferences, travel within MN (anticipate 1-2 in the Twin Cities which would limit travel expenses, 1-2 in greater Minnesota). Funding for 2 people/conference.	Funding for 2 people to attend conferences and present SLC framework, resources, and results					\$3,000
	Other	2 field trips per year for career exploration (6 total). Bus rentals cost roughly \$1,500/day. Est. 50 people per field trip.	Field trips provide opportunity for SLC and career exploration participants to expand their experiences with green infrastructure and educational opportunities. Trips may include a visit to a native plant nursery, college day at North Hennepin Community College, a restored native prairie, etc.					\$9,000
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$12,000</b>
<b>Travel Outside Minnesota</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Printing and Publication</b>								
							<b>Sub Total</b>	-
<b>Other Expenses</b>								
		Participant stipends	Participants are paid to attend trainings to improve accessibility. They receive a stipend of \$750 for the 30 hour SLC training and \$450 for participation in career pathways cohort (18 hours). They also receive a \$100 transportation stipend for both the SLC training and career pathways cohort. Amount funds					\$84,000

			one cohort of 20 participants/year for 3 years.					
		Gathering Events (3-4)	Supplies, food, rental fees for graduation event once/year for all SLC participants and partners to celebrate their accomplishments and network. Continued connection events for SLC participants and potential employers. Community of practice gathering in final year of grant for partners interested in learning more about SLC and/or implementing their own training program.					\$7,500
							<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>\$91,500</b>
							<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$295,000</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	Donations	Donations are utilized to support program development, increase training capacity, and explore partnerships. Anticipate \$6,000-\$7,000/year during grant time period.	Potential	\$20,000
Cash	City of Minneapolis	Supports program development and career pathways, as well as Minneapolis-based cohorts.	Pending	\$100,000
			<b>Non State Sub Total</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>
			<b>Funds Total</b>	<b>\$120,000</b>

Total Project Cost: \$415,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

## Attachments

### Required Attachments

#### *Visual Component*

File: [c5775835-192.pdf](#)

#### *Alternate Text for Visual Component*

The document is titled "Sustainable Landcare Training Program Outcomes". This document presents demographic information about our cohorts, results from our 2025 SLC cohorts in Minneapolis and the Pilot Career Readiness and Exploration Cohort, a quote from a participant, and proposed next steps for the program....

#### *Financial Capacity*

Title	File
Metro Blooms Certificate of Good Standing	<a href="#">16583649-458.pdf</a>
Metro Blooms Audit_ 2024 (Consolidated)	<a href="#">abcd5c19-0a4.pdf</a>
Metro Blooms 990_ 2024	<a href="#">33938909-2f7.pdf</a>

#### *Board Resolution or Letter*

Title	File
Metro Blooms Board Resolution	<a href="#">63088674-623.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?**

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:**

Laura Scholl, Metro Blooms

**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