



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-176

Proposal Title: Evaluating Programs for Immigrant and ESL Students

Project Manager Information

Name: Owen Connell

Organization: Saint Johns Arboretum and University

Office Telephone: (320) 363-3133

Email: oconnell001@csbsju.edu

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Saint John's Outdoor University plans to conduct an independent, 3rd party evaluation of its PreK-12 environmental education programming to create an improvement plan for including immigrant communities in programs.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$70,000

Proposed Project Completion: September 30, 2028

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): Central, Metro,

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

Region(s): Central

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project

Narrative

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

Since its formation in 1997, Saint John's Outdoor U has built a strong partnership with the local community, working to deliver environmental education field trip experiences that help to meet state science standards. Of the approximately 3000 PreK-12 students Outdoor U serves annually, roughly 20% are recent immigrants to the US or come from ESL households. Visiting school groups do not consistently come with an interpreter, and those that do may not be able to fully translate the material. As outlined in the Minnesota Outdoor Recreation Task Force's 2021 recommendations, it is vitally important to foster a welcoming outdoor culture that increases participation in underrepresented communities. The external evaluator will be better able to identify solutions for how Outdoor U can better include students from these underserved communities and create more culturally relevant program offerings.

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.

By working with an external evaluator, Outdoor U intends to develop a concrete framework for how to better reach these audiences. This framework will guide the future of Outdoor U educational programs, informing hiring practices and the structure of future programming. Current educational programs will be updated to better reflect evaluators' recommendations and goals outlined in framework. Additionally, one to two new program offerings will be created with the intent of appealing to immigrant and ESL communities.

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 evaluator will produce a written assessment with recommendations to improve Outdoor U's environmental education programming. This assessment will increase our ability to reach immigrant and ESL participants. By having a more targeted approach to how Outdoor U engages with these audiences, we can better spread awareness of the recreational and educational opportunities Outdoor U provides as well as areas for individual outdoor recreation communities may be unaware that they have access to. Modifying our program approach and creating targeted programming opportunities will foster a greater sense of connection and personal stake between these communities and their local environment.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Program Review

Activity Budget: \$50,000

Activity Description:

External Consultant will observe Outdoor U's current program offerings to gain insight into how Outdoor structures programs, interacts with audiences, and educates the public. To better understand how each of the full time staff lead these programs the consultant will observe, at minimum, three separate sessions of our seasonal program offerings.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
1. Solicit bids and select environmental education consultant	August 31, 2027
2. Consultant observes 3+ 2nd grade insect programs	October 31, 2027
3. Consultant observes 3+ 4th grade in school water programs	November 30, 2027
4. Consultant observes 3+ maple syrup programs	April 30, 2028
5. Consultant observes 3+ Kindergarten sensory exploration programs	May 31, 2028

Activity 2: Consultation presentation and guidance

Activity Budget: \$20,000

Activity Description:

External consultant will present observations to Outdoor U educators and give them written guidance on how to better reach immigrant audiences. Guidance will be implemented into Outdoor U program planning and new curriculum will be created.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
1. Consultant will compile notes over observations	June 30, 2028
2. Consultant will present findings to Outdoor U	July 31, 2028
3. Consultant will deliver written guidance to Outdoor U	July 31, 2028
4. Guidance will be implemented in subsequent program season	September 30, 2028
5. PreK-12 programs aimed at immigrant and ESL students will be created	September 30, 2028

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
John Geissler	St. John's Outdoor University	Support	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.

Results of program evaluation will be shared among Outdoor U's educational staff. Written assessments will be used in creating new programs that will align with consultant's feedback. Programs will be presented to Stearns County PreK-12 community members.

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?

Any written guidance from the external evaluator will be implemented into Outdoor U's educational programs and regular internal assessments will be conducted to ensure we are meeting recommended goals. Written guidance will be used in future grant proposals to better Outdoor U's outreach to immigrant communities and further our commitment to equitable access to outdoor spaces. Outdoor U will fund the creation of two new programs aimed at immigrant and ESL communities.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Owen Connell

Job Title: Assistant Director of PreK-12 Environmental Education

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

Owen Connell has served as Assistant Director of PreK-12 Environmental Education at Saint John's Outdoor University since July of 2023. He has a Master of Science degree in Ecology and Environmental Science from the University of Maine and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Clark University.

Prior to his work at Saint John's Outdoor University, he has been involved in numerous projects focusing on scientific communication and outreach. One prominent example is his time working with the University of Maine Systems Approaches to Understanding and Navigating the New Arctic (SAUNNA) National Research Traineeship (NRT) program to discuss the impact of climate change on arctic systems and indigenous communities.

Organization: Saint Johns Arboretum and University

Organization Description:

Saint John's Outdoor University provides environmental and outdoor education opportunities through classes, events and initiatives with the Abbey Arboretum and the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Project Manager		The project manager will responsible for communicating with the external evaluator and implementing changes recommended by them. This work will be incorporated into the project manager's regular position supported by SJU.			0%	0.08		-
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	The external organization will observe Outdoor U programming to provide feedback on how Outdoor U engages with immigrant and ESL students and will provide a written framework for how to better connect with these audiences.				1		\$70,000
							Sub Total	\$70,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-

Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
							Sub Total	-
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$70,000

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				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$70,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [d6855528-c14.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

An explanation of Outdoor U programming, our mission and a graph showing the amount of ESL students enrolled in Minnesota schools...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
990	a87f0200-ea4.pdf
Audited Financial Statements	a33259ac-2b7.pdf
Evidence of Good Standing	201b22e9-845.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
AuthorizedRepresentative_Letter	501c4707-113.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?

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?

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:

Owen Connell, St. John's Outdoor University

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