



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-208

Proposal Title: Dakota County Parks Outdoor Accessibility Improvements

Project Manager Information

Name: Niki Geisler

Organization: Dakota County

Office Telephone: (952) 891-7088

Email: niki.geisler@co.dakota.mn.us

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: This project will address barriers that currently limit participation by people with mobility impairments, older adults, veterans with service-connected disabilities, and families with young children in outdoor recreation activities.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$558,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2029

LCCMR Funding Category: Education and Outdoor Recreation (C)

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?

In the Future

Narrative

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

Dakota County Parks serves more than 3 million visitors annually, offering outdoor experiences and nature-based programming across its regional park system. Despite the county's ongoing investment in park infrastructure, an accessibility audit of park facilities indicated accessibility barriers that exclude or significantly limit participation by people with physical disabilities, mobility impairments, or other access needs. These barriers exist across multiple facility types and represent a gap between the park system's current condition and the equitable, inclusive experience that all residents deserve. The project supports Minnesota's broader goals of connecting all residents to the state's natural resources and ensuring that publicly funded parks serve the full public. Issues include non-automatic doors and routes to bathrooms that do not meet ADA path-of-travel requirements. Some routes and trails connecting parking areas to campsites and camper cabins include slopes that exceed ADA-allowable grades. Fire rings and picnic tables at many campsites are not positioned or designed for accessible use. Several sites lack accessible play components, routes connecting to play equipment, or adequate shade. Accessible raised gardening beds are not available at the established community garden. Swimming beaches lack appropriate access, seating, or accessible beach and water chairs.

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.

Dakota County Parks proposes a system-wide accessibility improvement program targeting the most significant barriers across park facilities. Improvements will span outdoor and building exterior access — including bathrooms and park entrances — as well as grade and slope corrections leading to recreation areas, camper cabins, and campsites. The project will also enhance trails and paths, install accessible fire rings and picnic tables, improve accessibility features at playgrounds and nature play areas, add accessible raised community garden beds, and provide beach seating along with accessible beach chairs at designated swimming areas. Projects have been prioritized based on site assessments, visitor feedback, equity considerations, and the severity of existing barriers. All improvements will be designed and constructed to meet or exceed ADA Standards for Accessible Design and applicable Minnesota accessibility requirements.

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?

Upon completion, this project will deliver measurable, lasting improvements to accessibility across the Dakota County Parks system. The result will be a more inclusive, welcoming park system that meets or exceeds ADA standards, expands recreational opportunities for all Dakota County residents and visitors, and reflects the county's commitment to equitable access to Minnesota's natural resources. In addition to physical improvements, the project will generate a documented record of accessible features across the park system, which can be shared with visitors in advance to support planning and improve the overall experience for visitors of all ages and abilities.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Design and Permitting

Activity Budget: \$60,000

Activity Description:

Review previous site audit and finalize priority improvement list and engineering plans. Complete design documents for building access, trail improvements, and campsite modifications; obtain required permits

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Review site audit and create implementation priority list	September 30, 2027
Complete design documents	November 30, 2027
Obtain necessary permits.	December 31, 2027

Activity 2: Accessibility Improvements Construction and Equipment Purchase/Installation

Activity Budget: \$498,000

Activity Description:

Address barriers at bathroom facilities and entrances at targeted park buildings, as well as targeted trail segments for access to facilities and recreation amenities. Site grading and path reconstruction will be completed at campgrounds, camper cabin areas, and recreation sites where approach slopes exceed allowable ADA grades. Targeted trail segments will be corrected using stable materials appropriate for accessible outdoor recreation. Accessible fire rings will be installed at targeted campsites to provide appropriate reach range, ground-level access, and firm stable surface connections. Accessible picnic tables with knee clearance and connected accessible surfaces will be provided at campsites. Accessible play components and connected accessible routes will be added or improved at playgrounds and nature play areas. Accessible gardening area will be added to the existing garden with accessible raised beds. Stable beach matting will be installed at designated beach areas to provide a firm surface from the accessible parking area to the waterline. Shade and seasonal beach seating with back and arm support will be added near the accessible beach route. Two beach chairs — designed for use on sand and water— will be made available at designated swimming beach locations, available for visitor use at no charge during the swimming season.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Selection of contractors for construction of project, all funds secured	February 28, 2028
Purchase of all accessible equipment to be installed	May 31, 2028
Construction, Oversight, & Administration Begins	July 31, 2028
Construction, Oversight, & Administration Ends	May 31, 2029
Inspection and evaluation complete. All improvements open for public use.	June 30, 2029

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.

Information about this project and ENRTF funding will be presented on Dakota County's parks website, during programs, with interested media, and to park visitors using either the ENRTF logo or attribution language. In addition, Dakota County will acknowledge grant funding and display the ENRTF logo on select signage in areas with funded accessibility features and/or accessibility equipment.

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?

The results of the projects identified in this grant include full construction and implementation of each improvement. Long-term maintenance and management of these improvements will be performed by the Dakota County Parks and Facilities Department as part of the County's ongoing management program. These activities are funded by tax levy and external grant funding.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Reintroduction Of Bison To Spring Lake Park Reserve	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08q	\$560,000
Completing the Mississippi River Greenway: Dakota County	M.L. 2024, , Chp. 83, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 08h	\$657,000
Spring Lake Park Reserve Restoration and River Access	M.L. 2024, , Chp. 83, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 09g	\$2,925,000
Cannon River Preservation and Access	M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09a	\$2,717,000
Lake Byllesby Regional Park Restoration and Recreation	M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09i	\$1,120,000
Thompson County Park Restoration and Accessibility Improvements	M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 09j	\$867,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Niki Geisler

Job Title: Parks Director

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

As the Dakota County Parks Director, Niki directs and administers all operations, personnel, public relations, policies, and budgets for the Parks Department. Prior to joining Dakota County, Niki served as the Vice President of Camping for YMCA of the North and has 20+ years as a professional in the non-profit sector where she also held positions of Executive Director, Professional Fundraiser, Senior Program Director, and Program Director. She is an accomplished professional with experience in the areas of community-based youth development, family camping, outdoor engagement strategy advancement, grant management, and fundraising. She has a passion for connecting communities to nature and a deep commitment to equity in outdoors.

Organization: Dakota County

Organization Description:

Located in the southeast corner of the seven-county Minneapolis-St. Paul area, the Dakota County Park System serves the state's third most populous county. With more than 5,000 acres and a rapidly growing network of greenways, Dakota County Parks is a nature-based system that exists to help meet the needs of over 400,000 county residents. Dakota County Parks has an active and professional capital development program that oversees park development to provide residents with facilities to enable natural resource-based recreation, a natural resource program that is restoring, maintaining, and enhancing hundreds of acres of prairie, forest and woodland, and a professional outdoor education program that manages and interprets the cultural sites within the Dakota County Park System.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD Contract	Service Contract	Design Services				0		\$60,000
TBD Contract	Service Contract	Construction				0		\$200,000
TBD Contract	Service Contract	Inspection and Evaluation Services				-		\$30,000
							Sub Total	\$290,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Equipment	Purchase of twenty accessible fire rings for campsites and camper cabins.	Accessible fire rings will be installed at targeted campsites to provide appropriate reach range, ground-level access, and firm stable surface connections.					\$20,000
	Equipment	Purchase of twenty accessible picnic tables for campsites and camper cabins	Accessible picnic tables with knee clearance and connected accessible surfaces will be provided at campsite and day-use locations, ensuring that visitors with disabilities can share in the social experience of outdoor dining and campfires alongside family and friends.					\$20,000
	Equipment	Four accessible beach mats	Stable beach matting or boardwalk connections will be installed at designated beach areas to provide a firm, stable surface from the accessible parking area to the waterline.					\$15,000
	Equipment	Four accessible all-terrain beach chairs	Beach wheelchairs — designed for use on sand and in water — will be made available at designated swimming beach					\$20,000

			locations, available for visitor use at no charge during the swimming season.					
	Equipment	Accessible swimming beach seating (approx. 12 units total for two swimming beaches)	Beach seating with back and arm support will be added near the accessible beach route.					\$25,000
							Sub Total	\$100,000
Capital Equipment								
		Ten to twenty accessible play features	Accessible play components will be added or improved at playgrounds and nature play areas. Improvements will emphasize inclusive design principles to ensure that children of varying abilities can play alongside one another in integrated settings.	X				\$168,000
							Sub Total	\$168,000
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	\$558,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
Capital Equipment		Ten to twenty accessible play features	These are not considered ineligible expenses Additional Explanation : These play features would be permanently installed and maintained regularly.

Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
Cash	Parks CIP: Grant Match Set-Aside (County Program Aid)	Construction of Accessibility Improvements	Secured	\$187,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$187,000
			Funds Total	\$187,000

Total Project Cost: \$745,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [88bad59f-ee0.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Locations within the Dakota County Parks system where accessibility improvements will occur....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report	3e938a4d-6f7.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution	53941a33-828.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Budget Addendum	3b4dda13-6d0.pdf
Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	debca4a2-c6b.pdf
Dakota County Parks 2050 Vision Plan Page 63- Accessibility Goals	721f8ab2-94a.pdf
ADA Accessibility Improvements Project List	55393fa7-11e.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?

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")?

No

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:

Tony Wotzka, Dakota County

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