



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-254

Proposal Title: Camp Earth-P: Environmental-Agricultural Regenerative Technology for Healthier Planet

Project Manager Information

Name: Bridget Kelly

Organization: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities - Southwest Minnesota State University

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: To increase interest and representation in agricultural and environmental fields, Camp EARTH-P will provide hands-on learning experiences for students in SW Minnesota using technology to make farming fun and accessible.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$258,000

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): SW

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

Region(s): SW

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.

There is a significant recruitment problem, resulting in an ongoing inability to attract new students into agriculture and environmental science fields. This issue is particularly alarming because it indicates the likelihood of future workforce shortages. Additionally, few students of color successfully navigate through agriculture and environmental education pathways.

In Marshall, MN, 22.4% of residents identify as non white or racially diverse, and 17% of families live below the poverty line. Families living just above this threshold also experience financial hardship and often require support. We estimate that at least 25%, and potentially up to 50%, of children in the greater Lyon County and SW Minnesota region would not normally be able to access an educational summer day camp program. An opportunity exists to engage students, including those from historically underrepresented communities, in the agricultural and environmental sciences, fields that remain among the least diverse within STEM.

Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) has extensive educational assets including agricultural plots, riverfront access to the Redwood River, Natural History Museum, Environmental Outdoor Learning Area, Rock/Mineral Collection, and greenhouse. We can offer rich, place based learning experiences. Strong relationships with local farms and dairies also create opportunities for unique hands-on agricultural education.

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.

We seek startup funds for an educational summer day camp program, and scholarship assistance for youth who need financial support to participate. Our program, EARTH-P, focuses on increasing student interest in urban and rural farming. We will teach youth about sustainable agricultural practices in Southwest Minnesota while leveraging technology. Integrating Internet of Things (IoT) tools and regenerative practices, like sensor based soil monitoring and automated irrigation of a FarmBot, we hope to spark student engagement, making farming feel fun and accessible.

In our program, students will explore SMSU's educational assets, farm in raised beds, monitor water quality on the Redwood River, participate in activities on local farms and dairies, hear from agricultural professionals, including veterinarians. In addition to implementing technologies, our proximity to local Indigenous communities allows us to invite educators who can share traditional ecological knowledge, offering students culturally grounded perspectives on land stewardship and sustainable farming, further advancing ENRTF goals.

Funding for this initiative will cover transportation, materials, professional facilitation, and program administration. Funding for internships will ensure that college age students gain experience that supports future job growth and strengthens skills in mentoring youth. EARTH-P will also open the door for continued outreach during the academic year.

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?

Camp EARTH-P will build environmental stewardship in Minnesota's youth by engaging them in practices that will protect and enhance natural resources. Students will explore methods for improving water quality, adopt sustainable and regenerative agriculture techniques, and learn urban square-foot farming, reducing land and input demands. Advancing ENRTF goals, we will highlight traditional ecological knowledge from local Indigenous communities, grounding conservation in culturally informed perspectives. By sparking early interest and strengthening pathways into agriculture and environmental careers, EARTH-P will secure a future workforce to care for Minnesota's resources. Long-term, we will provide camps each summer with continued year-round educational outreach.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Design Curriculum for Camp Earth-P and Conduct Outreach to Elementary and Middle School Children in the Greater SW Minnesota Region

Activity Budget: \$17,760

Activity Description:

1. Curriculum building

Tasks:

- Build a curriculum for the upcoming summer camp, conduct research, and complete camp preparation.
- Network and schedule events with local farmers and dairies.
- Prepare student activity workbooks; these booklets can also be taken home to share with families.
- Recruit undergraduate interns, implement the application process, background checks, and onboarding.
- Work with SMSU's Physical Plant to prepare raised beds with new soil. Remove ash trees that succumbed to emerald ash borers and repurpose the space.
- Review effectiveness, implement changes, and build on previous years' learning.

Deliverable: Ready-to-run camp with hands-on learning.

2. Advertise for upcoming summer camp

Tasks:

- Implement social media PR campaign, discuss story with local newspaper.
- Expand relationships and network with regional schools.
- Ensure youth, families, schools, community programs, libraries, etc., are aware of this opportunity.

Deliverable: Increase awareness and interest leading to camp participation.

3. Conduct outreach in regional schools

Tasks:

- Provide demonstrations to increase student interest in agriculture and environmental science.
- SMSU undergrads from the Environmental Science, Agronomy, and Education Departments will volunteer, promoting job growth and skills related to environmental careers.
- Word-of-mouth will support camp awareness and participation.

Deliverable: Year-round regional school visits and increased student engagement.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Build curriculum; Prepare for camp - logistics, scheduling, supplies; Recruit, hire interns (Summer session 2028)	March 31, 2028
Review curriculum and implement change; Prepare for camp (Summer session 2029)	May 31, 2029
Review curriculum and implement change; Prepare for camp (Summer session 2030)	May 31, 2030
Advertise for Camp EARTH-P; Recruit students; Conduct outreach in schools, libraries, community centers, etc. (Ongoing)	June 30, 2030
Program and curriculum assessment; Summarize and disseminate data	June 30, 2030

Activity 2: No Child Will Be Turned Away Due to an Inability to Pay for Camp EARTH-P: Scholarships, Transportation for Underserved Youth

Activity Budget: \$240,240

Activity Description:**1. Student Scholarships**

Tasks: Provide camp scholarships to 500+ students. Scholarships will cover the cost of students attending a five-day camp session. Multiple themed sessions will be offered each summer.

Deliverables: Increased access to camp for students who otherwise wouldn't be able to participate.

2. Transportation Support

Tasks: Arrange transportation for students in need through Community Transit, which services southwest Minnesota. This transportation will provide rides to and from camp, an essential service because parents work at local farms and factories during the summer, and will support travel to off-campus activities.

Deliverables: Increased participation, equitable access to learning experiences.

3. Camp EARTH-P

Tasks:

-Coordinate visits to Lingen Dairy, Deutz Heritage Farm (transitioning to organic farming), Schwan's food manufacturing facility, SMSU's 50-acre farm plots. Interns will help run camp activities.

-Utilize SMSU's educational facilities to implement curriculum, using technology, learn urban square-foot gardening, explore environmental implications through Redwood River monitoring.

-Invite educational speakers, including local Dakota and Lakota community members to share traditional knowledge and sustainability practices, as well as partners from the Agricultural Utilization Research Institute and veterinarians.

Deliverables: Outdoor positive learning experience for youth, providing self-efficacy, increasing interest and awareness of agriculture and environmental fields.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Enroll students; Provide scholarships; Secure regional transportation for students; Launch Camp EARTH-P (Summer session 2028)	August 31, 2028
Enroll students; Provide scholarships; Secure regional transportation for students; Launch Camp EARTH-P (Summer session 2029)	August 31, 2029
Enroll students; Provide scholarships; Secure regional transportation for students; Launch Camp Earth-P (Summer session 2030)	June 30, 2030

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.

Dissemination of Camp EARTH-P will occur through three primary avenues: marketing and outreach, educational programming, and communication of results and impacts.

1. Marketing and Outreach:

To ensure broad participation and awareness, outreach efforts will leverage the expertise of the SMSU Marketing Office and the statewide media systems of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. Marketing strategies will include targeted Facebook and Instagram advertising, social media public relations campaigns, and distribution of flyers to regional schools, libraries, and community organizations. Outreach will also include coverage in regional and statewide publications, such as the Marshall Independent, the Star Tribune Camp Guide, Minnesota Volunteer, and Minnesota Conservation Volunteer Magazine.

2. Educational Programming:

Dissemination will also occur through program content aligned with ENRTF Goal 5: ensuring that all Minnesotans, especially young people, have access to culturally relevant and innovative connections to Minnesota's lands and waters. Student learning will be shared with families through camp workbooks and materials sent home, as well as through discussions, educational talks, and hands on activities conducted during camp programming.

3. Results and Communication of Success:

Program success will be communicated through participant and mentor engagement. Feedback and data will be collected from campers, parents, families, and undergraduate interns. Follow up surveys with interns will assess career pathways, transferable mentoring skills, and increased awareness of educational and professional opportunities. Anonymized results will be made available to support future program growth, including potential statewide expansion. All physical materials purchased through this grant will be housed at SMSU for continued educational use. ENRTF support will be acknowledged through logos and recognition at all outreach events, camps, workbooks, and media engagements.

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?

Following the successful launch and implementation of our summer camp and outreach program, we plan to strengthen and expand our community networks to support long-term growth. By demonstrating the program's utility and results, we aim to pursue additional financial opportunities, including grants and matched funding from outside foundations and donors.

SMSU remains committed to providing agricultural and environmental education not only to our undergraduate but to the southwest Minnesota community. We intend to carry this program forward as part of our legacy of building a strong workforce pipeline, supporting agriculture, and safeguarding a clean and healthy environment for Minnesota.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Bridget Kelly

Job Title: Asst. Professor of Environmental Science

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

Dr. Bridget Kelly, Assistant Professor of Environmental Science at Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU), is one of only a handful of Black paleontologists in the country. Her personal experience with the lack of diversity in the sciences has shaped a career in which outreach and increasing student interest in STEM have been central components of her work.

Her experience includes coordinating the Geosciences Development Program at the University of California, Riverside. This program had two components: outreach to school age children, including classroom visits and field trip opportunities to national and state parks, and supervision of undergraduate research internships. Her work culminated in a published paper entitled "Strengthening geoscience educational pathways for underrepresented students from two year to four year institutions." Dr. Kelly then spent nearly three years engaging in educational outreach activities with children at the Museum of the Earth in Ithaca, NY, while continuing to supervise museum based research internships.

At SMSU, she launched the Environmental Outreach Program, currently serving over 600 students annually through short sessions and school year programming. This initiative has fostered collaboration among the Environmental Sciences, Agronomy, and Education Departments. Importantly, Dr. Kelly understands how to collaborate effectively and leverage external expertise, including working with the SMSU on campus daycare to draw on their knowledge of childcare operations.

Dr. Kelly has experience managing grants and is currently overseeing a \$70,000 project to renovate the Rock and Mineral Collection and associated laboratory on campus, transforming it into a working collection for community and school use.

In her role as project manager, Dr. Kelly will design curriculum and recruit and enroll students to launch Camp EARTH P. Her responsibilities will include managing support staff, volunteers, and interns; overseeing camp operations and logistics such as background checks and insurance; and coordinating outreach during the school year.

Organization: Minnesota State Colleges and Universities - Southwest Minnesota State University

Organization Description:

Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU), a public, four year university, is part of the Minnesota State Colleges/Universities System. Located in Lyon County, SMSU is surrounded by neighboring southwest counties: Yellow Medicine, Redwood, Murray, Pipestone, Lincoln, Cottonwood, Jackson, Nobles, and Rock. This region has a population of ~117,000 people.

SMSU serves as an important state university in the prairie region of Minnesota and provides education in the liberal arts, professional fields, and the sciences. SMSU has an enrollment of ~9,000 students, including undergraduates, graduate students, online learners, and dual enrolled high school students.

SMSU operates an on campus daycare and regularly hosts a variety of youth programs, including sports camps and 4 H activities. With established facilities, insurance, background checks, and extensive youth program experience, SMSU is well prepared to expand into environmental summer day camps. SMSU and the areas where camp activities will be held are fully accessible and able to accommodate children with mobility concerns, including those who use wheelchairs.

Additionally, SMSU shares a campus with the Southwest Central Service Cooperative Education Learning Center, a school for students with special needs, and the Marshall Area Technical & Educational Center, a public alternative school serving grades 5–12.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	School bus transportation (\$800 / week x 18 summer camp weeks) for students to/from camp, an essential service that increases equity and participation, as many family members work at local farms and factories during the summer. Will also support travel to off-campus activities including transport of students using wheelchairs.				0.75		\$43,200
TBD	Service Contract	Educators in Traditional Ecological Knowledge and environmental sustainability from multicultural backgrounds who teach, deliver presentations, and lead activities that enrich the regenerative and urban farming curriculum.				0.12		\$6,000
							Sub Total	\$49,200
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Educational supplies	Educational supplies allow Camp EARTH P to provide participants with resources for activities that enhance educational experiences, including learning materials and supplies for water and soil quality testing.					\$6,000
	Tools and Supplies	Farm supplies	Tools and supplies such as trowels, gloves, seeds, pots, soil, etc., are necessary for hands-on demonstrations of environmental sustainability and urban farming concepts.					\$8,000
							Sub Total	\$14,000
Capital Equipment								

							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Educational materials for camps, 25-page booklets for 500 students	In addition to helping students reinforce key concepts and learning outcomes and remember what they learned, the workbooks will allow students to bring them home and share information with families and friends.					\$3,760
							Sub Total	\$3,760
Other Expenses								
		Undergraduate internships	Undergraduate internships fund student support for 120 hrs/week x 18 camp weeks @ \$19/hr. These internships will provide opportunities for undergraduate students to gain experience that supports future job growth and strengthens skills in agriculture, sustainability, and youth mentoring.					\$41,040
		Camp scholarships	Camp scholarships for a minimum of 500 students (up to \$300 per student to cover camp enrollment). Provide youth scholarships for more than 500 children over three years. These scholarships will					\$150,000

			increase equity and access to camp for students who otherwise would not be able to participate. Scholarships will cover camp expenses, including program costs such as staffing, first aid and emergency response, safety equipment, food, T-shirts/identification materials, curriculum consumables, and other related expenses.					
							Sub Total	\$191,040
							Grand Total	\$258,000

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				
In-Kind	Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU)	SMSU Space and Facilities Use - Usage fees \$400/day, including use of the outdoor classroom; facilities usage such as maintenance and custodial services; security; parking for staff, interns, and volunteers; IT support for technology; and use of university technology, including FarmBot, AI-enabled flower pots, smart tablets, etc.	Potential	\$36,000
In-Kind	Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU)	SMSU Physical Plant - Labor donation for raised garden bed setup, tree removal, and training in pest avoidance and identification	Pending	\$5,000
			State Sub Total	\$41,000
Non-State				
In-Kind	Dr. Bridget Kelly	Dr. Kelly will donate professional expertise and summer volunteer time, contributing approximately 240 hours/year for three years.	Secured	\$35,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$35,000
			Funds Total	\$76,000

Total Project Cost: \$334,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [5f9d128d-26f.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Graphic illustration of the theme of Camp EARTH-P: Environmental Agricultural Regenerative Technology for a Healthier Planet. It shows diverse students engaging in hands-on outdoor learning emphasizing agricultural/environmental sustainability. Students shown enjoying activities, including water and soil quality monitoring and urban gardening practices, with technology used to increase interest....

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?

Yes, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities - Southwest Minnesota State University

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")?

Yes

Do you certify that background checks are performed for background check crimes, as defined in Minnesota Statutes, section 299C.61, Subd. 2, on all employees, contractors, and volunteers who have or may have access to a child to

whom children's services are provided by your organization?

Yes

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

Dr. Gerald Toland; Department of Agriculture, Culinology and Hospitality Management; Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU)

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