



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-398

Proposal Title: Deeper Environmental Education for Youth Through Aligned Curriculum

Project Manager Information

Name: Ryan Wille

Organization: Friends of Project Wild Rooted

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Email: friends8ofpwr@gmail.com

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: To help Project Wild Rooted standardize and align nature-based outdoor education programs, ensuring equity by providing families with enriching experiences throughout the year and for years ahead.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$257,000

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.

Many youth outdoor education programs offer valuable experiences in nature, but often lack a structured framework that allows environmental learning to build consistently as children grow. Without intentional scaffolding across age groups, students may participate in outdoor activities without developing a deeper understanding of ecosystems, natural resources, and environmental stewardship over time.

Project Wild Rooted serves children from early childhood through middle school through nature-based programs that connect youth with the outdoors. While these programs provide meaningful experiences, they have developed organically and are not yet fully aligned within a cohesive curriculum structure. This creates an opportunity to strengthen the progression of learning so students can build knowledge and skills year after year.

This project will create a standardized curriculum framework that scaffolds environmental learning across programs. Early childhood units will introduce foundational concepts through exploration and observation. Kindergarten and elementary programming will build on these experiences with deeper investigations of ecosystems and natural resources, while older students will engage in more advanced environmental studies and stewardship activities.

Additionally, the project will develop clear, repeatable lesson structures so educators can consistently deliver high-quality programming, ensuring all students receive cohesive and meaningful environmental learning experiences throughout their years at PWR.

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.

Our proposed solution is to develop a cohesive, developmentally aligned environmental education framework that scaffolds learning across all PWR programs. Funding will support the hiring of a curriculum director who will work closely with educators from each age group—early childhood, kindergarten, elementary, and middle school—to align and strengthen existing nature-based programming.

The first step will be to inventory and map all current lessons and thematic units used across programs. The curriculum team will then organize these units into a thoughtful sequence that aligns with Minnesota's seasonal cycles and natural resource topics. This process will help ensure students encounter environmental concepts at the right developmental stage while avoiding gaps or unnecessary repetition as they progress through the programs over multiple years.

Next, the team will identify opportunities for scaffolding learning. Units that students encounter more than once as they grow will be enhanced with deeper investigations, expanded scientific concepts, and additional stewardship activities appropriate for older learners. This approach will allow students to revisit important environmental themes while developing an increasingly sophisticated understanding of ecosystems and natural resources. Finally, the project will create clear, repeatable lesson structures and documentation so educators can consistently deliver high-quality programs.

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?

This project will strengthen environmental education by creating a developmentally aligned curriculum that deepens students' understanding of Minnesota's ecosystems and natural resources over multiple years. By scaffolding learning from early childhood through middle school, students will build increasingly sophisticated knowledge of topics such as ecosystems, seasonal cycles, habitat health, and stewardship practices. Standardized lessons will ensure consistent, high-quality environmental learning experiences for all participants. Through repeated and increasingly deeper

engagement with nature, students will develop the knowledge, appreciation, and sense of responsibility needed to support the long-term protection, conservation, and preservation of Minnesota's natural resources.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Curriculum Alignment and Scaffolding

Activity Budget: \$126,000

Activity Description:

The goal of this activity is to create a clear progression of learning that builds environmental knowledge and stewardship over time while ensuring lessons are repeatable and consistent across instructors.

1. Hire curriculum director and assemble curriculum team: The team will include current program teachers, field experts, and the curriculum director to guide alignment and development of the curriculum framework.
2. Inventory and document all existing lessons and thematic units: Each program's monthly themed units will be documented in a shared organizational system. This information will be used to create a scope and sequence outlining the learning progression across programs.
3. Sequence units to align with seasons and learning progression: Units will be organized so environmental topics align with Minnesota's seasonal cycles and build logically from early childhood through middle school.
4. Identify scaffolding opportunities across age groups: The team will identify units repeated at different ages and enhance them with deeper observations, scientific inquiry, and stewardship activities appropriate for older students.
5. Develop standardized lesson structures: Lesson templates and video recaps will outline objectives, materials, and procedures to ensure consistent implementation.
6. Review and refine curriculum: Educators will provide feedback based on classroom experiences to continually improve quality.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Assemble Curriculum Team	July 31, 2027
Take Inventory Of Lessons	August 31, 2027
Sequence and align programs	December 31, 2027
Identify Scaffolding Opportunities	February 28, 2028
Develop Standardized lesson structures	April 30, 2028
Evaluation, Review, and Refinement	July 31, 2028

Activity 2: Curriculum Development and Collaboration

Activity Budget: \$131,000

Activity Description:

The goal of this activity is to equip educators to consistently and effectively implement the aligned curriculum

framework, ensuring all students experience scaffolded environmental learning that builds knowledge and stewardship over time.

1. Introduce Curriculum Framework to Educators: Teachers will be oriented to the new curriculum structure and its progression across age groups to understand how thematic units build over time.
2. Professional Development Sessions: Educators will participate in training focused on scaffolded environmental learning, outdoor teaching strategies, and engaging students in Minnesota ecosystems.
3. Collaborative Planning: Teachers will work together to plan lessons, coordinate across programs, and ensure learning progression and scaffolding are implemented effectively.
4. Implement Curriculum: Educators will deliver lessons across programs serving students ages 3–14, applying the aligned framework and standardized lesson structures.
5. Ongoing Collaboration and Support: Regular check-ins and team discussions will allow teachers to share successes, troubleshoot challenges, and refine lesson delivery.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement: Educator feedback, along with student engagement observations, will guide ongoing curriculum refinement to strengthen learning outcomes and maintain high-quality environmental education experiences.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Introduce Curriculum Framework to Educators	August 31, 2028
Professional Development Sessions	December 31, 2029
Collaborative Planning	December 31, 2029
Implement Curriculum	December 31, 2029
Ongoing Collaboration	December 31, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Lindstrom Dentistry	Business	Sponsor	Yes
Mountain Man Electric	Business	Sponsor	Yes
AeroTek	Business	Sponsor	Yes
State Farm	Business	Sponsor	Yes
Mickelson Landscaping	Business	Sponsor	Yes
Benevity	Giving Foundation	Sponsor	Yes
Jeffers Foundation	Foundation	Sponsor	Yes
Walmart	Spark Support	Sponsor	Yes
Frandsen Bank and Trust	Business	Sponsor	Yes
Peterson Companies	Business	Sponsor	Yes
Silo Wealth	Business	Sponsor	Yes
Edward Jones	Business	Sponsor	Yes
PartnerRE	Corporation	Sponsor	Yes
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources	State	Sponsor	Yes
St. Croix Valley Foundation	Community Foundation	Sponsor	Yes
Chisago Lakes School District	School	Field Trip Experiences	No
North Branch School District	School	Field Trip Experiences	No
Osceola School District	School	Field Trip Experiences	No
St. Croix Falls School District	School	Field Trip Experiences	No
Cambridge/Isanti School District	School	Field Trip Experiences	No
River Grove School	School	Field Trip Experiences	No
Chisago Lakes Christian	School	Field Trip Experiences	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.

Curriculum publications will display the ENRTF logo and/or will have attribution language printed on it. This would include curriculum maps, scope and sequence, and posted within each program's curriculum guide.

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 updated, enhanced, and expanded curriculum will be implemented into our programs and projects. Once the programs are enhanced or scaffolded they can be utilized for many years, maximizing a long term impact on students. Subsequent endeavors will be sustained by revenues generated from registrations, existing grant funds, business sponsorships, public fundraising events, and pursuit of additional grant opportunities. This comprehensive approach ensures ongoing financial support, enabling the programs to thrive and continue providing valuable educational experiences to children.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Ryan Wille

Job Title: President, Friends of Project Wild Rooted

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

Ryan founded Friends of Project Wild Rooted and has brought great growth and success to Project Wild Rooted. He has led a great effort in outdoor education and nature based experiences for thousands of children. He also takes great pride in being a youth football and baseball coach. He will lead this project to enhance and standardize nature based curriculum and workshops. Ryan will ensure the projects progression and success. He has a proven track record in program development through its execution. Her experience spans project logistics, idea development, relationship bonding, budget management, planning and implementation. Ryan also has a team of licensed educators behind him as well as a parent coalition. They will work to build, expand, explore, and align program curriculum that inspires children's outdoor experiences with the natural world.

Organization: Friends of Project Wild Rooted

Organization Description:

Friends of Project Wild Rooted was created to help the next generation of environmental stewards by supporting Project Wild Rooted, who inspire and empower children through experiential nature-based hands-on learning. We have been providing this organization with the resources and tools necessary to succeed. We believe that collectively, we can accomplish our vision of a sustainable future where people and the planet prosper. Project Wild Rooted is a community-centered educational organization dedicated to nurturing confident, curious, and capable children through hands-on, experiential learning rooted in nature. Our combined mission is to foster a deep relationship between children and the world around them, encouraging focus, resilience, creativity, and a sense of belonging through meaningful engagement with natural environments. We believe children learn best when they are actively involved, trusted with real experiences, and given the space to explore, create, and connect. Project Wild Rooted has grown into a multi-program organization serving children from toddlerhood through middle school age. Our programs are designed to meet children where they are developmentally, while offering consistency in values: connection to nature, hands-on learning, confidence-building, and community. We want our community to experience the remarkable world around us.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Curriculum Director		Leads, supports, and organizes curriculum for all programs within Project Wild Rooted. 1 curriculum lead, \$35hr., 28 hours/week. 30 months			0%	2.5		\$117,600
Curriculum Team Member		Program Lead and teacher for early child programs. 1 position, \$30hr., 8 hours/week, 30 months			0%	2.5		\$28,800
Curriculum Team Member		Program Lead and teacher for upper elementary children programs. 1 position, \$30hr., 8hours/week, 30 months			0%	2.5		\$28,800
Curriculum Team Member		Program Lead and teacher for lower elementary children programs. 1 position, \$30hr., 8 hours/week, 30 months			0%	2.5		\$28,800
Teacher		Program Teacher #1, 1 position, \$25hr., 8 hours/week, 30 months			0%	2.5		\$24,000
Teacher		Program Teacher #2, 1 position, \$25hr., 8 hours/week, 30 months			0%	2.5		\$24,000
							Sub Total	\$252,000
Contracts and Services								
							Sub Total	-
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Activity Equipment and Tools.	As Project Wild Rooted aligns and scaffolds its environmental curriculum across programs, new lessons and activities may be developed to strengthen learning progression and deepen student engagement with Minnesota's ecosystems and natural resources. Because this curriculum alignment process is still underway, specific equipment needs cannot yet be fully identified. A portion of the budget					\$5,000

			is reserved to purchase tools, field equipment, and activity materials necessary to support newly developed environmental education experiences. These items may include outdoor exploration tools, observation and data collection equipment, and materials that support hands-on environmental investigations and stewardship activities. This funding will ensure educators have the appropriate resources to implement the newly aligned lessons and provide meaningful, experiential learning opportunities for students.					
							Sub Total	\$5,000
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	\$257,000

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	Friends of PWR general fund	Cover additional costs where needed	Pending	\$25,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$25,000
			Funds Total	\$25,000

Total Project Cost: \$282,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [0b66495f-b32.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Our visual component outlines Project Wild Rooted's mission to preserve natural resources. It highlights our unique nature education approach and long-term vision for sustainability. It lists our programs, showcases budget summary, growing revenue, and waitlist data....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
990, 2025	ecb4cb40-6cb.pdf
Secretary of State Certificate	c698aea7-690.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Resolution Letter	6dcef5e2-6da.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Brochure	bcd31dc5-d6a.pdf
Our Campuses	63a86c1a-df8.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")?

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:

Michelle Wille, Laura Greene

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

N/A