



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-411

Proposal Title: Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy

Project Manager Information

Name: Erika Bailey-Johnson

Organization: Sacred Bundle

Office Telephone: (218) 766-8487

Email: erikabaileyjohnson@gmail.com

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy will increase the opportunity for all Minnesotans to connect to the lands, sky, and waters of northern Minnesota through the lens of the Ojibwe worldview.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$897,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2030

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): NE, NW, Central,

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 the face of historic biodiversity loss, climate change, water contamination, and environmental injustices, this project is critical to educating and fostering hope in our communities. In the Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy, participants grow a clearer picture of their role and responsibility as a member of a Community of Life.

Many barriers exist currently to integrate more culturally respectful, place-based education into curriculum. Many formal and nonformal educators lack the knowledge, resources, or connections to integrate this type of education into their teaching. Many feel uncomfortable navigating an Indigenous topic when they are not Indigenous.

The era of digital media and screens has been shown to consume a considerable amount of time in today's society. More screen time has raised serious public health concerns such as increased obesity, sleep disorders, depression, and anxiety. Research has shown that too much time in front of a screen can have a negative impact on the growth of cognitive, linguistic, and social-emotional health in young people.

On the other hand, exposure to nature has been linked to multiple benefits. Research has demonstrated over and over again that time in the outdoors can lower stress, improve attention and cognitive development, and increase empathy and cooperation.

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.

This proposal is to create an Indigenous environmental education program called the Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy. We (Sacred Bundle) recently took ownership of a former elementary school in the heart of Bemidji, MN. We are calling this multi-purpose community space the Minwaadizi Center which means he/she lives a good life/is a good person. One of our primary programs we will create out of this space is to connect community to nature by offering a year-round schedule of Ojibwe-themed programs, workshops, camps, and training.

We will work with local, regional, and national partners to adapt environmental education programming to include an Ojibwe perspective. For this proposal we are excited to have a strong partner in Happy Dancing Turtle based in Pine River, MN, who will create a hub in the Minwaadizi Center. We will bring established environmental education programming to our Ojibwe community and bring our Ojibwe community to established environmental education sites to see, hear, and participate in best practices to connect people to nature.

Over the course of three years, we will train staff and begin programming, with the goal of having dozens of programs available to youth, families, and adult learners.

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?

Embedded in the Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy will be several project outcomes:

- * Foster collaboration among diverse groups to better protect, conserve, preserve, and enhance the state's natural resources;
- * Enhance environmental education initiatives by integrating Ojibwe perspectives, experiences, and partnerships;
- * Increase understanding and awareness of weather, climate change, water resources, wildlife, plants, renewable energy, especially from an Ojibwe perspective;
- * Provide experiential educational opportunities for teachers, students, state and local decision-makers, landowners, and the public on how to improve and protect the water, air, soil, wildlife, and plants that we all share.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Create an Indigenous environmental education program called the Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy.

Activity Budget: \$897,000

Activity Description:

Objective: Increase the opportunity for all Minnesotans to connect to the land, sky, and waters of northern Minnesota through the lens of the Ojibwe worldview.

Task 1: Host meetings with project partners to strategically collaborate on ways to include an Ojibwe perspective into their outdoor programming. Visit established sites and participate in relevant programming.

The Project Manager will organize meetings with partners to determine if there is a clear path to either embed Ojibwe perspectives into existing programming or create new programming.

The Project Manager will bring the environmental programs to our community and facilitate travel plans for visiting environmental learning centers. Both of these endeavors will allow staff to learn from other experienced environmental educators and integrate best practices into the Mishko Wisitoon Wilderness Academy.

Task 2: Begin training staff and offering programming. The Project Manager and Field Coordinator will work to train staff.

Task 3: Evaluate and expand programming. The Project Manager will work with program staff to offer a year-round schedule of Ojibwe-themed programs, workshops, camps, and training. Staff will consistently evaluate programming by recording participant numbers, obtaining verbal feedback of both staff and participants, and utilizing an outside evaluator to objectively observe some programs.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Gather partners and perform site visits	June 30, 2028
Train staff and offer programming	June 30, 2029
Expand and evaluate programming	June 30, 2030

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Warren Moon	Wilderness Awareness School	Executive Director; Attend meetings, Provide expert input for the creation of an Indigenous environmental education program, particularly how to integrate the Wilderness Awareness School staff training and philosophy	No
Andrea Lorek Strauss	Minnesota Master Naturalist Program	Extension Educator; Attend meetings, Provide expert input for the creation of an Indigenous environmental education program, particularly how to integrate the Minnesota Master Naturalist courses	No
Erin Collier	Leave No Trace	Director of Education and Training; Provide expert input for the creation of an Indigenous environmental education program, particularly how to integrate the Leave No Trace courses	No
Teresa Knight	National Outdoor Leadership School	Wilderness Medicine Account Associate; Provide expert input for the creation of an Indigenous environmental education program, particularly how to integrate the NOLS courses	No
Quinn Swanson	Happy Dancing Turtle	Executive Director; Attend meetings, Provide expert input for the creation of an Indigenous environmental education program, particularly how to integrate community and in-school environmental education programming.	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.

Through this project, we will be connecting with other Tribal communities and environmental learning centers in our region to see how we can help others develop a similar program. This could be part of our contracted work with other organizations. Some models are a “train the trainer” experience or a “toolkit” to be able to do the programming in multiple locations.

Conferences are also a way to disseminate information in an accessible way, and we will attend both environmental and indigenous education conferences in our area.

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?

Our goal is to collaborate with well-established regional and national organizations, visit local established environmental learning centers, and figure out the best way to provide environmental education programming to our community. Whether that be as a consultant to larger organizations or as an instructor of Indigenous-themed environmental education, our long-term goal is to be self-sustaining with our environmental education programming in the Minwaadizi Center.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Erika Bailey-Johnson

Job Title: Project Manager

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

Erika Bailey-Johnson is a member of the Red Lake Band of Ojibwe and has several decades of experience leading

environmental education programming. Erika's extensive experience and dedication include 16 years as the first Sustainability Director at Bemidji State University (BSU) in Bemidji, Minnesota. She worked in the Ganawendakamigaawigamig (Office of Earth-Caretaking or Sustainability Office). She was also appointed the Coordinator of the People and the Environment academic program in 2016 and taught one class per semester for 20 years, incorporating experiential education in all aspects. She completed her BA in Biology from the University of Minnesota, Morris in 1998 and her Master's degree in Environmental Studies from BSU in 2006. Her background is in science teaching, and Erika and her husband taught for two years in Mexico and three years in Kuwait before returning home to Northern Minnesota. In 2015, Erika was named as one of the top 40 under 40 professionals in the Midwest working to accelerate America's transition to a clean energy economy by Midwest Energy News. She speaks at regional and national conferences on BSU's unique sustainability model which includes a wellness component and an emphasis on integrating Indigenous voices. She served on Governor Dayton's Committee on Pollinator Protection from 2016 to 2018. Erika is currently on the board for the Ernest Oberholtzer Foundation, Sacred Bundle, and Happy Dancing Turtle. In 2022, Erika received the Minnesota State Board of Trustees Service Faculty of the Year award. She is a founding member of the City of Bemidji Sustainability Committee, and for the past six years was the founding Director of the Niizhoo-gwayakochigewin project to integrate an Indigenous lens into campus sustainability work and academic programs. She just recently became certified as a Minnesota Master Naturalist instructor.

Organization: Sacred Bundle

Organization Description:

Sacred Bundle, Inc. is a tribally chartered IRC 7871 nonprofit organization in accordance with Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe's Title 8 Business Corporation Code, Chapter 2 Nonprofit Corporations. This is a very unique space created by Section 7871(a)(7)(B) of the Internal Revenue Code that can only be occupied by Indigenous organizations allowing them the same nonprofit status of a 501(c)3.

The board, staff, volunteers and partners of Sacred Bundle, Inc., bring years of dedication, experience, and leadership in designing and implementing community and culturally-based programs. Sacred Bundle is a culturally-structured organization based on historic clan systems. In all aspects of our efforts Sacred Bundle is guided by four critical Ojibwe developmental principles:

Gakina-awiiya – We are all related

Gikinoo'amaadiwin – The way to continuing knowledge

Biimaadiziwin – Our Way of Life

Gwayakochigewin – Doing the right thing, doing the thing right

Intertwined in these principles are two key concepts that are foundational and underpin Indigenous worldview: "All my Relations" and the "Sacred".

This work is currently guided by our ten-member Board of Directors, eight of which are Indigenous from four different Tribal Nations.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Program Manager		Provide program oversight, staff supervision, and grant reporting			30%	3		\$253,500
Field Coordinator		Provide field support for program staff and coordinating communication with program participants			30%	3		\$195,000
Field Instructor		Provide experiential outdoor programming			30%	3		\$156,000
Administrative Staff		Support program staff in coordinating background checks and other required procedures			30%	1.5		\$65,400
							Sub Total	\$669,900
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Creation of online tools/website to be used for program navigation				0.1		\$25,000
Wilderness Awareness School	Service Contract	Art of Mentoring workshop, facilitation, and cross-programmatic staff consultation (max of 30 individuals)				0.1		\$50,000
Various	Service Contract	Content Experts for programming (\$15000 for Year 2; \$35,000 for Year 3)				0.2		\$50,000
TBD	Service Contract	Program Evaluator				0.1		\$12,000
							Sub Total	\$137,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Field Staff program supplies (radios, first aid kits, workshop supplies)	Participant communication, safety, and program participation					\$25,100
							Sub Total	\$25,100
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-

Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	3 visits to MN environmental education centers for 4 people, various miles, at IRS standard mileage rate; attend two conferences for 4 people, various miles, at IRS standard mileage rate	Visit three environmental learning sites, learn what works and doesn't work for that particular site, all with an eye towards Indigenizing our program; attend two conferences in the field of environmental and/or Indigenous education					\$10,000
							Sub Total	\$10,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Colored print material (2500-5000 pages)	Print educational materials					\$5,000
							Sub Total	\$5,000
Other Expenses								
		Engage in new and existing Relationship-Building Activities	Continue and grow program participation					\$20,000
		Field Staff Training and Development	Orientation, Wilderness First Aid, CPR, etc.					\$30,000
							Sub Total	\$50,000
							Grand Total	\$897,000

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				
In-Kind	Sacred Bundle	Lease of space (\$1000 per month for 3 years)	Secured	\$36,000
Cash	Happy Dancing Turtle	Bridge funding	Pending	\$50,000
In-Kind	Happy Dancing Turtle	Field Instructor (.5 FTE per year for 3 years)	Pending	\$78,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$164,000
			Funds Total	\$164,000

Total Project Cost: \$1,061,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [0ca7a075-69b.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Certificate of Good Standing...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
IRS determination letter	3b859525-552.pdf
LOI, Bridge Funding	a9527eb3-0f0.pdf
Sacred Bundle 2025 Audit	29af00ba-e3f.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board Resolution Letter, Sacred Bundle	5da7599a-ad0.docx

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support, Minnesota Master Naturalist	05c51362-99f.pdf
Letter of Support, National Outdoor Leadership School	1668dd55-940.pdf
Letter of Support, Wilderness Awareness School	be5a3b0c-942.pdf
Letter of Support, Happy Dancing Turtle	548f9cbd-5e3.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?

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")?

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:

Quinn Swanson - Happy Dancing Turtle

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