



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-415

Proposal Title: Adopting Closed-Loop Geothermal System as Climate-Resilient Solution

Project Manager Information

Name: Geanella Ochoa

Organization: Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Accion Latina

Office Telephone: (612) 478-2901

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: The Latino Center for Community Engagement will eliminate onsite fossil fuels through a closed-loop geothermal system, creating a sustainable, resilient, and culturally anchored hub for Latine communities across Minnesota.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$604,000

Proposed Project Completion: October 31, 2029

LCCMR Funding Category: Energy (E)

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?

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.

COPAL's Latino Center for Community Engagement (LCCE) addresses the urgent need for carbon-neutral, community-centered buildings in Minnesota by demonstrating how large urban facilities can eliminate on-site fossil fuels while creating healthy, resilient spaces for residents.

According to an article published in Geothermal Rising, only 2% of the Earth's geothermal resources reside in permeable regions essential to conventional geothermal technologies. However, with a closed-loop system, it is possible to overcome the permeability barriers and design a near net-zero structure. This model aligns with Minnesota's B3: sustainability stands and will establish the Latino Center for Community Engagement as the green prototype for a more resilient and sustainable East Lake Street.

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.

COPAL seeks funding to install a closed loop geothermal structure that will harness the earth's stable temperature to provide sustainable heating and cooling to the Latino Center for Community Engagement. By designing it to be a closed loop system, the LCCE will significantly reduce its carbon emissions and dramatically improve energy efficiency. An additional benefit that comes with harnessing geothermal is that it remarkably enhances indoor air quality: providing clean, fresh air and improving occupants' health.

The LCCE will be situated in an area that is categorized as a brownfield site, a previously industrial site with documented contamination now being remediated to support a climate-positive community building. Brownfields are commonly associated with high levels of contamination. COPAL is working with our partners at Solution Blue to address and reduce further contamination.

The outcome is a building that embodies COPAL's guiding principles in functional space and form. By designing a closed loop system, we negate the harsh environmental impacts that traditional fossil fuels produce. Geothermal is an exceptional alternative and is a scientifically backed source for low-carbon renewable energy and utilizes little to no water to function, an essential thing to note as the world enters a global water bankruptcy.

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?

By utilizing geothermal energy, we will achieve the following:

Efficiency

Geothermal systems can harness the earth's temperature to reduce the reliance on fossil fuels like natural gas to heat and cool buildings. According to Power Efficiency, it has a cost savings benefit between 30% and 70%.

Protect

In an article published by Geothermal Rising, closed loop systems enhance indoor air quality and require little to no water to effectively function.

Preservation

Closed loop systems prevent hazardous chemicals leeching into the ground, and do not interfere with the quality of subsurface water sources.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Design a geothermal system to heat and cool the Latino Center for Community Engagement

Activity Budget: \$58,500

Activity Description:

This activity develops the complete geothermal system design for the Latino Center for Community Engagement (LCCE). The objective is to engineer a closed-loop ground-source heat pump system paired with a dedicated outdoor air system and energy-recovery ventilation to eliminate on-site fossil fuels. Tasks include geothermal feasibility analysis, borefield design, energy modeling, mechanical integration, and ensuring all components meet Minnesota B3 Guidelines and SB2030 Energy Standards. This phase also includes required steps such as enrollment in the Minnesota B3 Tracking Tool, consultation with the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and the Department of Administration Predesign Review.

AWH Architects and engineering partners will incorporate community feedback and ensure alignment with renewable energy and environmental justice goals. The output is a complete, constructible set of geothermal design documents. Its impact is enabling a high-performance, low-carbon community building that serves as a regional model. Evaluation will occur through B3/SB2030 modeling, internal design review, and compliance verification.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Complete Predesign Review through the Department of Administration	October 31, 2027
Enrollment in Minnesota B3 Guidelines Tracking Tool	October 31, 2027
Consultation with Minnesota SHPO	October 31, 2027
AWH Architects completes geothermal system design aligned with B3/SB2030 Energy Standards	October 31, 2027

Activity 2: Construct a geothermal system to heat and cool the Latino Center for Community Engagement

Activity Budget: \$505,500

Activity Description:

This activity funds the installation of the LCCE's closed-loop geothermal system as part of the building's construction. Tasks include drilling geothermal boreholes, installing submerged closed-loop piping, connecting the borefield to ground-source heat pumps, integrating electrical and mechanical components, and coordinating with the high-performance building envelope. Required milestones for construction-phase ENRTF projects include securing all construction funding, selecting a construction contractor, and obtaining mechanical/geothermal permits.

The outputs include a fully installed geothermal borefield, an operational geothermal mechanical system, and integration of all-electric heating and cooling infrastructure. This work eliminates on-site fossil fuel use, reduces lifetime greenhouse-gas emissions, and enables a resilient community building. Evaluation will be conducted through inspection, performance testing, and commissioning procedures.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
All construction funds legally secured	March 31, 2028
Geothermal contractor selected	April 30, 2028
Mechanical/geothermal permits secured	April 30, 2028

Complete geothermal heat pump installation and system integration	May 31, 2028
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Activity 3: Evaluate the LCCE's geothermal system to ensure it has met B3/SB2030 climate goals

Activity Budget: \$40,000

Activity Description:

This activity verifies that the geothermal system operates as designed, meets Minnesota B3 Guidelines, and achieves SB2030 Energy Standards. Tasks include commissioning, performance testing, staff training on operations and maintenance, documenting system energy use, and completing Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) to evaluate greenhouse-gas impacts. This activity also includes installing required ENRTF signage and preparing operational energy-use reports for the LCCMR.

Outputs include a commissioning report, B3/SB2030 performance documentation, and trained facility staff prepared to maintain long-term system performance. Evaluation will include reviewing early operating data to confirm achievement of the initial SB2030 EUI target of 23.2 kBtu/sf/yr and reporting findings to LCCMR.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Report operating energy use and costs to LCCMR	October 31, 2027
Complete geothermal system commissioning	October 31, 2029
Geothermal system meets initial SB2030 EUI target	October 31, 2029
ENRTF signage installed	October 31, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
John Greene	AWH Architects	Lead Architect	Yes
Commissioning Agent / Engineer	TBD	Commissioning ensures the entire system performs as intended	Yes
Geothermal Contractor	TBD	Geothermal Contractor designs and installs geothermal heating/cooling systems	Yes

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.

COPAL will share project results through community presentations, statewide Latine environmental justice networks, bilingual educational materials, and public events held at the Latino Center for Community Engagement. Technical findings—including geothermal system performance, greenhouse-gas reductions, and SB2030/B3 compliance—will be documented in annual public reports and shared with local governments, University of Minnesota partners, and community-based organizations seeking to implement similar renewable energy systems. Updates will be posted on COPAL’s website and social media with ENRTF acknowledgment. COPAL will also host site tours and trainings to promote broader adoption of closed-loop geothermal systems as a climate-resilient solution for urban communities.

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 LCCE’s closed-loop geothermal system will operate as a permanent, on-site renewable energy source requiring minimal maintenance and no fossil fuel inputs. After project completion, COPAL will sustain the system through a combination of operating revenue, partner leases, and long-term donor commitments secured through the capital campaign. Technical partners will support monitoring and optimization during early operational years. Findings will be integrated into COPAL’s statewide organizing work and shared as a model for equitable clean-energy adoption in other communities. Any additional improvements or lifecycle replacements will be funded through COPAL’s facilities budget and continued fundraising.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Engaging Latine Communities in Conservation and Preservation	M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 05o	\$400,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Geanella Ochoa

Job Title: Associate Executive Director

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

Carolina Ortiz is the Associate Executive Director at COPAL Education Fund. A leader grounded in lived experience and environmental justice advocacy, Carolina brings extensive expertise in coalition building, legislative strategy, and community-centered environmental protection. She led the Frontline Communities Protection Coalition to pass Minnesota’s cumulative impacts legislation, establishing new protections for communities overburdened by pollution.

Carolina has cultivated strong partnerships locally and nationally and has managed multi-sector collaborations that advance environmental health, energy equity, and community resilience. With ENRTF support, she will oversee the development and implementation of the geothermal system at the Latino Center for Community Engagement, ensuring the project meets B3 standards, eliminates on-site fossil fuel use, and maximizes long-term benefits for Minnesota’s natural resources and Latine communities.

Organization: Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Accion Latina

Organization Description:

COPAL (Comunidades Organizando el Poder y la Acción Latina) is a member-based organization that works to improve the quality of life for Latine families in Minnesota through building collective power, transforming systems and creating opportunities. COPAL’s environmental justice (EJ) program protects, conserves, preserves, and enhances Minnesota’s air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources by strengthening the power and influence of Minnesota’s Latine and BIPOC communities. The program engages in coalitional and non-partisan 501c3 work and organizes monthly outdoor events to raise awareness about EJ issues impacting our BIPOC families.

COPAL serves Latine communities across Minnesota; 98% of those COPAL supports identify as Latine and 94% speak Spanish. The organization’s 1,011 active members are decision-makers who lead through six committees—Environmental Justice, Health for All, Twin Cities, Southeast MN, Southcentral MN, and Youth. These committees set priorities, guide campaigns, and ensure COPAL’s work reflects community needs. Since 2018, the organization has built systems to track engagement, now recording over 65,000 contacts across programs, including 10,800 through direct services.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
AWH Architects	Service Contract	System Integration				1		\$28,500
TBD - Geothermal Contractor	Service Contract	System controls				1		\$475,000
Commissioning Agent / Engineer	Service Contract	Training, performance verification				1		\$9,500
							Sub Total	\$513,000
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								
		Project Contingency (5%)	Accounts for fluctuations in cost					\$25,650
		Inflation Coverage	Accounts for inflation in geothermal system material costs					\$65,350
							Sub Total	\$91,000
							Grand Total	\$604,000

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				
Cash	Minnesota Department of Education	Furnishings	Secured	\$400,000
			State Sub Total	\$400,000
Non-State				
Cash	Foundation Funds	Property Acquisition	Secured	\$1,701,579
Cash	Foundation Funds and City of Minneapolis	Predesign and Design	Secured	\$1,478,268
Cash	All private and public levels	Pre-construction and Construction	Pending	\$14,898,380
Cash	All private and public levels	Project Contingency	Pending	\$744,919
Cash	All private and public levels	Inflation Coverage	Pending	\$1,381,704
Cash	All private and public levels	Project Management and Oversight	Pending	\$175,000
Cash	All private and public levels	Commissioning	Pending	\$60,500
Cash	All private and public levels	Professional Fees	Pending	\$196,000
			Non State Sub Total	\$20,636,350
			Funds Total	\$21,036,350

Total Project Cost: \$21,640,350

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Acquisition and Restoration

Parcel List

Name	County	Site Significance	Activity	Acres	Miles	Estimated Cost	Type of Landowner	Easement or Title Holder	Status of Work
2905 Parcel	Hennepin	This project transforms long-neglected, environmentally impacted parcels into a B3-compliant, climate-resilient community anchor—advancing brownfield cleanup, renewable-energy adoption, and cultural belonging on Lake Street’s historic Latino corridor.	Fee Title	0.5	-	-	Private	2905 East Lake Street LLC	Negotiations In Progress
3012 1/2 Parcel	Hennepin	This project transforms long-neglected, environmentally impacted parcels into a B3-compliant, climate-resilient community anchor—advancing brownfield cleanup, renewable-energy adoption, and cultural belonging on Lake Street’s historic Latino corridor.	Fee Title	0.2	-	-	Private	2905 East Lake Street LLC	Has Not Begun
				-	-	-			
Totals				0.7	0	-			

Fee Acquisition

1. Describe the selection process for identifying and including proposed parcels on the parcel list, including an explanation of the criteria and decision-making process used to rank and prioritize parcels.

The parcels at 2905, 2919, and 3012½ East Lake Street were selected based on their location within the core of the historic Latino corridor, their strategic importance to community resilience, and their suitability for constructing a net-zero-ready community building supported by geothermal energy. COPAL prioritized parcels that (1) were blighted or environmentally impacted, (2) were under absentee ownership, (3) offered sufficient adjacency for a unified building site, and (4) held high community significance as part of post-2020 recovery. The parcels ranked highest because they allowed for environmental cleanup, fossil-fuel elimination, and the creation of a BIPOC-owned cultural and resilience hub on Lake Street.

2. List all adopted state, regional, or local natural resource plans in which the lands included in the parcel list are identified for the acquisition purposes you propose. Include the URL to the plan if one is available.

Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan – Guides land use, resilience, and climate mitigation.

<https://minneapolis2040.com/>

City of Minneapolis Climate Action Plan – Encourages renewable energy systems and carbon-reduction strategies.

<https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/mayor/issues-and-priorities/climate-action/>

Hennepin County Zero Waste and Climate Action Plan – Supports environmentally responsible redevelopment of urban parcels.

<https://www.hennepincounty.gov/climate-action>

Minnesota's B3 Sustainable Building Guidelines – Identifies requirements for energy-efficient, low-carbon public-interest construction.

<https://b3mn.org/>

3. For any parcels acquired in fee title, a restoration and management plan must be prepared. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for parcels acquired by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation, including how long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel will be financed into the future.

No ecological restoration will be performed on these parcels because they are fully urbanized lots intended for construction of the Latino Center for Community Engagement. COPAL will maintain documentation of environmental assessments, demolition, soil remediation, and long-term site management files in accordance with ENRTF and city requirements. Long-term maintenance of the building and site will be financed through a combination of COPAL operating funds, partner leases, and ongoing capital campaign commitments. The geothermal system itself will lower utility costs, supporting long-term financial sustainability. Because no habitat restoration is occurring, a natural resource restoration plan is not applicable.

4. For each parcel to be conveyed to a State of Minnesota entity (e.g., DNR) after purchase, provide a statement confirming that county board approval will be obtained.

No parcels acquired through this project will be conveyed to a Minnesota state entity. County board approval is therefore not applicable.

5. If applicable (see M.S. 116P.17), provide a statement confirming that written approval from the DNR Commissioner will be obtained 10 business days prior to any final acquisition transaction.

Because no land will be conveyed to the DNR and no state-held easements will be created, written approval from the DNR Commissioner is not required. If project conditions change, COPAL will obtain written approval at least 10 business days prior to any acquisition transaction.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [b58de11e-251.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

Aerial map of the Latino Center for Community Engagement...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
COPAL Evidence of Good Standing	572caac8-8eb.pdf
COPAL Audit - 2024	78112349-4e0.pdf
COPAL Form 990 - 2024	a450823b-5b7.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Non-State Entity Resolution Letter	de174a2e-43b.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Letter of Support from HACER	45f27a6e-85b.pdf
Letter of Recommendation - Huellas Latinas	38e4cb36-651.pdf
COPAL Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	02e95f4b-d3a.pdf
COPAL Capital Construction Budget Addendum	d1c137ea-418.pdf
Additional LCCE aerial map	66969fd8-ae4.pdf
LCCE Map	8ef3a21b-4d7.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Fee Acquisition,

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

Is the purpose of the acquisition for construction of a building(s), trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration, either now or in the future?

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:

Carolina Ortiz (COPAL), Maria Carter-Bertrand (COPAL), Robert Lunning (AWH Architects), Lisa Kugler (Lisa Kugler Consults LCC)

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