



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-480

Proposal Title: Nature for New Minnesotans: Expanding Inclusive Environmental Education

Project Manager Information

Name: Natalie Kennedy

Organization: U of MN - Bell Museum

Office Telephone: (651) 208-4074

Email: nkennedy@umn.edu

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Nature for New Minnesotans will improve existing ELL environmental education curriculum offerings by developing and piloting curriculum reflective of Dakota and Ojibwe perspectives.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$300,000

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?

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.

Minnesota's public lands, parks, forests, lakes, and rivers provide significant opportunities for recreation, learning, and stewardship, yet many residents face barriers that limit their ability to fully engage with these natural resources. Immigrant and refugee communities—many of whom are adult English language learners—often experience language and cultural barriers that make it difficult to learn about Minnesota ecosystems and nature and environmental stewardship opportunities, resulting in limited access to environmental education resources that are accessible or relevant.

The Bell Museum's Nature for New Minnesotans program was created to address this gap by partnering with Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs to integrate environmental education into English language learning. Through lessons focused on Minnesota plants, animals, seasons, and outdoor recreation opportunities, participants develop language skills while building knowledge about the state's natural resources.

However, the current curriculum lacks Dakota and Ojibwe perspectives, which are essential to a full understanding of Minnesota's nature and natural history. This project addresses that gap by joining Indigenous educators and Adult Basic Education specialists to expand the curriculum with culturally relevant content. By reducing language and cultural barriers, the project will help more Minnesotans understand, access, enjoy, and care for the state's lands and waters.

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 propose to develop adapt existing curriculum as well as develop new curriculum in order to incorporate Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge related to Native plants and animals, seasonal ecological cycles, cultural relationships to Minnesota's landscapes, and traditional stewardship practices. The collaboration between adult basic education English language educators and On Native Land Indigenous educators will ensure that lessons will deliver the necessary content in a design that is accessible for adult English language learners at multiple language proficiency levels.

We will pilot the curriculum with Adult Basic Education classrooms including lessons, outdoor learning experiences, and hands on observation through plant and animal specimens kits.

Curriculum will be hosted on the Bell's Nature for New Minnesotans website, publicly accessible and promoted to ELL instructors, environmental educators, community organizations, libraries and learning centers across Minnesota. Making the curriculum publicly accessible will significantly expand its impact by enabling educators statewide to introduce diverse learners to Minnesota's natural resources.

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?

The anticipated outcomes for this project includes:

- Increased environmental literacy among adult English language learners;
- Increased awareness of Minnesota nature based opportunities;
- Greater understanding of Indigenous ecological perspectives.

Ultimately we hope that this will lead to more diverse participation in Minnesota's outdoor nature-based opportunities and increased passion for the stewardship of Minnesota's lands and water among learners. Additionally we anticipate that this will decrease intimidation around educating on Native perspectives in nature/environment and increase educator capacity to deliver inclusive environmental education.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Collaborative Curriculum Development

Activity Budget: \$140,000

Activity Description:

Develop culturally inclusive environmental education curriculum for adult English language learners that integrates Dakota and Ojibwe perspectives on Minnesota ecosystems.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Project kickoff and curriculum review completed	October 31, 2027
Curriculum framework and lesson outlines completed	January 31, 2028
Draft curriculum modules developed	April 30, 2028
Internal review with Indigenous educators and ABE specialists completed	June 30, 2028

Activity 2: Curriculum Pilot Implementation - Test and refine the curriculum through implementation in ABE classrooms and outdoor learning experiences.

Activity Budget: \$90,000

Activity Description:

Bell Museum staff will work with ABE instructors to pilot curriculum modules in 4-6 classrooms serving adult English language learners. Lessons will include hands-on activities and outdoor learning experiences at local parks, natural areas, or environmental learning sites. The project team will collect instructor and learner feedback to evaluate curriculum effectiveness and accessibility.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Pilot classrooms recruited and instructor orientation completed	September 30, 2028
First round of classroom pilots implemented	January 31, 2029
Outdoor learning experiences completed	June 30, 2029
Evaluation and feedback collection completed	October 31, 2029
Curriculum revisions based on pilot results	December 31, 2029

Activity 3: Finalize curriculum materials and disseminate statewide.

Activity Budget: \$70,000

Activity Description:

The project team will revise curriculum modules based on pilot results and develop final educator resources. 12–14 finalized curriculum modules and educator resources will be published on the Nature for New Minnesotans website with an open-access online curriculum library and shared with Adult Basic Education networks and environmental education partners across Minnesota.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
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Final curriculum revisions completed	March 31, 2030
Online curriculum platform updated and resources published	April 30, 2030
Statewide educator dissemination completed	May 31, 2030

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Azul Kmiecik	Hamline University and MPH, UMN, Metro North Adult Basic Education, MAT	Adult Basic Education - English as a Second Language educator - primary curriculum development collaborator. (PhD in Curriculum & Instruction (Second Languages & Cultures), MA in English as a Second Language,)	Yes
Patsy Egan, PhD	ATLAS, ABE Teaching & Learning Advancement System	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Jessica Jones (Lead ABE ESL teacher)	Literacy Minnesota	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Shad Klukas (Chief Operations Officer)	Neighborhood House	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	Yes
Joe Foss (ABE ESL Teacher)	Metro North Adult Basic Education	Host organization that works with immigrant groups and teaches English for language learner classes.	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.

Results of this project will be publicly accessible to ensure that the curriculum developed through this work can be broadly accessed for direct usage, reference, and to serve as a model nationwide. Finalized Nature for New Minnesotans curriculum modules will be published as free, open-access resources on the program website, allowing Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, environmental educators, libraries, and community organizations statewide and beyond to use the materials. Curriculum guides will include lesson plans, outdoor activity guides, and background information on Minnesota ecosystems and Indigenous perspectives to support consistent and accurate use.

The Bell will work with Adult Basic Education networks, as well as our partners in University of Minnesota Extension, Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, and environmental education organizations statewide to promote awareness of the materials and encourage adoption. Presentations will be offered through educator meetings, conferences, and via partner organizations to demonstrate how the curriculum can be used to connect diverse learners with Minnesota's lands and waters.

All curriculum products developed with Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund support will remain publicly available online to ensure long-term access. Materials will be maintained by the Bell Museum to ensure continued availability beyond the grant period.

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?

Since Nature for New Minnesotans was first developed and run through UMN Extension Natural Resources with the Bell as a project partner, the program has matured from a pilot into its next phase and the Bell took on the stewardship to operationalize it into a long term sustainable program under the Statewide Engagement dept of the Bell. The addition and modification of curriculum, to better serve program participants and reflect Dakota and Ojibwe perspectives, will result in evergreen content that will continue to be accessible long after project completion.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Natalie Kennedy

Job Title: Director of Statewide Engagement

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

Natalie Kennedy-Schuck will serve as the project manager for the proposed initiative. Natalie is the Director of Statewide Engagement at the Bell Museum, the University of Minnesota's natural history museum, where she leads programs that connect communities across Minnesota to the state's natural resources through environmental education, partnerships, and place-based learning experiences.

In her role, Natalie oversees the Bell Museum's statewide public engagement initiatives, including environmental education programs, partnerships with University of Minnesota Research and Outreach Centers, and collaborative projects that expand access to nature learning opportunities for diverse audiences. Her work focuses on building meaningful relationships with community organizations, educators, and cultural partners to develop inclusive programs that help people understand and engage with Minnesota's ecosystems, wildlife, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Natalie has extensive experience managing collaborative, multi-partner projects that integrate environmental education with community engagement. She has led initiatives that bring together scientists, educators, Indigenous knowledge holders, and community organizations to develop programming that reflects diverse perspectives on the natural world. Her work emphasizes creating pathways for audiences who have historically faced barriers to accessing environmental education and outdoor spaces.

She also oversees the Bell Museum's Nature for New Minnesotans program and has helped guide partnerships with Adult Basic Education programs that support English language learners in developing connections to Minnesota's natural landscapes. In addition, Natalie launched the Bell Museum's On Native Land program, working closely with Indigenous educators to integrate Dakota and Ojibwe perspectives into environmental learning experiences.

Through her leadership of statewide partnerships, curriculum development initiatives, and inclusive environmental programming, Natalie brings the organizational, partnership-building, and project management experience necessary to successfully lead this project. She will coordinate project partners, oversee curriculum development and pilot implementation, and ensure that final materials are disseminated broadly to educators across Minnesota.

Organization: U of MN - Bell Museum

Organization Description:

The Bell Museum is Minnesota's official natural history museum. Founded in 1872, the Bell connects people with the natural world through science, art, and education, with a focus on Minnesota's lands, waters, wildlife, and ecosystems. Located on the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus, the museum is a statewide resource for environmental

learning, combining scientific research collections, immersive exhibits, public programs, and community partnerships to foster understanding and stewardship of Minnesota's natural resources.

The Bell houses over a million scientific specimens that document Minnesota's biodiversity and environmental history. These collections support research and education about the state's plants, animals, and ecosystems. The museum reaches tens of thousands of people each year while also extending its impact through partnerships with schools, community organizations, and educators across Minnesota.

The Bell's Statewide Engagement department develops programs that bring environmental education beyond the museum's walls and into communities and directly in nature. These initiatives include partnerships with University of Minnesota Research and Outreach Centers, educator collaborations, youth camps, and community programs that introduce diverse audiences to Minnesota's natural environments. Through these programs, the Bell Museum works to ensure that all Minnesotans have opportunities to connect with, understand, and care for the state's natural resources.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Nature for New Minnesotans Project Coordinator		Coordinate program delivery with ELL and other program partner			32.3%	0.84		\$80,000
Nature for New Minnesotans program associate		Support program delivery, work with ELL educators, schedule program experiences, support curriculum modifications			32.3%	1.35		\$99,000
On Native Land educators		Provide content expertise for ELL curriculum development, support onsite and field trip experiences.			8%	0.51		\$22,000
Statewide Programs Manager		Supervise and advise program coordinator, work to operationalize program at the Bell Museum, provide supervision to additional project staff			36.6%	0.21		\$23,000
Statewide Engagement Director		Project PI, oversees entire project, budget, and staffing, ensures program is meeting milestones and assesses for outcomes.			36.6%	0.15		\$22,000
On Native Land Program Coordinator		Coordinate involvement of On Native Land educators to support curriculum development/modifications, manage time and logistics.			36.6%	0.21		\$18,000
							Sub Total	\$264,000
Contracts and Services								
English Language Learning Centers & Environmental Learning Centers	Service Contract	Stipend to program partners to support commitment, participation, and utilization of NFNM curriculum and to enable full learner participation through, as well as participation in professional development. (Stipends range between are approx \$2500 - \$3500 each depending on partner commitment level)				0		\$15,000
Azul Kmiecik	Service Contract	Supporting development/modification of curriculum to ensure adult basic education English language learning principals and practices are maintained.				0.03		\$5,000

							Sub Total	\$20,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Tools and Supplies	Tools and Supplies ELL Professional Development Materials	Materials for ELL Instructors including sample participant materials and instructor guides					\$4,000
	Tools and Supplies	Participant Materials	Supplies used by adult learners for nature-based activities (hand lenses, field guides, field notebooks)					\$3,000
	Tools and Supplies	Instructional supplies	Supplies used to teach courses (demonstration materials, nature specimen boxes, etc.)					\$1,000
							Sub Total	\$8,000
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Program staff local and statewide travel to NFNM classroom sites.	Based on 2-4 program staff traveling 3500 miles per year to and from partner sites. Funding allows for overnight lodging based on federally allowable travel expenses to statewide partner sites.					\$5,000
							Sub Total	\$5,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								

	Printing	Instructional materials	Printed materials for adult English language learners. (Estimated \$7 per participant X 540 participants)					\$3,000
							Sub Total	\$3,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$300,000

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				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$300,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [f742308a-784.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Nature for New Minnesotans Program Overview + model...

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Endorsement Letter	52ba429a-391.pdf
NFNM Previous LCCMR Final Report	3cbdd2f2-33d.pdf
On Native Land program and staffing (One Pager)	5fa0bb6a-9ef.pdf
Letter of Support - ATLAS	d7691b8f-b1b.pdf
Letter of Support - Metro North ABE	443b5cd2-5d0.pdf
Letter of Support - Neighborhood House	06d48bb0-366.pdf
Letter of Support - Azul Kmiecik	1de00270-7b8.pdf
Letter of Support - Literacy MN	f77c8e3a-35e.docx

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 UMN Policy on travel 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")?

No

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

Jen Olson, Bell Museum

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