



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-536

Proposal Title: Shared Land, Shared Love

Project Manager Information

Name: Karma Choeyang

Organization: The Tehor Tibetan Organization of Minnesota

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Email: tehormn@gmail.com

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Growing traditional barley using seeds from the University of Minnesota or Tibet, and developing a recreational center for educational purposes by teaching the forefathers' way of life in Tibet.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$650,000

Proposed Project Completion: July 31, 2028

LCCMR Funding Category: Land (F)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Region(s): NE

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

Region(s): NE

When will the work impact occur?

During the Project

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

The Tehor Tibetan Organization of Minnesota acquired 40 acres of farmland in rural Minnesota to initiate sustainable barley farming, establish an educational farm, and create a community center that integrates traditional nomadic Tibetan farming practices and ways of living with modern conservation efforts. Currently, there are no Tibetan farmers in Minnesota, but we see significant potential for barley in the state.

This initiative has three components to it: 1) Farming and education, 2) Land restoration, and 3) Community center. In partnership with the University of Minnesota Extension Program, we plan to grow traditional barley seeds from Tibet or winter-hardy barley varieties from the University of Minnesota. If we succeed with barley cultivation, we will introduce yak farming. We aim to restore the soil on the 40-acre farm by planting native prairie species in areas unsuitable for farming, and that should be protected. Our project plan includes building a solar-powered, carbon-neutral community center. This center will teach traditional Tibetan nomadic practices, promote environmental education among multigenerational Tibetan families, and create an outdoor gathering space that fosters sustainable living in harmony with nature.

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.

Barley is a staple food for many Tibetan people, especially in the form of Tsampa, a traditional roasted barley flour that has sustained Tibetan communities for centuries. It is traditionally grown on the high-altitude Himalayan Plateau, where the growing season is short and environmental conditions are harsh. Tibetan barley farming methods rely on minimal rainfall and avoid synthetic chemicals, reflecting a long tradition of sustainable and resilient agriculture.

Barley's deep fibrous root system helps improve soil structure, increase water infiltration, and restore soil health. Combining these traditional farming practices with native prairie restoration could help reshape agricultural practices in Minnesota by promoting more sustainable land use.

This initiative was started by the Tehor Tibetan Organization of Minnesota, founded by Tibetan immigrants who brought their rich nomadic farming knowledge and cultural traditions to the United States. Because many Tibetan community members are lower-income workers despite professional backgrounds, purchasing farmland individually can be difficult. In response, the community collectively purchased 40 acres of former corn farmland to launch a community farming project and create a shared community center.

Today, community members are working together to plan, develop, and cultivate the land through collective effort, shared knowledge, and a vision of sustainable agriculture

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?

Initiate a community farming system to encourage Tibetan farmers to gain confidence into buying or leasing lands in Minnesota and to become farmers. This community farming hub will also teach younger generations and Minnesotans about nomadic traditional way of farming without applying any synthetic chemicals.

Construction of a solar-powered, carbon-neutral community center that integrates Tibetan cultural architecture with sustainable energy solutions. This hub will be used as a community gathering space and educational center to teach about sustainable farming practices and nomadic culture and will be open for all Minnesotans.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Request funding for infrastructure such as a sewage system and community center.

Activity Budget: \$450,000

Activity Description:

The community raised the money to purchase the land. We are working on securing funding to build the community center and infrastructure such as solar, water and sewage system on the land. We are pursuing federal funding, state funding, philanthropic funding and community-led fundraising to fund the infrastructure needed. The building will have a kitchen, community space, educational space, and will reflect both Tibetan architecture and integrate into Minnesota's rural landscape.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
This project will provide significant environmental, social, and cultural benefits.	July 31, 2028

Activity 2: Request funding agriculture farming.

Activity Budget: \$50,000

Activity Description:

This part of the funding will be used to partner with the University of Minnesota extension program, Climate Land Leaders, and other partners in planting barley, and native trees and prairies. Funding will be used to securing farming tools, seeds and manure, etc. No funding will be used to purchase synthetic chemicals.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Funding will be used to securing farming tools, seeds and manure.	July 31, 2028

Activity 3: Request funding for partnerships and learning and evaluation.

Activity Budget: \$150,000

Activity Description:

The funding will also be used to host and expand summer nomadic camps in 2026 and 2027 for multi-generational community members to learn about Nomadic way of living, climate change, soil health, and sustainable agriculture practices.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
learn about Nomadic way of living, climate change, soil health, and sustainable agriculture practices.	July 31, 2028

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA)	Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA)	We are members of Climate Land Leaders and are connected with other members to tap into their learnings, resources and ideas for our land. Consulting with Hmong American Farmers Association (HAFA)	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.

We will share the progress and results of this project through documentation, presentations, and community outreach. Farming activities, soil health, and crop growth will be recorded through notes, photos, and seasonal reports.

Findings will be shared with the community through workshops, presentations, and cultural events at the community center. We also plan to share updates through community newsletters, social media, and local organizations to raise awareness about sustainable farming practices.

Seeds, farming methods, and cultural knowledge related to barley cultivation will be preserved and documented for future use. This will help support sustainable agriculture, strengthen community connections, and guide similar projects in the future.

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?

We are seeking funding to: 1) run a summer nomadic camp, 2) to initiate barley farming and native trees and plants to restore the land and introduce sustainable agriculture farming practices, and 3) to construct a community center and other infrastructure such as solar, sewage system, water, and agricultural projects (specifically growing barley).

We are not seeking any funding for staff. This is community-members led projects and the older generation with farming backgrounds are volunteering and gifting their time and talent. We believe that the introduction of farming and summer nomadic camps are doable with only this grant.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Karma Choeyang

Job Title: Social Worker

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

While we are providing an individual name. This project was initiated by 300 individuals and are planning this initiative collectively. Most of the older generation Tibetans are from the Eastern part of Tibet who used to be nomads and farmers in Tibet. They are gifting their skills and knowledge to move this project forward. Each year, community members come together to elect 10 project leads to continue moving the project forward. Gelek Namgyal who is named is a social worker at Abbot Northwestern Hospital as a social worker. Social work is an academic discipline and practice-based profession concerned with meeting the basic needs of individuals, families, groups, communities, and society as a whole to enhance their individual and collective well-being.

Organization: The Tehor Tibetan Organization of Minnesota

Organization Description:

The Tehor Tibetan Organization of Minnesota, a registered nonprofit with 501(c)(3) status, was established in the early 2000s. Our community, consisting of approximately 300 members primarily residing in the Twin Cities area, comprises individuals who have traversed challenging journeys from Tibet to India and eventually to the United States. The organization was created to preserve the unique cultural heritage and to maintain a sense of community.

About three years ago, 300 community members raised funding to purchase 40 acres of land in Finlayson, MN. The project is called the Tibetan Prairie Haven. We are intentionally building a community hub in rural Minnesota, turning the land back into a natural habitat and designing spaces to teach about human values, Tibetan culture, and the environment.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
							Sub Total	-
Contracts and Services								
Tehor Tibetan Organization of Minnesota	Service Contract	infrastructure such as a sewage system, community center, and agricultural projects (specifically growing barley).				0		\$650,000
							Sub Total	\$650,000
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								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$650,000

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: \$650,000

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
Norbu-lingka		ecosystem	Restoration	40	-	\$650,000	Private		Has Not Begun
Totals				40	0	\$650,000			

Restoration

1. Provide a statement confirming that all restoration activities completed with these funds will occur on land permanently protected by a conservation easement or public ownership.

The funds we receive will be used exclusively for restoration activities on land that is permanently protected under a conservation easement or public ownership.

2. Summarize the components and expected outcomes of restoration and management plans for the parcels to be restored by your organization, how these plans are kept on file by your organization, and overall strategies for long-term plan implementation.

The community center will be built in phases as we secure funding. The priorities are the infrastructure and kitchen. Tibetan community members lead the hub designs to create a culturally authentic, welcoming space that reflects our values and aspirations. 300 members will actively participate in creating the space, and the community members will do most of the labor of building the hub. This is a way to foster collective work and collaboration. The rest of the funding will be raised by community members through donation drives and seeking philanthropic support and federal funding.

3. Describe how restoration efforts will utilize and follow the Board of Soil and Water Resources “Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines” in order to ensure ecological integrity and pollinator enhancement.

This project will provide significant environmental, social, and cultural benefits. If this project succeeds, we will introduce how to enhance the conservation of Minnesota’s natural resources through sustainable farming and land restoration, while simultaneously providing a community gathering space that promotes Tibetan nomadic farming practices and way of living.

4. Describe how the long-term maintenance and management needs of the parcel being restored with these funds will be met and financed into the future.

This initiative was started by the Tehor Tibetan Organization of Minnesota, which is founded by Tibetan immigrants who have brought their rich nomadic farming practices and traditions to the United States. Buying and starting a farm for any one Tibetan community members, who are mostly lower-working class with professional background. Thus, they came together as a community and purchased the 40 acres of corn land to initiate a community farming and community center. now planning and developing both the farmland and this initiative through collective efforts.

5. Describe how consideration will be given to contracting with Conservation Corps of Minnesota for any restoration activities.

Consideration will be given to contracting with the Conservation Corps of Minnesota for restoration activities by assessing project needs and aligning them with the Corps’ expertise in natural resource management. Whenever feasible, we will engage the Conservation Corps to support restoration efforts, leveraging their skilled workforce to enhance project implementation. This partnership would not only ensure high-quality restoration work but also provide valuable hands-on experience and workforce development opportunities for program participants.

6. Provide a statement indicating that evaluations will be completed on parcels where activities were implemented both 1) initially after activity completion and 2) three years later as a follow-up. Evaluations should analyze improvements to the parcel and whether goals have been met, identify any problems with the implementation, and identify any findings that can be used to improve implementation of future restoration efforts at the site or elsewhere.

Evaluations will be conducted on parcels where activities have been implemented, first upon completion of the restoration work and again three years later as a follow-up. These evaluations will assess improvements to the parcel, determine whether project goals have been met, identify any challenges encountered during implementation, and provide insights to enhance future restoration efforts both at this site and elsewhere.

Attachments

Required Attachments

Map

File: [cf30d471-bf5.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Map

We purchased 40 acres of land at 66398 County Highway 61, Finlayson, MN 55735 for our project. As part of the renovation, we restored the old house and cleared the collapsed structure using soil, sand, and small pebbles....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
990	389e8fba-65b.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Board letter	35f94b3f-b8b.docx

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Capital construction	a2738198-85a.pdf
meeting	04f5b76c-de6.jpe

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

Yes: Restoration,

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

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:

Gelek Namgyal

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