



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-579

Proposal Title: Camp Northern Lights Commercial Kitchen Reconstruction

Project Manager Information

Name: Sara Miller

Organization: YMCA of the North

Office Telephone: (612) 900-0127

Email: saramiriam.miller@ymcamn.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Rebuild YMCA Camp Northern Lights commercial kitchen, to restore food services to over 700 camp families that visit the grounds in Babbitt, MN annually.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$3,895,000

Proposed Project Completion: June 30, 2028

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

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

Region(s): NE

When will the work impact occur?

In the Future

Narrative

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

In June 2024, a fire destroyed the commercial kitchen at YMCA Camp Northern Lights in Babbitt, Minnesota. This 2,000-square-foot facility was the heart of our camp's food service operations, enabling us to provide meals to hundreds of families and staff.

The loss of this kitchen has severely impacted our programming. We cannot offer meals to campers, forcing families to pack all meals while limiting our capacity to a kitchen we have been renting from a local community center 20 minutes from camp. This creates barriers for families and reduces the traditional camp experience that builds community among visiting families.

Camp Northern Lights serves as a vital resource in northeastern Minnesota. As one of only eight family camps in the country, it provides outdoor education and adventure for families from diverse backgrounds. Many campers attend through financial assistance programs, and the communal dining experience is integral to fostering belonging.

Replacing the Orion building kitchen represents both an urgent need and an opportunity to restore full programming while potentially enhancing our capacity to serve more Minnesota families. A modernized, code-compliant commercial kitchen will ensure we can continue our mission of nurturing families through transformative camp experiences in a safe, inclusive environment.

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.

Working with our architectural firm, we have designed a commercial kitchen that meets current health and safety standards while accommodating our programming needs, with the capacity for expanding services. Additionally, this new kitchen will allow for expedited staff dining during peak camp sessions. The total project cost for our new kitchen is \$5.2M dollars. This facility will enable us to resume full meal services, removing disruptions for families and restoring the dining experience central to camp culture.

Through the commitment of our local and camp communities, we have raised over \$1.3M dollars toward project construction costs. However, a funding gap remains to complete this essential project. LCCMR grant support would provide the final financial resources needed to begin construction and restore meal service operations.

Upon completion, families will initially enjoy meals in outdoor common areas and cabins while we pursue Phase Two, the addition of a dedicated dining hall. This phased approach allows us to quickly restore core services while planning for long-term enhancements.

Completing this kitchen represents an investment into the legacy of Camp Northern Lights and our continued ability to serve families across Minnesota.

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?

Camp Northern Lights has welcomed Minnesota families to the edge of the Boundary Waters wilderness for 7 years. By establishing full camp services, we can once again draw over 700 families, or about 2500 individuals annually, from across the state to experience one of Minnesota's most treasured natural resources. Camp serves as a vital entry point to this wilderness, helping visitors understand the importance of preserving it for future generations. We believe this exposure will create over 2,500 stewards annually, each personally invested in protecting the Boundary Waters because of their transformative time at camp.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Camp Northern Lights Kitchen Rebuild Pre-Design/Design Phase

Activity Budget: \$1,000

Activity Description:

This commercial kitchen project has been a YMCA priority since 2024, with significant work already completed. Feasibility studies and early design work are done, and the YMCA has partnered with Gardner Builders, a trusted vendor with a proven track record on YMCA construction projects, to develop designs and lead project planning.

On the regulatory front, the Minnesota B3 offices have confirmed the project qualifies for the 10,000 square foot exemption listed in the LCCMR RFP, resolving a key question that had temporarily halted design finalization. SHPO consultation is also satisfied, as the building site was previously developed and reviewed during past construction activity. Should an ENRTF award be received, approval has been granted to complete a retroactive Pre-design Review by the Dept. of Administration given that design work began prior to this funding application.

With regulatory determinations complete, the YMCA will work with Gardner Builders to finalize construction plans, secure any remaining permits, and advertise the project for bid. Our team is well prepared to move through the remaining pre-construction steps efficiently. Upon receipt of an award, the YMCA is positioned to begin construction promptly, having already completed the most time intensive components of the planning and approval process.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Department of Administration Predesign Review	June 30, 2027
Other Permitting/Agency Review	July 31, 2027
Advertisement for Bid	July 31, 2027
Approval of Final Bids	August 31, 2027

Activity 2: Camp Northern Lights Kitchen Rebuild Pre-Construction/Construction

Activity Budget: \$3,875,250

Activity Description:

The YMCA has been in a holding pattern, waiting on the completion of fundraising before moving into construction of Camp Northern Lights' new kitchen. Receipt of this award would mark the final step in that effort, securing the remaining funds needed to proceed. With financing in place, the YMCA will authorize Gardner Builders to finalize subcontracting and complete the bidding process to get the project underway.

Because the new kitchen will be built over the footprint of a previous structure, site preparation is minimal with the majority focused on rerouting an existing roadway and some peripheral work on the grounds to improve accessibility. Once the project is handed off to Gardner Builders for staking and mobilization, we anticipate a smooth transition into active construction.

The YMCA has full confidence in Gardner and our internal Real Estate Development Team. Their combined track record demonstrates the capacity to deliver projects of this scope on time and within budget. Together, they will oversee all construction activity, contractor coordination, inspections, and project administration from groundbreaking through closeout. We tentatively project the bulk of construction being completed by early May 2028, with full closeout by the end of that month.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Secure Permits	August 31, 2027
Staking, Mobilization, and Site Preparation	September 30, 2027
Begin Construction	September 30, 2027
Final Grading	May 31, 2028
Substantial Completion	May 31, 2028
Construction Ends	May 31, 2028

Activity 3: Camp Northern Lights Kitchen Rebuild Close-Out**Activity Budget:** \$18,750**Activity Description:**

Completion and occupancy of the kitchen will be subject to municipal inspection and local permitting, and we anticipate receiving our certificate of occupancy in May of 2028. Gardner Builders will work closely with the construction team throughout this period to address any inspection action items, finalize the property, and oversee site stabilization and groundskeeping, ensuring the site is clean, safe, and compliant at the time of handoff.

Once the certificate of occupancy is secured, the YMCA Marketing Team will develop all signage required by ENRTF, ensuring the kitchen properly acknowledges the trust fund's contribution to the project. This step will be completed in coordination with project closeout so that the facility is fully compliant before opening.

With construction wrapped, inspections passed, and required signage in place, the kitchen will be ready to open and begin serving Camp Northern Lights participants. We are planning for the kitchen to be operational in time for the 2028 camp session, at which point it will fulfill its intended purpose as a central part of the camp experience. The YMCA remains committed to meeting all post-construction obligations and will provide ongoing reporting to document the facility's use and the continued public benefit of this investment.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Stabilization & Punch List Items	May 31, 2028
Certificate of Occupancy Obtained	May 31, 2028
As-builts Survey	June 30, 2028
Notice of Funding Restriction Recorded	June 30, 2028
Install Signage with ENRTF Language and Logo	June 30, 2028
Kitchen Open for Use	June 30, 2028

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.

The YMCA of the North will provide all required reporting and include samples of how we have featured ENRTF/LCCMR acknowledgements. In addition, the YMCA of the North will recognize the ENRTF/LCCMR in branch and program materials along with signage featuring approved ENRTF branding and logos, on our webpage and social media platforms, and with key stakeholders. The YMCA will also invite the LCCMR chairs to the opening of the kitchen. We strive to make all contributions known at both the local level of our camps and at the organizational level at the YMCA of the North.

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?

Once the project is completed, Camp Northern Lights existing staff will operate the new commercial kitchen. Though we lost the physical facility, we have retained experienced staff and policies ready to support kitchen operations from day one. Camper feedback, gathered through an established survey system used across our association, will guide ongoing adjustments to best serve our community. Should any contingencies arise after the grant period, our YMCA has multiple layers of emergency funding available to ensure the project's long-term success. We are fully committed to Camp Northern Lights and the families it serves.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
Unlocking Minnesota Wilderness for Youth	M.L. 2024, , Chp. 83, Art. , Sec. 2, Subd. 05i	\$705,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Sara Miller

Job Title: Director of Grants Management and Compliance

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

Oversees all grant compliance for the YMCA of the North

Organization: YMCA of the North

Organization Description:

The YMCA of the North (YMCA) opened in 1856 in Minnesota and serves Minnesota residents across a 7-county area of the Twin Cities, six camps in rural Minnesota, and in association with all other YMCAs in Minnesota. We are the third largest YMCA in the country, remaining relevant to generations adapting to meet the needs of Minnesotans. Of our six camps based in rural Minnesota, this grant would be associated with one of our two family camps, Camp Northern Lights. The mission of YMCA Camp Northern Lights is to nurture our need for belonging and connection, to each other and to the outdoors. Spending time together in nature is one of the best ways for families to grow together. YMCA Camp Northern Lights, a north woods family camp, is the YMCA's newest family camp in Northern Minnesota. Located on the edge of the Superior National Forest, families experience a beautiful wilderness setting that promotes community,

relaxation, and adventure. Camp is situated on Bear Island Lake and offers year-round programs including retreats and cabin reservation opportunities.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Vice President of Real Estate and Development, YMCA of the North		These are the projected costs associated with our Real Estate Development Team acting as project managers throughout the construction of the commercial kitchen at Camp Northern Lights			0%	0.12		\$18,000
							Sub Total	\$18,000
Contracts and Services								
Contractor, Garnder Builders	Service Contract	Contractor work and fees, final infrastructure and site development, full construction budget to close-out phase (with 5% contingency and inflation addition of 13.06%), final inspections, taking occupancy, permitting costs, and creation of as-built survey.				0		\$3,412,000
							Sub Total	\$3,412,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Equipment	Kitchen Equipment	This equipment will be installed at the time of construction and includes the: cooking equipment, refrigeration, food preparation tools and equipment, ingredient storage, and cleaning and safety supplies and equipment. This will allow the kitchen to operate at a commercial level - feeding the large number of guests and staff the camp serves annually.					\$465,000
							Sub Total	\$465,000
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	\$3,895,000

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	Be The Light Fundraising Initiative	YMCA 25% Non-ENRTF Matching Funds	Secured	\$1,338,107
			Non State Sub Total	\$1,338,107
			Funds Total	\$1,338,107

Total Project Cost: \$5,233,107

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [7089ced4-bc6.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

This map shows a series of increasingly localized representations of where the kitchen will be placed. Beginning with the state, the city, and then within the camp. It also features a black and white architectural drawing of the kitchen on a topographical map, with scale indicated and direction....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Business Filing Details	cd474b70-4b5.pdf
Audited Financial Statement	aeb6a3a8-bca.pdf
IRS Tax Exemption Letter	ef817289-686.pdf
990	9e8ea0d1-dee.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
YMCA Board Resolution Letter	277fe5ad-7db.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
YMCA of the North Capital Construction Budget Addendum	b3cfae0e-da9.pdf
YMCA of the North Capital Construction Project Questionnaire	d9d96151-60a.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?

Yes

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

Yes

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF? If so, describe here (1) the source and estimated amounts of any revenue and (2) how you propose to use those revenues:

Yes, Camp Northern Lights anticipates that the new commercial kitchen will generate approximately \$200,000 in annual revenue through meal service fees paid by campers and program participants. This estimate is drawn from our

operational pro forma, which projects meal volume based on current and expected camp enrollment and estimates related to the performance of our other family camp providing similar services. We have requested a reinvestment of ENRTF funds because this figure does not represent operational revenue, instead it represents the full cost of delivering food service.

The projected \$200,000 in revenue will be directly reinvested into the kitchen operation itself, covering the two primary costs associated with running a commercial kitchen. The annual food and supply costs are estimated at \$150,000, and the salary of a dedicated Food Service Manager at \$50,000 annually. These figures reflect realistic costs for a camp of our size and to ensure the kitchen operates on a financially sustainable basis without drawing on other camp resources.

Camp Northern Lights is not projecting financial gain from this facility. Rather, a reinvestment of grant funds would allow the kitchen to be self-sustaining, with meal revenue covering the direct costs of providing food to our camper families. This model allows us to offer quality meals as part of the camp experience without placing an ongoing operational burden on our general budget, ensuring that the capital investment made possible by this grant continues to serve our mission beyond the grant period.

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:

Sean Lofton - YMCA of the North

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