



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-595

Proposal Title: Cultivating Environmental Education and Stewardship Through YMCA Volunteering

Project Manager Information

Name: Sara Miller

Organization: YMCA of the North

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Email: saramiriam.miller@ymcamn.org

Project Basic Information

Project Summary: Engage over 6,000 Minnesotans annually, while driving year-over-year volunteer growth, through environmentally focused educational and conservation volunteer opportunities at 13 YMCA camp and adventure locations around the state.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$708,000

Proposed Project Completion: July 31, 2029

LCCMR Funding 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.

YMCA of the North manages 13 camp properties across Minnesota, spanning diverse ecosystems that require consistent and skilled land stewardship. This includes invasive species control, prairie restoration, fire prevention through forest management, and sustainable trail maintenance are ongoing needs that currently outpace what staff alone can address.

YMCA leadership has identified an opportunity to solve this capacity gap while opening our camps to new audiences. Parents of campers, former campers, retirees, students, and anyone curious about Minnesota's natural environment represent a largely untapped volunteer base for the Y. By formalizing the infrastructure to recruit, train, and deploy these individuals, we turn a staffing limitation into a community driven asset.

Our existing, state-approved, environmental education curriculum used with youth campers and school groups, provides the backbone for adult volunteer training and education. Participants will understand why and leave with practical knowledge they can apply elsewhere.

This proposal requests funding to expand YMCA volunteer infrastructure through staff coordination capacity, training systems, and outreach tools. The restoration work accomplished during the grant period is important, but a self-sustaining network of Minnesotans actively invested in the health of these lands well beyond year three is the goal.

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.

The Adventure Volunteer Program would build lasting environmental stewardship capacity across YMCA of the North's Minnesota camp locations through a three-year pilot program, supported by two full-time manager positions and updated technology.

The Environmental Education Volunteer Manager would recruit and train volunteers to deliver hands-on environmental education aligned with existing state-approved curricula, while reinforcing core environmental stewardship principles with volunteer groups. The Land Stewardship Volunteer Manager would engage students, retirees, former campers, and environmental enthusiasts in invasive species removal, prairie restoration, forest management, trail work, and disease control. Both avenues broadening the population connected to camp programming.

A new volunteer management system integrated with our current CRM would coordinate scheduling, track hours and outcomes, and support volunteer recognition across our sites.

Rather than addressing only immediate land management needs, this program builds lasting infrastructure for sustainable community engagement. The goal is to involve thousands of Minnesotans annually, with 10% growth in participation each year of the grant, and beyond. Progress would be tracked through volunteer hours, retention rates, and satisfaction surveys, giving managers actionable data to refine programming over time.

The result is a system that generates measurable educational and environmental outcomes while deepening community ties to Minnesota's natural spaces.

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?

Project outcomes will focus on environmental protection, conservation, and preservation through forest and brush clearing to reduce wildfire risk, removal of invasive species to restore native plants, and prairie restoration through managed planting that support pollinators and native birds. Buffer zone management to slow the spread of floral diseases, while trail development will expand public access to outdoor recreation while minimizing erosion and habitat

disturbance. Together, these activities will improve habitat quality across diverse Minnesota ecosystems while integrating educational initiatives throughout. These outcomes will be achieved through the development and application of a robust volunteer network, built with LCCMR support.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Hire Environmental Education Volunteer Manager and Land Stewardship Volunteer Manager

Activity Budget: \$408,000

Activity Description:

Adventure leadership will partner with the YMCA of the North's Human Resources team to develop accurate job descriptions for both the Environmental Education Volunteer Manager and Land Stewardship Volunteer Manager, ensuring each reflects the program's land stewardship, environmental education, and volunteer management responsibilities. Both positions will be reviewed for compensation equity before being posted in alignment with the YMCA's and state's employment practices.

Applications will be screened by Human Resources before Adventure leadership begins interviews. Interview panels will assess candidates for relevant experience in environmental education, land stewardship, volunteer coordination, and community engagement. Reference checks and any required background screenings will be completed before formal offers are extended and approved through the appropriate HR and finance channels.

Once hired, both managers will complete the YMCA of the North's full onboarding process, including payroll and benefits enrollment, compliance training, and organizational orientation. They will then transition into Adventure team onboarding, where they will be introduced to completed and ongoing work across the 13 camp locations, identified land management and programming needs, and their respective roles within the broader Adventure Team before beginning active volunteer recruitment and coordination work.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Develop complete Job descriptions with Human Resources	July 31, 2027
Conduct Interviews	August 31, 2027
Make offers for Program and Land Stewardship Volunteer Managers	August 31, 2027
Complete new employee onboarding	September 30, 2027

Activity 2: Deploy New Volunteer CRM/Software

Activity Budget: \$100,000

Activity Description:

Adventure leadership and the YMCA IT department will lead the identification and acquisition of a volunteer management system that integrates with our existing CRM to track volunteer hours, retention, and satisfaction across camp locations. The process will begin with leadership and IT documenting specific system requirements based on the program's land stewardship and environmental education needs.

Once approved, the team will issue a request for proposals to qualified vendors, evaluate responses against defined criteria, and conduct demos before selecting a platform. IT will then complete a review and negotiate contract terms covering integration requirements, service agreements, and data ownership.

After a vendor is selected, the newly hired Environmental Education Volunteer Manager and Land Stewardship Volunteer Manager will partner with IT to configure and optimize the system, ensuring it reflects real workflow needs before full deployment. A pilot phase will allow the team to identify gaps and refine the setup prior to going live across

all properties. Following launch, managers will continue monitoring system performance and work with IT to adjust as the program grows and volunteer engagement scales toward the 10% annual participation increase goal.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Solicit RFP from applicable software developers	July 31, 2027
Implement software within camps/adventure volunteer program	August 31, 2027
Implement staff training on new software	September 30, 2027

Activity 3: Engage Community Volunteers

Activity Budget: \$200,000

Activity Description:

The Environmental Education Volunteer Manager and Land Stewardship Volunteer Manager will begin by auditing existing volunteer programs and opportunities across all Minnesota YMCA of the North camp locations, identifying gaps in environmental education and land stewardship where volunteer support can have the greatest impact.

From there, both managers will work directly with camp leadership to develop clearly defined volunteer opportunities tailored to each location's specific programming and land management needs, ranging from invasive species removal and prairie restoration to hands-on environmental education with visiting campers and school groups.

As recruitment builds momentum, the managers will develop a network of trained volunteer leaders drawn from students, retirees, former campers, environmental professionals, and community members who can help sustain and grow the program over time. In partnership with the YMCA marketing team, the program will develop branded volunteer uniform to build community identity and recognize volunteer contributions across the network.

Annual volunteer programming will then be implemented consistently across all camp locations, creating predictable engagement opportunities that volunteers can plan each year. Satisfaction surveys will be administered regularly and reviewed by both managers to evaluate volunteer experience, identify areas for improvement, and refine programming so that participation continues growing toward the program's

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Audit existing volunteer programs and opportunities at the YMCA and similar organizations	November 30, 2027
Work with camp leadership to develop volunteer opportunities modeled off MN DNR volunteer program	December 31, 2027
Work with marketing team to develop volunteer uniforms and volunteer work safety packets	December 31, 2027
Develop award and recognition milestones for volunteers	December 31, 2027
Organize Volunteer Council, kick off meeting	January 31, 2028
Develop network of volunteer leaders	July 31, 2029
Implement annual volunteer programming across camp locations	July 31, 2029
Examine volunteer satisfaction surveys to refine programming	July 31, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Partnership with Minnesota Forestry Service, Day Camps & Overnight Camps	Minnesota Forestry Service	In-kind service providing in-depth learning experiences for youth for each age and stage and modeling careers in the outdoors.	No
Hennepin County Green Partners	Hennepin County	Grants to support recycling at camps	Yes
EQIP Grant	St. Louis County	Supporting the preservation of the Forest Canopy for Camp Widjiwagan	Yes
EQIP Grant	St. Louis County	Preservation of water quality at Camp Menogyn	Yes
American Diabetes Association, Minnesota	ADA Minnesota	Partner for specialty Diabetes Camp for staffing medical station, developing menus and training staff about diabetes and recognition/management of diabetic issues that may arise.	No
American Red Cross, Minnesota	American Red Cross, Minnesota	Trains camp staff and lifeguard in CPR and First Aid	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.

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. We will also share our impact in our camp newsletter that reaches 25,000 households every year.

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 expansion of the YMCA volunteer initiatives is an emerging organizational priority. Significant internal resources will be devoted to making sure that the program is able to extend beyond the LCCMR grant period. Results will be carefully studied throughout the project lifecycle, particularly the participant surveys, so that real time adjustments can be made throughout the first three years. These lessons will be used by the two managers in conjunction with the Adventure leadership team to continue refining our volunteer program so that continuity, environmental impact, and participant satisfaction can be guaranteed, reinforcing volunteer retention and program health.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

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

Project Manager Name: Sara Miller

Job Title: Director of Grants Management & Compliance

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

Oversees all grant compliance and post award management 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 our states residents across a 7-county area of the Twin Cities, six camps in rural Minnesota, seven day camps in the outlying area of the Twin Cities Metropolitan area, and in association with all other YMCAs in Minnesota. We are the third largest YMCA in the country, remaining relevant to generations by adapting to meet the needs of Minnesotans. The mission of the YMCA is to build healthy spirit, mind and body for all while serving relentlessly with our community until all can thrive in each stage of life. Across our work, we nurture development of the YMCA's core values of caring, equity, honesty, respect, and responsibility. For more than 160 years, the YMCA has been committed to serving all people, particularly those who are most marginalized and underserved. We remain relevant as we adapt and change to meet community needs.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
YMCA Environmental Education Volunteer Manager		Key program staff that will recruit volunteers, develop and manage environmental educational volunteering programs, and administer and analyze volunteer feedback to optimize future programming. Responsible for reporting program efficacy to executive leadership.			30%	3		\$204,000
YMCA Land Stewardship Volunteer Manager		Key program staff that will recruit volunteers, develop and manage environmental stewardship volunteering programs, and administer and analyze volunteer feedback to optimize future programming. Responsible for reporting program efficacy to executive leadership.			30%	3		\$204,000
Vice President of Adventure		Provide overall supervision and assistance to incoming volunteer managers. 20% of their time will be devoted to working with incoming managers to develop and implement expanded camp volunteer programming.			0%	0.6		\$90,000
							Sub Total	\$498,000
Contracts and Services								
TBD	Service Contract	Procurement for a tracking software that can integrate into YMCA's existing CRM, Tractionrec, which will allow managers to track needed volunteer metrics to make decisions on programming and to provide program reports to leadership team. One quarter of the funds would be reserved for training staff on new software.				3		\$100,000
							Sub Total	\$100,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
	Equipment	Reusable Volunteer Safety Equipment	An order of re-usable high visibility vests, leather work gloves, and safety glasses for volunteer safety while					\$78,000

			working on environmental or land stewardship project. 120 sets for each of the 13 locations, allowing for 30 sets in each size from Small to X-Large. Cost per set is estimated at \$25 per. We would want to buy in two rounds, in the first and last year of the grant period to maintain a consistent supply while understanding usage and loss rates of the equipment.					
							Sub Total	\$78,000
Capital Equipment								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	Mileage for travel between 13 camp sites, schools, service organizations, and speaking events around the state of MN for 2 volunteer manager roles. 500 miles/month @.67/mile = \$335 x 12 months = \$4,020 x 3 years = \$12,060 x 2 staff (rounded down to even 1000th for LCCMR portal)	Manager staff mileage to reimburse the travel that will be required to visit camps to develop and administer volunteer activities, train camp staff, recruit volunteer leaders, and develop individualized volunteer activities for each site across the state of Minnesota.					\$24,000
							Sub Total	\$24,000
Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	YMCA disposable paper name tags	Adhesive paper name tags for volunteers to identify themselves on					\$300

			the day of events. Allows for the ready identification of volunteers, creating a more cohesive volunteer experience. \$10 per 400, 4000 annual stickers.					
	Printing	Reusable YMCA magnetic name tags	A permanent magnetic name tag, like those that YMCA staff wear for recurring volunteers who have logged more than 40 hours of volunteering. In recognition of commitment to volunteer program. \$5/per badge, with the expectation that 1/3 of volunteers will qualify annually. 660 volunteers in Year 2 and 726 volunteers in year 3, 1,386 with a 5% buffer is 1,455 total. (rounded for LCCMR portal submission)					\$7,700
							Sub Total	\$8,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$708,000

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: \$708,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [aabfe5f3-028.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

A bar graph showing the project growth of volunteerism program impact on the YMCA of the North's camping and adventure program area....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
YMCA Business Filing Details	a8023dc0-e25.pdf
YMCA Audited Financial Statement	4730d232-3a2.pdf
YMCA IRS Determination Letter	a711a789-f30.pdf
YMCA 990	68e1f0bb-bb1.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
YMCA Bord Resolution Letter	19055080-2a3.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:

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