



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2027 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2027-611

Proposal Title: Mobile Water Safety Education

Project Manager Information

Name: Jason McGrew-King

Organization: Three Rivers Park District

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: In response to urgent community requests for water safety education, this proposal builds upon a successful indoor Family Water Safety Workshop to launch an outdoor-focused mobile water safety initiative.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$400,000

Proposed Project Completion: December 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?

Region(s): Metro

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

Region(s): Metro

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.

Since many Minnesota outdoor activities revolve around water, there is a need for knowledge around water safety so that families can enjoy these natural resources while feeling safe doing so.

Through listening sessions with communities currently underrepresented in outdoor spaces, residents have stressed a need to learn to swim or feel comfortable and safe in water. Oftentimes, the request for water safety and swimming instruction was the very first thing that came out of their mouths, before we could explore any other activities in the natural park spaces. While we can point to alarming statistics—that every year, several children and adults lose their lives in Minnesota lakes, and that there is a clear racial disparity in drowning related deaths—the families we’re talking to feel that fear and reality to their core. This is about protecting the people they love most. Citing finances, proximity, availability, and cultural concerns as barriers to accessing water education, there is a true need to expand programs for these underrepresented communities. Furthermore, existing aquatic instruction is almost exclusively in an indoor environment. While it is valuable to begin learning in a pool, there is a strong need to bridge that experience into natural 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.

Our proposal aims to provide opportunities for family-focused, culturally responsive, and low-barrier water safety instruction targeted to communities most disconnected from natural water resources. This is a new model emerging from lessons learned over the last two years of piloting an indoor Family Water Safety Workshop in partnership with V3 Sports. We first piloted that model Spring 2024 and have since fine-tuned the model to guide more than 300 multigenerational participants through that 4-hour indoor, pool-based workshop. While that model has proven successful and necessary, the emerging need is to further expand learning opportunities into outdoor, open-water environments and to reach families close to their home.

All previous water safety instruction has been facilitated through a contract with V3 Sports. Our project equips Three Rivers to train and sustain a team of our own staff to offer mobile water safety education, meeting families directly at the beaches and water-sources closest to home. We build from relevant aspects of the indoor model and supplement with information and experiences pertinent to understanding safety in an outdoor environment. Residents receive hands-on training when it’s most convenient and relevant—when they’re already at the park and ready to enjoy a day with their families.

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?

We believe people who are connected to nature are happier, healthier, and more likely to be environmental stewards. In the land of 10,000 lakes, an appreciation for water is key to the connection to nature. Equipping our increasingly diverse communities with the knowledge and skills to be safe around water opens pathways into nature and makes the experiences more accessible, more relevant, and ultimately more enjoyable. Through that connection, belonging, ownership, and a sense of responsibility are cultivated. Knowledge inspires curiosity, promotes environmental stewardship, and improves the quality of life today while preserving natural waterways for future generations.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Prepare Three Rivers staff to launch and lead mobile water safety education

Activity Budget: \$215,000

Activity Description:

Three Rivers strives to sustain the response to community need and intentionally bridge that experience into natural bodies of water. Therefore, we must update existing job descriptions, expand staff responsibilities, and get lead staff trained and certified to offer these experiences in-house. This first activity is key to establishing water safety education into our regular operations for implementation during and beyond the grant period.

Tasks include:

Elevate an existing part-time position to take-on additional hours and responsibilities for a newly created Water Safety Education Coordinator role; create job description to encompass these responsibilities.

Three Rivers staff attend and complete Aquatic Training & Lifesaving Aquatic Skills Train-the-Trainer series and Water Safety Workshop Curriculum Facilitation training through Sankofa Swim International.

Staff complete Lifeguard and CPR/First Aid Certifications.

Update relevant seasonal job description to include water safety instruction responsibilities, recruit and hire for positions who will facilitate mobile water safety workshops.

Adapt and expand-on current curriculum to be relevant and ready for an outdoor, open-water environment.

Train seasonal staff; distribute written curriculum to support delivery.

Recruit groups to complete water safety education in both pool-based and outdoor environments.

Ongoing evaluation, community feedback, and adjustments as we implement and refine the model.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Identify and elevate existing part-time staff to newly created Water Safety Education Coordinator role.	September 30, 2027
Water Safety Education Coordinator and team of Three Rivers staff complete trainings and certifications.	February 28, 2028
Develop promotional materials (recognizing ENRTF) and recruit groups to participate in water safety workshop experiences.	March 31, 2028
Adapt and expand Water Safety Workshop curriculum to be relevant for mobile and outdoor environment.	May 31, 2028
Hire and train first year of seasonal staff to facilitate mobile water safety workshops.	June 30, 2028

Activity 2: Purchase equipment to support ongoing water safety education at Three Rivers Park District

Activity Budget: \$55,000

Activity Description:

Another major activity is to identify and purchase necessary equipment to successfully implement mobile water safety

education during and after the grant period. We intend to expand safe water access and enjoyment beyond structured programs by adding lifejacket loaner stations that allow for park visitors to confidently engage in water-based activities in the park system even when staff are not present.

Tasks include:

Identify and purchase equipment to support the delivery of mobile programming (examples: waterproof first aid equipment, boundary markers, kickboards and basic flotation devices, weighted retrieval items, rescue equipment, etc.). Existing partners at V3 Sports and Sankofa Swim International will help develop the initial list of gear, which will be refined as mobile water safety education is underway.

Identify and purchase equipment to support water safety education participants (examples: loaner towels or swimwear, goggles, swim caps, etc.). Initial list will be identified by staff and partners and further refined throughout implementation period as we hear from participants and learn what's still needed.

Determine which parks and waterfront locations could most benefit from the addition of a lifejacket loaner station.

Build or purchase lifejacket loaner station boxes, including ENRTF acknowledgement and logo. Purchase life jackets and install loaner boxes.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Purchase initial equipment to support water safety education team in delivering mobile water safety programming.	March 31, 2028
Purchase initial equipment to support mobile water safety education participants.	April 30, 2028
Begin utilizing mobile water safety equipment for instructors and participants in outdoor water safety settings.	June 30, 2028
Identify park locations and plan for lifejacket loaner station installation.	December 31, 2028
Install up to 3 lifejacket loaner stations with ENRTF logo recognition at identified park locations.	May 31, 2029

Activity 3: Deliver water-based programming, train and support partners and community leaders, and share model

Activity Budget: \$130,000

Activity Description:

The third stage is about program delivery, creating sustainment, and sharing learnings.

Tasks include:

Conduct 30+ water safety education workshops, mix of pool-based and natural water environments.

Engage 15+ groups in additional water-based activities in natural waterways, such as family swimming days, paddling instruction or guided introduction to fishing.

Offer 10+ skill-based trainings for community leaders to build confident Water Watchers who can supervise, recognize risk, and respond appropriately in aquatic environments.

Identify additional training needed for communities to feel equipped in inviting and leading their groups into natural

aquatic environments and activities. Offer trainings as identified.

Share stories of success through social media and other formats, acknowledging ENRTF in all public-facing communications.

Share model and lessons learned with Twin Cities regional park implementing agencies convened through the Metropolitan Council on an ongoing basis throughout funding period, inviting staff to observe, participate, or utilize created resources as available. ENRTF support highlighted.

Share model and seek opportunities to collaborate with other aquatic agencies in the West Metro, especially those who participated in the 2024 Water Safety Audit (included in supplemental materials).

Submit workshop or presentation proposals to relevant local and statewide conferences to share model and lessons learned, acknowledging ENRTF support.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Mobile water safety workshops begin, facilitated by V3 Sports or Sankofa Swim International staff.	July 31, 2027
Previous indoor water safety workshop participants begin engaging in other water-based activities in the parks.	July 31, 2027
Introductory pool-based water safety education sessions begin.	September 30, 2027
Water Safety Education Coordinator shadows Sankofa Swim International or V3 Sports staff during skill-based trainings.	May 31, 2028
Non-pool based, mobile water safety education sessions begin, facilitated by newly trained Three Rivers staff.	June 30, 2028
Water Safety Education Coordinator and Three Rivers team begin leading training workshops for community leaders.	October 31, 2028
Share model and lessons learned with Metro Regional Park implementing agencies and aquatic organizations.	April 30, 2029
Present model and lessons learned in at least 1 statewide conference with recognition of ENRTF.	December 31, 2029
Engage at least 1,000 participants in water safety education programming over the grant period.	December 31, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Molly Belk	V3 Sports	Program Manager	Yes
Dr. Ayanna Rakhu	Sankofa Swim International	Founder of Sankofa Swim International	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.

As outlined in Activity 3, we anticipate that park agencies and aquatic staff across the state will be interested in hearing about our process, model, and lessons learned along the way. There are currently very limited models of intergenerational water safety instruction across the state and little to no existing examples of mobile water safety education occurring within a natural resource-based environment. Three Rivers will actively look for opportunities to share our findings, offer resources and support to train others when interested, and proudly share gratitude and recognition to ENRTF funds in making the work possible. More details were outlined in Activities 1 and 3, but we plan to document and share project resources and findings in the following ways:

Adapt existing Water Safety Workshop Curriculum to an outdoor and mobile setting, sharing with staff who will be leading workshops and made available to any agencies interested in a copy.

Highlight stories of project through social media at least 2x/year.

Give regular updates (at least quarterly) to outreach staff at regional park agencies in Twin Cities Metro Area through regular convenings facilitated by the Metropolitan Council.

Share project update and relevant resources with the 11 agencies with aquatic programming within West Metro area who were part of the 2024 Water Safety Audit, included in supplemental materials.

Submit workshop and presentation proposals to relevant conferences and present findings in at least 1 statewide conference.

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 intention is that this funding would allow the launch and creation of a program that, if proven successful, will become a sustained offering built into the operating expenses of the Park District. Seasonal job descriptions would get updated to include water safety roles and where possible, additional staffing dollars would be allocated to support a new Water Safety Coordinator role. Lead staff would be trained to facilitate future onboarding and direct staff support for program facilitators. Continued curriculum licensing costs would be minimal; equipment purchased through funds continue to be used, and park district program staff facilitate ongoing education.

Other ENRTF Appropriations Awarded in the Last Six Years

Name	Appropriation	Amount Awarded
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Shoreline Stabilization, Fishing, and ADA Improvements at Silverwood Park	M.L. 2021, First Special Session, Chp. 6, Art. 6, Sec. 2, Subd. 08o	\$200,000
Karner Blue Butterfly Insurance Population Establishment in Minnesota	M.L. 2023, , Chp. 60, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08b	\$405,000
Mississippi Gateway Shoreline Stabilization and Fishing Improvements	M.L. 2025, First Special Session, Chp. 1, Art. 2, Sec. 2, Subd. 08g	\$735,000

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Jason McGrew-King

Job Title: Intergovernmental Relations and Communications Supervisor

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

Jason McGrew-King is Intergovernmental Relations and Communications Supervisor for Three Rivers Park District and has 15 years of experience working with the Minnesota Legislature and all levels of government on behalf of Three Rivers Park District. His work includes writing, submitting and managing federal and state grant requests, including Congressional Community Project Funding requests and Capital Improvement requests submitted to Minnesota Management and Budget. Jason will manage this project throughout the LCCMR's consideration of it; if the Legislature appropriates funding for this project, the project manager role will shift to Amanda Fong, Three Rivers Park District's Community Engagement Supervisor.

Amanda Fong has been the Supervisor of Three Rivers' Community Engagement team since 2015. Under Amanda's direction, the team has employed cultural humility to listen, respond and advocate on behalf of the communities they work with and serve as a bridge into community to help inform and improve decision-making across the Park District.

In the last couple of years, Amanda and her team have successfully managed various projects supported by local, state and federal funding. Her team currently manages 7 grant contracts valued at more than \$330,000. In the past few years, they have managed well over \$1 million in grant contracts, expanding efforts to meet needs and interests expressed by community related to outdoor recreation. Several funds distributed through Hennepin County have been renewed and increased annually with County Contract Management staff consistently highlighting Three Rivers as a leader within their service providers. Contract managers express appreciation that we've provided thorough, timely, and meaningful reporting metrics and financial details, that we regularly meet and exceed grant deliverables and expressed goals, and that we are seen as a collaborative partner that works thoughtfully to integrate perspectives and skillsets across agencies and communities.

Organization: Three Rivers Park District

Organization Description:

Three Rivers Park District is a natural resources-based park system in suburban Hennepin County. We were founded in 1957 by the Minnesota Legislature to acquire, develop and maintain regional parks, park reserves and trails. We manage 27,000 acres of parkland and over 176 miles of regional trails. Our passionate staff of more than 2,500 employees (full-time, part-time and seasonal) work together to carry out our mission to promote environmental stewardship through recreation and education in a natural resources-based park system. Three Rivers' goal is to enhance the quality of life, local and statewide, through recreation and education while acquiring, developing and maintaining nature spaces for today and tomorrow. Our parks offer activities year-round, including swimming, biking, paddling, fishing, camping, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sledding, and much more. Three Rivers' Community Engagement team, who will be directly responsible for implementation of the project outlined in this proposal, focuses on building relationships with communities within Hennepin County who are underrepresented in the parks, with outreach efforts focused on connecting with potential new park users who identify as Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, communities who are newer to the country, and families with limited financial resources.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
Water Safety Education Coordinator		Salary, Payroll, and Benefits to increase FTE and elevate responsibility for an existing part-time role that takes on responsibility for this water safety education initiative, a position that does not currently exist. Builds and maintains partnerships, gets trained and certified to be in-house trainer for part-time and seasonal staff who will facilitate mobile water safety workshops, coordinates details for water safety education including recruitment, event logistics management, staff training and support, partner leader trainings, communication, and evaluation.			17%	1.25		\$175,000
Seasonal and part-time staff time		Facilitates mobile water safety education under the training and direction of the Water Safety Education Coordinator. The 0.5 FTE will be split among approximately 6 seasonal and part-time positions.			0%	0.63		\$30,000
							Sub Total	\$205,000
Contracts and Services								
V3 Sports and Sankofa Swim International	Service Contract	Pool-based water safety workshops, Instruction for paddling and other water-based activities, swim pond passes for mobile water safety workshop participants.				-		\$100,000
v3 Sports, Sankofa Swim International, TBD	Service Contract	Training + certification for staff to be able to deliver internal Water Safety training to other park employees + mobile water safety workshops to participants, curriculum and annual licensing, water-based trainings and certifications for partnering organizations and community leaders.				-		\$40,000
							Sub Total	\$140,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								

	Equipment	Life jackets	Life jackets will be available for program participants in the parks and for check-out for the public.					\$55,000
							Sub Total	\$55,000
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	\$400,000

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: \$400,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [8463d8fb-850.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

Family Water Safety Workshops at V3 Sports Inc. Workshops are designed for the entire family to participate together. Each session includes a mix of both in-water and out-of-water learning activities, allowing participants of all ages to build water safety knowledge, practice skills, and strengthen confidence in and around aquatic environments....

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Three Rivers Park District 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report	39d2119c-020.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Three Rivers Park District Board Resolution of Support	cf3816e5-c70.pdf

Supplemental Attachments

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

Title	File
Water Safety Workshops Blog Posts and Photos	4149cf19-44f.pdf
MRPA Award of Excellence photos	e0bc8eb1-1d6.pdf
Water Safety Audit Report	50d70f30-a02.pdf
Letter of Support - Hennepin County	c70f3abc-58b.pdf
Letter of Support - V3 Sports	76cde3ea-580.pdf
Letter of Support - Sankofa Swim International	9173c3ee-1c5.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?

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:

Mandy Whiteside (Three Rivers Park District), Amanda Fong (Three Rivers Park District) and Elise Limper (Three Rivers Park District)

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