

Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) Community Grant Program Report

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Background and Purpose

The ENRTF Community Grant program was established in Minnesota Statutes 116X during the 2023 Minnesota Legislative Session to provide grants “for the benefit of current residents and future generations.”

Grants must:

- be for purposes authorized under the ENRTF section of the Minnesota State Constitution, and
- expand the number and diversity of recipients who benefit from ENRTF, especially in communities that have been adversely affected by pollution and environmental degradation.

Background and Purpose (cont.)

Under MS116X, grants may be awarded only for the following purposes:

- helping adversely impacted communities respond to environmental degradation and related health concerns;
- education and awareness related to stewardship of air, land, water, forests, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources; or
- preserving or enhancing air, land, water, and other natural resources that otherwise may be substantially impaired or destroyed in any area of the state.
- trail maintenance and improvement on state, regional, or local trails, not including new trails or trail segments; or
- aquatic invasive species management.

ENRTF Community Grant Program Report Requirement

Minnesota Laws of 2025 First Special Session, chapter 1, article 3, section 3 requires that the report include:

- recommendations to ensure that the program operates in a similar manner to the Conservation Partners Legacy (CPL) program, including a draft of any request for proposals and the criteria that will be used to prioritize applications and allocate funding
- details of grant program implementation
- the organizational structure and membership of the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Community Grants Advisory Council

Where We Are Now

- The DNR is just entering the implementation phase of this program.
- The DNR is committed to achieving the ENRTF Community Grant Program's goal of expanding access to ENRTF dollars while maintaining strong fiscal controls in accordance with state law and policy.
- Immediate next step is to establish the ENRTF Community Grant Advisory Council. The application is open through April 10, 2026.
 - The advisory council membership, structure, terms and duties are defined in MS116X.

ENRTF Community Grants and CPL

The DNR administers both Outdoor Heritage Fund grants and ENRTF grants appropriated through the LCCMR process.

The ENRTF Community Grant and CPL programs are for similar legislative purposes – to increase capacity within Minnesota to address environmental and natural resource issues by expanding access to funding.

ENRTF Community Grants and CPL

Similarities between the two programs:

- enhanced technical assistance and guidance
- use of technical experts for application review and project consultation
- standard and expedited grant models

Different from CPL, the ENRTF Community Grants Program will:

- not require match and will allow for use of fiscal agents
- have an advisory council as established in MS116X
- allow for greater flexibility in administrative expenses to support capacity building

ENRTF Advisory Council

The DNR will establish the advisory council in accordance with the membership, structure, terms, duties, and experience requirements outlined in MS116X.

- an open and competitive process will identify 14 to 19 members. The application is open through April 10, 2026.
- the exact number of council members will depend on the amount needed to satisfy the qualifications and demographics set in law.
- council members will be required to disclose and appropriately manage actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interests.

Standard and expedited grant rounds

- Expedited grants must be “ready to go” and cannot include capital projects or land acquisition, due to time constraints.
- Two expedited rounds per year, and one standard round.
- Expedited grants will be up to \$50,000 and standard grants up to \$750,000.

To meet program goals, application prioritization will consider

- Past access to ENRTF dollars
- Location relative to Environmental Justice Areas (EJAs)

Implementation Plan (cont.)

Strategies for expanding trust fund accessibility

- Various supports will include financial management support, application support, technical assistance, and allowance for administrative expenses.

Risk assessment, mitigation, and fiscal controls

- The program will be implemented in full accordance with state laws and policies including the use of pre-award financial reviews and grant monitoring.
- The DNR's administrative budget will be used to provide both these necessary supports and grant oversight measures.

Thank You!

Questions? Contact Mary Robison

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