# FY2027 RFP 01: Community Impact Funding Round

**Name of Granting Agency:** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

**Title of Grant Program/Opportunity:** Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Community Grant Program FY2027 RFP 01: Community Impact Funding Round

## FY2027 RFP 01 Request for Proposal Cover Sheet

| Topic | Description | RFP page number |
|---|---|---|
| Overview, grant description and purpose | The Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Community Grant Program supports projects that protect, conserve, preserve or enhance Minnesota's environment and natural resources while expanding the number and diversity of organizations that benefit from ENRTF funding. This funding opportunity is designed as a more accessible entry point for smaller, community-based projects and uses a two-stage competitive application process to reduce applicant burden while maintaining responsible stewardship of public funds. | 5 |
| Eligible applicants | Eligible applicants are expected to include nonprofit organizations, Tribal Nations and eligible tribal governmental entities, eligible local and regional governmental entities and other eligible recipients consistent with governing law. State agencies, the University of Minnesota Board of Regents and for-profit businesses will not receive Community Grant Program awards. A Stage 1 Concept Note must identify an eligible legal applicant. See the RFP for complete applicant and project eligibility requirements. | 13 |
| Eligible and ineligible projects | Projects are required to take place in Minnesota, provide an environmental or natural resource benefit in Minnesota and fit at least one of five statutory activity areas: helping adversely impacted communities respond to environmental degradation and related health concerns, environmental and natural resource education and awareness, preserving or enhancing natural resources, maintaining or improving existing state, regional or local trails or aquatic invasive species management. The RFP and applicable activity area appendix provide the controlling eligibility requirements and identify activities that are not eligible. | 16-19 |
| Amount available, award amounts and key funding items | Approximately $4,000,000 is expected to be available through this funding opportunity. Applicants may request $20,000 to $150,000. No match is required. The activities that directly carry out the approved environmental and natural resource projects must be completed within | 9 |

| Topic | Description | RFP page number |
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| | 12 months or less. The grant period may include up to two additional months for approved startup and close-out administration. See Section 4.3 for details. Reimbursement is the standard payment method. All proposed Community Grant Program awards are subject to applicable pre-award risk assessment requirements. Requirements vary based on award amount, applicant type and applicable law. | |
| Application timelines | • RFP publication: November 5, 2026<br>• Applicant preparation period: November 5 – November 30, 2026<br>• Stage 1 Concept Note opens in Foundant: December 1, 2026<br>• Applicant questions due for guaranteed pre-deadline response: Friday December 18, 2026, at 4:30pm Central Time (CT)<br>• Stage 1 Concept Note due: Thursday, January 7, 2027, 11:59pm CT<br>• Anticipated Stage 1 notifications and Stage 2 invitations: February 2027<br>• Anticipated Stage 2 application period: February – April 2027<br>• Anticipated funding selections: Spring 2027<br>• Anticipated grant start: Summer 2027<br><br>**Note:** Dates after the Stage 1 Concept Note deadline are estimates and may be adjusted based on the number of Concept Notes received, the time needed to complete eligibility review and competitive scoring and the number of applicants invited to Stage 2. The DNR will publish confirmed Stage 2 dates and related applicant instructions for invited applicants after Stage 1 review is complete. | 40 |
| Application format | The Community Grant Program uses a two-stage application process. Stage 1 is a short Concept Note that will be used to determine who will be eligible to submit a Stage 2 Full Application. Only applicants invited through the Stage 1 competitive process will be allowed to submit a Stage 2 application. Stage 2 is a separate competitive evaluation and an invitation to Stage 2 does not guarantee funding. The RFP, application questions, instructions, accessible application materials and applicant resources will be available on the Community Grant Program webpage.<br><br>Stage 1 Concept Notes and Stage 2 Full Applications will be submitted through the Foundant application portal which will open on December 1, 2026, unless the DNR formally authorizes another submission method. Accessible offline versions of the application questions and instructions will be available for review and preparation.<br><br>The Stage 1 Foundant application link will be published when the application opens on December 1, 2026. The DNR will add the link to the Community Grant webpage. The DNR will also email the link to people who have signed up for the Community Grant Program email list. Signing up for the email list is not required to apply. | 7, 40 |

| Topic | Description | RFP page number |
|---|---|---|
| Questions, technical assistance and contact information | Applicants should submit questions through Ask an ENRTF Community Grant Program Question, the DNR's primary question submission form. During Stage 1, the DNR will provide generally available applicant information and support, including plain-language resources, information sessions, eligibility guidance and application-system instructions. Applicants invited to Stage 2 will receive additional structured technical assistance to support development of the Full Application. Generally applicable substantive information will be shared through frequently asked questions, information sessions or other official applicant resources. The deadline to submit questions is 4:30 PM CST on December 18, 2026. Questions submitted by the deadline will receive a response by December 22, 2026. Questions submitted after December 18, 2026, are not guaranteed to receive a response. Current applicant-support information will be available on the Community Grants webpage.<br>Stage 1 information sessions<br>• November 17th: 12:00 PM-1:00 PM CT<br>• November 19th: 12:00 PM-1:00 PM CT<br>• December 8th: 12:00 PM-1:00 PM CT<br>• December 15th: 12:00 PM-1:00 PM CT<br>Stage 1 information-session dates, registration instructions and access links will be available on the official Community Grant Program webpage. | 12, 52 |
| Grant implementation requirements | Applicants selected for funding must complete applicable pre-award requirements before an award is executed. Grantees will be responsible for complying with the approved award, allowable cost and payment requirements, reporting, recordkeeping, monitoring, financial reconciliation (when applicable), performance evaluation, procurement and contracting requirements (when applicable) and grant closeout. Grant-funded work must not begin until the required grant instrument is executed and the DNR has authorized work to begin. Any work completed before a grant instrument is fully executed cannot be reimbursed. See the RFP and applicable Office of Grants Management policies for complete requirements. | 38, 50 |

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## Section 1. Funding opportunity and authority

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources administers this Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Community Grant Program funding opportunity. The DNR expects to award approximately $4,000,000 through a two-stage competitive process, with individual grant requests from $20,000 to $150,000.

Applicants begin with a short Stage 1 Concept Note. Applicants whose Concept Notes advance through the Stage 1 competitive process will be invited to develop a Stage 2 Full Application. Stage 1 and Stage 2 are separate competitive evaluations and an invitation to Stage 2 does not guarantee funding.

Substantive project implementation must be completed within 12 months or less. The grant period may include up to two additional months for approved startup and close-out activities, for a total grant period of up to 14 months.

### 1.2 Program authority and legislative foundation

The ENRTF Community Grant Program is established under Minnesota Statutes, chapter 116X. The Legislature directs the Department of Natural Resources to administer the Community Grant Program for purposes authorized under the Minnesota Constitution.

The Community Grant Program is intended to expand the number and diversity of recipients benefiting from the ENRTF, with an emphasis on communities adversely affected by pollution and environmental degradation. Grants are required to provide benefits across Minnesota's regions and residents. Its two-stage application process, applicant resources and published evaluation criteria are intended to support expanded participation while maintaining the eligibility and competitive requirements established in this RFP.

This funding opportunity is subject to applicable state law, statewide grants-management requirements and DNR requirements. Applicable law controls if there is a conflict between this RFP and controlling legal requirements.

The DNR has incorporated applicable authorities into the eligibility requirements, competitive process, evaluation criteria, pre-award requirements and grant-administration provisions described in this RFP.

Principal authorities include:

- Minnesota Constitution, article XI, section 14
- Minnesota Statutes, chapter 116X, Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Community Grant Program
- Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Community Grant Program
- Applicable provisions of Minnesota Statutes, sections 16B.97, 16B.98 and 16B.981
- 2025 First Special Session, chapter 1
- 2026 Session Law, chapter 104
- 2026 Laws, chapter 119, article 2, section 9
- Applicable Office of Grants Management policies

## Section 2. Is this opportunity a potential fit?

### 2.1 Who should consider applying?

This funding opportunity could be a good fit if you have a project idea that:

- Addresses an eligible environmental or natural resource need or opportunity in Minnesota
- Fits at least one of the five statutory activity areas identified in Section 2.2
- Is expected to provide a meaningful environmental or natural resource benefit in Minnesota
- Is appropriately scaled for a grant request of $20,000 to $150,000
- Can accomplish its substantive project work within 12 months or less
- Can be further developed during Stage 2 if the DNR invites the project to continue

Projects may also provide important community, educational, cultural, public health, recreational or other benefits when those benefits are connected to an eligible environmental or natural resource purpose.

You do not need previous ENRTF or Minnesota state grant experience.

Review sections 7–14, Applicant and Project Eligibility and the applicable statutory activity appendix for the controlling applicant and project eligibility requirements before submitting a Concept Note.

### 2.2 Five statutory activity areas

To be eligible, the proposed project must fit at least one of the five statutory activity areas below. Applicants must select the one activity area that best represents the primary purpose for which Community Grant Program funds would be used.

**A. Adversely Impacted Communities**

Helping adversely impacted communities respond to environmental degradation and related health concerns. See Appendix A.

**B. Education and Awareness**

Education and awareness related to stewardship of Minnesota's air, land, water, forests, fish, wildlife and other natural resources. See Appendix B.

**C. Preserving or Enhancing Natural Resources**

Preserving or enhancing Minnesota's air, land, water and other natural resources that otherwise may be substantially impaired or destroyed. See Appendix C.

**D. Existing Trail Maintenance and Improvement**

Maintenance and improvement of existing state, regional or local trails. New trail construction is not eligible under this activity area. See Appendix D.

**E. Aquatic Invasive Species Management**

Aquatic invasive species management consistent with applicable legal, permitting, planning and technical requirements. See Appendix E.

A project is allowed to create benefits or include activities relevant to more than one statutory activity area. Select the activity area that most directly reflects the principal purpose for which Community Grant Program funds would be used. Applicants do not need to prepare separate Concept Notes merely because one project could create benefits relevant to multiple activity areas.

## Section 3. How the two-stage competitive process works

This funding opportunity uses two competitive stages.

Stage 1 uses a short Concept Note to evaluate eligible project concepts, establish a competitive ranking and determine which projects will advance into the limited Stage 2 cohort. Stage 2 allows invited applicants to further develop the project that advanced from Stage 1 into a Full Application. Each Full Application is competitively evaluated under the published Stage 2 criteria.

An invitation to Stage 2 is not a grant award and does not guarantee funding.

### 3.1 Stage 1: Concept Note

Stage 1 begins with a short Concept Note designed to allow applicants to explain a project idea without preparing a complete Full Application.

The controlling Stage 1 questions and instructions are provided in Appendix F: Stage 1 Concept Note Form and Instructions and in the authorized application system when Stage 1 opens. See Section 17, Stage 1 Concept Note, for the Stage 1 application requirements and Section 37, Application System, Submission and Receipt for the controlling submission process.

The Concept Note will collect focused information about the applicant, community, identified need and proposed project.

The DNR will review Concept Notes for completeness and eligibility before applying the published Stage 1 competitive scoring criteria.

After eligibility review, the DNR will score eligible Concept Notes using the four published Stage 1 criteria, totaling 100 points and rank them from highest to lowest based on total Stage 1 score. The criteria, point values and information considered under each criterion are provided in Section 18, Stage 1 Scoring Criteria.

The DNR will invite the highest-ranked Concept Notes to Stage 2, subject to the application limit and tie provisions in Part 3 of this document, until the established Stage 2 cohort is filled.

To be considered for advancement to Stage 2, an eligible Concept Note must receive a minimum Stage 1 score of 50 out of 100 points under the published scoring criteria.

Meeting the minimum score does not guarantee advancement.

The number of Stage 2 invitations is limited by the program's ability to administer the Stage 2 project

development, technical assistance and review process consistently and by the scale of funding available through this funding opportunity.

Stage 2 remains a competitive process, as the number of applicants invited to Stage 2 will exceed the number awarded funding.

See Part 3 for the controlling Stage 1 scoring and advancement rules.

## 3.2 Stage 2: Full Application by invitation

An invitation to Stage 2 is not an award and does not guarantee funding.

Only applicants invited by the DNR will be allowed to submit a Stage 2 Full Application.

Invited applicants will use **Appendix G: Stage 2 Full Application Form and Instructions** and **the DNR's grants management system, Foundant,** to apply. Appendix G provides an offline accessible version of the Full Application questions, instructions and required information for Stage 2. The Full Application presented in Foundant is required to be substantively equivalent to Appendix G.

The DNR will provide invited applicants with additional Stage 2 operating instructions, including Foundant access and submission instructions, the Stage 2 schedule, technical assistance information and other administrative details needed to complete the Full Application. These instructions will explain or implement this RFP but are not allowed to add or change substantive eligibility requirements, evaluation criteria or other competitive requirements. If needed, any substantive change to the requirements established by this RFP or Appendix G will be made through the formal RFP amendment process.

During Stage 2, invited applicants will further develop the project that advanced from Stage 1 into a complete Full Application for technical and competitive evaluation. Applicants should further develop implementation methods, work plans, expected results, budgets, partnerships, fiscal arrangements, site details, permits and governmental approval requirements, application status and anticipated timelines, staffing, procurement approaches and other implementation details that were not required to be completed at Stage 1.

The Full Application must remain materially consistent with the project described in the Concept Note that resulted in the applicant being invited to submit a Stage 2 Full Application. It may not substitute for a materially different applicant, project purpose, primary statutory activity, core environmental or natural resource need, essential community or place relationship or other element that was material to the project's Stage 1 evaluation and advancement.

Governmental applicants may have authorization, documentation or internal approval processes that differ from those of nongovernmental applicants. During Stage 2, the DNR will identify the requirements applicable to the proposed project and applicant while applying the same published competitive criteria to all eligible Full Applications. Additional provisions addressing governmental authority, including Tribal governmental authority where applicable, are provided elsewhere in this RFP.

Stage 2 is a separate competitive process. Stage 1 scores do not carry forward into Stage 2. The DNR will evaluate each eligible Full Application using the four published Stage 2 criteria, which total 100 points. The

criteria, point values and information considered under each criterion are provided in Section 27, Stage 2 Scoring Criteria. A Full Application is required to receive at least 70 points to be considered for funding. Meeting the minimum score does not guarantee an award. Funding decisions remain subject to the applicable selection, approval and funding requirements established in this RFP.

### 3.3 Stage 2 technical assistance and competitive evaluation

Applicants invited to Stage 2 will have access to a defined technical assistance process to help them understand Full Application requirements and further develop the project that advanced from Stage 1.

Support will include training, templates and tools, established open office hours, explanations of requirements, project development questions and project-specific guidance.

Applicants remain responsible for their projects, decisions, applications, permits and governmental approvals. The DNR will not write an application, make substantive project decisions for an applicant, advise on or complete regulatory or governmental processes on an applicant's behalf or provide an applicant with unpublished competitive requirements or scoring information.

Any generally applicable substantive guidance developed through the technical assistance process will be made available to all the Stage 2 applicants. The DNR will use reviewer-assignment controls to preserve the independence of competitive scoring when substantive individualized project-development assistance is provided.

Review Part 4 for the complete Stage 2 evaluation and selection process.

## Section 4. Funding available

### 4.1 Total funding available

The DNR expects to award approximately $4,000,000 through this funding opportunity. The DNR does not guarantee that all available funding will be awarded.

### 4.2 Grant amounts

Applicants may request amounts from $20,000 to $150,000.

Applicants should request the amount reasonably necessary to accomplish the proposed project. Requesting the maximum amount does not make a Concept Note or Full Application more competitive.

The amount requested in the Stage 1 Concept Note is a preliminary estimate based on information reasonably available to the applicant at that stage.

If invited to Stage 2, an applicant may increase or decrease the requested grant amount within the $20,000 to $150,000 funding range as the project design, work plan and budget are developed.

Any adjustment must remain materially consistent with the project that advanced from Stage 1 and comply with

the applicant and project continuity requirements established by this RFP.

Applicants must explain any increase in the requested amount and demonstrate how the revised funding supports the proposed project activities and expected results.

The DNR will evaluate the revised funding request under the published Stage 2 criteria, competitive ranking and available funding. An increased request does not provide a competitive preference or guarantee selection or an award at the requested amount.

All selected applicants must complete applicable state grant requirements before receiving a grant award. Review Part 5 for selection, pre-award and grant development requirements and Part 7 for grant administration requirements.

### 4.3 Project implementation and grant period

Applicants are required to design the substantive project work to be completed within no more than 12 months.

The authorized grant period may include up to two additional months for necessary startup and close-out activities, resulting in a total grant period of up to 14 months. The additional administrative time does not extend the 12-month maximum for substantive project implementation and may not be used simply to continue unfinished substantive project work.

Costs may be charged to the grant only when they are included in the approved budget, incurred during the authorized grant period, permitted by the grant agreement and otherwise allowable.

Review Part 7 for detailed eligible costs, payment, reporting, monitoring, performance evaluation and closeout requirements.

## Section 5. Stage 1 competitive advancement

### 5.1 How projects advance

Stage 1 is competitive. After determining applicant and project eligibility, the DNR will score eligible Concept Notes using the four published Stage 1 criteria and rank them from highest to lowest based on total Stage 1 score.

The DNR will consider qualifying Concept Notes for advancement in competitive rank order, subject to applicant-limit and tie provisions in Part 3 and any applicable statutory funding requirements. The number of Concept Notes invited to Stage 2 will reflect available funding, applicable statutory constraints and the Community Grant Program's capacity to provide consistent Stage 2 project development, technical assistance and review.

To be considered for advancement to Stage 2, an eligible Concept Note must receive a minimum Stage 1 score of 50 out of 100 points under the published scoring criteria.

Meeting the minimum score does not guarantee advancement. Before final advancement decisions, the DNR will establish and document the number of Stage 2 invitations based on the scale of funding available and the number of projects the Community Grant Program can administer consistently through Stage 2 project development, technical assistance and review. The capacity determination does not change applicant scores or create an additional competitive criterion.

Review Part 3 of this document for the controlling Stage 1 scoring, ranking, tie, advancement, notification and feedback requirements.

## Section 6. RFP documents, applicant resources and official communications

### 6.1 Controlling RFP and application documents

This RFP includes appendices, which are attachments containing activity-specific requirements and application materials. This RFP, the applicable activity-area appendix, Appendix F: Stage 1 Concept Note Form and Instructions, Appendix G: Stage 2 Full Application Form and Instructions for invited applicants and any formal RFP amendments establish the substantive requirements of this funding opportunity.

Applicants should review the main RFP and the appendix corresponding to the project's primary statutory activity area. Applicants do not need to review activity-area appendices that do not apply to their proposed project.

The electronic application system will organize approved application content into fields, screens, instructions or system functions, but it will not create additional substantive eligibility, application or competitive evaluation requirements that are not established through this RFP, its applicable appendices or a formal amendment.

### 6.2 Applicant resources and online navigation

The Community Grant Program webpage will serve as the official public source for current funding opportunity information, including the RFP, Request for Proposal Cover Sheet, applicable appendices, application materials, formal amendments, application access, applicant resources, frequently asked questions and other official program information.

Applicants will be able to review the RFP and application requirements before creating an account in the application system.

Applicant resources will include eligibility and application guidance, information sessions, application system instructions, accessibility and language-access information and other resources.

Applicant resources explain and support the funding opportunity but do not create eligibility requirements, scoring criteria, application requirements, deadlines or other competitive rules that are not established in this RFP or a subsequent formal amendment.

## 6.3 Official questions, amendments and communications

Applicants should submit questions about FY2027 RFP 01: Community Impact Funding Round through the Ask an ENRTF Community Grant Program Question form.

Applicants who cannot use the online question form or who are directed by the DNR to submit a question by email, may submit questions through the official Community Grant Program mailbox:

enrtf.communitygrants.dnr@state.mn.us

**Program contact**

Gwendolyn Tweed
ENRTF Community Grant Program Supervisor
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
Phone: 651-259-5225
Email: enrtf.communitygrants.dnr@state.mn.us

The telephone contact is provided for assistance accessing program information, navigating the official question process or requesting additional assistance. Questions requiring interpretation of eligibility, allowable activities, application requirements or competitive evaluation should be submitted through the official question form or authorized email process to ensure consistent guidance and documentation.

The DNR will assist applicants who cannot use these methods, including through appropriate accessibility accommodations. Information provided by telephone does not constitute an official eligibility determination, authorize an exception to published requirements or modify this RFP.

Applicants should submit questions by the deadline identified on the RFP cover sheet to allow the DNR sufficient time to consider and, when appropriate, provide guidance before the Stage 1 application deadline.

The DNR will review submitted questions and respond individually when appropriate. Questions may also identify recurring issues that warrant clarification through frequently asked questions, applicant resources, technical assistance or other official Community Grant Program communications.

Applicants are responsible for reviewing formal amendments and other official communications issued by the DNR. Review Section 41, Questions, Answers and Formal Changes, for the controlling question, amendment and official-change process.

If an applicant resource conflicts with this RFP or a formal amendment, the RFP and any applicable amendments control.

The Ask an ENRTF Community Grant Program Question form is not an application submission method and may not be used to submit, amend, supplement or replace a Stage 1 Concept Note or Stage 2 Full Application.

# Part 2. Applicant and project eligibility

## Section 7. Who can apply?

### 7.1 Eligible legal applicants

Each Stage 1 Concept Note must identify an eligible legal applicant.

For purposes of this funding opportunity, an eligible legal applicant is an organization or governmental entity that:

- Falls within an eligible recipient category under the governing Community Grant Program authority;
- Can be identified as the applicant throughout the competitive process; and
- If selected for funding, can enter into the applicable state grant arrangement and accept responsibility for the award

Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations, Tribal Nations and Tribal governmental entities, local and regional governmental entities and other recipients permitted under the governing Community Grant Program authority.

### 7.2 Who Is not eligible to apply?

The following are not eligible to receive a Community Grant Program award:

- State agencies
- The University of Minnesota Board of Regents
- For-profit businesses

### 7.3 Community groups and other project participants

The DNR will request legal status and other organizational documentation during pre-award review rather than at Stage 1. Review Sections 31–34 for pre-award and grant structure requirements.

An individual, community group, informal organization or other participant that is not itself an eligible legal applicant may participate through an eligible legal applicant and may serve as the substantive project lead or a project partner.

The eligible legal applicant shall be identified at Stage 1 and remains the applicant throughout the competitive process. When the legal applicant and substantive project lead are different, the application shall identify their roles clearly. The arrangement must not be used to evade application limits, substitute a different competitive applicant or break the project continuity requirements between Stage 1 and Stage 2.

Partnership, fiscal agent and other administrative arrangements may continue to develop after Stage 1 as permitted by this RFP.

Review Part 5 for pre-award and grant structure requirements.

## Section 8. Project leadership, partners and fiscal agents

### 8.1 Substantive project lead

Each Concept Note must identify one substantive project lead.

The substantive project lead is the person, group or organization principally responsible for the project idea, relevant community or place relationships and the substantive environmental or natural resource work.

For many projects, the eligible legal applicant, substantive project lead and eventual grantee will be the same organization. In other projects, different organizations or participants may have distinct projects, partnerships or fiscal roles.

The eligible legal applicant identified at Stage 1 remains the applicant throughout the application process and, if selected, will be the grantee, presuming successful pre-award review and execution of final grant agreement documents. Project partners and fiscal arrangements may continue to develop as permitted by this RFP, but they shall not be used to substitute a different competitive applicant.

When roles differ, the application shall identify them clearly enough for the DNR to understand all participants' roles, including who leads the project and who would carry legal and financial responsibility for the grant.

### 8.2 Partners and collaborators

Projects may include partners or collaborators. Collaboration among multiple organizations is welcome but is not required. Each Concept Note must identify one eligible legal applicant and one substantive project lead (those two could be the same entity in some cases), regardless of the number of project partners.

At Stage 1, applicants should identify significant known partners when their role is important to understanding the proposed project. Formal partner agreements are not required at Stage 1 unless a specific Stage 1 requirement in this RFP or the applicable activity area appendix expressly requires them. If invited to Stage 2, applicants will further develop the partner roles and commitments needed to demonstrate that the project can be implemented.

Review Part 4 for Stage 2 project development and Full Application requirements.

### 8.3 Fiscal agents

A fiscal agent may provide financial or administrative support when an applicant or substantive project lead needs additional capacity to administer a grant.

A fiscal agent does not replace the eligible legal applicant or grantee and does not increase an application's competitive score or standing.

At Stage 1, an applicant may identify that fiscal or administrative support is needed without having a completed fiscal agent agreement. If invited to Stage 2, the applicant shall further develop the proposed fiscal structure and identify the organization(s) that would carry the relevant financial and administrative responsibilities.

A fiscal agent must provide genuine financial or administrative capacity. A fiscal agent arrangement should not be used only to lend an organization's name, avoid application limits or obscure the identity of the substantive project lead.

One fiscal agent may support more than one Community Grant Program project when the arrangement provides sufficient capacity and accountability for each project and is otherwise permitted under applicable grant requirements.

Final fiscal agent responsibilities, payment arrangements, documentation and grant structure will be determined during Stage 2 and pre-award as applicable. Review Part 5 for pre-award and grant-structure requirements.

## Section 9. Application limits

### 9.1 Stage 1 limit

A substantive project lead may submit no more than two distinct Stage 1 Concept Notes in this funding round. This limit applies to each substantive project lead, regardless of the eligible legal applicant. An eligible legal applicant may submit Concept Notes for more than two projects if the projects have different substantive project leads and each project otherwise meets the requirements of this RFP.

The two Concept Notes from the same substantive project lead must describe genuinely different project concepts. Each separately submitted Concept Note counts toward the two-Concept-Note limit, even when the submissions describe the same project or identify different eligible legal applicants, partners or fiscal agents. Submitting the same project through two different organizations therefore counts as two Concept Notes, not one.

### 9.2 Stage 2 limit

No more than one Concept Note from the same substantive project lead may advance to Stage 2. This limit applies to each substantive project lead, regardless of the eligible legal applicant. An eligible legal applicant may be associated with more than one project advancing to Stage 2 if those projects have different substantive project leads and otherwise meet the requirements of this RFP.

Participation as a partner or collaborator on another project does not count against this limit. Using a different legal applicant, partner or fiscal agent does not create an additional Stage 2 opportunity for the same substantive project lead.

Review Part 3 for the Stage 1 advancement process.

## Section 10. General project eligibility

### 10.1 Statutory activity

A proposed project must fit at least one of the five statutory activity areas described in Appendices A–E.

Applicants must select one primary statutory activity area that best reflects the principal purpose for which Community Grant Program funds would be used.

A project may include activities or benefits related to more than one statutory activity area, but the applicant must identify the activity area that most directly represents the proposed project's primary purpose.

The DNR will evaluate activity area eligibility under the primary statutory activity area selected by the applicant.

Applicants who are uncertain which activity area best fits their proposed project should review the Five Eligible Activity Areas guidance and available applicant support before submission.

### 10.2 Minnesota environmental or natural resource benefit

The proposed project must provide a meaningful environmental or natural resource benefit in Minnesota.

A project may focus on a neighborhood, Tribal Nation, lake, watershed, trail, school community, local jurisdiction or another appropriately defined Minnesota place. A project does not need statewide geographic reach to be eligible.

Community Grant Program funds may only be used for funded project activities that take place in Minnesota.

A project may also provide community, educational, cultural, public health, recreational or other benefits when those benefits are connected to an eligible environmental or natural resource purpose.

### 10.3 Stage-Appropriate project information

Stage 1 applicants must provide enough information for the DNR to determine project eligibility and evaluate the proposed project under the published Stage 1 criteria.

At Stage 1, applicants must provide the information identified in this RFP and Appendix F for eligibility and Concept Note evaluation. Detailed implementation information that is not required at Stage 1 may continue to develop and, if the project advances, will be addressed through the Stage 2 Full Application as applicable.

Review Part 3 for Stage 1 requirements, Part 4 for Stage 2 development and evaluation and Appendices A–E for activity-specific requirements.

## Section 11. Property, jurisdiction, permissions and approvals

### 11.1 Project location and property

At Stage 1, applicants must identify the project location or geographic area with enough detail for the DNR to understand the proposed Minnesota benefit and any major site conditions relevant to eligibility or feasibility.

An exact parcel or final site does not need to be established at Stage 1 unless this RFP or the applicable statutory activity appendix requires it.

A project may occur on private property when the project is otherwise eligible, provides the required environmental or natural resource benefit and satisfies applicable property, public benefit and grant requirements.

A project is not automatically ineligible because proposed work would occur on property that is not publicly owned.

Applicants must identify the property owner or controlling entity when known and describe any known site control issue that could materially affect the project.

Applicants do not need final landowner authorization or site-control documentation at Stage 1 unless the applicable activity-area appendix expressly requires it. If the project advances, the DNR will request the property information needed for Stage 2 or pre-award review. Before grant-funded work begins, the grantee must obtain the property permissions, approvals, permits or other authority required for the project.

### 11.2 Tribal lands, waters, resources and jurisdiction

Funding through this RFP does not substitute for Tribal governmental authorization or other Tribal governmental action that is required for a proposed project.

Projects involving Tribal lands, waters, natural resources, jurisdiction, treaty-protected interests, culturally important resources or other matters subject to Tribal governmental authority will require coordination, authorization or other action by the affected Tribal Nation.

At Stage 1, applicants should identify any known Tribal governmental approval, jurisdictional requirement or other Tribal governmental action that could materially affect project feasibility when that information can appropriately be included in the Concept Note. If invited to Stage 2, the applicant should further develop the status, timing and project implications of material approvals or governmental actions that remain unresolved.

Applicants should not include protected cultural information, precise sensitive resource locations, traditional knowledge, sacred information or other information that should not be publicly disclosed in ordinary application fields.

Review Part 7 for data practices and sensitive information requirements.

### 11.3 Permits and other approvals

At Stage 1, applicants should identify major permits, permissions, site approvals, Tribal governmental approvals, other governmental approvals or authorizations that are known or reasonably foreseeable and could materially affect the project.

Applicants generally do not need to obtain permits or approvals before submitting a Stage 1 Concept Note unless this RFP or the applicable statutory activity appendix expressly requires them at Stage 1.

If invited to Stage 2, applicants will further develop the status, timing, responsible party and expected process for material permits and approvals.

Required permits and authorizations, including any required Tribal governmental approval, must be obtained by the time required by law, the applicable statutory activity appendix, the final grant requirements or the responsible authority.

## Section 12. Project scale and timing

Projects must fit the scale of this funding opportunity: a grant request of $20,000 to $150,000 and no more than 12 months of substantive project implementation.

Review Section 4.3, Project Implementation and Grant Period, for the distinction between substantive project implementation and any approved startup or closeout period.

Stage 1 does not require a fully developed implementation plan. The DNR will consider whether the proposed concept can reasonably become a feasible project within the available funding, project period and Stage 2 development process.

At Stage 1, an unresolved permit, partner agreement, procurement step, site issue, governmental approval or technical detail does not by itself make a project ineligible when the matter should reasonably be addressed during Stage 2 or before implementation. A project is ineligible if it fails to meet a published eligibility requirement. Otherwise, a material unresolved issue will be considered under the Stage 1 Project Feasibility criterion when it raises reasonable concerns about whether the project can be successfully implemented within the available funding and project period.

Projects that inherently require multiple years of substantive implementation are outside the scope of this funding opportunity.

Review Part 4 for Stage 2 work plan, feasibility and implementation-readiness requirements.

## Section 13. Prohibited and ineligible projects

### 13.1 Scientific research

Community Grant Program funds must not be awarded for a scientific research project.

In distinguishing prohibited scientific research from eligible project implementation, the DNR will consider the project's primary purpose, design, methods and intended use of data, analysis or findings generated by the project.

A project does not become scientific research solely because it uses established monitoring, measurement, data collection, testing or evaluation methods to support management, prevention, response, stewardship, education or project implementation.

Review the applicable statutory activity appendix for additional activity-specific requirements or guidance.

## 13.2 New trail construction

Community Grant Program funds must not be used for construction of a new trail or new trail segment.

Review Appendix D for the eligibility requirements that apply to trail-related projects.

## 13.3 Other ineligible projects

A project is ineligible if it does not fit at least one authorized statutory activity area or violates a prohibition that applies to the proposed project.

Appendices A–E identify additional activity specific eligibility requirements and restrictions.

A project is ineligible when it fails to meet a published applicant or project eligibility requirement that applies to the proposed project. Other matters, such as an unfinished partner agreement, unresolved permit or incomplete implementation detail, do not automatically make a project ineligible at Stage 1 unless a published eligibility requirement applies. The DNR will consider these matters through the applicable competitive scoring criterion, pre-award review and/or grant-administration process.

## 13.4 Eligible and ineligible project costs

Project eligibility and the allowability of individual project costs are separate determinations. A project could be eligible even when a particular proposed expense cannot be paid with Community Grant Program funds.

A detailed project budget is not required at Stage 1. Applicants must provide the funding information requested in Appendix F for Concept Note evaluation.

Applicants invited to Stage 2 will develop a detailed project budget. Proposed costs must be necessary and reasonable for the project, connected to the approved work and allowable under applicable requirements.

Review Part 4 for Stage 2 budget requirements for guidance explaining applicable cost requirements and budget-preparation expectations. Applicant guidance will explain these requirements but will not create additional cost restrictions.

## Section 14. Match and other funding

### 14.1 No required match

No matching contribution is required.

An applicant does not receive a competitive advantage simply because it can contribute more cash, staff time, donated services or other outside resources.

### 14.2 Other funding

Projects may use other compatible funding sources.

ENRTF money may supplement traditional sources of funding for environment and natural resource activities and must not be used as a substitute for those traditional funding sources. In practical terms, Community Grant Program funds should support eligible work in addition to, rather than replace, funding that is already available or ordinarily used for the same environmental or natural-resource activity. At Stage 1, applicants need to identify another funding source only when the project depends on that funding to be feasible. A complete financing package is not required for the Stage 1 Concept Note.

If invited to Stage 2, applicants will develop the project budget and identify other funding needed to implement the project.

The same cost must not be charged to more than one funding source.

Review Part 4 for Stage 2 budget requirements.

# Part 3. Stage 1 Concept Note competitive process

## Section 15. What information is needed at Stage 1?

### 15.1 Minimum Stage 1 information

Stage 1 is designed to evaluate a project concept, not a complete implementation plan. The Concept Note must provide enough information for the DNR to determine applicant and project eligibility and evaluate the proposed project using the published Stage 1 criteria.

The Stage 1 Concept Note requires concise information needed to determine eligibility and evaluate the project under the published Stage 1 criteria, including:

- The eligible legal applicant and substantive project lead
- The project idea, location or geographic area and primary statutory activity area
- The environmental or natural resource need or opportunity and expected benefit
- The proposed work and the change or result the project is intended to produce

- Basic project feasibility, including material dependencies or unresolved matters the applicant already knows about
- The amount requested and proposed substantive project duration
- Partners, fiscal support, site conditions, permits, governmental approvals or other matters when relevant to the proposed project

Detailed implementation information that is not required at Stage 1 should continue to be developed and, if the project advances, will be addressed through the Stage 2 Full Application as applicable.

The complete Stage 1 questions, response limits and required certifications are provided in Appendix F: Stage 1 Concept Note Form and Instructions.

### 15.2 Stage 1 certifications

Appendix F identifies the certifications and acknowledgments required when a Concept Note is submitted.

The DNR will require at Stage 1 only those certifications or acknowledgments that apply at that stage of the competitive process.

Additional certifications or documentation required based on the proposed award amount, applicant type or applicable pre-award requirements will be requested later in the process.

Review Part 5 for pre-award requirements.

## Section 16. Stage 1 eligibility screening

### 16.1 Eligibility before scoring

The DNR reviews Stage 1 applicant and project eligibility before competitive scoring.

Eligibility screening determines whether the applicant and proposed project meet the published requirements to advance in the review process. Eligibility screening is separate from competitive evaluation.

The eligibility review uses the requirements in Part 2, the applicable statutory activity appendix and the Stage 1 requirements in Appendix F.

### 16.2 Eligibility questions and verification

When eligibility depends on a narrow fact that is unclear or incomplete, the DNR will use the limited clarification process in Section 21.

The DNR will verify submitted information when necessary to determine whether a published eligibility requirement applies. The DNR will assess activity-area eligibility under the primary statutory activity area selected by the applicant.

The DNR will not use clarification or verification to move an application to a different statutory activity area or allow an applicant to add or improve substantive competitive information after the application deadline.

## Section 17. Stage 1 Concept Note

### 17.1 Purpose

The Concept Note is the entry point for Stage 1 application. It is intended to provide a concise and accessible way for applicants with different levels of grant writing and state grant experience to present a project concept.

Applicants should explain the proposed project in plain language.

### 17.2 Application and submission process

Applicants must submit the Stage 1 Concept Note through Foundant unless the DNR formally authorizes an alternative submission method.

**Appendix F: Stage 1 Concept Note Form and Instructions** is the official offline accessible version of the Stage 1 questions, instructions and required application information. Applicants should use Appendix F to review the requirements and prepare responses outside Foundant.

The DNR will maintain substantive equivalence between Appendix F and the Stage 1 application presented in Foundant. System labels, help text and navigation explain how to use the system but will not create additional substantive eligibility, scoring or application requirements.

Completing Appendix F outside Foundant does not constitute submission unless the DNR has formally authorized an alternative submission method.

### 17.3 Concept Note organization

Appendix F contains the complete Stage 1 questions and instructions. Applicants will be evaluated on the information submitted through the authorized application process by the deadline, subject only to the limited clarification and verification processes permitted by this RFP.

## Section 18. Stage 1 scoring criteria

### 18.1 Scoring overview

All eligible Concept Notes are evaluated using four published criteria totaling 100 points.

The applicable statutory activity appendix determines activity-specific eligibility and provides technical information relevant to evaluation under a published criterion. An activity appendix does not, however, create a separate scoring criterion or scoring track.

| Stage 1 criterion | Points |
|---|---|
| Expanding access and statutory priority | 25 |
| Environmental or natural resource need and expected benefit | 30 |
| Project idea and expected results | 25 |
| Project feasibility | 20 |
| Total | 100 |

## 18.2 Criterion 1: Expanding access and statutory priority, 25 Points

This criterion considers whether the Concept Note demonstrates expanded access to ENRTF participation and an applicable statutory priority.

Relevant information could include the substantive project lead, prior direct ENRTF participation, project location or community, applicable environmental conditions and the project's grounding in the place or community it is intended to benefit.

The DNR will use structured information and controlled verification to apply this criterion consistently.

## 18.3 Criterion 2: Environmental or natural resource need and expected benefit, 30 Points

This criterion considers the environmental or natural resource condition, problem or opportunity the proposed project addresses, why it matters and the benefit that could reasonably result from the proposed work.

## 18.4 Criterion 3: Project idea and expected results, 25 Points

This criterion considers whether the proposed work is a reasonable response to the identified environmental or natural-resource need and whether the Concept Note provides a clear and credible explanation of the change or near-term result the project is intended to produce.

## 18.5 Criterion 4: Project feasibility, 20 Points

This criterion considers whether the proposed concept presents a credible path to successful implementation within the funding range, project period and basic program requirements.

Reviewers will consider the project information available at Stage 1, including known material dependencies or unresolved issues and whether there is a reasonable path for addressing those matters during Stage 2 or before implementation, as applicable.

## Section 19. Stage 1 scoring and review method

### 19.1 Standardized review

Reviewers will evaluate each eligible Concept Note using the published Stage 1 criteria and point values. Scores are based on the submitted Concept Note and information properly confirmed through a clarification or verification process permitted by this RFP.

Stage 1 Concept Notes will be reviewed and scored by designated DNR Community Grant Program staff using the published evaluation criteria and standardized scoring procedures.

The DNR will use standardized reviewer instructions, scoring tools, calibration and quality-control procedures to promote consistent application of the published criteria. Internal reviewer guidance will not establish additional competitive criteria, change a published point value or introduce evaluation requirements or priorities that are not established in this RFP.

If required competitive information is not provided by the deadline, reviewers evaluate the Concept Note as submitted.

## Section 20. Competitive advancement to Stage 2

### 20.1 Score, rank and advancement

After eligibility review and scoring are complete, the DNR will rank eligible Concept Notes from highest to lowest based on total Stage 1 score.

To be considered for advancement to Stage 2, an eligible Concept Note must receive a minimum Stage 1 score of 50 out of 100 points under the published scoring criteria. Meeting the minimum score does not guarantee advancement.

The DNR will consider qualifying Concept Notes for advancement in competitive rank order, subject to the application-limit and tie provisions in this Part and any applicable statutory funding requirements. The number of Concept Notes invited to Stage 2 will reflect available funding, applicable statutory constraints and the Community Grant Program's capacity to provide consistent Stage 2 project development, technical assistance and review.

### 20.2 Application Limit at the advancement boundary

A substantive project lead may not have more than one Concept Note advance to Stage 2. If two Concept Notes from the same substantive project lead would otherwise fall within the Stage 2 cohort, the higher-ranked Concept Note advances and the next highest-ranked eligible Concept Note from another substantive project lead is considered. The lower-ranked Concept Note is not reclassified as ineligible; it does not advance because of the published Stage 2 application limit.

If two Concept Notes from the same substantive project lead have the same Stage 1 score and the application limit affects advancement, the tie process in Section 20.3 applies.

### 20.3 Ties at the Stage 2 advancement boundary

If Concept Notes are tied at a point that determines advancement to Stage 2, the DNR will apply the following order:

1. The Concept Note with the higher Criterion 2 score will rank higher.
2. If still tied, the Concept Note with the higher Criterion 1 score will rank higher.
3. If still tied, the DNR will assign an additional reviewer who did not participate in the initial scoring of the tied Concept Notes. The additional reviewer will evaluate the tied Concept Notes using the published Stage 1 criteria and the information that will properly be considered under this RFP. The additional review will be used only to resolve the tie.

The DNR will apply the tie process consistently to similarly situated Concept Notes.

## Section 21. Stage 1 clarifications, corrections and fairness

### 21.1 Narrow factual clarification

The DNR may request a narrow factual clarification when needed to confirm or resolve ambiguity in information already contained in the submitted Concept Note and necessary to determine eligibility or apply another published non-merit requirement.

A clarification may confirm an existing fact but must not:

- Add missing competitive information
- Improve a competitive response
- Substitute a different applicant or project
- Change the applicant-selected primary statutory activity area, or
- Otherwise provide a post-deadline opportunity to strengthen the Concept Note

The DNR will document material clarification requests and responses and apply the clarification process consistently.

### 21.2 Administrative corrections

The DNR may correct a documented DNR or DNR-controlled system error when the correction does not allow an applicant to add, replace or improve substantive application information. If correcting the error changes an application score, rank or advancement result, the DNR will update the affected records and decisions accordingly.

The DNR will document the error, correction and basis for the correction and will apply the correction process consistently to similarly situated applicants.

### 21.3 Verification and equal treatment

Clarification, verification and administrative correction must not create an unpublished scoring factor or allow an applicant to add or improve the competitive substance of a Concept Note after the deadline. The DNR will apply these processes consistently to similarly situated applicants and document material actions affecting an application.

## Section 22. Stage 1 notifications and feedback

### 22.1 Written Stage 1 decision

The DNR will provide each Stage 1 applicant with a written decision.

The decision will identify whether the Concept Note:

- Is ineligible under a published requirement
- Is eligible but did not advance under the published Stage 1 scoring and advancement rules, or
- Is invited to Stage 2

### 22.2 Stage 1 feedback

The Stage 1 written decision will identify the applicant's outcome under Section 22.1. The DNR may provide additional applicant feedback or general learning resources to applicants not advancing to Stage 2 when program capacity permits. Any additional feedback is informational and does not create an appeal or reconsideration process.

### 22.3 Administrative error

This RFP does not establish an appeal of competitive reviewer judgment unless applicable law or statewide grant requirements provide otherwise.

The DNR may correct a documented administrative, mathematical or DNR-controlled system error without reopening the applicant's competitive response. A correction may change the affected score, rank or advancement decision when necessary to reflect the corrected record.

## Section 23. Transition to Stage 2

### 23.1 Invitation is not an award

An invitation to Stage 2 allows the applicant to develop and submit a Full Application for the project that advanced from Stage 1. The invitation is not a grant award, does not guarantee funding and does not authorize grant-funded work or costs. Review Part 4 for the Stage 2 competitive process.

### 23.2 Develop the same project

Stage 2 is intended to further develop the project that earned the Stage 2 invitation. Applicants are not expected to have every implementation detail completed at Stage 1.

The eligible legal applicant, substantive project lead, core environmental or natural resource need, project purpose, primary statutory activity area, underlying project concept and essential community or place relationship must remain materially consistent between Stage 1 and Stage 2.

During Stage 2, applicants will develop the additional implementation information required for the Full Application, including work plan, budget, results, roles and other project details that were not required to be completed at Stage 1.

Stage 2 may not be used to substitute a materially different applicant or competitive project.

If a proposed change could materially alter an element that affected the project's Stage 1 eligibility, scoring or advancement, the DNR will determine whether the project remains eligible to proceed as the project invited to Stage 2.

# Part 4. Stage 2 Full Application competitive process

## Section 24. Stage 2 Project development and technical assistance

### 24.1 Purpose of Stage 2

Stage 2 is a separate competitive process for applicants invited to develop and submit a Full Application. Stage 1 scores do not carry forward into Stage 2.

During Stage 2, invited applicants will complete the additional project information required for evaluation under the published Stage 2 criteria. The Full Application must remain materially consistent with the project that advanced from Stage 1 under the continuity requirements in Part 3.

An invitation to Stage 2 is not a grant award, does not guarantee funding and does not authorize grant-funded work or costs.

### 24.2 Stage 2 technical assistance

Invited applicants will have access to a defined Stage 2 technical assistance process intended to help them understand Full Application requirements and develop the project that advanced from Stage 1.

Technical assistance may include training, templates and tools, open office hours, explanations of requirements, project development questions and proportionate project-specific guidance.

Detailed technical assistance schedules, service information and operating instructions will be provided through

the Stage 2 invitation or official applicant resources. Those materials may explain this RFP and Appendix G but must not create new substantive competitive requirements or evaluation criteria.

### 24.3 Applicant responsibility and assistance boundaries

The applicant remains responsible for the proposed project, substantive project decisions and the Full Application it submits, including determining and obtaining permits, governmental approvals and other external authorizations required for the project.

DNR staff may explain requirements, ask developmental questions, identify gaps or concerns and provide examples or tools. They will not write the Full Application, make substantive project decisions for the applicant, provide legal or engineering representation, complete regulatory or governmental processes on the applicant's behalf or guarantee funding.

Participation in Stage 2 technical assistance does not increase or decrease an application's competitive score or funding priority.

## Section 25. Fairness and separation of technical assistance from evaluation

### 25.1 Fair access to Stage 2 technical assistance

The DNR will provide a transparent Stage 2 technical-assistance framework for invited applicants. The type or amount of assistance may vary reasonably, based on the project, the applicant's questions, accessibility needs and project development needs. If technical assistance identifies information about Full Application requirements or evaluation that would be useful to all Stage 2 applicants, the DNR will share that information with all invited applicants through an official communication or applicant resource, as appropriate. The DNR will protect applicant-specific, non-public, sensitive, accessibility-related and government-to-government information and will not disclose that information through general applicant guidance.

### 25.2 Separation from evaluation

A person who provides substantive individualized project development assistance to an applicant must not competitively score that applicant's Full Application.

The DNR Community Grant team may use other DNR staff or subject-matter reviewers for eligibility, technical, fiscal, administrative or compliance review when those roles do not provide the competitive scorer with unpublished applicant evidence or otherwise compromise the independence of scoring.

Information shared through technical assistance is not additional application evidence and is not scored unless it is submitted through the Full Application or properly considered through a clarification or verification process permitted by this RFP.

## Section 26. Full Application requirements

### 26.1 Full Application

The Full Application is the competitive application for Stage 2. Appendix G: Stage 2 Full Application Form and Instructions contains the complete Stage 2 questions, instructions and required application information.

The Full Application must provide enough information for the DNR to evaluate the proposed project under the published Stage 2 criteria, determine whether the application meets the minimum Stage 2 merit threshold and establish its competitive rank for funding consideration.

Stage 2 requires greater project definition than Stage 1. The level of information required should be proportionate to the proposed project and applicable activity area.

Submission of a Full Application does not guarantee selection or funding. Review Part 6 for submission requirements.

### 26.2 Project design and technical approach

Applicants must describe the purpose of the project, environmental or natural-resource needs, proposed activities and methods, why the proposed approach is appropriate and material project-specific technical requirements or assumptions. The level of technical details must be proportionate to the proposed project. Applicants should identify material unresolved technical questions when they could affect successful implementation and explain the planned path for resolving them.

### 26.3 Work plan, feasibility and implementation readiness

Applicants must provide a feasible implementation plan that identifies, as applicable:

- Major activities or tasks
- Sequence and milestones
- Responsible parties
- Project timing and significant seasonal constraints
- Partner roles
- Staffing or expertise
- Site status
- Permits, permissions and governmental approvals
- Procurement or contracting needs
- Major dependencies
- Material implementation risks

Applicants should identify material implementation matters that remain unresolved and provide a credible path and expected timing for resolving matters necessary to implement the project. Completion of a permit,

agreement, governmental approval, procurement action, contractor selection or similar prerequisite before Full Application submission is not required unless this RFP or applicable authority expressly requires it at that stage.

## 26.4 Results and performance

Applicants must explain what the proposed project is expected to accomplish and how they will document the work performed and practical near-term results achieved.

Depending on the project, this could include deliverables, completion standards, counts, observations, measurements or other proportionate evidence.

## 26.5 Budget and value

Applicants must provide the amount requested, a detailed but proportionate project budget and enough explanation for the DNR to understand significant costs, assumptions and how proposed costs connect to the work plan.

Applicants must identify significant cost assumptions, dependencies, any other funding needed for project feasibility and any proposed fiscal agent fee, as applicable.

Match or other outside resources are not required and do not receive a competitive advantage merely because they are available. They are considered only when relevant to project feasibility, the proposed budget or value under the published Stage 2 criteria.

Review Part 7 for applicable eligible and ineligible cost requirements.

## 26.6 Legal applicant, partners and fiscal structure

The eligible legal applicant identified at Stage 1 must remain the applicant for the Stage 2 Full Application.

The Full Application must confirm the legal applicant and substantive project lead, identify material project partners and their roles and describe any proposed fiscal agent arrangement.

Partnerships and fiscal arrangements should continue to develop when permitted by this RFP, but they are not allowed to substitute a different competitive applicant or a materially different project.

If a fiscal agent is proposed, the Full Application must identify the proposed fiscal agent, anticipated role and responsibilities and any expected fee. Final fiscal agent approval and grant structure requirements are addressed during pre-award. Review Part 5.

## 26.7 Information reserved for pre-award

Stage 2 does not require completion of the full pre-award process. The DNR will request pre-award documentation after selection through the appropriate process unless a specific requirement must be addressed earlier under this RFP or applicable law.

Applicants should not submit bank information, sensitive financial records or other protected information

through ordinary application fields or attachments unless the DNR specifically instructs them to do so through an approved process.

Review Part 5 for pre-award requirements.

## Section 27. Stage 2 evaluation criteria

### 27.1 Scoring overview

Each complete and eligible Full Application will be evaluated using the same four published Stage 2 criteria, totaling 100 points. Stage 1 scores do not carry forward or combine with Stage 2 scores.

| Stage 2 evaluation criteria | **Maximum Points** |
|---|---|
| Project design and technical approach | 35 |
| Work plan, feasibility and implementation readiness | 30 |
| Results and performance | 20 |
| Budget and value | 15 |
| Total | 100 |

A Full Application must receive at least 70 of 100 points to meet the minimum Stage 2 merit threshold and remain eligible for funding recommendation. Meeting the minimum threshold does not guarantee funding. Applications meeting the minimum threshold will be competitively ranked and considered for funding in accordance with Sections 29 and 30.

Activity-specific requirements and technical information are allowed to inform evaluation under an applicable published criterion but do not create an additional competitive criterion or separate scoring track.

### 27.2 Project design and technical approach, 35 Points

Reviewers consider whether the project design reasonably responds to the identified environmental or natural resource need, whether the proposed methods are appropriate, whether material technical conditions are addressed and whether the project presents a credible path to the expected environmental or natural resource benefit.

### 27.3 Work plan, feasibility and implementation readiness, 30 Points

Reviewers consider whether the project can reasonably be implemented on the proposed scale and within the proposed timeframe.

Relevant considerations could include sequencing, roles, staffing or expertise, sites, partners, permits, governmental approvals, procurement, seasonal constraints, dependencies and material unresolved issues.

Reviewers will consider whether the work plan provides a credible pathway and reasonable timing for resolving matters necessary for implementation.

### 27.4 Results and performance, 20 Points

Reviewers consider whether the proposed results are appropriate to the project and whether the applicant presents a practical and proportionate way to document the work performed and near-term results achieved.

### 27.5 Budget and value, 15 Points

Reviewers consider whether requested costs are understandable, reasonable, necessary for the proposed work, connected to the work plan and proportionate to the project and expected benefit.

Lowest cost does not automatically represent the best value. Match, outside resources or an applicant's ability to absorb project costs do not by themselves increase competitive merit.

## Section 28. Stage 2 evaluation process

### 28.1 Stage 2 evaluation and technical review

The DNR will evaluate each complete and eligible Full Application using the published Stage 2 criteria. Stage 2 Full Applications will be competitively reviewed by designated DNR staff, with appropriate technical and subject-matter expertise incorporated into the review process. Additional technical, fiscal or other subject-matter review may be used as needed to evaluate submitted information and determine whether published requirements are met.

Technical or subject-matter review does not create an additional competitive criterion, change a published point value or introduce an unpublished preference.

### 28.2 Clarification and verification

The DNR may request a narrow factual clarification when needed to resolve ambiguity in information already contained in the submitted Full Application and necessary to determine eligibility or apply another published requirement.

Clarification or verification may confirm information already submitted or help the DNR apply a published requirement. It may not be used to add missing information needed for competitive evaluation, improve the project's competitive standing or introduce an unpublished scoring factor.

The DNR will document material clarification or verification actions and apply the process consistently to similarly situated applicants.

## Section 29. Stage 2 competitive evaluation and funding recommendation

### 29.1 Final Stage 2 score

Reviewers will score each complete and eligible Full Application using the published Stage 2 criteria and point values.

Scores will be based on the submitted Full Application and information properly considered through the clarification, verification and technical review processes permitted by this RFP.

A Full Application must meet the minimum Stage 2 merit threshold established in Section 27.1 to remain eligible for a funding recommendation. Stage 1 scores do not carry forward or combine with Stage 2 scores.

### 29.2 Competitive funding determination

The DNR will rank complete and eligible Full Applications that meet the minimum Stage 2 merit threshold from highest to lowest based on final Stage 2 score.

Funding recommendations will proceed in rank order based on available funding and applicable published legal or program requirements. Meeting the minimum score does not guarantee funding.

A Full Application that does not meet the minimum Stage 2 merit threshold or fails an applicable eligibility requirement will not be recommended for funding.

The DNR will document the final score, rank and basis for each funding recommendation.

### 29.3 Stage 2 decision documentation

The DNR will maintain sufficient documentation to show how each Stage 2 funding recommendation was based on the published criteria, final scores, competitive ranking and applicable requirements.

## Section 30. Stage 2 selection

### 30.1 Selection based on Stage 2 competitive evaluation

The DNR will make Stage 2 funding selections from complete and eligible Full Applications that meet the published minimum Stage 2 merit threshold. Qualifying Full Applications will be considered in final Stage 2 rank order based on available funding and applicable published legal or program requirements.

Stage 1 ranking determines advancement to Stage 2 but does not determine Stage 2 selection.

### 30.2 Consistent application of published requirements

The DNR will apply the published Stage 2 criteria and applicable requirements and will not use an unpublished competitive preference to alter final Stage 2 ranking or selection.

Any selection requirement imposed by applicable law will be administered consistently with that authority and this RFP.

### 30.3 Selection for pre-award review

Applicants selected through Stage 2 will move to the pre-award process described in Part 5. Selection is not an executed grant agreement and does not authorize grant-funded work or costs. The selected project shall remain materially consistent with the project competitively evaluated under this RFP.

# Part 5. Selection, pre-award and grant agreement

## Section 31. Selection and proposed award status

### 31.1 Selection for funding

Applicants selected for funding through the Stage 2 competitive process will receive written notice from the DNR.

Selection identifies a project the DNR intends to move forward for pre-award review and grant development. Selection is not an executed grant agreement and does not guarantee that a grant will be executed.

Grant-funded work shall begin only after the required grant agreement is fully executed and the DNR establishes the authorized start date. Costs incurred before the authorized start date will not be reimbursed.

### 31.2 If a selected applicant does not proceed

If a selected applicant withdraws, becomes ineligible, cannot complete applicable pre-award requirements or cannot proceed to an acceptable grant arrangement, the DNR may discontinue the proposed award.

If funding remains available and timing permits, the DNR may consider the next highest-ranked Full Application that met the Stage 2 minimum merit threshold, subject to applicable eligibility, legal and pre-award requirements. The next-ranked applicant is not automatically entitled to an award and the DNR is not required to award all available funds.

## Section 32. Pre-award review and funding refinement

### 32.1 Purpose of pre-award review

Pre-award review occurs after competitive selection and before grant execution.

Its purpose is to confirm that the selected applicant and proposed grant can proceed under applicable Community Grant Program, state and DNR requirements and to identify any financial, administrative, legal, compliance or implementation conditions that must be addressed before the grant is executed.

Pre-award review is not a new competitive scoring stage. It does not reopen the Stage 2 competitive evaluation and must not be used to substitute a materially different applicant or project.

Pre-award requirements will vary based on the proposed grantee's legal structure, award amount, project characteristics and the state requirements that apply to the proposed grant. The DNR will review legal authority, required risk information, financial and administrative capacity, grant structure, payment method and project-specific conditions needed to establish a grant that meets applicable requirements and can be successfully administered.

The DNR will request pre-award information when it is needed rather than requiring applicants to submit unnecessary financial or administrative documentation during the competitive application stages.

## 32.2 Pre-Award Risk Assessment

The DNR will conduct the applicable Pre-Award Risk Assessment required for the proposed award before grant execution.

For a proposed Community Grant Program award of less than $50,000, Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, subdivision 3c, applies the pre-award risk-assessment requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 16B.981. For proposed awards of $50,000 or more, the DNR will apply Minnesota Statutes, section 16B.981 and applicable statewide grants-management requirements to the proposed grantee. The assessment may consider, as applicable, experience and performance on similar responsibilities, organizational and financial capacity, internal controls, required financial information, organizational standing, certifications and other information authorized by applicable requirements.

Selected applicants must provide required pre-award information accurately and within the timeframe established by the DNR.

## 32.3 Responding to Pre-Award Risk Assessment

Identification of a pre-award risk concern does not automatically prevent an award. The DNR will follow applicable state requirements for applicant response, risk mitigation and final pre-award determination.

When permitted, an identified risk may be addressed through an appropriate mitigation plan, grant condition, oversight or payment control. If applicable requirements do not allow the proposed grant to proceed or an acceptable risk response cannot be established, the DNR may decline to execute the grant.

## 32.4 Funding and project refinement

Before grant execution, the DNR will work with the selected applicant to refine and, as appropriate, revise the proposed award amount, budget, work plan, results and performance requirements, technical conditions, fiscal arrangements or other implementation details when necessary to establish a grant that meets applicable administrative, financial and technical requirements.

Any proposed adjustments will be discussed with the selected applicant and incorporated into the final grant agreement only through mutual agreement. The DNR may propose adjustments to the final award amount within the funding limits of this RFP when necessary to complete pre-award grant development, provided the resulting project remains feasible and materially consistent with the project selected through Stage 2. These adjustments must not substitute a materially different applicant or project, change the project's primary statutory activity or core purpose or add substantial new activities that were not part of the competitively evaluated project.

If the proposed award amount or project scope is reduced through pre-award revisions, the DNR and selected applicants will work together to adjust the work plan, budget, results and performance requirements so the resulting project remains feasible within the agreed funding level and grant period.

The DNR may identify reasonable pre-award conditions necessary to proceed with an award. These conditions will be communicated to the selected applicant and addressed through the pre-award revision process, consistent with applicable law and this RFP.

If the DNR and selected applicants cannot reach agreement on a feasible grant within the competitively selected project scope and applicable requirements, the DNR will decline to proceed with the proposed award.

## Section 33. Legal grantee, fiscal agent and payment structure

### 33.1 Legal grantee

The eligible legal applicant identified at Stage 1 and maintained through the competitive process is the proposed grantee if the project is selected for funding.

Before grant execution, the DNR will confirm the proposed grantee's legal status, authority to enter into the grant agreement and other requirements applicable to the proposed award.

The grantee remains responsible to the DNR for compliance with the grant agreement and administration of the funded project, including when the project involves partners, collaborators or an approved fiscal agent.

The final grant structure must remain consistent with the applicant and project continuity requirements established by this RFP.

### 33.2 Fiscal agent

A fiscal agent may provide defined financial or administrative support when permitted by this RFP and applicable law.

A fiscal agent must provide genuine fiscal or administrative capacity. A fiscal agent arrangement must not be nominal or used only to avoid applicant, application or grant requirements.

Before grant execution, the DNR will review the proposed fiscal agent arrangement and any documentation needed to confirm the fiscal agent's authority, capacity, responsibilities, fee and accountability for the proposed grant structure.

A qualified fiscal agent may support more than one Community Grant Program project when the DNR determines that the arrangement provides sufficient capacity and accountability for each grant and complies with applicable requirements.

Use of a fiscal agent does not replace the competitive applicant or transfer the grantee's responsibility for the funded project.

When a fiscal agent is used as part of an advance payment arrangement under Section 33.3, the fiscal agent must satisfy the requirements applicable to that arrangement.

## 33.3 Reimbursement and cash flow

The Community Grant Program will be administered on a reimbursement basis unless the DNR approves an advance-payment arrangement authorized by Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, subdivision 4a.

Under reimbursement, the grantee incurs and pays eligible project costs and then requests reimbursement from the DNR in accordance with the approved budget, grant agreement and applicable requirements.

Applicants should consider cash flow during Stage 2 and pre-award. A selected applicant that is unable to implement the approved project on a reimbursement basis should raise that issue with the DNR during grant development so the DNR can determine whether an authorized payment structure is available and appropriate. The commissioner may approve an advance payment when:

- The recipient has obtained a surety bond in an amount and form approved by the commissioner, or
- A fiscal agent has been designated and approved by the commissioner for purposes of the advance payment arrangement

A fiscal agent approved for advance payments is subject to the applicable requirements of Minnesota Statutes, sections 16B.97 through 16B.991.

An advance payment is discretionary and is not an applicant entitlement.

The DNR must approve the applicable payment structure before grant execution. The grant agreement will establish the approved payment method and applicable financial controls.

## 33.4 Tribal Nations and Tribal governmental entities

The DNR will use a legally appropriate pre-award and grant-development process for Tribal Nations and eligible Tribal governmental entities.

During pre-award, the DNR will identify the authorization, documentation, payment structure and other grant-execution requirements applicable to the proposed Tribal governmental grantee.

The DNR will apply the competitive requirements established by this RFP while recognizing that governmental authorization, documentation and grant-execution processes applicable to a Tribal government may differ from those applicable to a nongovernmental grantee.

The DNR will not require a Tribal Nation or Tribal governmental entity to deny its sovereignty as a requirement or condition of a grant.

## Section 34. Grant agreement, grant period and authorization to begin

### 34.1 Grant agreement

A grant becomes effective only through an approved grant agreement executed in accordance with applicable state and DNR requirements.

The grant agreement establishes the enforceable terms of the award, including the approved project scope, work plan, budget, grant period, payment method, performance and reporting requirements, monitoring and financial controls, project-specific conditions, amendment requirements and closeout requirements.

The final project scope, work plan, budget and results must remain materially consistent with the project competitively selected through Stage 2.

Selection for funding does not create a grant agreement and does not authorize project costs.

Grant-funded work must begin only after the grant agreement is fully executed and the DNR has established the authorized start date.

Costs incurred before the authorized start date will not be reimbursed.

### 34.2 Grant period

The grant agreement must include a total grant period of up to 14 months: no more than 12 months for substantive project implementation, plus up to two additional months when necessary for approved startup and close-out administration.

The 12-month substantive implementation limit is a requirement of this funding opportunity.

The additional administrative period may be used only for approved startup and close-out activities. It must not be used to extend substantive project implementation beyond 12 months or to complete unfinished substantive project work.

Reasonable and necessary startup or close-out costs may be charged to the grant only when they are included in the approved budget, incurred within the authorized grant period and otherwise allowable under the grant agreement and applicable requirements.

### 34.3 Reporting, monitoring and financial reconciliation

The Community Grant Program is subject to the grant recipient reporting, monitoring and small grant administration requirements established in Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, as amended by 2026 Session Law, chapter 104.

Under Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, subdivision 5a, each Community Grant Program recipient is required to submit a written progress report to the commissioner at least quarterly, in a form and manner approved by the commissioner, until all grant funds have been expended and all terms of the grant agreement have been met.

Under Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, subdivision 3b:

- For grants of $50,000 or more, the DNR must conduct at least one in-person unannounced monitoring visit before final payment
- For grants under $50,000, the DNR must select a sample from the grants awarded each year and conduct at least one unannounced monitoring visit on each selected grant before final payment

Under Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, subdivision 3c, grants under $50,000 are also subject to the small-grant administration requirements established for the Community Grant Program, including financial reconciliation of a sample of grantee expenditures before final payment.

Additional monitoring, financial reconciliation, reporting or oversight shall apply when required by statewide grants management requirements, the grant agreement, project-specific conditions or identified risk. Grantees are required to maintain the records necessary to support payment, reporting, monitoring, financial reconciliation, audit and closeout.

Review Part 7 for additional grant administration and close-out requirements.

### 34.4 Transition Support for New Grantees

The DNR will provide grant-startup support to help grantees understand the financial, administrative, reporting, monitoring and project-management requirements that apply after award. Where practical, startup will build on the work plan, budget, results and implementation information developed during Stage 2, so grantees do not need to re-create the same information unnecessarily.

Startup support does not replace the grantee's responsibility to comply with the executed grant agreement and applicable requirements.

# Part 6. Application submission and application support

## Section 35. Official funding opportunity information and communications

### 35.1 Official funding opportunity information

This funding opportunity is ENRTF Community Grant Program FY2027 RFP 01: Community Impact Funding Round.

The official Community Grant Program webpage provides access to current funding opportunity information, application materials and applicant resources. See Part 1, Section 6, for information about controlling RFP documents, official communications and amendments.

### 35.2 Official questions

Applicants may use the official question process described in Part 1, Section 6.3, to submit questions about this funding opportunity.

Submitting a question does not extend an application deadline or create an exception to a requirement in this RFP. See Section 41 for the procedures governing questions, answers and formal changes.

## Section 36. Application schedule and preparation period

### 36.1 Competitive process schedule

The current application schedule is provided in the Request for Proposal Cover Sheet and Part 1 of this RFP and will also be available through the official Community Grant Program webpage.

A material change to an application deadline or another substantive competitive requirement will be communicated through a formal RFP amendment.

Applicants are responsible for reviewing formal amendments and current official funding opportunity information during the competitive process.

### 36.2 Applicant preparation period November 5 – November 30, 2026

Publication of the RFP begins the applicant preparation and support period. Applicants may use official applicant resources, information sessions and question channels to understand the funding opportunity and prepare a Concept Note.

Applicant resources, examples and support are allowed to explain the published requirements but must not create or change eligibility, scoring, deadlines or other substantive competitive requirements.

## Section 37. Foundant application system, submission and receipt

### 37.1 Foundant application system and offline forms

Stage 1 Concept Notes and Stage 2 Full Applications must be submitted through Foundant unless the DNR formally authorizes another submission method under this Part.

The DNR will publish the Foundant application link on the official Community Grant Program webpage when the applicable application period opens. The DNR will also email the link to people who have signed up for the Community Grant Program email list.  Applicants do not need to subscribe to the email list to apply.

Appendix F is the official offline accessible version of the Stage 1 Concept Note questions, instructions and required application information.

Appendix G is the official offline accessible version of the Stage 2 Full Application questions, instructions and required application information for applicants invited to Stage 2.

Applicants should use Appendix F or Appendix G to review application requirements and prepare responses outside Foundant.

The DNR will maintain substantive equivalence between the information required in Foundant and the corresponding official application form in Appendix F or Appendix G. Foundant labels, help text, navigation and branching will explain system use but will not create additional substantive eligibility, scoring or application requirements.

Completing Appendix F or Appendix G outside Foundant does not constitute submission unless the DNR has formally approved an alternative submission method.

### 37.2 Submission and receipt

An application is submitted only when the applicant completes the required submission steps through Foundant or another submission method formally authorized by the DNR.

Saving, drafting or partially completing an application does not constitute submission.

For applications submitted through Foundant, the official submitted status and system timestamp will establish whether the application was received by the applicable deadline.

Applicants are responsible for confirming that the application has been successfully submitted.

Foundant system instructions will be available through official applicant resources and will not change the substantive requirements of this RFP.

### 37.3 Final submitted version

The version received through the authorized submission method by the applicable deadline is the submitted application used for the competitive process.

Draft, saved or incomplete entries that have not been submitted through the authorized process are not submitted applications.

Any correction, withdrawal, clarification or verification after submission is governed by this Part and the applicable Stage 1 or Stage 2 rules.

## Section 38. Accessibility, reasonable accommodation and language assistance

### 38.1 Accessible application materials

The DNR will provide accessible funding opportunities and application materials consistent with applicable requirements.

The DNR will ensure applicants can review the substantive Stage 1 application requirements through Appendix F and the substantive Stage 2 application requirements through Appendix G without relying solely on access to Foundant.

The DNR will maintain substantive equivalence between the applicable offline accessible application form and the information required through Foundant.

Applicants should contact the DNR if they identify an accessibility barrier in the RFP, an appendix, an applicant resource or the application process.

### 38.2 Reasonable accommodation and alternative submission

An applicant who needs a reasonable accommodation to access funding opportunity information, participate in applicant support, prepare an application or submit an application may request assistance from the DNR.

Depending on the individual need, the DNR could provide an accessible format, communication support, a reasonable modification to the application process or, when necessary and approved, an alternative method for submitting substantively equivalent application information.

An approved alternative submission process must preserve equivalent application content, applicable deadline controls, receipt documentation and competitive treatment.

Requesting or receiving a reasonable accommodation does not affect competitive evaluation.

Applicants are encouraged to request an accommodation as early as possible. Applicants should provide only the information necessary for the DNR to understand the access barrier and requested accommodation. The DNR does not require unnecessary medical or disability information to arrange an accommodation.

The official Community Grant Program webpage will provide the current accessibility contact and request process.

### 38.3 Language assistance

The DNR may provide selected applicant resources in languages other than English to improve access to the funding opportunity. Translated resources available will be identified through the official Community Grant Program webpage.

Translated applicant resources explain and support the funding opportunity. They do not replace the controlling English-language RFP unless the DNR expressly identifies a translated document as a controlling version.

Unless the DNR formally authorizes another submission process, Stage 1 Concept Notes and Stage 2 Full Applications are required to be submitted in English.

## Section 39. Corrections, withdrawals, incomplete applications and late submissions

### 39.1 Corrections and withdrawals before the deadline

An applicant may correct, replace or withdraw an application before the applicable deadline only through the process supported by Foundant or another process formally authorized by the DNR.

Applicant instructions will explain the available procedure.

Any replacement application must be fully submitted through the authorized process by the applicable deadline.

### 39.2 Incomplete applications

Applicants are responsible for submitting the information and materials required by this RFP and the applicable application form by the published deadline.

After the application deadline, applicants may not add missing competitive information or improve their submitted applications. The DNR may request narrow factual clarifications, verify submitted information or correct documented administrative errors only as permitted under the applicable Stage 1 or Stage 2 rules. These processes must not provide applicants with an opportunity to improve their competitive standing.

### 39.3 Late applications

Applications received after the published deadline will not be accepted, except through an approved reasonable accommodation or a formally authorized competitively applied contingency under Section 40.

An applicant's individual technology problem, incomplete application, failure to complete submission or failure to confirm successful submission by the deadline does not by itself extend the deadline.

Individual DNR staff shall not privately accept a late application or create an informal deadline exception.

## Section 40. System outages and submission contingencies

### 40.1 Application system readiness

The DNR will identify the Stage 1 application opening date through the official competitive process schedule.

If a material application system issue requires the DNR to change an announced opening date, deadline or submission method, the DNR will communicate that change through the formal process required by this RFP.

### 40.2 DNR-controlled or system-wide failure

If Foundant or another DNR-controlled application process experiences a documented failure that materially prevents applicants from submitting an application, the DNR may use a uniform remedy necessary to preserve fair access to the competitive process.

A remedy could include:

- Extending the applicable deadline
- Authorizing an alternative submission method with documented receipt and timeliness controls

Any material deadline change will be issued through a formal RFP amendment.

A system contingency process is not allowed to be used to allow an applicant to add or improve substantive application information after the deadline.

The DNR will apply the approved remedy consistently to applicants materially affected by the documented DNR-controlled or system-wide failure.

## Section 41. Questions, answers and formal changes

### 41.1 Questions and applicant support

Applicants should submit questions through the official Ask an ENRTF Community Grant Program Question online form available through the Community Grants webpage.

The DNR is allowed to respond directly to applicant-specific administrative questions or factual matters. When a response provides generally applicable substantive guidance about published application requirements or evaluations that could reasonably benefit other applicants, the DNR will share that guidance through a frequently asked question, applicant resource, information session or other official communication, as appropriate.

Questions and applicant support responses may explain the published funding opportunity but do not change this RFP.

### 41.2 Question deadline

Applicants should submit questions by the deadline identified in the official competitive process schedule.

The DNR may continue to receive questions after the published question deadline. However, the DNR does not guarantee that a response, frequently asked question update, applicant-resource update or other guidance will be available before the applicable application deadline.

When a question identifies an issue that is broadly relevant to applicants, the DNR may share the resulting guidance through an official frequently asked question, applicant resource, information session or other official communication, as appropriate.

Submitting a question does not extend an application deadline or create an exception to the requirements of this RFP.

### 41.3 Formal amendments

A material change to the funding opportunity must be made through a formal RFP amendment.

Material changes include changes to eligibility, scoring criteria or point values, required competitive application information, available funding, application deadlines, the authorized submission method when it materially affects applicants or another substantive competitive requirement.

A formal amendment becomes part of the controlling funding opportunity and supersedes earlier language to the extent stated in the amendment.

Applicants are responsible for reviewing formal amendments issued during the competitive process.

### 41.4 Administrative and system updates

The DNR may update applicant instructions, examples, frequently asked questions, training materials or system guidance when the update only explains an existing requirement. An administrative or system update may not create a new eligibility rule, scoring factor, required competitive response or other substantive application requirement.

If an update would materially change the funding opportunity, the DNR will use the formal amendment process in Section 41.3.

## Section 42. Applicant resources and navigation

### 42.1 Applicant resource system

The DNR provides applicant resources to help people understand the Community Grant Program, determine whether a project could fit, prepare an application and navigate the two-stage application process.

Resources may include eligibility and activity-area guidance, information sessions, frequently asked questions, application system instructions, accessibility and language-access information and Stage 1 or Stage 2 preparation tools.

Applicant resources may explain the requirements established by this RFP but must not create additional eligibility, scoring or substantive application requirements. Current resources will be available through the Community Grants webpage.

### 42.2 Stage 1 resources

Stage 1 resources are intended to help applicants understand eligibility and activity area fit, prepare the Concept Note and use the authorized application process.

### 42.3 Stage 2 resources

Applicants invited to Stage 2 will receive additional guidance, tools, training and technical assistance to support development of the Full Application and preparation for possible grant implementation.

Stage 2 resources will help applicants develop the project design, work plan, budget, results, implementation information and other content required by this RFP and Appendix G. They must not create undisclosed competitive requirements.

# Part 7. Grant administration and closeout

## Section 43. Government data practices and protection of information

### 43.1 Grant application data

Information submitted to the DNR through this funding opportunity is government data and is governed by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and other applicable laws.

Under Minnesota Statutes, section 13.599, application responses are private or nonpublic until the application responses are opened.

Once responses are opened, the following information becomes public:

- The applicant's name
- The applicant's address
- The amount of funding requested

Other application response data remain private or nonpublic until completion of the evaluation process as defined by Minnesota Statutes, section 13.599.

After completion of the evaluation process, remaining application response data become public except for data classified as trade secret data or otherwise protected by applicable law.

Data created or maintained by the DNR as part of the competitive evaluation process are protected nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process and then become public except for data that remain protected under applicable law.

Applicants should not assume that information submitted as part of an application will remain confidential after the applicable statutory data-classification period ends.

### 43.2 Sensitive Information and Data Minimization

Applicants and grantees should provide only information required by the RFP, applicable appendix, Foundant, grant agreement or an authorized DNR request.

Do not submit sensitive information unless the DNR specifically requests it and identifies an appropriate submission process.

Unless specifically requested through an approved process, applicants and grantees should not place sensitive or legally protected information in ordinary application fields, attachments or email. Examples include Social Security or government identification numbers, bank information, tax records, private personnel or health information, security information, legally privileged material and trade-secret information.

Pre-award financial or risk information will be requested through the process designated by the DNR when required.

### 43.3 Tribal, cultural, archaeological and sensitive resource information

Applicants and grantees should not unnecessarily disclose culturally restricted, sacred, Tribal, archaeological, traditional knowledge, security-sensitive or precise-location resource information.

When information necessary for project review or administration could require special handling, contact the Community Grant Program before submitting the information through an ordinary application field, attachment or email.

Where an exact location or sensitive detail is not necessary for eligibility, competitive evaluation or grant administration, the DNR may allow the information to be provided at a more general level.

The DNR cannot guarantee confidential treatment solely because information is identified by an applicant or grantee as sensitive. Data classification and disclosure are governed by applicable law.

## Section 44. State rights of the funding opportunity

### 44.1 State administrative rights

Subject to applicable law, statewide grants management requirements and this RFP, the DNR may cancel or formally amend the funding opportunity; enforce published eligibility, submission and clarification rules; make fewer or no awards; award less than the total amount available; complete required pre-award review; and establish or administer lawful grant conditions within the limits described in this RFP.

The exercise of these administrative rights does not create a new competitive scoring criterion or authorize substitution of a materially different project for the project selected through the competitive process.

## Section 45. Financial administration, records and grant compliance

### 45.1 Use of grant funds and payment

Community Grant Program funds must be used only for approved, allowable project costs incurred in accordance with the approved budget, grant agreement and applicable requirements.

The Community Grant Program operates on a reimbursement basis unless the DNR has approved an advance payment arrangement authorized under Section 33.

Under reimbursement, the grantee incurs and pays an eligible project cost before requesting reimbursement from the DNR.

Reimbursement requests must correspond to the approved grant budget and be supported by documentation required by the grant agreement and DNR instructions.

The DNR will review a payment request against the approved budget, expenditures to date, project progress and applicable reporting requirements before approving payment.

Unsupported, unallowable or otherwise ineligible costs must be disallowed, withheld from payment or subject to repayment as authorized by applicable law and the grant agreement.

Grant payments must be withheld when required reports are past due unless the DNR has approved an applicable extension.

## 45.2 Ineligible costs

Community Grant Program funds must not be used for costs that are prohibited by applicable law, the funding appropriation, statewide grants management requirements, DNR requirements, this RFP or the grant agreement.

Ineligible costs include, but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Lobbying or political contributions
- Bad debts
- Late payment fees, finance charges or contingency funds
- Fines, penalties, parking violations or traffic violations
- Costs that are not necessary and reasonable for the approved project
- Costs incurred outside the authorized grant period
- Costs that are not supported by required documentation
- Costs charged to another funding source for the same expense
- Other costs prohibited by applicable law, statewide grants management requirements, DNR requirements, this RFP or the grant agreement

Taxes and travel costs are allowable only when permitted under applicable state, DNR and grant requirements.

Applicants invited to Stage 2 should develop budgets using the cost guidance provided by the DNR. Final cost allowability is determined through the approved budget, grant agreement and applicable requirements.

## 45.3 Records, retention and audit access

Grantees must maintain sufficient records to document grant expenditures and payment requests, project implementation and required approvals, applicable procurement or contracting, project results, compliance with the grant agreement and required monitoring and close-out.

Under Minnesota Statutes, section 16B.98, subdivision 8, books, records, documents and accounting procedures and practices relevant to the grant are subject to examination by authorized state officials, including the commissioner of administration, the state granting agency, the state auditor, the attorney general and the legislative auditor, as applicable.

Grantees must retain applicable grant records for at least six years from the grant agreement end date or the DNR's receipt and approval of all final reports, whichever is later, unless applicable state or program requirements establish a longer retention period. The grant agreement will identify applicable recordkeeping, retention, audit and access requirements.

## 45.4 Procurement, contracting and conflicts of interest

Grantees must comply with the procurement, contracting, competitive bidding, prevailing wage, suspension and debarment and conflict-of-interest requirements applicable to their organization, project and grant-funded purchases or contracts. Requirements may differ based on the grantee's legal status and the type and amount of the purchase or contract.

Grantees must maintain documentation supporting purchasing and contracting decisions, including applicable competitive selection procedures and authorized exceptions. When a fiscal agent is used, the applicable grant documents will identify the fiscal and administrative responsibilities of the grantee and fiscal agent, including responsibility for purchasing, contracting and maintaining supporting records.

The grant agreement and grantee administration resources will identify the procurement and contracting procedures applicable to the award, including requirements specific to governmental, Tribal governmental and non-governmental grantees.

Significant procurement and contracting needs that affect project feasibility, schedule or budget should be identified during Stage 2.

## 45.5 Financial reconciliation

Community Grant Program grants are subject to financial reconciliation requirements established by Community Grant Program law and applicable state grants management policy.

Under Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, subdivision 3c, as amended by 2026 Session Law, chapter 104, the DNR must conduct a financial reconciliation of grantee expenditures on a sample of Community Grant Program grants under $50,000 before final payment.

For grants of $50,000 or more, applicable statewide grants management policy requires financial reconciliation of grantee expenditures before final payment, subject to any authorized sampling, monitoring plan or policy exception.

Financial reconciliation will require the grantee to provide supporting documentation necessary to verify that selected expenditures were made in accordance with the approved budget and grant agreement. The DNR will document completed financial reconciliations in the grant record.

## 45.6 Affirmative action and nondiscrimination

Grantees must comply with applicable state nondiscrimination and affirmative action requirements, including Minnesota Human Rights Act, Minnesota Statutes, chapter 363A and applicable Minnesota Rules.

Grantees must not discriminate against employees or applicants for employment on grounds prohibited by applicable law. Where required, grantees must take affirmative action in employment, recruitment, advancement, training and other employment practices consistent with applicable legal requirements.

Grantees must comply with applicable rules and orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued under the Minnesota Human Rights Act. The grant agreement will establish the nondiscrimination and affirmative action obligations applicable to the grantee and grant-funded activities.

### 45.7 Voter registration

As applicable, grantees must comply with Minnesota Statutes, section 201.162, by providing voter registration services for their employees and for members of the public served by the grantee.

## Section 46. Reporting, monitoring and performance

### 46.1 Quarterly progress reporting

The Community Grant Program is subject to the grant-recipient reporting requirements established in Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, as amended by 2026 Session Law, chapter 104.

Each grantee is required to submit a written progress report to the DNR at least quarterly, in the form and manner established by the DNR, until all grant funds have been expended and all terms of the grant agreement have been met.

Progress reports will address project implementation, expenditures, results and other information needed to administer and monitor the grant.

Reporting may address:

- Project activities and progress
- Expenditures
- Results and accomplishments
- Implementation issues or delays
- Changes or risks requiring DNR attention
- Upcoming work
- Other information reasonably necessary to administer the grant

Reporting requirements should be proportionate to the project and award while still providing the information needed to meet statutory and grant-administration requirements.

The grant agreement and grantee guidance will establish the reporting format, schedule and submission process.

### 46.2 Grant monitoring

The Community Grant Program is subject to the monitoring requirements established in Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, subdivision 3b, as amended by 2026 Session Law, chapter 104.

For Community Grant Program grants of $50,000 or more, the DNR must conduct at least one in-person unannounced monitoring visit before final payment.

For Community Grant Program grants under $50,000, the DNR must select a sample from grants awarded each year and conduct at least one unannounced monitoring visit on each selected grant before final payment.

The DNR will conduct additional monitoring when required by applicable state grants management requirements, the grant agreement, project conditions or identified risk.

Monitoring will review project progress, use of grant funds, compliance with the grant agreement, supporting records, results and other matters necessary to administer the grant.

Grantees must cooperate with required monitoring and make applicable project records, responsible personnel and project locations available as required.

## 46.3 Results and performance

The Community Grant Program is required to provide measurable results.

The grant agreement will identify the results, outputs, outcomes or other performance expectations appropriate to the project and the evidence the grantee must provide to document progress and completion.

Performance documentation should be proportionate to the project.

Grantees should communicate material implementation issues that could affect expected results and work with the DNR through the applicable grant administration process when an approved project needs to adapt.

Post-award reporting and monitoring are used to confirm that the grant is being implemented in accordance with the approved project, grant agreement and applicable requirements.

## 46.4 Grantee performance evaluation

Minnesota Statutes, section 16B.98, subdivision 12, requires a written grantee performance evaluation for a grant agreement more than $25,000.

Because Community Grant Program awards range from $20,000 to $150,000, this requirement applies to Community Grant Program grants over $25,000.

The evaluation is required to address the grantee's timeliness, quality and overall performance in meeting the terms and objectives of the grant.

Required evaluations are submitted through the state process and made publicly available as required by law.

A grantee may request a copy of its performance evaluation and is allowed to provide a written response. A grantee response will be maintained with the grant file as required by law.

## Section 47. Project changes, property and continuing responsibilities

### 47.1 Changes to an approved grant

After the grant agreement is executed, a grantee must obtain DNR approval before implementing a change when approval is required by the grant agreement or applicable requirements.

Changes to the approved scope, budget, work plan, schedule, results, location, grant structure or another material grant condition may require prior DNR approval under the grant agreement or applicable requirements.

The grantee must notify the DNR when a proposed change could materially affect the approved project.

When a formal grant amendment is required, the amendment is required to be approved and executed before the grantee incurs costs or implements work that depends on the amendment.

A grant amendment may refine an approved project but is required to remain consistent with the purpose and scope of the grant originally awarded.

A grant agreement amendment is different from an amendment to this RFP.

### 47.2 Property, equipment, permits and continuing responsibilities

Projects involving equipment, physical improvements, real property, permits, site access or continuing maintenance could be subject to project-specific requirements during or after the grant period.

Depending on the project, the grant may include requirements concerning site control, permits or governmental approvals, equipment or property, maintenance, access, asset disposition or continuing stewardship.

These requirements do not apply identically to every Community Grant Program grant.

Applicable requirements will be identified through the activity-area appendix, Stage 2 project development process, pre-award review, grant agreement or grantee guidance, as appropriate.

Receiving a Community Grant Program grant award does not substitute for a permit, governmental approval, landowner authorization or other authorities required to carry out the project.

## Section 48. Noncompliance, final payment and grant closeout

### 48.1 Compliance and corrective action

Grantees must administer Community Grant Program funds in accordance with the grant agreement and applicable requirements.

If a grantee does not comply with an applicable requirement, the DNR is allowed to use corrective action or another remedy authorized by law, state grants management requirements or the grant agreement.

The DNR will determine an appropriate corrective action or other authorized remedy based on the nature and severity of the issue, the grant agreement and applicable legal requirements. Corrective actions may include requesting additional information, providing technical assistance, imposing corrective conditions or increasing monitoring. When authorized, the DNR may also disallow or withhold payments, require repayment, suspend the grant or terminate the grant agreement.

Under Minnesota Statutes, section 116X.03, a Community Grant Program recipient is required to return grant money that is not used in accordance with the applicable grant agreement.

### 48.2 Final payment and closeout

Completion of the final project activity does not by itself close the grant.

Before final payment and administrative closeout, the grantee must complete all requirements applicable to the award, including required reporting, payment documentation, financial reconciliation, monitoring, results documentation, resolution of questioned costs, return of unused or improperly used funds, property or equipment requirements and outstanding grant conditions**.**

The DNR will determine when applicable grant requirements have been satisfied and the grant will be allowed to be administratively closed.

Continuing responsibilities established by the grant agreement or applicable law will remain in effect after administrative close-out.

Closeout administration is separate from substantive project implementation and shall occur during the approved administrative closeout period described in Part 5.

# Appendices A-E. Five Statutory Activity Areas

**Name of Granting Agency:** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

**Title of Grant Program/Opportunity:** Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Community Grant Program

**November 5, 2026**

## Appendix A. Helping Adversely Impacted Communities Respond to Environmental Degradation and Related Health Concerns

**Short reference:** Adversely Impacted Communities

Use this appendix with the main Request for Proposals. The main RFP contains the rules that apply to all applicants and projects. This appendix explains the additional fit and project-specific information for projects whose primary statutory activity is helping adversely impacted communities respond to environmental degradation and related health concerns.

## A.1 Purpose and when to use Appendix A

Use Appendix A when the principal funded purpose of the project is to help an adversely impacted community respond to environmental degradation and related health concerns.

The legal applicant, substantive project lead and community expected to benefit may be different. When their roles differ, the Stage 1 Concept Note must identify them clearly, as required by Sections 7 and 8 of the main RFP.

A project may involve more than one Community Grant Program activity area. For Stage 1, choose the activity area that best reflects the project's principal funded purpose. You may also identify other activity areas that apply. You will not be required to complete multiple full Stage 1 activity-area question sets.

For this funding opportunity, grant requests must be from $20,000 to $150,000, and substantive project implementation must be completed within 12 months or less. Up to two additional months may be authorized for approved startup and close-out activities, but not to continue unfinished substantive project work. See Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 12 of the RFP.

## A.2 What makes a project fit this activity area

A project in this activity area should show a reasonable connection among three elements:

1. A community that is adversely impacted
2. Environmental degradation affecting that community and, where relevant, related health concerns
3. A proposed project that helps the community respond to those conditions

The connection among the community, environmental condition and proposed response is central to this activity area. The project does not fit this activity area solely because it is located in a community experiencing social or economic disadvantage, serves an underserved population, provides a general community benefit or is proposed by an organization that works on environmental or public-health issues.

Applicants should describe, in their own terms and based on information available to them, the community, the environmental degradation or related concern, why it matters and how the proposed project responds. Applicants are not required to use a particular map or dataset, conduct a new technical analysis or demonstrate activity-area fit through a prescribed evidence source solely to submit a Stage 1 Concept Note.

The DNR may use appropriate information to verify statutory or program eligibility and to implement the published Stage 1 criteria. A map designation or dataset alone does not establish activity-area eligibility or determine a competitive score. The DNR will assess submitted information under the eligibility requirements and scoring criteria published in the main RFP.

## A.3 Environmental degradation and related health concerns

Applicants should describe the environmental condition that is important to the project and explain how it affects the community or creates a concern for the community. Environmental degradation may include conditions involving air pollution, water degradation, soil or land degradation, biodiversity loss or another

relevant environmental condition. These categories are examples, not an exhaustive eligibility list. The description should be proportionate to what the applicant knows at the time of application. Applicants are not expected to conduct a new scientific study or health assessment solely to apply.

A related health concern may be described when it is connected to the environmental degradation addressed by the project. Applicants should not be expected to establish a medical diagnosis, prove individual health effects or conduct a health study unless a project-specific requirement expressly requires that information.

Applicants may rely on the information available to them, including community knowledge, local or Tribal governmental information when appropriate, existing plans or reports, public information or other relevant sources. The DNR may verify information used to determine statutory or program eligibility.

## A.4 Projects that may fit

Projects may fit this activity area when their principal funded purpose is to help an adversely impacted community understand, address, reduce, mitigate or respond to environmental degradation or a related health concern. The specific activity must also comply with the main RFP and any project-specific legal or technical requirements.

Optional applicant resources may provide maps, datasets, government information, community-planning resources and explanatory examples that applicants may use if helpful in developing or supporting their project narratives. These resources are supplemental and do not create additional eligibility requirements, scoring expectations, or preferred evidence pathways.

## A.5 Projects that do not fit this activity area

A project does not fit Appendix A merely because:

- The project is located in a community that has experienced social or economic disadvantage
- The applicant serves a population that has experienced barriers to funding or public programs
- An environmental activity will occur in the community but is not meaningfully connected to an environmental condition affecting that community
- The project provides a general community benefit without a sufficient connection to environmental degradation, or
- The applicant generally works on environmental, health, education or community issues

A project that does not fit Appendix A may still fit another Community Grant Program activity area. Applicants should select the activity area that best matches the project's principal funded purpose. The choice between Appendix A and another activity area is based on the project's principal funded purpose and the applicable activity-area requirements, not on whether a community appears in a particular map or dataset.

## A.6 Activity-specific information required at stage 1

Applicants selecting Appendix A as the primary activity area will answer a small number of additional questions in the Stage 1 Concept Note. The questions will be limited to information needed to determine activity-area fit, route or verify the application or provide evidence relevant to the published Stage 1 criteria.

The Stage 1 questions will ask the applicant to identify or briefly describe:

- The community expected to benefit
- The environmental degradation or environmental condition important to the project
- How that condition affects or creates concerns for the community
- How the proposed project would help the community respond

A concise explanation is sufficient at Stage 1. Applicants should not be required at Stage 1 to submit a new environmental study, health study, detailed technical analysis or extensive documentation solely to establish this activity-area fit unless the RFP expressly requires it.

## A.7 Additional activity-specific information that may be required at stage 2

Applicants invited to Stage 2 may be asked for additional information when it is necessary to evaluate the actual project. The information required will depend on the project and may include:

- Additional information supporting the environmental condition or community context
- A map, site description or project-area information
- The proposed technical approach or methods
- The substantive project lead's relationship to the affected community and, where relevant, the eligible legal applicant's relationship and how relevant community knowledge or priorities informed the project
- Known permits, approvals, site permissions or other authorizations
- Technical expertise or partners needed to carry out the work
- A practical approach for understanding or documenting project results, or
- Other project-specific information needed to evaluate design, feasibility, results, budget or value under the published Stage 2 criteria

Stage 2 readiness does not mean every permit, agreement, contractor, technical detail or site authorization must already be complete. When an item is not complete, applicants may explain the reasonable path for resolving it. Final compliance documentation may be required later in the grant process.

## A.8 Technical, site, data or authorization issues that may apply

Some Appendix A projects may require additional technical review or authorization because of the project's methods, location, environmental condition, land or water involved or information the project uses. The need for technical review does not by itself make a project ineligible. Material unresolved implementation issues may be considered under the published Project Feasibility criterion when they raise reasonable concerns about completing the project within the available funding and implementation period.

Applicants should not submit protected, private, not-public, security-sensitive, culturally sensitive or other restricted information through an ordinary application field or email when special handling may be required. Contact the Community Grant Program for instructions if information necessary to the project may require protected handling.

Projects involving Tribal lands, waters, natural resources, jurisdiction, treaty-protected interests or other matters subject to Tribal governmental authority will require coordination, authorization or other action by the affected Tribal Nation, as provided in Section 11.2 of the main RFP. Project-specific DNR Tribal Relations, legal or technical review may also be required. Applicants should not submit protected cultural information, traditional knowledge, sacred information, precise sensitive-resource locations or other information that should not be publicly disclosed through ordinary application fields.

The DNR may request additional information after submission when necessary to verify eligibility, understand a project-specific requirement or complete an authorized technical review. Any clarification process will follow the main RFP and may not be used to create an undisclosed scoring requirement.

### A.9 Where to get help and technical information

Applicants may use Community Grant Program applicant resources and technical assistance to understand this activity area and develop a project. Optional resources may include maps, environmental datasets, government information, community-planning resources, explanatory examples, planning questions and project-readiness guidance. Applicants may use these resources if they are helpful, but they are not required evidence and do not create additional eligibility requirements, scoring expectations or preferred evidence pathways. If a Concept Note advances, Stage 2 technical assistance may help the applicant refine the environmental problem statement, supporting information, project design and any technical documentation appropriate to the Full Application.

Questions about whether a project may fit this activity area may be submitted through the applicant-support process described in the main RFP.

## Appendix B. Environmental and Natural-Resource Education and Awareness

**Short reference:** Education and Awareness

### B.1 Purpose and when to use Appendix B

Use Appendix B when the primary funded purpose of your project is education or awareness related to stewardship of Minnesota's air, land, water, forests, fish, wildlife or other natural resources.

For this funding opportunity, applicants may request $20,000 to $150,000. Substantive project implementation must be completed within 12 months or less. Up to two additional months may be authorized for approved startup and closeout administration, but not to extend substantive project work.

Education or awareness may help people understand natural resources, recognize environmental conditions or stewardship needs, develop practical stewardship knowledge or skills, make informed natural-resource decisions or prepare to participate in stewardship activities.

The environmental or natural-resource connection must be a meaningful part of the project, not incidental.

## B.2 What makes a project fit

A project may fit this activity area when education or awareness is the central funded purpose and the project has a clear connection to stewardship of Minnesota's environment or natural resources.

For this activity area, stewardship means responsible care, understanding, protection, conservation, preservation, management or use of Minnesota's environment and natural resources.

An education or awareness project does not have to complete restoration or demonstrate long-term ecological change during the grant period. The project should, however, explain what participants or the intended audience are expected to learn, understand, be able to do or become more aware of and why that matters for stewardship.

## B.3 Education or awareness as the primary purpose

Education and awareness can also be part of projects whose primary purpose falls under another Community Grant Program activity area. Choose Appendix B as the primary activity area when education or awareness is the central purpose of the funded project.

If education mainly supports another activity, such as natural-resource restoration, trail maintenance or improvement, aquatic invasive species management or a project responding to environmental degradation in an adversely impacted community, select the activity area that best reflects the project's principal funded purpose.

You may identify additional activity areas that also apply. The DNR will evaluate eligibility under the primary activity area selected by the applicant and will not move the application to another activity area after the Stage 1 deadline.

## B.4 Projects that may fit

Projects may use different education or awareness approaches. Depending on the project's primary purpose and design, eligible approaches may include:

- Community, youth, school, after-school, field-based or outdoor environmental education
- Training for volunteers, educators, community leaders, peer educators or others who will use or share stewardship knowledge or skills
- Development or adaptation of educational, interpretive, multilingual, culturally relevant, digital or other learning materials when there is a credible plan for their use
- Demonstrations, field experiences, hands-on learning or other experiential education connected to stewardship

- Public awareness or communications activities whose principal purpose is substantive natural-resource education or stewardship awareness
- Community science or participatory learning when education, public understanding, stewardship learning or participant skill development is a principal purpose

Detailed examples and project-development guidance may be provided separately as applicant resources. Examples do not expand eligibility or create additional requirements.

## B.5 Projects that do not fit

Appendix B is not intended to fund a project whose primary purpose is:

- Organizational marketing, branding, fundraising, public relations or general promotion
- General youth development with only incidental environmental or natural-resource content
- General workforce development, job readiness, career development, employment placement, entrepreneurship or workforce services where natural-resource stewardship is not the principal project purpose
- Entertainment, networking or general event operations where environmental education or stewardship awareness is incidental
- Scientific research prohibited by the Community Grant Program, or
- Lobbying, prohibited political activity or advocacy that state grant funds may not support

A communications campaign, event, environmental-skills training activity, community-science activity or similar project may require additional review when its primary purpose or relationship to stewardship is unclear.

## B.6 Activity-specific information required at stage 1

If you select this as your primary activity area, the Stage 1 Concept Note will ask for concise information needed to understand how the project fits this activity area. You should be prepared to identify:

- The environmental or natural-resource stewardship topic
- The people or audience the project is intended to reach
- What you reasonably expect participants or the intended audience to learn, understand, be able to do or become more aware of
- How the education or awareness will be delivered
- How the proposed education or awareness relates to stewardship of Minnesota's environment or natural resources

Stage 1 does not require a complete curriculum, detailed education plan, extensive community-engagement documentation or other developed Stage 2 materials.

## B.7 Additional activity-specific information at stage 2

If your Concept Note advances, the Stage 2 Full Application may ask for additional information needed to evaluate the specific project. Depending on the project, this may include:

- More developed learning or awareness objectives and the intended audience
- The proposed education, delivery, outreach or participant-recruitment approach
- Curriculum, content, materials or a plan for developing or adapting them
- Educator, facilitator, partner or other implementation roles
- Accessibility, language access, participant safety, site or permission considerations relevant to delivery
- A practical way to understand whether the education or awareness achieved its intended result
- How educational products or materials will be used, distributed or made available when applicable

The DNR will request only information that is relevant to the proposed project and the published Stage 2 evaluation criteria.

### B.8 Project-specific technical or authorization issues

Some education and awareness projects may involve additional legal, technical, safety, site, data or authorization requirements because of the activities proposed. Examples may include field activities, environmental monitoring or sampling, community science, demonstrations, work with youth, culturally sensitive or Tribal educational content, use of traditional knowledge or physical improvements.

Scientific research projects are ineligible under Section 13.1 of the main RFP. Lobbying and political contributions are ineligible costs under Section 45.2. Event-based education, environmental workforce or skills training, community science and projects involving advocacy or political content may require project-specific review to determine whether the primary funded purpose fits Activity B and whether proposed activities and costs are allowable. The DNR will apply the requirements relevant to the actual project rather than treat the project format alone as determining eligibility.

When a downstream requirement such as a permit, permission, accessibility measure, procurement requirement or other implementation obligation is important to developing a realistic project, schedule, feasibility assessment or budget, the Stage 2 application may ask you to identify or plan for it. Final compliance documentation is generally addressed later unless it is required earlier.

### B.9 Help and technical information

Applicant resources and technical assistance may provide additional help with choosing the appropriate activity area, planning an education or awareness project, defining a realistic audience and result, adapting existing resources, considering accessibility and language access and distinguishing education or community science from scientific research.

Resources and technical assistance may explain the requirements in the RFP but do not create new eligibility or scoring requirements.

## Appendix C. Preserving or Enhancing Natural Resources Substantially Impaired or Destroyed

**Short reference:** Preserving or Enhancing Natural Resources

## C.1 Purpose and when to use Appendix C

Use Appendix C when the primary funded purpose of your project is to preserve or enhance an identifiable air, land, water or other natural resource that otherwise may be substantially impaired or destroyed.

For this funding opportunity, grant requests must be $20,000 to $150,000, and substantive project work must be completed within 12 months or less. Up to two additional months may be authorized for approved startup and closeout administration, but not to extend substantive project work.

A project in this activity area should connect three things: the natural resource, the existing condition or credible threat affecting it and the work proposed to preserve or enhance it.

A project does not fit this activity area solely because it takes place outdoors, uses native plants, improves the appearance of a site, supports recreation, includes volunteers or generally benefits the environment.

## C.2 What makes a project fit

A project may fit this activity area when it identifies a specific natural resource or resource system, explains what is happening or reasonably may happen to that resource without the proposed work and proposes activities with a credible and direct relationship to preserving or enhancing the resource.

Natural resources may include air, land, water, lakes, rivers and streams, wetlands, groundwater, shorelines, soils, forests, prairies and grasslands, habitat, fish, wildlife, native vegetation and other ecological resources.

For this funding opportunity, preserving a natural resource may include reasonable work to prevent or reduce substantial impairment, degradation or loss, including addressing a credible threat before major damage occurs.

Enhancing a natural resource generally means improving its condition, quality, function, resilience or environmental value.

## C.3 Natural resource, condition and proposed intervention

Your project should identify the natural resource and the condition or threat the project is intended to address.

The condition or threat may involve existing degradation or a reasonably anticipated risk. Depending on the resource and project, this may include erosion, habitat loss or fragmentation, invasive species, declining native vegetation, water-quality impairment, repeated disturbance, pollution, altered hydrology, climate-related stressors, disease, pests or another credible threat.

The DNR will determine whether the identified condition or threat and the proposed work are sufficient to meet the statutory requirement that the resource otherwise may be substantially impaired or destroyed. Applicants may rely on existing plans, observations, technical information, public data or other reasonable evidence appropriate to the project. A new technical study is not normally required for the Stage 1 Concept Note.

## C.4 Projects that may fit

Depending on the resource, condition and proposed work, projects that may fit include:

- Habitat preservation, rehabilitation or enhancement
- Native vegetation or plant-community work that improves ecological condition or function
- Erosion prevention or stabilization that protects a natural resource
- Water, shoreline, wetland, forest, prairie, grassland, soil, fish, wildlife or habitat stewardship and management
- Invasive-species work when preserving or enhancing the affected resource is the project's primary purpose and another statutory activity area does not fit more directly
- Ecological repair or restoration following an identified disturbance
- Preventive stewardship addressing a credible threat to an existing resource
- Planning or assessment that directly supports a defined preservation or enhancement objective, subject to the requirements in this appendix

The activity used to carry out the project does not independently establish eligibility. The project must still connect the proposed work to preservation or enhancement of a natural resource that otherwise may be substantially impaired or destroyed.

## C.5 Projects that do not fit

Appendix C is not intended to serve as a general environmental improvement category. A project may not fit when its primary purpose is:

- Beautification, general landscaping or general park improvement without a demonstrated natural-resource preservation or enhancement purpose
- Recreation infrastructure where natural-resource work is incidental
- Scientific research prohibited by the Community Grant Program
- General organizational planning or operating activity
- A project without an identifiable natural-resource condition or credible threat, or
- A project that inherently requires more than 12 months of substantive work or cannot reasonably be designed within the $20,000–$150,000 grant range

Planning or assessment may fit only when it directly supports a defined preservation or enhancement objective, produces an actionable result and has a reasonable pathway toward implementation.

An unresolved technical, permitting, site or approval matter does not automatically make a project ineligible unless it fails a published eligibility requirement. Otherwise, a material unresolved issue may affect evaluation under the published Project Feasibility criterion.

## C.6 Activity-specific information required at Stage 1

If you select this as your primary activity area, the Stage 1 Concept Note will ask for concise information needed to understand how the project fits this activity area. You should be prepared to identify:

- The natural resource and general project location
- What is happening, or reasonably may happen, to the resource without the proposed work
- How you know about the condition or threat

- What the project proposes to do to preserve or enhance the resource
- The realistic natural-resource benefit expected from the project
- Known site, property-access, permit, approval, technical-expertise or other implementation issues that could materially affect feasibility

Stage 1 does not normally require a new technical study, detailed design, complete permit package, final landowner authorization or other developed Stage 2 documentation unless a specific requirement states otherwise.

## C.7 Additional activity-specific information at stage 2

If your Concept Note advances, the Stage 2 Full Application may ask for additional information needed to evaluate the actual project. Depending on the project, this may include:

- A more developed description of the resource condition, project area and proposed treatment or management method
- Maps, photographs, site information, species or planting information or technical designs when relevant
- Landowner or site authorization and the status of permits or approvals
- Technical expertise, contractor or partner roles and an implementation schedule
- Ecological risks and how the project will avoid unintended harm
- Maintenance, stewardship or continuing-responsibility needs
- Practical measures for understanding project progress and natural-resource results

The DNR will request only information relevant to the proposed project and the published Stage 2 evaluation criteria. A straightforward stewardship project should not be required to provide technical information needed only for a more complex construction, treatment or restoration project.

## C.8 Site, permit, technical and continuing-responsibility issues

Some projects may require additional technical or specialist review because of the work proposed. This may include significant ground disturbance, engineered structures, hydrologic alteration, shoreline or wetland work, regulated waters, pesticides or herbicides, prescribed fire, vegetation removal, invasive-species treatment, threatened or endangered species, fish or wildlife habitat manipulation, cultural or archaeological resources, sensitive resource information or other specialized issues.

Projects involving Tribal lands, waters, natural resources, jurisdiction, treaty-protected interests, culturally important resources or other matters subject to Tribal governmental authority will require coordination, authorization or other action by the affected Tribal Nation. Applicants should not submit culturally restricted, sacred or other protected information through ordinary application fields.

When a permit, approval, property interest, technical standard or continuing stewardship responsibility is important to project feasibility, applicants should identify the issue at the stage when the DNR needs it. Not every permit, agreement, contractor or technical detail must be complete before an applicant can compete for funding.

The DNR will rely on applicable DNR and other authoritative technical requirements rather than creating separate Community Grant Program technical standards for each type of natural-resource work.

## C.9 Help and technical information

Applicant resources and technical assistance may provide additional help with choosing the appropriate activity area, describing a natural-resource condition or threat, identifying project-specific technical requirements, planning for permits or site authorization and developing a realistic preservation or enhancement project.

Resources and technical assistance may explain the requirements in the RFP but do not create new eligibility or scoring requirements.

# Appendix D. Maintaining or Improving Existing State, Regional or Local Trails

**Short reference:** Maintaining or Improving Existing Trails

## D.1 Purpose and when to use Appendix D

Use Appendix D when the primary funded purpose of your project is to maintain or improve an existing state, regional or local trail.

For this funding opportunity, grant requests must be $20,000 to $150,000, and substantive project work must be completed within 12 months or less. Up to two additional months may be authorized for approved startup and closeout administration, but not to extend substantive project work.

The basic fit test is straightforward: the trail already exists, the proposed work maintains or improves that existing trail and the project does not construct a new trail or new trail segment.

Community Grant funds under this activity area may not be used to construct a new trail or new trail segment.

## D.2 What makes a project fit

Your project should identify the existing trail, the condition or need being addressed and the maintenance or improvement work proposed.

For this funding opportunity, the project must involve an existing state, regional or local trail. At Stage 1, the applicant must provide enough information for the DNR to determine that the affected trail already exists and that the proposed work is reasonably capable of qualifying as maintenance or improvement rather than construction of a new trail or new trail segment. Additional technical, ownership, authorization or property documentation may be required at Stage 2 or pre-award.

A trail may be paved or natural-surface and may support different forms of use. Eligibility depends on the trail being an existing state, regional or local trail and on the proposed work remaining within the statutory authority for maintenance or improvement. The DNR does not require a trail to participate in another DNR trail grant or maintenance program solely to qualify under this activity area.

## D.3 Existing trail work versus new trail construction

Maintenance generally means work that keeps an existing trail or existing trail feature functional, safe, usable, sustainable or in appropriate condition without creating a new route.

Improvement generally means upgrading or enhancing an existing trail or existing trail feature while maintaining the identity of the existing trail.

For this funding opportunity, the DNR will assess proposed rehabilitation or reconstruction to determine whether it maintains or improves an existing trail without constructing a new trail or new trail segment.

New trails, extensions into new corridors, new connectors, new loops and new segments that create trail access where no trail previously existed are not eligible under this activity area.

A proposed reroute or alignment adjustment requires project-specific review to determine whether it maintains or improves an existing trail or would construct a prohibited new trail or new trail segment.

## D.4 Projects that may fit

Depending on the existing trail and proposed work, projects that may fit include:

- Resurfacing or repairing an existing trail surface or tread
- Correcting erosion or drainage problems affecting an existing trail
- Repairing or replacing an existing bridge, boardwalk or other trail feature in place
- Addressing accessibility barriers within an existing trail
- Stabilizing slopes or restoring vegetation disturbed by existing trail use or maintenance
- Rehabilitating deteriorated trail infrastructure
- Other work that maintains or improves the function, condition, safety, accessibility or sustainability of an existing trail

Replacement, rehabilitation or improvement of bridges, boardwalks and other structures integral to an existing trail may qualify when the work remains part of maintaining or improving that trail. Proposed maintenance or improvement of existing ancillary facilities such as parking areas, overlooks, picnic areas, trailheads, requires project-specific review to determine whether the work qualifies as maintenance or improvement of an existing trail. This provision does not authorize construction of new ancillary facilities.

## D.5 Projects that do not fit

A project does not fit Appendix D if it would construct a new trail or new trail segment.

Projects also may not fit this funding opportunity when their scale, technical complexity, engineering, environmental review, property needs, permitting, capital costs or implementation period cannot reasonably be completed within the funding and timing established in the RFP.

Calling proposed work maintenance or improvement does not make it eligible if the project would create a new functional trail route or segment.

## D.6 Activity-specific information required at stage 1

If you select this as your primary activity area, the Stage 1 Concept Note will ask for concise information needed to understand how the project fits Appendix D. You should be prepared to identify:

- The existing state, regional or local trail, including its location and, if known, its owner or managing entity
- Where the proposed work will occur and enough information to understand that the affected trail already exists
- The existing trail condition or need the project will address
- The maintenance or improvement work proposed
- Whether the proposed work would construct a new trail or new trail segment or materially extend the existing trail beyond its current route or footprint
- Your relationship to the trail and known approvals or permissions needed
- The realistic result expected when the project is complete

Detailed engineering drawings, completed environmental review, final permits and complete authorization documents are not normally required at Stage 1 unless a specific legal requirement states otherwise.

## D.7 Additional activity-specific information at stage 2

If your Concept Note advances, the Stage 2 Full Application may ask for additional information needed to evaluate the actual trail project. Depending on the project, this may include:

- Trail and project-segment maps, photographs and existing and proposed alignment
- Trail ownership, management, landowner authorization or corridor documentation
- Trail-condition information, dimensions, quantities and cost estimates
- Engineering or technical design appropriate to the proposed work
- Accessibility, erosion, drainage, structure, environmental-review, protected-species, cultural-resource and seasonal-construction considerations
- Permits, approvals, construction schedule, procurement approach and partner or contractor roles
- Long-term maintenance responsibility
- Information demonstrating that the project does not create a prohibited new trail or new trail segment

The DNR will request information proportionate to the project. A straightforward resurfacing project should not be required to provide the same engineering information as a bridge rehabilitation or other technically complex project.

## D.8 Ownership, authorization, design, permit and continuing-responsibility issues

Receiving a Community Grant does not give an applicant authority to perform work on a trail owned, managed or controlled by another entity. Applicants should identify what they know about ownership, management, public use, their relationship to the trail and authorization needs at Stage 1. Formal property-control, public-use, authorization or continuing-maintenance documentation may be required at Stage 2 or pre-award when necessary.

Trail projects may also require accessibility review, environmental review, permits, engineering, protected-species review, cultural-resource review, seasonal construction constraints or other technical requirements. These requirements do not generally need to be completed at Stage 1. Funding by the DNR does not guarantee approval by another DNR program, land manager, regulator or other authority.

Projects involving Tribal lands, waters, natural resources, jurisdiction, treaty-protected interests, culturally important resources or other matters subject to Tribal governmental authority will require coordination, authorization or other action by the affected Tribal Nation. Applicants should not submit culturally restricted, sacred or other protected information through ordinary application fields.

Projects must also satisfy the generally applicable requirements of the RFP, including the required connection to environmental or natural-resource benefit.

### D.9 Help and technical information

Applicant resources and technical assistance may provide additional help with identifying the appropriate activity area, documenting existing-trail status, distinguishing maintenance or improvement from new construction, planning for ownership and authorization and identifying project-specific accessibility, engineering, environmental or permitting requirements.

The DNR will rely on applicable Parks and Trails, accessibility, engineering, environmental and other authoritative requirements rather than reproducing technical standards in this appendix.

Resources and technical assistance may explain the requirements in the RFP but do not create new eligibility or scoring requirements.

## Appendix E. Aquatic Invasive Species Management

Short reference: Aquatic Invasive Species Management

### E.1 Purpose and when to use Appendix E

Use Appendix E when the primary funded purpose of your project is aquatic invasive species management.

An AIS project should identify the AIS issue or spread pathway, the waterbody, aquatic resource, location or pathway involved, the proposed management activity and the expected environmental, stewardship or management result.

The Community Grant Program complements Minnesota's existing AIS management system. A Community Grant does not replace required permits, approvals, species-handling requirements, reporting obligations or Tribal, local, state or federal authority.

For this funding opportunity, grant requests must be $20,000 to $150,000, and substantive project work must be completed within 12 months or less. Up to two additional months may be authorized for necessary startup and close-out administration, but not to extend substantive project work.

## E.2 What makes a project fit

A project may fit this activity area when it makes a credible contribution to preventing, detecting, monitoring, responding to, controlling or otherwise managing aquatic invasive species.

Projects may address an aquatic invasive species, a credible prevention or spread concern or an emerging AIS threat when the issue and proposed management approach are supported by current authoritative information. Applicants are not expected at Stage 1 to perform a specialized regulatory or species-status determination.

A project does not fit Appendix E merely because it occurs on or near water, includes general lake stewardship or environmental education, purchases aquatic equipment or discusses invasive species in general. AIS management must be the project's principal funded purpose.

## E.3 Types of AIS management projects

AIS management projects may use different approaches. Depending on the project and applicable technical requirements, approaches may include:

- Prevention of AIS introduction or spread
- Early detection or monitoring tied to an established management or reporting purpose
- Local or community response to an identified AIS issue
- Treatment, control or removal using an appropriate and authorized method
- Education or stewardship that directly supports AIS prevention, detection, response, control or management
- Planning or coordination tied to a defined AIS management need

Planning or coordination may qualify when it addresses a defined AIS management need, produces an actionable or implementable result and has a reasonable pathway toward management action.

Monitoring, surveillance or data collection may qualify when its primary purpose is to support AIS management, prevention, response, stewardship or implementation rather than to conduct scientific research.

## E.4 Projects that may fit

Depending on the AIS issue and project design, projects that may fit include:

- Locally coordinated prevention or spread-reduction activities
- Volunteer or community early-detection and monitoring using appropriate methods and reporting pathways
- Community stewardship or coordinated response supporting an identified AIS management objective
- Education or training directly connected to an AIS management purpose
- Development of an implementable AIS prevention, response or management plan
- Chemical, mechanical, physical, biological, decontamination or other treatment or control activities when the method is authorized, technically appropriate and suitable for the proposed grantee role

- Specialized equipment when it is directly necessary for an eligible AIS project and appropriate controls for use, maintenance, ownership and disposition are established

Treatment and control methods may include chemical, mechanical or physical, biological or other technically appropriate approaches. Specific methods may require project-specific technical review, permits, authorizations, qualifications, monitoring, safety measures or other conditions. Applicants should identify material known requirements at Stage 1 and develop them during Stage 2 as applicable. Required permits and authorizations must be obtained by the time required by law, the responsible authority or the grant agreement. Applicants are not expected to submit a fully engineered management plan at Stage 1.

Equipment purchases do not independently establish eligibility. Equipment must support a defined AIS management purpose and be reasonable for the proposed project.

## E.5 Projects that do not fit

Appendix E is not intended to create a parallel AIS regulatory or technical system. A project may not fit when its primary purpose is:

- General lake, water-quality or natural-resource work without a defined AIS management purpose;
- Scientific research prohibited by the Community Grant Program
- General organizational operations unrelated to a defined AIS project
- Equipment acquisition without a defined management need
- Regulatory, enforcement, permitting, inspection or other governmental functions that Community Grant funding may not lawfully replace, or
- An activity that inherently requires more than 12 months of substantive implementation or cannot reasonably be designed within the $20,000–$150,000 grant range

The existence of other governmental AIS responsibilities does not by itself determine whether a proposed AIS management project is eligible. Under Section 14.2 of the main RFP, Community Grant Program funds may supplement traditional funding for environmental and natural resource activities but may not replace funding already available or ordinarily used for the same activity. Projects must also comply with applicable legal requirements.

An unresolved permit, technical method, specialist agreement, equipment plan or other implementation detail does not automatically make a project ineligible unless it fails a published eligibility requirement. Otherwise, a material unresolved issue is evaluated under the published Stage 1 Project Feasibility criterion.

## E.6 Activity-specific information required at stage 1

If you select this as your primary activity area, the Stage 1 Concept Note will ask for concise information needed to understand how the project fits Appendix E. You should be prepared to identify:

- The AIS species, if known, or the AIS management concern or spread pathway
- The waterbody, aquatic resource, project location or spread pathway involved
- Whether the project primarily involves prevention, early detection, monitoring, response, treatment or control, education supporting management or planning or coordination
- The main activities proposed
- The realistic AIS management or stewardship result expected during the grant period

- What the applicant knows now about permits, approvals, proposed methods, specialized expertise, contractors, equipment, reporting or other significant technical needs

Applicants are not expected to make a specialized taxonomic determination when authoritative confirmation is pending. Technical and approval needs do not necessarily have to be resolved at Stage 1.

## E.7 Additional activity-specific information at stage 2

If your Concept Note advances, the Stage 2 Full Application may ask for additional information needed to evaluate the actual project. Depending on the project, this may include:

- The AIS problem, species or spread pathway, affected waterbody or project area, management context and objective and authoritative information supporting the proposed approach
- The technical, monitoring, treatment, prevention or control method
- Permit or approval status and applicable reporting pathway
- Qualified contractor, technical expert, partner or other implementation roles
- Equipment specifications and plans for appropriate use and maintenance
- Species-handling, disposal, safety, data-management and non-target-risk considerations when applicable
- Follow-up management and long-term stewardship needs
- Practical performance measures appropriate to the project

The DNR will request information proportionate to the project. A prevention or volunteer-monitoring project should not be required to provide the same technical information as a chemical treatment or other specialized control project.

## E.8 Technical, regulatory, equipment and authorization issues

Applicants are responsible for complying with applicable AIS laws, permits, approvals, technical requirements, species-handling requirements, environmental requirements and reporting obligations. Community Grant funding does not authorize an activity that otherwise requires approval from the DNR or another authority.

Projects involving multiple jurisdictions or connected waters should identify relevant management entities and a credible pathway to necessary coordination. Not all agreements need to be finalized at Stage 1.

A Community Grant applicant does not need to possess every specialized AIS skill internally. An applicant may use qualified contractors, technical partners, DNR guidance, Tribal natural-resource expertise, county or watershed expertise or other appropriate expertise. The proposed project must have a credible path to obtaining the expertise needed to carry out the work safely and effectively.

Where the eligible legal applicant differs from the substantive project lead, the application must identify their roles. The eligible legal applicant remains responsible for the award if selected, subject to successful pre-award review and execution of the grant agreement.

Projects involving Tribal lands, waters, natural resources, jurisdiction, treaty-protected interests, culturally important resources or other matters subject to Tribal governmental authority will require coordination, authorization or other action by the affected Tribal Nation. At Stage 1, applicants should identify known Tribal governmental actions that could materially affect feasibility when that information can appropriately be

included. Applicants should not submit culturally restricted, sacred or other protected information through ordinary application fields.

### E.9 Help and technical information

Applicant resources and technical assistance may provide additional help with choosing the appropriate activity area, locating authoritative AIS information, understanding permits and reporting pathways and developing a realistic prevention, monitoring, response, treatment, control or planning project.

The DNR will rely on existing authoritative AIS technical and reporting systems rather than create separate Community Grant Program AIS standards or reporting systems.

Resources and technical assistance may explain the requirements in the RFP but do not create new eligibility or scoring requirements.

# Appendix F. Stage 1 Concept Note Form and Instructions

**Name of Granting Agency:** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

**Title of Grant Program/Opportunity:** Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Community Grant Program

## FY2027 RFP 01: Community Impact Funding Round

**November 5, 2026**

Use this appendix with the main Request for Proposals and the statutory activity appendix that best fits your project. The main RFP contains the controlling eligibility, scoring, advancement, submission and grant requirements.

## How to use this offline version

This appendix is the official offline accessible version of the Stage 1 Concept Note questions, instructions and required information.

Use it to review the questions and prepare your responses before entering them in Foundant.

The Foundant version may look different. Questions may appear in a different order or on different screens, and Foundant may use text boxes, drop-down menus, check boxes, character limits or other response formats. The substantive information applicants are required to provide must remain equivalent to this appendix.

Unless the DNR formally authorizes another submission method, completing this offline version does not submit a Concept Note.

Submit the Concept Note through Foundant by the Stage 1 deadline identified in the RFP.

If you need an accessibility accommodation to access, complete or submit the Concept Note, use the accessibility process described in the RFP.

*An asterisk (*) identifies a required question.* All questions and follow-up response fields are displayed together rather than hidden through branching. If a follow-up does not apply to your project, enter "Not applicable" in its response field. If you do not know an answer and "Not sure" is available, select it. Do not enter "Not applicable" for a required eligibility or identity question unless the question expressly allows it.

## F.1 About the Concept Note

The Concept Note is the first competitive stage of the ENRTF Community Grant Program funding opportunity.

It is designed to let applicants explain a project idea without preparing a Full Application.

Use plain language. The DNR does not award points for professional grant-writing style, specialized evaluation terminology or polished formatting.

Stage 1 asks only for information needed to:

I. Determine applicant and project eligibility
II. Apply the published Stage 1 scoring criteria
III. Administer Stage 1 advancement
IV. Understand what may need further development if the project advances to Stage 2

Unless the RFP or the applicable activity appendix specifically requires otherwise, you do not need to have at Stage 1:

V. A detailed budget
VI. A completed work plan
VII. Completed permits
VIII. Executed partner agreements
IX. Final site-control documentation
X. A formal results framework
XI. Financial-capacity documents
XII. Tax returns
XIII. Bank information
XIV. Resumes
XV. An organizational chart, or
XVI. Other pre-award documentation

Review Section 18 of the RFP before completing the Concept Note.

### Stage 1 evaluation criteria

Each complete and eligible Concept Note will be evaluated using the same four published Stage 1 criteria, totaling 100 points. Stage 1 scores do not carry forward or combine with Stage 2 scores.

| Stage 1 Evaluation Criteria | Maximum Points |
|---|---|
| Expanding access and statutory priority | 25 |
| Environmental or natural resource need and expected benefit | 30 |
| Project idea and expected results | 25 |
| Project feasibility | 20 |
| Total | 100 |

An eligible Concept Note must earn at least 50 of 100 points to meet the minimum Stage 1 merit threshold. Meeting that threshold does not guarantee an invitation to submit a Stage 2 Full Application. See Part 3, Sections 18-20 of the RFP.

The same Stage 1 criteria and point values apply to all eligible Concept Notes. The activity appendices help determine statutory activity area eligibility and may provide technical information relevant to the published criteria, but they do not create separate scoring tracks.

## F.2 Before you start

Before completing the Concept Note, review the applicant and project eligibility requirements in the RFP and the appendix for the statutory activity area that best fits the principal funded purpose of your project.

Be ready to describe:

I. The eligible legal applicant
II. The substantive project lead
III. The project idea
IV. The place, community or natural resource involved
V. The environmental or natural resource need or opportunity
VI. The benefit or change the project is intended to produce
VII. The approximate funding request
VIII. What you know now about making the project happen

Choose one primary statutory activity area based on the principal funded purpose of the project.

You may identify other activity areas that also relate to the project, but at Stage 1 you will answer the activity-specific questions only for the primary activity area you select.

The DNR will evaluate statutory activity-area eligibility under the primary activity area selected by the applicant. The DNR will not move the application to a different activity area after the Stage 1 deadline. The eligible legal applicant may be different from the substantive project lead; both must be identified at Stage 1, and an approved fiscal agent does not replace the legal applicant.

## F.3 Preliminary eligibility and project-fit questions

These questions support applicant self-assessment and DNR eligibility screening. They do not replace the DNR's eligibility determination under the RFP. A "No" or "Not sure" answer may identify an issue for verification; it is not automatically a competitive score. Describe substantive evidence in the later Concept Note questions.

**F3-01. Is the eligible legal applicant identified in this Concept Note permitted to apply under Section 7 of the RFP? ***

Eligible legal applicants include nonprofit organizations; Tribal Nations and eligible Tribal governmental entities; eligible local and regional governmental entities; and other eligible recipients under the governing Community Grant Program authority.

*State agencies, the University of Minnesota Board of Regents and for-profit businesses may not receive Community Grant awards.*

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F3-02. Does your proposed project fit at least one of the five statutory activity areas described in Section 2.2 and Appendices A-E of the RFP? ***

1. **Helping adversely impacted communities respond to environmental degradation and related health concerns**
2. **Environmental and natural-resource education and awareness**
3. **Preserving or enhancing air, land, water and other natural resources that otherwise may be substantially impaired or destroyed in any area of the state**
4. **Maintaining or improving existing state, regional or local trails, or**
5. **Aquatic invasive species management ***

*If your project does not fit one of these activity areas, it may be ineligible. The DNR will determine eligibility under the RFP and the selected primary activity area.*

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F3-03. Does the proposed project provide a meaningful environmental or natural resource benefit in Minnesota? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F3-04. Is the project grounded in an identifiable community or place-based need, priority or opportunity, with an appropriate public or community benefit connected to its environmental or natural resource purpose? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F3-05. Can the substantive project work reasonably be completed within 12 months or less? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F3-06. Is the amount of the Community Grant Program funding requested between $20,000 minimum and $150,000 maximum? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F3-07. You have identified major site, property, jurisdiction, permission, approval or similar issue that could materially affect project implementation? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F3-08. If a project involves a trail, will the proposed work avoid construction of a new trail or new trail segment? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐ Not a trail project

**F3-09. Have you reviewed the statutory appendix for your project's selected primary purpose? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

## F.4 Applicant and project leadership

**F4-01. Give your project a short working title. ***

*250 characters or fewer.*

**F4-02. What is the legal name of the eligible applicant organization or governmental entity? ***

Identify the organization or governmental entity that would be the grantee if selected, subject to successful pre-award review and a final grant agreement. Do not substitute the substantive project lead or fiscal agent unless that entity is also the eligible legal applicant. See Section 7 of the RFP. *250 characters or fewer.*

The eligible legal applicant identified at Stage 1 remains the applicant throughout the competition and, if selected, is the proposed grantee.

A community group, informal organization, coalition or other participant that is not itself an eligible legal applicant may participate through an eligible legal applicant.

**F4-03. Which description best fits the legal applicant? ***

☐ Nonprofit organization ☐ Tribal Nation or eligible Tribal governmental entity ☐ Local governmental entity ☐ Regional governmental entity ☐ Other eligible organization or governmental entity under the RFP ☐ Not sure

**If Other eligible organization or governmental entity under the RFP to Question F4-03, please describe.**

*250 characters or fewer.*

**F4-04. Identify one substantive project lead for the proposed project? ***

The substantive project lead is the person, group or organization principally responsible for the project idea, relevant community or place relationships and substantive environmental or natural resource work. The substantive project lead may be the legal applicant or another project participant. *250 characters or fewer.*

**F4-05. Which description best fits the substantive project lead? ***

☐ Same organization or governmental entity as the legal applicant ☐ Nonprofit organization ☐ Tribal Nation or Tribal governmental entity ☐ Local or regional governmental entity ☐ Informal or unregistered community group ☐ Collaboration or coalition ☐ Individual acting on behalf of a participating group or organization ☐ Other ☐ Not sure

**If Other to Question F4-05, please describe it.**

*250 characters or fewer.*

**F4-06. If the legal applicant and substantive project lead are different, briefly describe their relationship.**

This information helps the DNR understand who leads the substantive work and who would have legal and financial accountability for the award. If the legal applicant and substantive project lead are the same, enter "Not applicable." This information does not by itself create a separate scoring factor. *400 characters or fewer.*

The legal applicant may not be replaced with a different competitive applicant during Stage 2. Project partnerships and fiscal arrangements may continue to develop as permitted by the RFP.

**F4-07. Primary contact name ***

**F4-08. Primary contact title or role ***

**F4-09. Primary contact email ***

**F4-10. Primary contact phone ***

**F4-11. Has either the eligible legal applicant or the substantive project lead previously received ENRTF funding directly? ***

A. Eligible legal applicant: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
B. Substantive project lead: ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F4-12. If either answer to Question F4-11 is "Yes" or "Not sure," provide identifying information for the relevant applicant or project lead. If both answers are "No," enter "Not applicable." ***

For each relevant entity, provide a project title, recipient name, project number, approximate year or other information you know. The DNR may verify prior direct ENRTF funding. *250 characters or fewer.*

**F4-13. Is this substantive project lead associated with another Stage 1 Concept Note in this funding round? ***

A substantive project lead may submit no more than two distinct Concept Notes in Stage 1, and no more than one may advance to Stage 2. The limit applies even when the legal applicants differ. This is an administrative question, not a separate scoring criterion.

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

If Yes to Question F4-13, enter the other Concept Note's working title if known. Otherwise, enter "not applicable." *250 characters or fewer.*

## F.5 Project identification and statutory activity

**F5-01. Which statutory activity area best reflects the principal funded purpose of the project? ***

Review Appendices A through E before selecting one primary activity area. Select the area best reflecting what the grant funds would principally support. If unsure, use the RFP guidance and question process before submitting; the DNR will not change the selected primary activity area after the deadline.

☐ A. Adversely impacted communities ☐ B. Education and awareness ☐ C. Preserving or enhancing natural resources ☐ D. Existing trail maintenance or improvement ☐ E. Aquatic invasive species management

**F5-02. Does the project also relate to another statutory activity area? ***

Select all that apply. Additional activity areas do not create additional scoring criteria or require another complete set of activity-specific Stage 1 questions.

☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ No additional activity area

## F.6 Place, community and expanding access

**F6-01. Where would the project happen? ***

Describe the location or geographic area clearly enough for the DNR to understand the Minnesota benefit. You may identify a neighborhood, city, county, Tribal Nation, lake, watershed, trail, school community, multiple sites, statewide area or another relevant geography. An exact parcel is not required at Stage 1 unless the applicable activity appendix requires one. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F6-02. Which community, place or natural resource is expected to benefit from the proposed project? ***

Identify the beneficiary or benefiting resource rather than the applicant unless they are the same. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F6-03. What community or place-based knowledge, priorities, relationships, plans or experience informed this project idea? ***

Describe what is relevant to the project. If community involvement or project relationships are still developing, explain what you know as of time of submission. The DNR does not require a particular community-engagement method or formal endorsement at Stage 1. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F6-04. Which of the following are relevant to how this project expands participation in or access to ENRTF funding? ***

Select all that apply. Selecting more boxes does not increase the score. The DNR will consider the relevance and strength of the information provided under the published criterion.

- ☐ Legal applicant has not previously received direct ENRTF funding
- ☐ Substantive project lead has not previously received direct ENRTF funding
- ☐ Project involves a community or organization with limited prior access to ENRTF funding
- ☐ Project addresses barriers that have made participation in ENRTF funding difficult
- ☐ Project is grounded in community knowledge, relationships or priorities
- ☐ Project involves a community adversely affected by pollution or environmental degradation
- ☐ Another relevant circumstance
- ☐ Not sure

**F6-05. How, if applicable, would this project help expand participation in or access to ENRTF funding? ***

Refer to any relevant selections in Question F6-04 and explain the circumstances or barriers involved, if known. The applicant need not belong to the benefiting community or be the substantive project lead. If this does not apply or is not known, say so. *You do not need to qualify under Activity A to respond to this question. 500 characters or fewer.*

**F6-06. Has the community, place or natural resource expected to benefit from this project been adversely affected by pollution or environmental degradation? If so, briefly describe the adverse effects and how the proposed project relates to them.**

If this does not apply or you are not sure, you may say so. The DNR does not require use of a particular environmental-justice map or dataset at Stage 1. *500 characters or fewer.*

## F.7 Environmental or natural resource need and expected benefit

**F7-01. What environmental or natural-resource condition, problem, need or opportunity makes this project important? ***

Explain what is happening now using the information reasonably available to you. *1,000 characters or fewer.*

**F7-02. Why does this matter and what environmental or natural-resource benefit do you expect the project to provide? ***

Focus on the meaningful benefit that could reasonably result from the proposed project. *1,000 characters or fewer.*

## F.8 Project idea and expected results

**F8-01. What would you do as part of this project? ***

Describe the main project work. A detailed work plan is not required at Stage 1. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F8-02. If the project works as intended, what would be different? ***

Describe the change you expect the project to contribute to. You do not need to use terms such as outputs, outcomes, indicators, targets, logic model or theory of change. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F8-03. What might help you know whether the project made a difference? ***

Describe a practical sign, observation, measure, record or other way you might recognize progress or change. A formal evaluation or monitoring plan is not required at Stage 1. *500 characters or fewer.*

## F.9 Project feasibility and Stage 2 development

Stage 1 does not require every implementation matter to be complete.

The questions in this section help the DNR evaluate whether the project has a credible path to implementation and understand what may need further development if the project advances.

All feasibility follow-up questions are shown. For a follow-up that does not apply, enter "Not applicable." If something is unresolved, explain what you know. An unresolved matter does not automatically make a project ineligible unless a published requirement applies.

Identifying something that is still developing does not by itself make a project less competitive.

**F9-01. What makes you think this project could be carried out successfully within the requested funding and project period? ***

You may describe relevant people or organizations, community or technical knowledge, prior experience, existing relationships, site or seasonal conditions, available resources, preliminary planning or other factors that make the project workable. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F9-02. Which of the following would still need development or resolution if the project advances to Stage 2? ***

Select all that apply. Select "Nothing significant identified at this time" alone if no major matters are known.

☐ Detailed project design or methods ☐ Work plan or schedule ☐ Detailed budget ☐ Project partners or roles ☐ Fiscal agent or financial-administration arrangements ☐ Property or site access ☐ Permits ☐ Governmental approvals or authorization ☐ Tribal governmental approval or internal governmental process ☐ Technical review or technical design ☐ Procurement or contractor planning ☐ Staffing ☐ Performance measures or reporting approach ☐ Nothing significant identified at this time ☐ Other

**F9-03. Briefly describe the most important matters that would need to be developed or resolved during Stage 2.**

Identify what you know now. You are not expected to resolve these matters before submitting the Concept Note unless the RFP or applicable activity appendix specifically requires it. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F9-04. Of the matters identified above, which one or two are most important to resolve if the project advances to Stage 2? ***

This information helps the DNR understand the project-development sequence. It is not a separate scoring criterion. *250 characters or fewer.*

**F9-05. Are any of the matters identified above tied to a known external schedule, meeting cycle, approval process, season, third-party decision or other timing constraint? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐ Not applicable

**F9-06. If Yes or Not sure to Question F9-05, describe the timing information you know now.**

Examples may include a governmental meeting cycle, Tribal governmental process, permit review period, property decision, seasonal field condition, partner approval, technical review or another external dependency. Do not propose your own Stage 2 deadline. If the project advances, the DNR will establish the applicable Stage 2 schedule under the RFP. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F9-07. Does the project depend on access to a particular property, site, waterbody, trail or other location? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐ Not applicable

**F9-08. If Yes to Question F9-07, what is the current status of access?**

☐ Access or authority is in place ☐ Access or authority is being developed ☐ Access or authority is not yet in place ☐ Multiple sites have different statuses ☐ Not sure ☐ Other

**Brief explanation, if useful:**

*500 characters or fewer.* Final site-control documentation is generally not required at Stage 1 unless the applicable activity appendix or another controlling requirement says otherwise.

**F9-10. Do you know whether permits, permissions, governmental approvals or other authorizations may be needed? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐ Not applicable

**If Yes or Not sure to Question F9-10, briefly identify what you know now.**

Completed permits and approvals are generally not required at Stage 1 unless the RFP, applicable activity appendix or law requires them earlier. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F9-11. Are other organizations, groups, communities or partners involved or likely to be involved? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Still developing ☐ Not sure

**If Yes or Still developing to Question F9-11, identify the significant partners you know about and briefly describe the role you expect them to play.**

Formal letters or executed agreements are not required at Stage 1 unless a specific requirement says otherwise. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F9-12. Is there another major dependency, uncertainty, including other funding needed to complete the project, that could significantly affect whether the project can move forward?**

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**If Yes or Not sure to Question F9-12, briefly explain. If the project depends on another funding source, identify the source and indicate whether that funding is secured, anticipated or still being pursued.**

500 characters or fewer.

## F.10 Funding and project timing

**F10-01. How much Community Grant funding are you requesting? ***

Enter an amount within the grant range established in the RFP. Request the amount you reasonably expect the project to need. A detailed budget is not required at Stage 1. Requesting the maximum amount does not make a project more competitive. The amount requested at Stage 1 is a preliminary estimate. If invited to Stage 2, applicants may refine their requested amount within the $20,000 to $150,000 funding range, subject to Section 4.2 of the main RFP and the requirement that the project remain materially consistent with the Concept Note that earned advancement

**F10-02. About how many months of substantive project implementation would the project need? ***

Substantive project implementation must fit within the maximum period established in the RFP. Do not include additional startup or closeout time that may be authorized separately under the RFP.

## F.11 Activity-specific Stage 1 questions

Answer only the subsection for the primary statutory activity area selected in Question F5-01.

These questions supplement the common Concept Note questions.

The applicable activity appendix contains the controlling activity-specific eligibility and technical requirements.

### F.11A Activity A: Helping Adversely Impacted Communities Respond to Environmental Degradation and Related Health Concerns

**F11-A1. Briefly describe the community that is adversely impacted and is expected to benefit from the project. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**F11-A2. What environmental degradation or environmental condition is important to this project, and how does it affect or create concerns for the community? ***

Use the information reasonably available to you. You are not required to use a particular map or dataset, conduct a new technical analysis or submit a new environmental or health study solely to answer this question. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F11-A3. How would the proposed project help the community respond to that environmental condition or related concern? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

## F.11B Activity B: Environmental and Natural-Resource Education and Awareness

**F11-B1. What environmental or natural-resource stewardship topic would the project address, and who is the intended audience? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**F11-B2. What do you want participants or the audience to learn, understand or be better able to do? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**F11-B3. How would the project deliver the education or awareness activity, and how is it connected to stewardship of Minnesota's air, land, water, forests, fish, wildlife or other natural resources? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

## F.11C Activity C: Preserving or Enhancing Natural Resources Substantially Impaired or Destroyed

**F11-C1. What natural resource would the project preserve or enhance, and what condition, impairment, threat or loss is the project responding to? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**F11-C2. What physical, ecological, management, restoration, protection or other intervention would the project carry out? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**F11-C3. What do you know now about the project site, land or water involved, technical approach, permits or approvals, and who would have continuing responsibility for the project, if applicable? ***

Provide what you know now. Final designs, permits, site-control documents and technical studies are not generally required at Stage 1 unless Appendix C specifically requires them. 500 characters or fewer.

## F.11D Activity D: Maintaining or Improving Existing State, Regional or Local Trails

**F11-D1. Identify the existing state, regional or local trail and describe the part of the trail the project would address. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**F11-D2. What maintenance or improvement work would the project carry out, and what problem or need would that work address? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**F11-D3. Would any part of the proposed project construct a new trail or new trail segment? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F11-D4. Would any part of the project materially extend the existing trail beyond its current route or footprint? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F11-D5. If yes or not sure to either question, briefly describe the proposed work.**

*500 characters or fewer.*

New trails and new trail segments are not eligible under this funding opportunity.

Appendix D contains the controlling activity-specific requirements. Completed permits, engineering, environmental review or final authorization documents are not generally required at Stage 1 unless the RFP or Appendix D specifically requires them.

## F.11E Activity E: Aquatic Invasive Species Management

**F11-E1. What aquatic invasive species, aquatic invasive species concern or spread pathway would the project address and what waterbody, aquatic resource, location or pathway is involved? ***

*750 characters or fewer.*

**F11-E2. Which type of aquatic invasive species management work best describes the project? ***

Select all that apply.

☐ Prevention ☐ Early detection or surveillance ☐ Monitoring tied to management ☐ Response ☐ Treatment or control ☐ Education supporting aquatic invasive species management ☐ Planning or coordination ☐ Other ☐ Not sure

**F11-E3. What aquatic invasive species management or stewardship result do you expect during the grant period? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**F11-E4. What do you know now about permits, approvals, proposed treatment or monitoring methods, specialized expertise, contractors, equipment, reporting or other significant technical needs? ***

Provide what you know now. You do not need completed permits, final technical designs or a fully developed aquatic invasive species management plan at Stage 1 unless Appendix E specifically requires them. *500 characters or fewer.*

### F.11F Common statutory and eligibility screens

**F11-F1. Is scientific research the primary purpose of the proposed project? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

**F11-F2. If Yes or Not sure to Question F11-F1, briefly describe the purpose of any research, monitoring, testing, data collection or scientific work.**

Community Grant funds may not be awarded for a scientific research project. Monitoring, surveillance, testing or data collection may be part of an otherwise eligible project when its primary purpose is management, prevention, response, stewardship, implementation, education or another eligible program purpose rather than scientific research. *500 characters or fewer.*

**F11-F3. Would the proposed Community Grant Program funding support eligible environmental or natural resource work in addition to, rather than replace, traditional funding that is already available or ordinarily used for the same activity? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure ☐ Not applicable

**If No or Not sure to Question F11-F3, briefly explain.**

*500 characters or fewer.*

## F.12 Review, acknowledgments and certifications

Before submitting, review your Concept Note for completeness.

Do not include:

I. Social Security numbers
II. government identification numbers
III. bank account information
IV. tax returns
V. payment-card information
VI. protected cultural information
VII. precise locations of sensitive natural or cultural resources
VIII. legally protected personnel information, or
IX. other restricted or sensitive information unless the DNR specifically directs you to provide that information through an approved secure process.

**F12-01. Accuracy acknowledgment ***

☐ I have reviewed the information in this Concept Note and believe it is true, correct and reliable to the best of my knowledge.

**F12-02. Stage 1 and Stage 2 acknowledgment ***

☐ I understand that submitting a Concept Note does not guarantee advancement to Stage 2 or a grant award.

**F12-03. Later-requirements acknowledgment ***

☐ I understand that additional eligibility, technical, legal, financial, administrative and pre-award requirements may apply if the Concept Note advances or is selected for funding.

**F12-04. Applicant continuity acknowledgment ***

☐ I understand that the eligible legal applicant identified in this Concept Note remains the competitive applicant if the project advances to Stage 2.

**F12-05. Project continuity acknowledgment ***

☐ I understand that a project invited to Stage 2 may be further developed but must remain materially consistent with the project that earned the Stage 2 invitation.

F12-06**. Name of person submitting the Concept Note ***

*[Enter response here.]*

**F12-07. Role or relationship to the legal applicant ***

*[Enter response here.]*

## Financial-related felony certification

Complete Question F12-08 only if the Community Grant amount requested in Question F10-01 is $50,000 or more.

**F12-08. Financial-related felony certification**

For applicants to whom this requirement applies, use the definition and instructions provided by the DNR for the applicable statewide certification.

☐ I certify that no current principal of the applicant organization has been convicted of a felony financial crime during the last 10 years. ☐ This certification does not apply because the requested amount is less than $50,000.

## F.13 Submit the Concept Note

Submit the Concept Note through Foundant by the Stage 1 deadline identified in the RFP.

The Foundant submission record will establish the official date and time received.

Do not email this offline Word version as your Concept Note unless the DNR has formally authorized another submission method.

If you need an accessibility accommodation to complete or submit the Concept Note, use the reasonable-accommodation process in the RFP.

After submission, keep a copy of the submission confirmation and your submitted Concept Note for your records.

# Appendix G. Stage 2 Full Application Form and Instructions

**Name of Granting Agency:** Minnesota Department of Natural Resources

**Title of Grant Program/Opportunity:** Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund Community Grant Program

## FY2027 RFP 01: Community Impact Funding Round

**November 5, 2026**

This appendix is part of the Request for Proposals (RFP). Read the main RFP and the activity-area appendix that applies to your project before preparing a Full Application.

## How to use this offline version

This appendix is the official offline accessible version of the Stage 2 Full Application questions, instructions and required information.

Use it to review the questions and prepare your responses before entering them in Foundant.

The Foundant version may look different. Questions may appear in a different order or on different screens and Foundant may use text boxes, drop-down menus, check boxes, character limits or other response formats. The substantive information applicants are required to provide must remain equivalent to this appendix.

Unless the DNR formally authorizes another submission method, completing this offline version does not submit a Full Application.

Submit the Full Application through Foundant by the Stage 2 deadline identified in the RFP.

If you need an accessibility accommodation to access, complete or submit the Full Application, use the accessibility process described in the RFP.

*An asterisk (*) identifies a required question.* All questions and follow-up response fields are displayed together rather than hidden through branching. If a follow-up does not apply to your project, enter “Not applicable” in its response field. If you do not know an answer and “Not sure” is available, select it. Do not enter “Not applicable” for a required eligibility or identity question unless the question expressly allows it.

## G.1 About the Full Application

You may submit a Stage 2 Full Application only if the DNR notifies you that your Stage 1 Concept Note has advanced to Stage 2. Do not submit a Full Application unless you receive that notification.

The Stage 2 application period is anticipated for February through April 2027. If your Concept Note advances to Stage 2, the DNR will provide a Stage 2 invitation and application instructions with the actual schedule, Foundant access, response formats, templates, technical assistance information and other details needed to prepare and submit the Full Application.

Appendix G provides the official published Stage 2 Full Application questions and required information. Based on Stage 1 experience, the DNR may clarify existing instructions, improve applicant resources and adjust the presentation of questions in Foundant without creating new substantive application requirements. If a material change to required competitive application information or another substantive competitive requirement is necessary, the DNR will issue and communicate a formal RFP amendment under Section 41.3. An amendment becomes part of the controlling funding opportunity.

Stage 2 is a new competitive review. Stage 1 scores do not carry forward. Full Applications will be evaluated using the Stage 2 criteria published in the RFP.

This appendix provides the official offline accessible version of the Stage 2 Full Application questions and instructions so invited applicants can prepare responses before entering them in Foundant. Stage 2 Full Applications must be submitted through Foundant unless the DNR formally authorizes another submission method under Section 37 of the RFP.

The Foundant version may look different from this appendix. Questions may appear in a different order or on different screens and Foundant may use text boxes, drop-down menus, check boxes, character limits, file uploads or other response formats. The substantive information applicants are required to provide must remain equivalent to this appendix and consistent with the RFP and any formal amendments.

Foundant and later Stage 2 operating instructions may explain or implement the RFP and Appendix G, but they may not introduce an undisclosed eligibility requirement, scoring factor or required competitive response.

If you need an accessibility accommodation to access, complete or submit the Full Application, contact the DNR using the accessibility information in the RFP. The appropriate accommodation will be determined based on the individual request.

### Stage 2 evaluation criteria

Each complete and eligible Full Application will be evaluated using the same four published Stage 2 criteria, totaling 100 points. Stage 1 scores do not carry forward or combine with Stage 2 scores.

| Stage 2 evaluation criteria | Maximum Points |
|---|---|
| Project design and technical approach | 35 |
| Work plan, feasibility and implementation readiness | 30 |

| Stage 2 evaluation criteria | Maximum Points |
|---|---|
| Results and performance | 20 |
| Budget and value | 15 |
| Total | 100 |

An eligible Full Application must earn at least 70 of 100 points to meet the minimum Stage 2 merit threshold. Meeting that threshold does not guarantee an award. See Part 4, Sections 27–30 of the RFP.

## G.2 Applicant and project confirmation

Confirm the information from your Stage 1 Concept Note and further develop the same project. The eligible legal applicant, substantive project lead, primary statutory activity area, project purpose and other elements material to Stage 1 advancement must remain materially consistent. See Sections 23.2 and 26.6 of the RFP.

**G2-01. Project title***

*250 characters or fewer.*

**G2-02. Substantive project lead for the proposed project ***

Name of the person, group, organization, Tribal Nation or eligible governmental entity identified as substantive project lead at Stage 1. *250 characters or fewer.*

**G2-03. Legal applicant that would enter into a grant agreement with the DNR if selected ***

Response: Organization or governmental entity name and type; the legal applicant may not be replaced at Stage 2. *250 characters or fewer.*

**G2-04A. Primary contact name ***

**G2-04B. Primary contact title or role ***

**G2-04C. Primary contact email ***

**G2-04D. Primary contact phone ***

**G2-05. Confirm statutory activity area that best reflects the principal funded purpose of the project? ***

Confirm the primary activity area (A, B, C, D or E) selected at Stage 1; the primary activity area may not be changed.

☐ A. Adversely impacted communities ☐ B. Education and awareness ☐ C. Preserving or enhancing natural resources ☐ D. Existing trail maintenance or improvement ☐ E. Aquatic invasive species management

**G2-06. Additional statutory activities, if any. ***

Select all that apply. Additional activity areas do not create additional scoring criteria or require another complete set of activity-specific Stage 1 questions.

☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ No additional activity area

**G2-07. Requested ENRTF Community Grant Program amount ***

Enter the requested Community Grant Program amount, from $20,000 to $150,000. The Stage 1 funding request was a preliminary estimate. Applicants may increase or decrease the requested amount during Stage 2, provided the project remains materially consistent with the Concept Note that advanced from Stage 1. Any increase must be explained and supported by the developed project activities, work plan and budget, consistent with Section 4.2 of the main RFP.

*$ [Enter amount]*

**G2-08. Project location ***

Describe the location or geographic area clearly enough for the DNR to understand the Minnesota benefit. You may identify a neighborhood, city, county, Tribal Nation, lake, watershed, trail, school community, multiple sites, statewide area or another relevant geography. *500 characters or fewer.*

**G2-09. Describe significant project refinements since Stage 1 Concept Note and explain how the project remains materially consistent with the Concept Note that advanced. ***

If the requested funding amount has increased since Stage 1, explain the reason for the increase and how it supports the developed project.

*1,000 characters or fewer.*

## G.3 Project design and technical approach

This section principally supports Criterion 1: Project Design and Technical Approach (35%). Explain the developed project you propose to carry out.

**G3-01. What environmental or natural-resource need, problem or opportunity will this project address? ***

Explain what is happening now using the information reasonably available to you. *1,000 characters or fewer.*

**G3-02. Describe the project design and the principal activities you will carry out. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G3-03. Explain why the proposed approach is appropriate for the need, place, community, resource or management problem you identified. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G3-04. Explain how the activities are expected to lead to the environmental, natural-resource or community benefit you described. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G3-05. Describe important technical methods, practices, standards or sources of information that shape the approach, if applicable.**

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G3-06. Identify important technical questions or uncertainties that remain and explain how you expect to address them.**

*500 characters or fewer.*

## G.4 Activity-specific technical questions

Complete the questions for the primary statutory activity selected at Stage 1. The DNR may request information related to an additional activity only when authorized under the RFP and necessary for applicable eligibility, technical review, feasibility or implementation requirements. These questions support the common Stage 2 criteria and do not create separate activity-specific points.

### Activity A. Helping Adversely Impacted Communities Respond to Environmental Degradation and Related Health Concerns

**G4-A01. Describe the community or place affected by environmental degradation or a related concern, why the condition matters and the information that supports your understanding. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-A02. Explain how the proposed project responds to that condition and is expected to benefit the affected community or place. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-A03. Identify any additional supporting information, technical documentation, community knowledge, government information or analysis that is important to understand the project.**

*500 characters or fewer.*

Upload document, if applicable.

You are not required to use a particular map or dataset or conduct a new technical analysis solely for this question.

### Activity B. Environmental and Natural-Resource Education and Awareness

**G4-B01. Describe the education or awareness objectives, intended audience and stewardship-related learning or behavior the project is intended to support. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-B02. Describe the education or engagement methods, materials, activities and delivery approach. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-B03. Describe important accessibility, language, cultural, safety, site, permission or distribution considerations and how the project will address them. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

## Activity C. Preserving or Enhancing Minnesota's Natural Resources

**G4-C01. Identify the natural resource, its condition or threat and the preservation or enhancement work proposed. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-C02. Describe the site, technical approach and any design, restoration, management or other methods important to the work. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-C03. Describe known site-control, permit, authorization, maintenance or continuing-responsibility considerations. ***

Identify what is known and what remains to be resolved. *500 characters or fewer.*

## Activity D. Maintaining or Improving Existing State, Regional or Local Trails

**G4-D01. Describe the existing state, regional or local trail and the information that supports its existing-trail status. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-D02. Describe the proposed maintenance or improvement work and the condition, safety, accessibility, sustainability, resource-protection or other need the proposed maintenance or improvement work addresses. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-D03. Does the project include a reroute, alignment adjustment, widening, bridge, boardwalk or other substantial trail structure or facility? If yes, describe the feature, its relationship to the existing trail and why it is needed.**

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-D04. Describe known ownership, site-control, public-use, environmental-review, permit, seasonal, protected-species, design, construction or continuing-maintenance considerations.**

Identify what is known and what remains to be resolved. *500 characters or fewer.*

## Activity E. Aquatic Invasive Species Management

**G4-E01. Describe the AIS management problem, credible prevention or spread concern or emerging threat the project will address. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-E02. Describe the management purpose and proposed approach, such as prevention, planning or coordination, surveillance or monitoring, treatment or control, response or another management activity. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-E03. Identify the information that supports the proposed management approach and describe important technical dependencies or uncertainties. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-E04. If the project includes monitoring, surveillance or data collection, explain how that work will support AIS management, prevention, response, stewardship or implementation rather than scientific research.**

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G4-E05. If the project includes treatment or control, describe the proposed method at the level currently developed and identify known permits, authorizations, technical review or other conditions that may apply.**

A final engineered or fully developed management plan is not required merely to complete this application unless another applicable requirement specifically requires it. *500 characters or fewer.*

## G.5 Work plan

This section principally supports Criterion 2: Work Plan, Feasibility and Implementation Readiness (30%). The work plan should show a credible path to implementation. Readiness does not mean every permit, agreement, contractor or technical detail must already be complete.

The work plan must schedule substantive implementation within 12 months or less. The authorized grant period may include up to two additional months for necessary startup and close-out administration, but not to continue unfinished substantive project work. See Section 4.3 of the RFP.

**G5-01. List the major project activities or work-plan tasks. ***

For each: activity or task, purpose or deliverable, responsible party and anticipated start and end within the 12-month substantive implementation period, as applicable. *500 characters or fewer.*

**G5-02. Describe the sequence of the work and any major dependencies among activities. ***

*10,000 characters or fewer.*

**G5-03. Identify major project milestones or decision points. ***

*10,000 characters or fewer.*

**G5-04. Describe the roles of the substantive project lead, legal applicant, partners, contractors, consultants, volunteers or other key participants. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

## G.6 Implementation readiness

**G6-01. What is already in place to begin and complete the project? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G6-02. What important items still need to be developed, obtained, confirmed or resolved before or during implementation? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G6-03. Identify known permits, environmental reviews, approvals, site access, agreements, procurement, staffing, contracting, seasonal constraints or other dependencies that could materially affect implementation. ***

Entering “not applicable” or “not yet known” is acceptable where appropriate.

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G6-04. For each material unresolved item, describe the current status, who is responsible and the reasonable path and timing for resolving it. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G6-05. Identify project-development or technical-assistance needs that would help the project move successfully toward implementation. ***

Requesting technical assistance will not, by itself, increase or decrease an application's competitive score.

. *500 characters or fewer.*

**G6-06. Describe significant implementation risks and how you would reduce, manage or respond to them. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

## G.7 Results and performance

This section principally supports Criterion 3: Results and Performance (20%). Measures should be proportionate to the project. Applicants are not rewarded for sophisticated evaluation methods for their own sake.

**G7-01. What will the project produce or complete? ***

List the principal outputs or deliverables. *500 characters or fewer.*

**G7-02. What environmental, natural-resource, community, stewardship, management or other relevant change do you expect from the project? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G7-03. How will you know whether the project made the expected difference? ***

Describe practical measures, observations, records or other indicators. *500 characters or fewer.*

**G7-04. How will you document and report project accomplishments to the DNR? ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G7-05. If important results are expected after the grant period, explain what can reasonably be observed or documented during the grant and what longer-term change is expected.**

*500 characters or fewer.*

## G.8 Budget and value

This section principally supports Criterion 4: Budget and Value (15%). The budget should be understandable, reasonable, connected to the work plan and proportionate to the project.

**G8-01. Provide the proposed project budget. ***

Use the official budget categories and format provided for Stage 2. Show the requested Community Grant Program funds and any other project resources separately, where applicable.

*Upload project budget.*

**G8-02. Explain the basis for major costs and how they connect to the work plan. ***

*Upload budget narrative.*

**G8-03. Identify major estimates, quotes, assumptions, unit costs or other information used to develop the budget. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

Upload document, if applicable

**G8-04. Explain why the proposed costs represent reasonable value for the work and expected benefit. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G8-05. Identify other committed or anticipated project resources, if any, and explain whether the project depends on them. ***

Outside funding or in-kind resources do not create a competitive advantage merely because they are available unless the RFP specifically requires them. *500 characters or fewer.*

**G8-06. If the proposed budget includes necessary startup or close-out administration outside the 12-month substantive implementation period, identify the associated activities and costs.**

Costs must be allowable, included in an approved budget, and incurred within an authorized grant period under Section 4.3 of the RFP. *500 characters or fewer.*

Upload document, if applicable

## G.9 Applicant, partners and fiscal structure

**G9-01. Describe the legal applicant's role in the project and its capacity to carry out the responsibilities it would assume under a grant agreement. ***

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G9-02. Identify key project partners and describe their roles and current level of commitment. ***

Do not attach routine support letters unless specifically requested. *500 characters or fewer.*

**G9-03. If a fiscal agent is proposed, identify the proposed fiscal agent, its anticipated responsibilities and any expected fee and explain how the substantive project lead, eligible legal applicant and the fiscal agent would carry out their respective roles.**

*500 characters or fewer.*

**G9-04. Identify the person or role expected to be responsible for project administration, financial administration and required reporting.**

*250 characters or fewer.*

**G9-05. Identify material partner, fiscal agent or organizational arrangements that remain to be finalized and the plan for completing them.**

*500 characters or fewer.*

## G.10 Project-specific attachments

Submit only attachments required by the RFP, your applicable activity-area appendix or a question in this Full Application. Do not submit extra materials simply to make the application longer.

**G10-01. Required project-specific attachments**

Examples may include maps, conceptual designs, technical information, site information, cost documentation or other project-specific materials when they are necessary to understand or evaluate the proposed project. The DNR will not require an attachment merely because another DNR grant program commonly requires it.

Upload only those identified for your project or activity.

## G.11 Information reserved for pre-award

If your application is selected to move forward after competitive review, the DNR may request additional information needed for pre-award review, risk assessment, grant-agreement development, payment arrangements, financial review, authorized signatures or other State requirements. Do not submit pre-award-only information with the Full Application unless the RFP or the DNR specifically requires it at this stage.

Selection for pre-award review is not a grant award and does not authorize project work or spending.

## G.12 Certifications and submission

**G12-01. I certify that the information in this Full Application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.**

☐ I certify that the information in this Full Application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

**G12-02. I understand that submission of a Full Application does not guarantee selection or a grant award.**

☐ I understand that the submission of a Full Application does not guarantee selection or a grant award.

**G12-03. I understand that an applicant selected to move forward may need to provide additional information and satisfy applicable pre-award and grant-agreement requirements before a grant can be executed.**

☐ I understand that an applicant selected to move forward may need to provide additional information and satisfy applicable pre-award and grant-agreement requirements before a grant can be executed.

**G12-04. Additional applicable certifications.**

The final Foundant Stage 2 application will identify and display the full text of any additional certifications required by applicable state law, statewide grants management requirements or a formal amendment to this RFP.

The DNR will identify which certifications apply to each applicant and provide the applicable instructions before submission.

Foundant will not establish new substantive eligibility requirements, competitive criteria or application requirements beyond those authorized by the RFP, its appendices, applicable law or a formal amendment.

If an additional certification would materially change the required competitive application information, the DNR will issue a formal RFP amendment under Section 41.3 before requiring that certification.

**G12-05. Person submitting the application**

**G12-06. Role or relationship to the applicant**

## Financial-related felony certification

Complete Question G12-07 only if the Community Grant amount requested in Question G2-07 is $50,000 or more.

**G12-07. Financial-related felony certification**

For applicants to whom this requirement applies, use the definition and instructions provided by the DNR for the applicable statewide certification.

☐ I certify that no current principal of the applicant organization has been convicted of a felony financial crime during the last 10 years. ☐ This certification does not apply because the requested amount is less than $50,000.

## G.13 Submit the Full Application

Submit the Full Application through Foundant by the Stage 2 deadline identified in the RFP.

The Foundant submission record will establish the official date and time received.

Do not email this offline Word version as your Full Application unless the DNR has formally authorized another submission method.

If you need an accessibility accommodation to complete or submit the Full Application, use the reasonable-accommodation process in the RFP.

After submission, keep a copy of the submission confirmation and your submitted Full Application for your records.