



FY 2026

**Bridging Conservation  
Request for Proposals (RFP)**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....	2
Grant Overview.....	3
Purpose .....	3
Equity Priorities .....	3
Funding Available and Match .....	3
Timeline.....	3
Grant Eligibility and Program Requirements .....	4
Eligible Applicants .....	4
Collaboration.....	4
Eligible Activities.....	4
Allowable and Unallowable costs.....	5
Grant Management and Reporting .....	5
Applying for a Grant.....	5
How To Submit A Question .....	5
How to Apply Using eLINK.....	5
Application Questions .....	6
Application Review .....	6
Selection and Ranking Criteria .....	7
Conflict of Interest.....	7
Privacy Notice.....	7
Grant Recipient Information.....	8
Grant Agreement and Project Period.....	8
Payment Schedule.....	8
Reporting and Administration Requirements .....	8
Prevailing Wage.....	9
Subagreements.....	9

## GRANT OVERVIEW

### PURPOSE

Bridging Conservation was established from the Laws of Minnesota 2023, Chapter 60, Article 1, section 3, subd. 6, with the purpose of creating new or expanding existing outreach and education programs to non-native English-speaking communities. The Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) Bridging Conservation Grants Program supports education and outreach activities regarding conservation.

### EQUITY PRIORITIES

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making.

Multiple DEI approaches will be included in this grant process including:

- Resources for applicants: RFP informational meeting with recording posted online
  - [Register for the informational meeting](#) on February 25 from 1-2PM on Teams
- Resources for applicants: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document
- Resources for applicants: One-on-one application support sessions during the application period
- Resources for applicants: Resources can be made available in alternate, accessible formats
- Weighted scoring criteria: How the applicant will serve non-native English-speaking communities.

### FUNDING AVAILABLE AND MATCH

A total of \$135,000 is available through this Request for Proposal. Grant requests must be between a minimum of \$10,000 and a maximum of \$45,000. Proposals that do not fall within this dollar range will not be accepted. There is no required match for this program. Prior to final selection, BWSR staff may engage applicants to resolve questions or discuss modifications to the project or funding request.

### TIMELINE

Applications must be submitted by 4:30 PM CT/CST on April 2, 2026. Late submissions or incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. The grant applicant is responsible for proving timely submittal.

<b>Grant Cycle</b>	<b>Grant Cycle Dates</b>
Application period open	February 4, 2026
Application period close	April 2, 2026
Anticipated awards	Late April 2026
Anticipated grant agreements sent to recipients	Late April/early May 2026
Work plan submittal deadline	May 29, 2026

Grant execution deadline	June 15, 2026
Grant agreement end date	December 31, 2027

## GRANT ELIGIBILITY AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants for competitive grants include:

- a) Non-governmental organizations
  - o A non-governmental organization is defined as an organization that is a nonprofit, also known as a charitable organization, that is formed for the purpose of fulfilling a mission to improve the common good of society rather than to acquire and distribute profits. The organization meets the definition in Minn. Stat. §309.50 Subd. 4 and meets the Internal Revenue Service code definitions, with the most common type being a 501 (c) (3), (Policy 08-06 Minnesota Office of Grants Management).
- b) Political subdivisions/Local governments
  - o Cities
  - o Counties
  - o Local government joint power boards
  - o Soil and water conservation districts
  - o Townships
  - o Watershed districts
  - o Watershed management organizations
- c) Tribal Governments and Commissions or Consortiums representing Tribal governments
  - o Minnesota Tribal Governments refers to the federally recognized sovereign tribal nations that share geography with Minnesota (MINN STAT. 10.65), the 1854 Treaty Authority, and the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission.
- d) Public/Charter schools (K-12)

Applicants must operate in Minnesota and conduct grant activities that benefit the resources of Minnesota. Applicants must have state or federal recognition as a formal organization or entity, such as a Minnesota Tax ID or Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. Organizations or groups that do not have state or federal recognition must apply with a fiscal agent. Applicants that are debarred or suspended by the State of Minnesota or the Federal Government are not eligible. Applicants must be in compliance with all applicable federal, State, and local laws, policies, ordinances, rules, and regulations.

### COLLABORATION

Multi-organization collaboration is welcome but not required.

### ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

The term “non-native English-speaking communities” refers to communities whose first and/or primary language is not English.

The primary purpose of activities funded through this grant is to promote conservation to non-native English-speaking communities through education and outreach programs and activities; ensure conservation information, training, and programs are linguistically and culturally relevant and accessible; equip non-native English-speaking communities with the knowledge to practice conservation in their daily lives and advocate for environmental stewardship.

Eligible activities may include administration/coordination, education/information, project development, and supplies and equipment (i.e. with a primary purpose of outreach and/or education).

## ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS

Allowable costs are those costs solely incurred through project activities that are directly related to and necessary for producing the project outcomes described in the proposal. Grant recipients are required to account for the staff time charged to BWSR grants in order to track the expenditure of grant funds and match to ensure the use of the funds is consistent with applicable State and BWSR requirements. Unallowable costs to be charged to BWSR grants include but are not limited to:

- Bad debts, monetary settlements and judgements, late payment fees, and investment management fees
- Donations, fundraising, sponsorships, and acknowledgements
- Entertainment, gifts, prizes, and decorations
- Alcohol
- Interest on loans not authorized under state statute
- Loans of BWSR grant funds
- Lobbying, lobbyists, and political contributions
- Merit awards and bonuses

## GRANT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Eligible activities include local grant administration, management, and reporting that are directly related to and necessary for implementing the project or activity associated with the grant. Grantee is required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments. Applicants who have previously received a grant from BWSR must be in compliance with BWSR requirements for grantee website and eLINK reporting before grant execution and payment.

## APPLYING FOR A GRANT

### HOW TO SUBMIT A QUESTION

For questions regarding this Grant Program and RFP, contact Mandy Duong at [mandy.duong@state.mn.us](mailto:mandy.duong@state.mn.us) with "Bridging Conservation" in the subject line.

For questions regarding the eLINK grants management system, email [elinksupport@state.mn.us](mailto:elinksupport@state.mn.us). Please review the eLINK-related topics below and on BWSR's eLINK webpage before contacting eLINK support.

### HOW TO APPLY USING ELINK

#### 1. Set up your eLINK user account

Proposals need to be submitted via <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/elink>. Eligible applicants without a current eLINK user account must register for an account at <https://elink.bwsr.state.mn.us> no later than seven days prior to the proposal deadline. For eLINK related questions, first visit the eLINK section of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page. If your question is not addressed here, please contact [elinksupport@state.mn.us](mailto:elinksupport@state.mn.us).

2. Complete your funding request (proposal)

See the “[Completing a Funding Request in eLINK](#)” under the “eLINK Training Videos” tab on the eLINK webpage to view a 11-minute online module describing how to complete a Funding Request within eLINK.

- Answers to each question is limited to 2,000 characters. Due to differences in how programs are encoded, be aware that the character limit in eLINK is not the same as Microsoft Word or other text editors.

Applicants must provide answers to the Application Questions as part of their proposal submitted in eLINK. The questions are related to the ranking criteria categories, which determine how proposals are scored by reviewers. The ranking criteria can be found in the “Application Review” section of this RFP.

- Proposals should clearly articulate communities this grant will serve, how it supports outreach and/or education efforts for non-native English-speaking communities, and anticipated outcomes.

## APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Questions	Points
1) Project Abstract: Succinctly describe the anticipated outcomes of the proposed activities, and how you intend to achieve those results.	5
2) How does your organization’s history, mission, and community engagement strategies align with the purpose of the Bridging Conservation Program in creating or expanding conservation outreach and education to non-native English-speaking communities?	5
3) Explain your organization’s capacity to effectively engage non-native English-speaking communities. Include any relevant partnerships, staff expertise, previous grants received, or training.	15
4) Describe the non-native English-speaking communities your project serves. Describe the communities’ current needs and barriers to accessing conservation information or resources, and how your project will address these gaps.	15
5) Describe your organization's proposed activities and explain how these activities will achieve anticipated outcomes in promoting conservation awareness, education, or behavior change among non-native English-speaking communities.	30
6) How will your organization’s proposed activities ensure that conservation information, training, and programs are linguistically and culturally accessible to the communities you serve?	15
7) How will your education and outreach efforts create lasting conservation impacts within the community? Describe how your project will build community knowledge, leadership, or self-sustaining conservation practices. This could include sharing resources and information with other partners.	15

## APPLICATION REVIEW

BWSR staff initially review all applications for eligibility. Eligible applications are further screened and forwarded to a BWSR staff work team that will review and rank the applications, in order, to make final funding decisions, as authorized by the Board. See Selection and Ranking Criteria for each grant in the section below.

## SELECTION AND RANKING CRITERIA

<b>Ranking Criteria</b>	<b>Maximum Points Possible</b>
1. Project Abstract: Clear description of anticipated achievements and outcomes of the proposed activities, and how the organization intends to achieve those results.	5
2. History, mission, and community engagement strategies aligns with the purpose of the Bridging Conservation Program in creating or expanding conservation outreach and education for non-native English-speaking communities.	5
3. Demonstrates extensive relevant experience, strong leadership, established partnerships, and capacity to deliver appropriate programming.	15
4. Describes the non-native English-speaking communities the project serves. Provides data or evidence of need; offers a thoughtful plan to address barriers.	15
5. Describes proposed activities that include education or outreach and connects the activities to anticipated outcomes (related to conservation awareness, education, and/or behavior changes in non-native English-speaking communities). Includes specific examples and methods of engagement.	30
6. Describes how proposed activities are linguistically and culturally accessible to non-native English-speaking communities.	15
7. Outlines sustainable approaches, leadership development, resource and information sharing strategies, or peer-education models ensuring long-term impact.	15
<b>Total Points Available</b>	<b>100</b>

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

State Grant Policy 08-01, (see <https://mn.gov/admin/government/grants/policies-statutes-forms/>) Conflict of Interest for State Grant-Making, also applies to BWSR grantees. Grantees' conflicts of interest are generally considered organizational conflicts of interest. Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice due to competing duties or loyalties,
- A grantee's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties, or
- A grantee or potential grantee has an unfair competitive advantage through being furnished unauthorized proprietary information or source selection information that is not available to all competitors.

## PRIVACY NOTICE

Under Minnesota Statute 13.599, responses to an RFP are nonpublic until the application deadline is reached. At that time, the name and address of the grantee, and the amount requested becomes public. All other data is nonpublic until the negotiation of the grant agreement with the selected grantee is completed. After the application evaluation process is

completed, all data (except trade secret data) becomes public. Data created during the evaluation process is nonpublic until the negotiation of the grant agreement with the selected grantee(s) is completed.

## GRANT RECIPIENT INFORMATION

### GRANT AGREEMENT AND PROJECT PERIOD

Notification of grant award will be in the form of an automated notification from the BWSR eLINK system or an email from BWSR Grants staff to the grantee. Notifications are sent to the Day-to-Day Contact(s) identified by the organization within the eLINK system. This notification includes instructions for further processing of the grant agreement and may also contain grant-specific information such as requirements for completing work plans, disbursement terms, or additional required documentation for processing the grant. Read these instructions carefully as requirements can vary by grant and fiscal year.

BWSR will use grant agreements, and an associated work plan, as contracts for assurance of deliverables and compliance with appropriate statutes, rules, and established policies. BWSR has the right to require a work plan revision or grant agreement amendment for changes in scope. Willful or negligent disregard of relevant statutes, rules and policies may lead to imposition of financial penalties on the grant recipient. Upon receiving the notification of grant award, which indicates approval of an application, and prior to beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving grant funds, the applicant is required to do the following:

1. Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, and submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.
2. Sign a grant contract agreement indicating their intention to complete the project(s) contained in the application. The agreement also authorizes BWSR to monitor progress of the grant. The grant contract agreement must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

The project period starts when the grant agreement is executed, meaning all required signatures have been obtained. Work that occurs before this date is not eligible for reimbursement with grant funds and cannot be used as match.

Grant contract agreement templates can be reviewed on the [Office of Grants Management Forms and FAQs website](#).

The grant agreement will expire on December 31, 2027.

### PAYMENT SCHEDULE

All grant funds will be distributed in one installment promptly after the execution of the Grant Agreement. All costs must be incurred within the grant period. All incurred costs should be calculated or determined before the final report is completed or returning funds. Unspent grant funds must be returned within 30 days of the expiration date of the Grant Agreement. Once final reporting has been completed funds may not be re-requested as funds may not be available.

### REPORTING AND ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

- All grant recipients are required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments of the grant.
- All grant recipients are subject to BWSR's Grant Monitoring and Financial Reconciliation Procedure.
- All grant recipients are subject to BWSR's Grant Noncompliance Policy.
- In the event there is a violation of the terms of the grant agreement, BWSR will enforce the grant agreement and evaluate appropriate actions, up to and including repayment of grant funds at a rate up to 100% of the grant agreement.
- Grant reporting, fiscal management, and administration requirements are the responsibility of the grant recipient.

- Additional information regarding BWSR grant reporting and administration can be found in the Grants Administration Manual ( <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/manual/> )

## PREVAILING WAGE

It is the responsibility of the grant recipient or contractor to pay prevailing wages on construction projects to which state prevailing wage laws apply (Minn. Stat. 177.42 – 177.44). All laborers and mechanics employed by grant recipients and subcontractors funded in whole or in part with state funds included in this RFP shall be paid wages at rates not less than those prevailing on projects of a character similar in the locality. Additional information on prevailing wage requirements is available on the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) website <https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/prevailing-wage-information>. Questions about the application of prevailing wage rates should be directed to DOLI at 651-284-5091.

## SUBAGREEMENTS

Funds may be distributed to partner(s) through the use of sub-agreements. Activities identified in the sub-agreement must fit within the scope of the agreement between BWSR and the recipient and include requirements for fund distribution, implementation, and reporting.