



St. Croix Valley Foundation Proposal Narrative

Please answer these questions in your narrative.

Include any other pertinent information that you deem important.

Please limit your narrative to three pages total.

I. Organization Overview

Provide your mission statement and a brief history of your organization.

Farm Table Foundation (FTF) is a non-profit organization that received 501(c)(3) status in January, 2018, and is supporting farming, seasonal food integrity, and resilience of a local food culture through research, training, and education. FTF founders, Peter Henry and Kari Wenger, began planning to make local food the centerpiece of a rural revitalization program in 2010. In 2014, their initiative moved into a former Chevrolet dealership on Amery, WI's Main Street where they converted 12,000 sq. ft. into a "food hub." The goals include creating a market for local farms, giving restaurant customers the experience of seasonal local produce year round, and providing quality educational experiences through the restaurant, kitchens, classroom, and exhibit hall. Part of that, and the focus of the Natural Heritage Project, includes bringing attention to at-risk species, through art, because a healthy local food culture is only dependent on the care and consideration of the creatures and their homes and maintaining the balance within nature's interdependent ecosystems.

II. Project Description

What is your project? Discuss the specific activities. What public service activity will you provide and where will that activity be conducted? What is the plan and the timeline of the project?

The Natural Heritage Project: Art Giving Voice to At-Risk Species includes exhibits custom designed by independent artists who share an appreciation and general concern toward the natural world. Artists choose a portion of the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Working List (WNHWL), a list of 1,200 at-risk species within Wisconsin compiled by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). They create a series of original works that inspire action, further awareness, and guide individuals of all backgrounds towards making a difference in the situations of the at-risk species.

The initial exhibit for the project, "Much Ado About Bees," by Jessica Turtle featured paintings highlighting seven at-risk species of bees. The second exhibit, "Inopia," by Sarah Nelson, now on display, demonstrates how humans, birds, insects, fish, crustaceans, reptiles, amphibians, flies, rodents, and the habitats of each are interconnected and interdependent and the ways humans have affected those connections. Each artist accompanied their works with research-based informational/educational documents describing how the species contribute to working ecosystems, the present situation of the species and the ways human activity has contributed, and the effects of species' loss to the environment and humans. In addition, each exhibit incorporated hands-on, sensory experiences. For example, Turtle's included a hand-woven sun hive, hand-painted bee boxes, beekeepers' tools, local honey samples, and beekeepers' clothing. Additionally, attendees can listen

to an audio guide while viewing each piece: <https://soundcloud.com/user-23595483/exhibit-audio-guide-inopia>. Nelson's and upcoming exhibits will also include heritage dioramas from the Chicago Field Museum. "Much Ado About Bees" and "Inopia" are both models for the upcoming exhibits that are the focus within this grant cycle.

FTF will host shows in the exhibit hall and will have an open door invitation encouraging attendance by the general public. FTF has also been working closely with the local school district and will anticipate student engagement. While the project is multi-year to ensure each species on the WNHWL is represented, this grant request focuses on five exhibits to be displayed between April 30, 2018-April 30, 2019. Determined artists are securing dates but will fall within this tentative schedule: Artist: Stacey Combs, Exhibit – April 30, 2018 – June 26, 2018; Artist: Brooks Geenen, Exhibit – July 31, 2018 – September 25, 2018; Artist: Mike Carina, Sarah Nelson/Auslandish, or Teri Powers, Exhibit – October, 2018 – November, 2018, Exhibit – December, 2018 – January, 2019, or Exhibit – February, 2019 – March, 2019.

What are the goals you hope to achieve?

1) Engage individuals, including general public and student audiences, in authentic moments of interaction and bring awareness of human involvement, ethics, and responsibility related to at-risk species through individual works of art, accompanying informational/educational pieces, and sensory experiences. **2)** Educate audiences on ways to effect positive change as it relates to at-risk species and resulting impacts. **3)** Represent 125 species this grant cycle (the ultimate goal is to feature every WNHWL species in at least 1 piece of artwork. Anticipated project completion is 8 years: 25 species @ 5-6 artists/year = 1,200) **4)** Engage 5 regional artists to research and create exhibits featuring WNHWL species that bring to light human responsibility in and resulting impacts of species' at-risk status. **5)** Host 5 openings and exhibits with at least 300 people in overall attendance at each. **6)** Host 5 panel/round table discussions featuring subject matter experts, artists, and interested individuals.

How will people find out about your project and/or what will you do to get your project to them?

The event will be broadcast through local publications such as Second Opinion, which has a distribution of 5,000; intercounty and local papers; Midwest Organic Sustainable Education Services (MOSES); Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture's listserv, SUSTAG; and direct mail postcards. In addition, the exhibits will be outlined on the FTF website and Facebook page, which has almost 3,000 followers, and the Natural Heritage Project website and Facebook page. Beyond these venues, individual artists will publicize on their websites and social media presences.

Who is involved in this project (leadership/consultants/volunteers/artists)? Why are their qualifications right for this project? If artistic personnel have not yet been selected, what is the process and/or criteria you will use to select them?

Jessica Turtle, the initial exhibitor of the project, is also the project founder and coordinator and is the curator of each exhibit. Additionally, she serves as the creative director at FTF and her artistic background is a blend of fine art exhibitions, education, and sustainability leadership. FTF will collaborate with experienced regional artists who fit within the project based on artistic interests and concern for at-risk species: Mike Carina – human connection to birds through fine art and three-dimensional objects with social commentary utilizing non-recyclable plastics; Stacey Combs – medicinal plants used by those with mental health concerns, will make connection between human existence and nature's positive effect; Brooks Geenen – the engagement between animals and environment and ways changing environment affects species – specifically birds, what they eat, and their habitat – including insects; Sarah Nelson as Auslandish – story and history through illustrations;

and Teri Power – human engagement with natural environment, paper from plant fibers. In addition, FTF will work with conservation organizations, such as Wisconsin DNR and Wisconsin’s United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) who will provide additional background, guidance, and documentation as it relates to the WNHWL. FTF has submitted a grant request to the Wisconsin Humanities Council, and if funded, will also receive guidance from Anastasia Shartin, who has a 27-year career as an art curator, administrator, and educator, presently working as visual arts director of The Phipps Center for the Arts in Hudson, WI. Also if the WHC grant is funded, each participating artist will receive a \$2,000 stipend.

III. Need, Impact, Evaluation

Why is this project needed?

The current rate of endangered and threatened species are a consequence of habitat loss and global warming resulting from human activity; some research even indicates these actions affect up to 99% of at-risk species. Natural resource agencies note that when one species is eliminated, it sets a chain reaction of negative effects with coexisting organisms, altering nature’s balance. The agencies have identified that loss of species has ecological, environmental, agricultural, and food system effects, such as loss of air and water purification, flood and drought control, pollination of crops and other vegetation, dispersal of seeds, and nutrient cycling. Highlighting the human connection to these environmental changes is the theme of the entire multi-year project. Local and regional artists will create artwork informed by their own research and interpretations of human experiences and their effects that will in turn trigger questioning and action for both the artists and those who participate in their exhibits.

What artistic benefit will result from your activities?

The participating artists will practice their specific mediums and share the process of their creations and research as a part of their exhibits. In addition, as part of the Natural Heritage Project, they and their art become a part of an artistic community. Together they will support each other’s work as well as collectively engage the public. The ultimate artistic benefit comes by highlighting that art is a voice and a way to bring and create awareness. Artworks and informational pieces will become channels that create social interactions surrounding the ways human-induced environmental changes have caused the rate of extinction to far exceed the speciation rate. Not only will individuals engage with the artworks of the individual artists, they will engage with a greater consciousness as it relates to at-risk species of Wisconsin and the impacts they may have as individuals in addressing that great concern.

How will the participants and the larger community benefit from the project activities?

The initiative will encourage observation, questioning, reflection, and discussion relating to human responsibility in creating the endangered species’ situations; the human ethics surrounding those actions; the effects loss of species may have on ecosystems and how that leads to concerning consequences and the reciprocal impact these consequences have on humans; and ways for individuals to acknowledge and address these circumstances. By bringing attention to this concern through the exhibits, it is anticipated action will occur to improve the at-risk status of species and improve ecological, environmental, agricultural, and food system health.

What methods will you use to determine whether you have met your project goals?

Track exhibit, opening, and panel/round table discussion attendance through the guest book sign-in; evaluate engagement and action potential of attendees through evaluation and feedback forms; track student visitors through attendance sheets and student engagement and learning through surveys; track artists and inventory through electronic spreadsheet; and track species representation within exhibits through electronic spreadsheets.