Association of Nepalis in Minnesota (ANMN)
Bringing Nepali community in Minnesota together and stronger

ANMN ESSER SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM 2023-24

FINAL REPORT (April 2025)

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the two-year ANMN ESSER Summer Enrichment Program (2023-24), which engaged 100 Nepali youth from various Twin Cities metro areas. Designed to support those most impacted by pandemic challenges, the six-week program offered seven enriching activities: yoga, environmental outdoor experiences, Nepali language, computer coding, public speaking, creative arts, and Nepali dance. Evaluation through surveys and feedback sessions indicated significant academic, social, emotional, and mental health benefits. Participants and parents expressed high satisfaction, while instructors noted improved social skills, focus, and cognitive development. The program's activities and financial reports were successfully submitted to and accepted by the Minnesota Department of Education's ESSER Summer Enrichment Program. Of the $111,294 grant awarded, $108,931 was reimbursed. Overall, the ESSER Summer Enrichment Program provided participants with a memorable and transformative experience, fostering lasting friendships and confidence.

ASSOCIATION OF NEPALIS IN MINNESOTA (ANMN)

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ANMN is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit tax-exempted public charity organization dedicated to preserving and promoting Nepali culture in the State of Minnesota.

Association of Nepalis in Minnesota (ANMN)

Established in 2004 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the ANMN is dedicated to preserving and promoting Nepali culture while fostering a supportive and vibrant community for Nepali immigrants, their families, and friends of Nepal in Minnesota. With a community of over 4,000 Nepali residents, most of whom are immigrants from Nepal, ANMN plays a crucial role in connecting various ethnic communities and encouraging cultural exchange.

ANMN hosts several significant cultural events throughout the year, including: **Nepali New Year** (celebrated in April), **Dashain** (the largest festival in Nepal, celebrated in October), **Tihar, Teej and Shivaratri.**

These festivals feature cultural shows and ethnic food, providing a rich experience of Nepali traditions. Additionally, ANMN actively organizes local community events such as arts and crafts exhibitions and sports activities, bringing the Nepali community in Minnesota together to celebrate their heritage.

ANMN also raises funds and donations to support community members in need, particularly those affected by natural disasters, pandemics, or accidents. This includes offering financial aid to those experiencing economic hardship, such as those impacted by COVID-19.

Minnesota ESSER Summer Enrichment Program

In response to the lingering effects of COVID-19 on youth education and mental health, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) made the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) Summer Enrichment Grant available competitively to community-based organizations in Minnesota.

The ANMN grant committee successfully designed the ESSER Summer Enrichment Program to support youth most impacted by the pandemic. Many students faced challenges with academic focus and social isolation due to disruptions in their school life during the pandemic. The program's activities are designed to improve mental health, reduce stress, and help youth re-engage with their studies.

ANMN ESSER Program Components

- **Environmental Outdoor Activities**: Excursions to local parks, rivers, and lakes were organized to improve mental health and well-being. These activities were particularly beneficial for youth recovering from social isolation during the pandemic.
- **Yoga Classes**: Yoga sessions focused on stress reduction, helping students regain their focus and improve both their physical and mental well-being.
- **Youth Leadership Speaking Development**: Using the Toastmasters International model, this component aimed at building leadership, communication, and teamwork skills. It boosted participants' confidence and provided them with practical skills for both academic and personal growth.
- **Computer Coding**: Technology and digital literacy were enhanced through computer coding classes, proving essential for the youth's academic progress and personal development in today's digital world.
- **Kakshya (Nepali Language)**: Kakshya included Nepali language classes with a curriculum covering Nepali language, culture, and traditions, preparing youth to preserve and pass on their cultural heritage.

- **Arts Workshop**: Workshops included activities such as drawing, painting, sketching, and scrap art, giving youth a creative outlet for expressing emotions and ideas.
- **Nepali Dance Class**: Traditional Nepali dance classes enhanced youth's physical coordination while connecting them to cultural traditions.

ESSER Instructors Development

The ANMN was one of the 38 community-based organizations awarded the ESSER grant. After completing the award agreement between MDE and ANMN, ANMN posted job descriptions for instructors and coordinators on the websites. Applications were reviewed, candidates were interviewed, and hires were made on a contractual basis. The instructional team included a distinguished Toastmaster, a certified classical hatha yoga teacher, a senior software engineer, professional visual artists, an outdoor educational expert, retired Nepali language teachers, and others. The professional instructors across all subjects were as follows:

Table 1. ANMN ESSER Program Instructors 2023-24

INSTRUCTORS	NAME (2023)	NAME (2024)
PROGRAM COORDINATOR	Anjila Adhikari	Barsha Bagoti
YOGA INSTRUCTOR	Priyanka Nepal	Priyanka Nepal
ENVIRONMENTAL/OUTDOOR INSTRUCTOR	Rabindra Thapa	Rabindra Thapa Birash Budathoki
NEPALI KAKSHYA INSTRUCTOR	Nisha Acharya Indira Rimal Parajuli	Indira Rimal Parajuli
LEADERSHIP COACH	Gopu Shrestha	Gopu Shrestha
ARTS WORKSHOP INSTRUCTOR	Raju Lamichhane	Raju Lamichhane
COMPUTER CODING INSTRUCTOR	Aayush Tuladhar	Shanker Shrestha
DANCE INSTRUCTOR	Pooja Bisural	Pooja Bisural

Program Locations and Schedule

In 2023-24, the Yoga and Environment programs were designed as weekday summer camps held in June, July, and August. Typically operating five days a week from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM for six weeks, these camps included full-day adventure excursions on Fridays. These outdoor sessions provided immersive experiences in nature and wellness.

Table 2. Yoga & Environmental Program Locations 2023-24

PROGRAM	LOCATION	2023/2024
YOGA	Creekside Community Center, Bloomington	2023
	DanceXchange, Edina	2024
YOGA/ENVIRONMENTAL OUTDOOR	Fort Snelling State Park, St Paul	2023
	Bryant Lake Regional Park, Eden Prairie	2024
	Minnehaha Regional Park, Minneapolis	2023/2024
	Wood Lake Nature Center, Richfield	2023/2024
	Highland Lake Park, Bloomington	2023/2024
	Richardson Nature Center, Bloomington	2023/2024
	Lebanon Hill Regional Park, Eagan	2023/2024
ENVIRONMENTAL FRIDAY EXCURSION	Como Zoo	2023
	Minnesota Science Museum	2024
	Joyer Adventure Farm	2024
	Mississippi River Cruise	2023/2024
	Minnesota History Museum	2023/2024
	Minnesota Arboretum	2023/2024
	Minnesota Zoo	2023/2024

Meanwhile, in 2023, all other programs, including Nepali Kakshya Language, Computer Coding, Leadership, Arts Workshop, and Nepali Dance, were held on weekends in various libraries. These sessions were shorter in duration, generally lasting one to two hours, and took place one or two days per weekend over several weeks.

However, in 2024, all these weekend programs were held at DanceXchange in Edina, which became the central hub. These weekend programs not only grew in variety but also in duration, with few extending up to 12 weeks, allowing for deeper engagement and continuity for participating youth.

Table 3. Classroom Program Locations 2023-24

PROGRAM	LOCATION	2023/2024
NEPALI KAKSHYA	Wentworth Library, W. St. Paul	2023
	DanceXchange, Edina	2024
LEADERSHIP	Burnhaven Library, Burnsville	2023
	DanceXchange, Edina	2024
COMPUTER CODING	Wentworth Library, W. St. Paul	2023
	DanceXchange, Edina	2024
ARTS WORKSHOP	Edina Library, Eding	2023
	DanceXchange, Edina	2024
NEPALI DANCE	Burnhaven Library, Burnsville	2023
	DanceXchange, Edina	2024

The number of youth participants in each program varied significantly. Additionally, in 2024, participation almost doubled in most programs compared to 2023. Table 4 shows the total number of youth participants in the programs. However, the attendance range varied each day.

Table 4. Youth Participation In Different Programs 2023-24

PROGRAM	YOUTH PARTICIPATION	
	2023	2024
YOGA	12	29
ENVIRONMENTAL OUTDOOR	16	29
NEPALI KAKSHYA	14	26
LEADERSHIP	7	16
COMPUTER CODING	8	14
ARTS WORKSHOP	8	21
NEPALI DANCE	6	8
TOTAL	71	143

Progress & Accomplishments

The ANMN ESSER Summer Enrichment Program offered a variety of activities to youth. Over two summers, 100 Nepali youth from various neighborhoods across the Twin Cities participated in a 6-week program, including those from low-income families. This ensured accessibility for youth who might not have had similar enrichment opportunities. In 2023, 38 youth were engaged, and in 2024, participation almost doubled to 62 youth. The increase in participation reflects the growing interest and positive community response to the program's impact and the enriching, culturally relevant experiences it provides.

The program focused on promoting physical wellness, emotional well-being, academic growth, and cultural identity through activities like structured yoga, environmental exploration, and cultural education. Participants built confidence, developed teamwork skills, and gained a deeper sense of cultural pride, while also learning self-care habits that would serve them long after the summer ended.

Table 5. ANMN ESSER Youth Participants School in 2023-24

PARTICIPANT SCHOOL	2023	2024	TOTAL
PRE-K	4	3	7
ELEMENTARY	15	34	49
MIDDLE SCHOOL	12	20	32
HIGH SCHOOLS	7	5	12
TOTAL	38	62	100

Program Focus Area

Over the two years, the summer enrichment program was thoughtfully designed to support the holistic development of youth through a diverse range of activities that integrated wellness, environmental education, cultural heritage, and academic enrichment.

(A) Yoga & Wellness

Yoga remained a cornerstone of the program, with practices tailored to enhance both physical well-being and emotional regulation. Participants were introduced to foundational and progressive techniques across both summers, such as:

- **Upa Yoga**, **Surya Shakti**, and **Balancing Sadhana** to build flexibility and energy
- **Angamardana**, a dynamic fitness system that builds strength and resilience
- **Pranayam** and breathing techniques to develop focus and calm
- Discussions on **Sattvic foods** and their connection to mental clarity

Youth consistently responded positively, with many reporting that they practiced yoga at home and even shared techniques with family members. Instructors noted improvements in participants' flexibility, concentration, and self-awareness.

(B) Environmental Education & Nature Exploration

This hands-on component provided immersive experiences in nature, building environmental awareness and stewardship. Activities included:

- Nature walks, bird watching, plant identification, and hiking
- Swimming, scavenger hunts, and team-based outdoor games

- Use of tools like GPS devices and binoculars to enhance observation skills
- Animal tracking and creating plaster casts of wildlife footprints

The program also benefited from the leadership of Rabi Thapa, the 2024 environmental instructor, whose engaging teaching style left a lasting impact on participants. Memorable field trips included visits to the Minnesota Zoo, Minnesota History Center, a 3D printing factory, and a Mississippi River cruise—all of which deepened participants' real-world understanding of classroom topics.

(C) Nepali Language & Cultural Heritage

Language classes were offered at both basic and advanced levels to meet youth where they were. Participants learned:

- Nepali alphabet, pronunciation, and sentence construction
- Verb conjugation, greetings, and everyday conversational skills
- Cultural components woven into language instruction to promote identity and pride

This approach helped strengthen communication skills while fostering a deeper connection to participants' heritage.

(D) STEM & Creative Arts Enrichment

To foster creativity, critical thinking, and communication, the program offered a variety of enrichment opportunities:

- **Computer Programming**: Youth learned coding basics and created simple game applications, boosting their digital literacy and problem-solving abilities.

- **Public Speaking**: Modeled after the Toastmasters format, this speaking workshop built confidence and articulation through guided practice.
- **Nepali Dance**: Participants explored traditional dance, enhancing physical coordination while connecting to cultural traditions.
- **Arts Workshops**: Activities like drawing, painting, sketching, and scrap art gave youth a creative outlet for expressing emotions and ideas. Art works prepared by participants were displayed during the ESSER feedback session concluded on August 24, 2025, at Lake Waconia Regional Park.

The summer program fostered growth, learning, and meaningful connections for youth through engaging instruction and a supportive environment.

Program Evaluation and Feedback

The ESSER Program was evaluated using surveys and feedback sessions. Two feedback sessions were held on November 4, 2023, and August 24, 2024, involving participants, parents, instructors, volunteers, and other individuals involved in the program. To assess the impact of the program, we also conducted questionnaire surveys for the Yoga and Environmental programs.

The surveys were conducted with participants (76% response rate, n=22) and parents (52% response rate, n=15). The surveys included questions about activities such as Yoga, Naturalist Education, Hiking, Sports, Team Building, Swimming, and Friday Field Trips, including visits to the Minnesota Zoo and Science Museum. Responses were rated from 1 (Excellent), 2 (Good), 3 (Fair), and 4 (Poor), with higher values indicating lower satisfaction.

Key Impacts

Survey Participants/Parents

- **Activity Enjoyment**: Both parents and participants rated activities positively, with most responses near "Excellent" (1) or "Good" (2). Notably, parents generally rated the activities higher than the participants, indicating observed benefits beyond immediate enjoyment.
- **Friday Field Trips**: Field trips, such as visits to the MN Zoo and Science Museum, were highly rated by both parents and participants. Most responses were in the "Excellent" or "Good" range.

Instructors Feedback

- **Yoga Instructor Feedback**: Though less popular compared to other activities, yoga had a significant impact on participants' focus, mental health, and flexibility. Several children practiced yoga at home, sharing it with their families, indicating a positive long-term effect.
- **Environmental Education Instructor Feedback**: Participants became more social, forming strong bonds and improving skills like using binoculars and GPS for nature exploration. They developed a deeper appreciation for the environment and showed improved cognitive skills through games and scrapbooking.

Feedback from Group Sessions Parents appreciated the well-organized activities, while feedback indicated the need for improved communication, centralized locations, and adjusted camp hours. These challenges from the first year (2023) were addressed in 2024. Other management adjustments included early planning, which led to increased youth participation, improved scheduling, and better staffing.

Other Programs, including Nepali language, computer coding, arts, leadership speaking, and dance, helped enhance academic skills, boost confidence, and foster creativity.

Overall, the ESSER Summer Program positively impacted participants' academic, social, emotional, and mental well-being. Both parents and participants reported high satisfaction, and instructors observed improvements in social skills, focus, and cognitive development. The program provided a memorable and enriching experience, fostering lasting friendships and confidence.

Budget & Reimbursement

The ANMN ESSER grant for 2023-2024 was awarded $111,294, with $51,202 allocated for 2023 and $60,092 for 2024. The award period was from June 16, 2023, to August 31, 2024. The fiscal year 2023 balance was allowed to be used in 2024. The Financial Reporting Forms (FRF) summarizing the expenditures every two weeks were submitted to the MDE ESSER department for reimbursement. Twelve FRFs were submitted for reimbursement, totaling $108,931. The total budget, reimbursed amount, and balance are listed in the table below.

Table 6: Approved Budget, Reimbursed and Balance 2023-24

YEAR	APPROVED BUDGET ($)	RE-IMBURSED ($)	BALANCE ($)
2023	$51,202	$42,510	$8,692
2024	$60,092	$66,421	($6,329)
TOTAL	$111,294	$108,931	$2,363

The reimbursed amount based on budget categories and the balance for the year 2023 are listed below. The balance amount was carried over to 2024.

Table 7: 2023 Approved Budget and Reimbursement by Categories

YEAR	CATEGORY/DESCRIPTION	APPROVED BUDGET ($)	REIMBURSED ($)	BALANCE ($)
2023	ADMIN/PROGRAM COORDINATOR	$12,000	$10,000	$2,000
	NON-LICENSED INSTRUCTORS	$20,160	$19,840	$320
	TRANSPORTATION	$3,500	$1,396	$2,104
	ENTRY FEE/STUDENT TRAVEL ALLOWANCES	$640	$653	($13)
	OPERATING RENTAL ROOM	$2,400	$1,080	$1,320
	CLASSROOM SUPPLIES MATERIALS	$2,000	$1,316	$684
	FOOD (TRAINING ACTIVITIES)	$4,800	$2,856	$1,944
	INDIRECT COST	$5,702	$5,369	$333
	TOTAL	$51,202	$42,510	$8,692

Table 7: 2024 Approved Budget and Reimbursement by Categories

YEAR	CATEGORY/DESCRIPTION	APPROVED BUDGET ($)	2023 BALANCE ($)	REIMBURSED ($)	BALANCE ($)
2024	ADMIN/PROGRAM COORDINATOR	$13,000	$2,000	$14,940	$60
	NON-LICENSED INSTRUCTORS	$25,680	$320	$25,930	$70
	TRANSPORTATION	$4,000	$2,104	$5,848	$256
	ENTRY FEE/STUDENT TRAVEL	$640	($13)	$973	($346)
	OPERATING RENTAL ROOM	$2,400	$1,320	$3,457	$263
	CLASSROOM SUPPLIES MATERIALS	$2,800	$684	$3,659	($175)
	FOOD (TRAINING ACTIVITIES)	$5,200	$1,944	$5,853	$1,291
	INDIRECT COST	$6,372	$333	$5,761	$944
	TOTAL	$60,092	$8,692	$66,421	$2,363

The financial reconciliation and submitted FRFs were reviewed by the MDE prior to reimbursement. The remaining balance of $2,363 was retained by the MDE ESSER.

Acknowledgements

The ANMN extends its gratitude to the Minnesota Department of Education for funding the program through the ESSER grant. We also thank our dedicated instructors, community partners, volunteers, and families for their support. Additionally, we would like to acknowledge Bharat Acharya, Ayush Tuladhar, and Narayan Dhakal for their invaluable contributions in proposal development, Bijay Shrestha for his efforts in interviewing candidates, and Ganesh Dahal for compiling the report. Most importantly, we appreciate the enthusiasm of our youth participants, which made the program a resounding success.

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Appendix: Photos

Photo 1a. 2023 ANMN ESSER youth in yoga camp at various locations

Photo 1b. 2024 ANMN ESSER youth in yoga camp

Photo 2a. 2023 ANMN ESSER youth in various outdoor locations

Photo 2b. 2024 ANMN ESSER youth in various outdoor activities

Photo 3a. 2023 ANMN ESSER youth participating in arts workshop

Photo 3b. 2024 ANMN ESSER youth with their arts works

Photo 4. 2023-24 ANMN ESSER youth in leadership workshop

Photo 5. 2023-24 ANMN ESSER youth in computer coding class
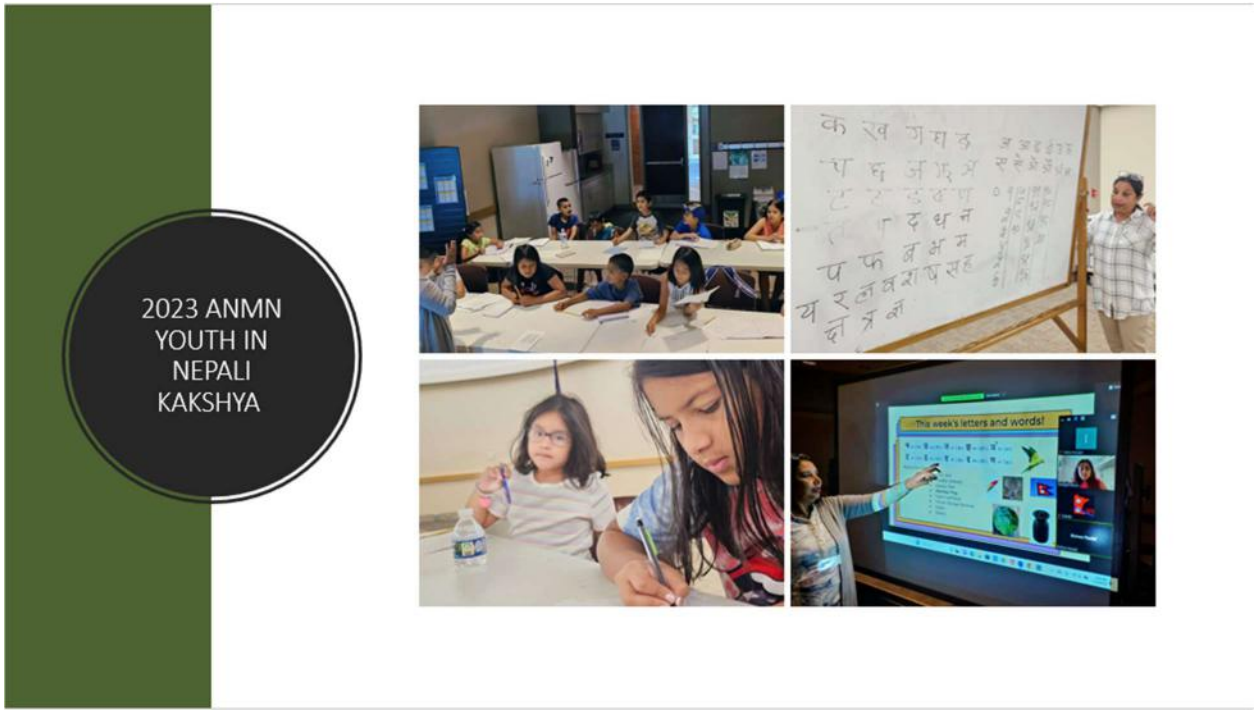
Photo 6. 2023 ANMN ESSER youth in Nepali Kakshya class