



# **AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant 2024 Request for Proposals**

**Applications due by 4 p.m. on December 7, 2023**

Revised September 12, 2023

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# Grant Summary

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## Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant (SustAg) program.

Grants fund research or demonstrations on Minnesota farms that explore sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable, resource efficient, and personally satisfying. Findings are published by the MDA, historically in the [Greenbook](#). This program is designed to demonstrate and publicize the energy efficiency, environmental benefit, or profitability of sustainable agriculture techniques or systems from production through marketing.

Projects must last at least two years but no more than three. During the final year of the project, grantees share outcomes with other producers at a field day or other type of outreach event.

## Funding availability

We plan to award approximately \$350,000 using a competitive review process. We expect to fund 8 to 15 grants, but the final number depends on the size of the awards. In this round of funding, applicants may only receive one SustAg grant.

**You may request up to \$50,000 for your project.**

- The first \$25,000 does not need to be matched.
- For requests between \$25,000 and \$50,000, you must supply a dollar-for-dollar match on the amount above \$25,000.
- Grant expenses are reimbursed when you submit expense documentation, up to four times per year.
- 10% of grant funds will be withheld until you complete your final outreach project and turn in your final reports.

## 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.

[Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#) sets up the expectation that grant programs intentionally show how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities or disparities.

This grant will prioritize:

- Projects led by a farmer or group of farmers.
- Projects that include two to three years of data collection.
- Emerging farmers, including women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, members of a community of color, young farmers, and farmers who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual (LGBTQIA+).

Grant outcomes will include:

- Supporting farmers, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions in completing innovative on-farm research and demonstration.
- Exploring sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable, resource efficient, or personally satisfying.
- Testing and demonstrating on-farm practices that will benefit a broad range of farmers.

## How to apply

- Apply for the AGRI SustAg Grant using our [online application system](#).
  - If you're a new user, you need to create an account first.
  - Once you're logged in, select AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant.
  - We must receive your application by **4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Thursday, December 7, 2023**, to be considered for funding. We will not accept late applications.
- Apply early so that there is enough time to get help with the online application system if needed.
  - It's best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance.

Note: The MDA is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems resulting in the MDA not receiving the application on time. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that submission is received by the MDA before the deadline.

## Application guidelines

- Use plain, easily understood language. Write for reviewers who have general knowledge but may not have a thorough or deep understanding of your organization or project.
- Answer all questions completely within the character limits specified in the grant application.
- Review the [Project Evaluation Profile](#) included in this document as it is used to score and compare the grant applications.

## Timeline and deadlines

**November 30, 2023, at 4 p.m. CT**.....Deadline to ask grant program questions.

**December 7, 2023, at 4 p.m. CT**.....Applications due.

**January 26, 2024**.....Applicants notified of decisions; grant agreement negotiations begin.

**March 2024**.....Anticipated start date for projects awarded funding.

## Questions

For questions on the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4 p.m. CT on November 30, 2023**.
  - Email [MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us) with “AGRI SustAg Grant” in the subject line.

We will post responses to all program questions on the [Questions and Answers](#) section of the AGRI SustAg webpage.

Note: MDA employees are not authorized to give advice on any applications. Applicants who solicit or receive advice from unauthorized MDA employees may be disqualified from eligibility for a grant award.

For help with the online application system:

- Call 651-201-6500, or
- Email [MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us) with “AGRI SustAg Grant” in the subject line.

## Tips for applicants

- Clearly describe the importance or potential impact of your project. The proposal should show that the findings are going to help other farmers besides you and explain why the project is important for the agricultural community.
- Explain how your project will show a new or different technique or approach that could benefit others.
- Make sure your budget is realistic, includes only eligible items, and doesn't have excessive purchased services or consultant costs (more than 50% of the total cost).
- Include a detailed budget that clearly explains how the money will be spent. More detail is better than less.
- Make sure you have technical or farmer cooperators and that they are the right cooperators for your project.
- Describe your plan to share information and lessons learned with the agricultural community. Give us details about the outreach event you plan to complete.
- Include just two or three clear objectives rather than trying to accomplish too much. Simple projects tend to work better than complex ones.
- Explain how you will evaluate or measure the success of your project.

# Grant Eligibility

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## Eligible applicants

Applicants must:

- Be a Minnesota farmer, educational institution, individual at an educational institution, or a non-profit organization.
  - For this program, a farmer is someone who cultivates, operates, or manages a farm for profit, and who grows or raises at least \$1,000 of agricultural products for sale annually.
  - Other government entities such as municipalities and counties are not eligible.
- Live in the state or be located in the state for research or demonstrations on farms in the state.
  - Be in good standing with the State of Minnesota:
  - No back taxes owed.
  - No defaults on Minnesota state-backed financing for the last seven years.
  - Acceptable performance on past MDA grants.
  - Compliant with current state regulations.

MDA employees and their spouses are not eligible to receive grants from this program.

If applying as an individual rather than as an organization, you must not have been convicted of a state or federal criminal offense which includes theft, embezzlement of public funds, or forgery.

## Collaboration

### If you are a farmer or group of farmers:

- You must involve at least one **Technical Cooperator**.

The cooperator should have technical expertise that will strengthen the project, such as knowledge of soil science, biology, agronomy, horticulture, entomology, engineering, marketing, finance, data collection, statistics, etc. Technical cooperators may be from University Extension, community colleges, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), or other similar organizations. Technical cooperators can help design the project, carry it out, and review and interpret the results. This person is expected to serve as an advisor – not someone you pay to do the project for you. A technical cooperator cannot be a family member.

- Your application must include a **letter of commitment** from at least one Technical Cooperator.

In the letter, the technical cooperator must explain how they will contribute to the project. If the budget contains funds for the technical cooperator, the letter must include the hourly rate that they will charge.

## If you are NOT a farmer:

- You must have at least one **Farmer Cooperator**.

The farmer or farmers must be meaningfully involved in designing and carrying out the project. The budget should include funds to compensate the farmer(s) for their involvement. Farmers are expected to be involved in project – not simply supply the land where the project can be conducted.

- Your application must include a **letter of commitment** from the farmer(s).

In the letter, the farmer cooperator must explain how they will be involved in the project.

## Eligible projects

Projects must:

- Show the ability to increase direct or indirect energy savings or production;
- Have a positive effect or reduce harmful effects on the environment; or
- Demonstrate increased profitability for the individual farm by reducing costs or improving marketing opportunities.

Project must also:

- Be conducted on a Minnesota farm or farms.
- Publicize and hold an outreach event in the form of a field day or other virtual event in the final season or year of the project. Examples of outreach events include but are not limited to field days, video diaries, how-to guides, blog posts, podcast interviews, presentations at ag-based conferences or meetings, etc.
- Not start until the grant contract is signed by all parties and has reached its start date.
- Be completed in three years or less. Grant contract agreements cannot be extended beyond three years.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- Increased environmental sustainability and improved soil health
- Conservation tillage and weed management
- Novel cover crops and crop rotations
- Nutrient and pesticide management, including runoff protection
- Farm-based energy efficiency or production such as wind, methane, or biomass
- Integrated pest management systems for insects, weeds, and diseases
- Seed breeding or conservation
- Livestock production systems or management strategies
- Developing or improving marketing opportunities, including season extension and post-harvest storage and handling
- Novel enterprise diversification, including organic production, using traditional and non-traditional crops and livestock
- Other creative ideas that address farm input reduction or management, conservation, energy, or profitability

We are looking for interesting ideas that may or may not work. Ideas do not have to be brand new but should be new to Minnesota or the part of the state where they're being proposed. For more ideas, see previously funded projects summarized in the Greenbook.

## Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Wages for time spent directly on the grant project (beyond normal farming operations). Explain why you are using that hourly rate.
- Consultant fees. Provide justification for the hourly rate.
- Costs to lease or use farm equipment needed for the project
- Special purpose equipment or other items necessary to achieve the objectives of the project. In general, this equipment may not exceed \$1,500 per item. With the MDA's permission, you may be allowed to use grant funds towards more expensive special purpose equipment and be reimbursed up to \$1,500 of the total purchase price.
- Project-related services such as soil testing or other analyses
- Project-related travel
- Postage, printing, and telephone expenses related to the project
- Outreach expenses (advertising, handouts, refreshments, etc.) for one outreach event in the final year

See the [Budget table](#) template included in the application for a breakdown of eligible expense categories.

## Ineligible expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Expenditures incurred prior to the full execution of the grant contract agreement or its start date, whichever occurs later, or those incurred after the expiration of the grant contract agreement
- Long-lasting, general-purpose equipment. Examples include tractors, motorized vehicles, buildings (including greenhouses and high tunnels), windmills or wind turbines, solar panels (except for those needed to power grant-specific equipment), building construction, and computers. However, these items may be rented as needed to conduct the project.
- Project specific equipment items that cost more than \$1,500 each
- Compensation for a grant writing consultant or grant manager
- General operating costs and indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project)
- Business or organizational start-up costs (e.g., starting a farm) or expansion costs
- Owner and employees' wages and benefits. Contact program staff for exceptions.
- Advertising, public relations, entertainment, and amusement costs
- Donated or volunteer (in-kind) services. While these may be given to an applicant by professional and technical personnel, consultants, and other skilled and unskilled labor, the value of these services is not an eligible cost.
- Fines, penalties, and other settlement expenses resulting from failure of the applicant to follow federal, state, local, or Native American Tribal laws and regulations
- Fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists and political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, legal costs, or contingency funds
- Parking or traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses, unless there's a specific need that cannot be met with in-state resources. In this case, contact program staff for prior approval.



## Matching funds

The AGRI SustAg Grant is a reimbursement grant. You must supply documentation showing payment for the full cost of the project to receive the awarded reimbursement amount. The maximum award is \$50,000.

Projects receiving more than \$25,000 in State funding require matching funds; otherwise, no match is required. Matching funds can be a cash-match, or new in FY 2024, you may use in-kind goods or services as a grant match. In-kind matching funds must be included in the budget as an estimated number of hours with the hourly rate for labor or use of equipment.

Sources of the cash-match may include non-State funds (funds that were not obtained through the budgeting process of the Minnesota Legislature or granted by a state agency) in the form of cash, loans, other grants, or liquid capital assets dedicated to the project. If a proposed project has been submitted to or funded by a federal grant program, specify the grantor, the funding amount, and the purpose of that grant funding.

The value of the land used to conduct the grant project may be used as an in-kind match. You must use average farmland rental rates or farmland rent from University of Minnesota Extension to calculate the value, if a rate is available. If land will be rented or leased to conduct this project (as a cost item in the budget), then the value of this land cannot also be claimed as in-kind match.

### Example 1

The project’s total cost is \$25,000. The applicant may apply for up to \$25,000 without providing a match.

Total project cost	Match requirements	Total grant award
\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000

### Example 2

The project’s total cost is \$45,000. The first \$25,000 of expenses will be funded by the grant. The remaining \$20,000 requires a one-to-one match with the applicant contributing \$10,000 and grant funding contributing \$10,000. In total, the applicant would be eligible for \$35,000 in grant funds from the State and would need to provide a match of \$10,000.

Total project cost	Match requirement	Total grant award
First \$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
Remaining \$20,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Total Cost: \$45,000	\$10,000	\$35,000

# Application Review Policies

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## Review process

A review committee, composed of soil scientists, agronomists, post-secondary educators, agricultural marketing specialists, sustainable and organic farmers, MDA staff, or other agricultural experts, evaluates all eligible applications based on the criteria in the Project Evaluation Profile. Reviewers may recommend whole or partial funding of a project. The commissioner of agriculture reviews the committee recommendations and makes the award decisions. Both the review committee and commissioner may use geographic distribution, services to prioritized populations, applicant's history as a state grantee, and capacity to perform the work.

The MDA will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing. Applicants may request a summary of reviewer comments.

## Conflicts of interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers ([MINN. STAT.16B.98](#) and [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making, 2022 \(Word\)](#)).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to give impartial assistance or advice to the MDA due to competing duties or loyalties.
- A grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicant or grantee will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

## Privacy notice and data classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant under the AGRI Program and the Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete this application without any legal consequence. However, only completed applications will be considered for a grant; incomplete applications will not be considered.

Data provided in this application is initially classified by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act as private or nonpublic, although some or all of the data will generally become public at various points of the application process unless the data are otherwise classified by state or federal law. Access to private or nonpublic data is limited to those authorized by law, including but not necessarily limited to MDA staff and contractors with a valid work assignment to access the data, parties authorized by the applicant, parties identified in a valid court order or federal subpoena, Minnesota Management and Budget, Minnesota Department of Administration, the

state auditor, and the legislative auditor. If necessary, the MDA may also share the data with law enforcement or the Office of the Attorney General.

Per Minnesota's statute on grants ([MINN. STAT. 13.599](#)):

- Names and addresses of grant applicants, and the grant amount requested, will be public data once application responses are opened.
- All remaining data in application responses (except for data classified as Department of Agriculture data ([MINN. STAT 13.643, subd. 1](#)) and trade secret information, see below) becomes public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).
- All data created or maintained by the MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret information, see below) will generally be public data after the evaluation process is completed.

Procedure for claiming protection of trade secrets:

- Trade secret information is classified as not public data. In order to qualify as trade secret information, the data in question must be provided to the MDA by the affected person (i.e. the data must be about the applicant) and otherwise meet the legal definition found in statute ([MINN. STAT. 13.37, subd. 1\(b\)](#)). In order for an applicant to assert trade secret protection for data submitted as part of this application: the applicant must: 1) clearly identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that the applicant believes to be trade secret information; 2) describe what efforts the applicant takes to maintain the secrecy of the data; and 3) adequately explain how the data derive(s) independent economic value from not being generally known to, and not readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons. Merely asserting trade secret protection does not, in and of itself, classify the data in question as not public; determining what data meet the definition of trade secret information is ultimately the legal responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data identified as trade secret information by an applicant will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, the data in question will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

All persons, businesses, and individuals applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must comply with applicable laws. Under the law titled Right of Setoff ([MINN STAT 270C.65, subd. 3](#)), a grantee consents to disclosure of its social security number, federal employer tax identification number, and/or Minnesota tax identification number, already provided to the State, to federal and state tax agencies, and to state personnel involved in the payment of state obligations. These identification numbers may be used in the enforcement of federal and state tax laws which could result in action requiring a grantee to file state tax returns and pay delinquent state tax liabilities, if any.

# Requirements for Grant Recipients

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## Pre-award financial review

During the 2023 legislative session, the Minnesota Legislature adopted new grant administration provisions (Laws of Minnesota 2023, chapter 62, article 7, section 11). The MDA reserves the right to adjust these pre-award financial review requirements as implementation details are decided.

## Non-profit organizations

All non-profit organizations applying for grants from the State of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to a grant award of \$50,000 and higher.

To comply with [Policy 08-06: Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations \(PDF\)](#), you may be asked to submit one of the following documents:

- Grant applicants with annual income of under \$50,000, or who have not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990 or audit, should submit their most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of \$50,000 or more but less than \$750,000 should submit their most recent IRS Form 990.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of over \$750,000 should submit their most recent certified financial audit.

The MDA will also verify that each non-profit organization is In Good Standing with the [Minnesota Secretary of State](#) (MINN. STAT. 317A or other applicable law), and appropriately registered with the [Attorney General's Office](#).

Consistent with the Attorney General's Office policy, non-profit organizations must be registered with the Attorney General's Office if they meet one of the following three conditions, unless otherwise exempt (MINN. STAT. 309.515):

- the charity receives or plans to receive more than \$25,000 in total contributions during its accounting year, or
- the charity's functions and activities, including fundraising, are not performed wholly by volunteers, or
- the charity utilizes a professional fundraiser.

Non-profit grantees that are not In Good Standing with the Minnesota Secretary of State and appropriately registered with the Attorney General's Office are not eligible to receive grant contract agreements unless approved by the MDA.

Non-profit grantees will also need to certify that no principal of the organization has been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years.

## Individuals

Individuals will need to certify that they have not been convicted of a felony financial crime related to a state grant agreement.

## For-profit businesses

All for-profit businesses selected for a grant award of \$50,000 or more must undergo a financial review prior to receiving a grant contract agreement. Grantees will be asked to submit several documents, including federal and state tax returns, current financial statements, certification that the business is not under bankruptcy proceedings, and disclosure of any liens on its assets. If the business has not been in business long enough to have a tax return, the grantee must prove to the MDA's satisfaction that the grantee has appropriate internal financial controls.

Grantees must also certify that no principals of the business have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years.

The MDA will verify that all for-profit businesses are In Good Standing with the Minnesota Secretary of State (MINN. STAT. 317A or other applicable law).

## Accountability and reporting

The MDA reserves the right to change reporting requirements during the project. Information submitted in any report will be a public record.

Annual progress and financial reports are sent out in November and due to the MDA in January of each project year.

- The progress report should explain the activities and results achieved during the year and is the basis for published articles of the grant project. The report can include pictures, tables, and figures; we will request captions and alternative text for pictures and figures.
- The financial report details all the grant project expenditures made during each calendar year alongside the approved budget. You will not receive further payments until progress and financial reports have been received and reviewed by the MDA.

SustAg articles are edited by MDA staff and are sent to grantees for review before being published. Each article highlights results of the project, practical and technical information on each project, and personal observations and management tips from the grantee.

## Grant award agreement and payments

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review on the [Office of Grants Management Forms and FAQs](#) webpage.

Upon approval of an application and before beginning work on the grant project and receiving reimbursements, the applicant must:

1. Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, or confirm that the information in SWIFT is still correct.
2. Submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.
3. Submit documentation to meet the pre-award financial review requirements.
4. Sign a grant contract agreement showing their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreement also authorizes the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. This agreement must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the contract has been signed by all parties. Applicants should anticipate that grant contracts will have an end date in late 2026 or early 2027 and may not be extended.

Grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. To receive grant payments, grantees must provide proof that grant project work has been done by submitting details of each purchase on receipts or invoices, and proof that the vendors have been paid. Annual progress reports are required to be submitted during the duration of the project. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

## **Site visits and financial reconciliations**

The grant agreement allows the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. The MDA will perform a monitoring visit for all grantees with awards of \$25,000 or more a final payment is approved. Other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation of at least one invoice on grants greater than or equal to \$50,000; financial reconciliation may be performed on additional payment requests at the discretion of the MDA. For this purpose, the grantee must provide expense receipts, employee timesheets, invoices, and any other supporting documents requested by the State.

## **Bidding requirements**

All funded applicants will be required to abide by the State's bidding requirements for larger purchases. See a detailed list of the State's [bidding requirements](#) for details.

## **Affirmative action and non-discrimination policy**

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified ([MINN. STAT. 363A.02](#)). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship ([Minnesota Rules, part 5000.3500](#)).

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the [Minnesota Human Rights Act](#).

### **Audits of project**

The grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 8](#)). This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

### **Voter registration requirement**

The grantee will provide voter registration services for its employees ([MINN. STAT. 201.162](#)).

## **AGRI Background and Program Goals**

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The Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program (AGRI) was established to advance Minnesota's agricultural and renewable energy industries ([MINN. STAT. 41A.12](#)). AGRI has made significant economic impacts by increasing productivity, improving efficiency, and assisting the development of agricultural products.

The primary goal of the AGRI SustAg Grant is to support innovative on-farm research and demonstrations to explore sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable, resource efficient, and personally satisfying. Findings are published annually by the MDA.

# Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation criteria	Maximum score
<b>The project is led by a farmer or group of farmers.</b>	5
<b>Technical or farmer cooperator(s)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical cooperators provide the expertise this project needs.</li> <li>• Farmer cooperators meaningfully involved.</li> <li>• Commitment letter(s) describe the cooperator’s expertise, role in project, and hourly rate charged (if any).</li> <li>• The technical and farmer cooperators have the necessary qualifications to do this project.</li> </ul>	15
<b>Diversity, equity, and inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emerging farmers are meaningfully involved in carrying out the project.</li> <li>• Plans for the outreach event include ideas to promote it to emerging farmers.</li> <li>• The project directly benefits emerging farmers or underserved populations.</li> </ul>	10
<b>Project rationale</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project will show positive effects on the environment, farm profitability, energy savings, or production.</li> <li>• There is a compelling reason to do this project.</li> <li>• The project informs or demonstrates best management practices.</li> <li>• The demonstrated technologies and techniques can be adopted and used by other farmers.</li> </ul>	20
<b>Project design and methods</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The design and methods follow from the rationale and objectives in the application.</li> <li>• Objectives of project are measurable and clearly stated.</li> <li>• The work plan details the design of the project and how it will accomplish the proposed objectives.</li> </ul>	15
<b>Evaluation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project includes a plan for measuring and evaluating outcomes for each objective.</li> <li>• The project includes a basis of comparison (for example, a control plot or treatment).</li> </ul>	15
<b>Outreach plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The plan to share information about the project with farmers and the broader agricultural community is well thought out.</li> </ul>	5
<b>Budget details</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget clearly details all project costs.</li> <li>• Itemized costs are realistic.</li> <li>• Estimates are clearly based on vendor quotes and market research.</li> <li>• Budget clearly explains source and amount of applicant’s funds (cash match).</li> <li>• Budget is cost effective and planned purchases are backed by quotes or other sources.</li> <li>• Charges for consulting and purchased services are less than 50% of the total cost.</li> </ul>	15
Are the commitment letter(s) from farmer or technical cooperator(s) included?	Yes/No
Is an outreach event planned for the final year?	Yes/No
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>



# Application Questions

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## Contact information

### Applicant information

- Contact person's name
- Organization or business name (if applicable)
- Contact person's mailing address
- Contact person's telephone
- Contact person's email
- Minnesota State House District(s) where your project is located (find this information at [Who Represents Me?](#))

### Authorized representative

- If awarded a grant, is the person authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the organization the same as the contact person listed above? (Yes or No)
  - If no, please provide the following Authorized Representative information for signing any resulting grant contract agreement:
    - Name
    - Telephone
    - Email

### Eligibility

- Confirm that the following statements apply to your application. For this application, the grant recipient (organization, business, or individual) is the applicant.
  - The applicant does not owe the State of Minnesota any back taxes and has not defaulted on any State of Minnesota backed financing in the last seven years. (True or False)
  - The applicant is compliant with current state regulations, or this project will support the organization becoming compliant. (True or False)
- The MDA is unable to reimburse for any work that is performed prior to the start date of the contract. Has work started on your proposed project or will work start before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties? (Yes or No)

### Previous AGRI SustAg Grants

- Have you received a previous AGRI SustAg Grant? (Yes or No)
  - If yes, briefly describe your previous grant project(s), including date(s) and amount(s) awarded. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

## Project summary

### Grant request

- Project name
- County or counties where project will take place
- Grant funds requested (equal to the total project cost minus the required match; cannot exceed \$50,000)
- Applicant's matching funds if total project cost is over \$25,000
  - Source of matching funds if over \$25,000 (cash, land, in-kind, or combination)
- Total project cost (grant funds plus matching funds, if applicable; cannot exceed \$75,000)
- Project duration (may not start until after the grant agreement contract is signed and must last between two and three years)
  - Expected project start and end dates and total project duration:
    - Contracts must last between two and three years from start date; expect contracts to be signed in March 2024.
    - Projects may not start and funds may not be spent before the grant contract is signed by both the grantee and the State.
    - Upon completion of your final outreach event, the remaining 10% of your award, based on actual eligible expenses incurred, will be paid. You will have up to two months after your contract end date to submit for a reimbursement.
    - All items and services must be paid for by the end date of the contract.

### Project summary

- Describe your project and the question or problem you plan to address. If relevant, list your hypothesis statement. The summary of this proposed project must be suitable for dissemination to the public. (1,200 characters, including spaces)
- Choose the topic that best describes this project:
  - Soil fertility
  - Livestock
  - Fruits and vegetables
  - Energy
  - Cropping systems
  - Alternative markets and specialty crops

### Project objectives

- List two to three primary objectives you plan to accomplish with your project. Objectives must be suitable for dissemination to the public. (1,200 characters, including spaces)

## Farmer applicants

- Do you meet the definition of a farmer as defined in the Request for Proposals? (A farmer is someone who cultivates, operates, or manages a farm for profit, and who grows or raises at least \$1,000 of agricultural products for sale annually.) (Yes or No)
- If yes:
  - Briefly describe your background as a farmer and business goals. How many years have you been farming? What percent of labor do you contribute to your farm? How do you market your farm products? Do you belong to any farm or agricultural organizations? If so, which ones? (2,500 characters, including spaces)
  - List the technical cooperator(s) involved in your project (include name(s), type of expertise, and how each cooperator will be involved in the project). (2,500 characters including spaces)
  - Note: You must include a cooperator commitment letter from each technical cooperator with your application. This letter should describe the cooperator's expertise and their role in the project. If the cooperator will be paid, the letter must include their hourly rate of pay for the type of work.
- If no:
  - You do not qualify to apply as a farmer for this program. You need to apply as a non-farmer applicant.

## Non-farmer applicants

- What category of non-farmer applicant best describes you?
  - Minnesota non-profit organization
  - Minnesota educational institution
  - Individual at a Minnesota educational institution
- List the farmer cooperator(s) involved in your project (include name(s), type of expertise, and how each cooperator will be involved in the project). (2,500 characters, including spaces)
- Note: You must include a cooperator commitment letter from each farmer cooperator with your application. This letter should describe the cooperator's expertise and their role in the project. If the cooperator will be paid, the letter must include their hourly rate of pay for the type of work.

## Diversity, equity, and inclusion

- This grant program prioritizes projects that serve emerging farmers, including women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, members of a community of color, young farmers, and farmers who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual (LGBTQIA+). Explain how your grant project will serve these communities, if at all. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

## Project details

### Description of the farming operation(s) involved

- Tell us about the farming operation(s) involved. (1,500 characters, including spaces)
  - Describe the type of farm, general location, what has been and is grown, raised, or produced by the operation, and who the agricultural products are sold to.
  - Describe your background experiences that will enable you to conduct this project, such as when the applicant or cooperating farmer started farming, relevant education and coursework, etc.

### Project rationale

- Explain the rationale for your project. (3,500 characters, including spaces)
  - What is the purpose of this project?
  - Why is it important?
  - How will this project help other farm businesses?
  - How does this project show positive effects on the environment, farm profitability, or energy savings or production?

### Project design and methods

- What are you going to do? Describe in detail how you will do your project from beginning to end. Be as specific as you can. Use a timeline and drawings or diagrams (for example: field map, crop rotation plan, building or paddock design, layout of test or demonstration plots, etc.) (5,000 characters, including spaces)
  - Supply the name(s) and occupation(s) of the person(s) responsible for carrying out and reporting on this project.
  - Name who is going to do each step of the project – list each participant’s role in the design, implementation, analysis of the results, and outreach steps.
  - Note: Additional documents can be uploaded. Clearly label and identify each additional document.

### Evaluation

- How will you document what happens throughout your project? For each of the objectives you listed in the project summary, what information will you collect to determine whether your grant project worked, and if you’d recommend it to other farmers? Be specific. (3,000 characters, including spaces)
  - Note: Projects don’t have to work out the way you think or want them to turn out. Often, it’s equally important to know what doesn’t work or what not to do. Don’t be afraid to try something others might consider risky.

## Outreach plan

- How will you share what you learn with Minnesota farmers, including how emerging farmers can benefit from your work? All projects must have an outreach event in the final year of the project. We encourage you to hold a field day, either in-person or virtually, if possible. In your budget, you can request funds for outreach events. (2,500 characters, including spaces)
  - Examples of outreach events may include, but are not limited to in-person or virtual field days, video diaries, how-to guides, blog posts, podcast interviews, presentations at ag-based conferences or meetings, etc.

## Budget details

### Budget table

- Complete your budget using the [2024 SustAg Application Budget Spreadsheet](#). Please download the file as an Excel spreadsheet, save it to your computer, add your budget information, and upload the completed document to your online application. Use realistic costs and justify each expenditure, including the purpose and the quantity. The budget table needs to include the total project cost and any matching funds. Budget categories include:
  - Analysis of samples
  - Consultants and other purchased services (contractors, paid consultants, technical assistance, etc.)
  - Personnel (labor – family or hired). Only include labor directly related to grant activities over and above time spent on normal farm operations.
  - Supplies, materials, and equipment (seed, fuel, purchased inputs, plot markers, office supplies, project specific equipment)
  - Use or rental of farm equipment
  - Outreach and communication (field day and other costs associated with holding an outreach event and publicity)
  - Travel (base on \$0.655 cents per mile, although this may change depending on IRS mileage rates)

### Budget narrative

- Justify each cost in your budget table. Include as much detail as possible to help reviewers understand why the cost is necessary. (2,500 characters, including spaces)

### Matching funds

- If you are applying for more than \$25,000 in grant award funds, list the source and amount of each type of match: in-kind land use or services provided by the grantee, or cash in the form of purchased goods or services. These should also be listed in your budget table. Provide any additional information about each match item listed in the budget table.
  - Use the [Iowa Farm Custom Rate Survey \(PDF\)](#) as a guideline for deciding the value of in-kind services. If your rates are different, provide a justification.
  - For land rent counting toward your match, you must use [average farmland rental rates](#) or [farmland rent](#) from University of Minnesota Extension to calculate the value, if available. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

### **Other sources of funding**

- Have you received, applied for, or do you plan to apply for other sources of funding to support this project? If yes, explain. (500 characters, including spaces)

### **Additional documents (optional)**

- If applicable, attach documents that give a visual representation of your proposed project. Examples include maps, charts, graphs, photos, etc. Clearly label and identify each additional document. You can use any common file format (i.e., JPG, PNG, and PDF). Please avoid Apple-specific file types such as Numbers since our reviewers may have trouble opening them.