



County Fair Grant Programs

Fiscal Year 2024 Request for Proposals

Applications due by 4 p.m. on February 29, 2024

Note: This version of the RFP shows the updated Legacy funding amount available to fairs. All other information is the same (January 19, 2024).

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Grant Summary

Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture is offering grants to help Minnesota county fairs preserve and promote Minnesota agriculture, and to provide access to the arts and the state's historical and cultural heritage. Funds come from the Minnesota Legislature through the [Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program \(AGRI\)](#) and the [Legacy Amendment](#).

Fiscal Year 2024 updates

Items to consider regarding this year's grant programs:

- The AGRI and Legacy funds will still be contracted separately. Fairs will receive two contracts if they receive both grants. The AGRI funds will be available until spring 2027 (up to three years after the start date). The Legacy funds will be available until June 30, 2025.
- Fairs may request to receive up to 50% of their AGRI award as an advance in their application. Like last year, these advances will not be automatic. A fair must have all prior grants closed out to be eligible for an AGRI advance.
- Before spending any money, fairs must have a fully executed grant contract agreement. Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis. Applications must be submitted by February 29, 2024. Fairs should plan to receive their grant contract agreements approximately 30 days after submitting their application.

Eligible applicants

Each of the state's county fairs is eligible to apply for the grants. Applications must come from the county agricultural society. All applicants must be in good standing with the State of Minnesota.

Eligible projects and expenses

AGRI: Preserving and promoting Minnesota agriculture

A total of \$1 million is available. Each county fair will be eligible for up to \$10,175. AGRI grant funds must be used to preserve and promote Minnesota agriculture. The funds are intended to be used for your 2024 fair, but they may also be used in 2025 and 2026. Examples of eligible projects include:

- Sound equipment for judging in livestock barns
- Hand sanitizing stations
- Fans for livestock barns
- Agricultural education displays
- Electricity updates or concrete for barn floor
- Lighting, fencing, or bleachers for livestock show arenas
- Children's barnyards

More specific examples of eligible expenses are included in the [Appendix \(AGRI Grant projects\)](#).

Legacy: Providing access to the arts or the state’s agricultural, historical, and cultural heritage

A total of \$400,000 is available. Each fair will be eligible for up to \$3,755. Grant funds must be used to preserve and promote Minnesota arts and agricultural history, and to provide access to the arts or the state's agricultural, historical, and cultural heritage. Funded activities must supplement (i.e., add to or enhance) traditional programming and not substitute (i.e., take the place of). The funds must be used before June 30, 2025 (likely during your 2024 fair). Examples of eligible projects include:

- Spinning demonstrations
- Pottery, blacksmithing, or primitive cooking workshop
- Antique equipment display that shows how farming was done in the past
- Mobile stage to host cultural heritage programming
- Chainsaw artists

More specific examples of eligible expenses are included in the [Appendix \(Legacy Grant projects\)](#).

How to apply

Applications are due by **4:00 p.m. Central Time on Thursday, February 29, 2024**. We will not consider late applications.

- Apply using our [online application system](#) (preferred).
 - If you are a new user, you’ll need to create an account first.
 - Once you’re logged in, select “County Fair Grant Programs FY24”.
- If you can’t apply online, contact the grant administrator at least one week before the application deadline.
- Apply early so there is enough time to get technical assistance 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.

Timeline

- We review applications as they are received. All applications are due by 4:00 p.m. Central Time on Thursday, February 29, 2024.
- If we have questions on your application, we will contact you within one month of your submission. Please respond promptly to our questions so you have time to change your proposal before we create the contract.
- Once your proposal is approved, we will send you the contract. You have 30 days to sign and return the contract.

Questions

If you have questions about the program or need help with the online application system, call us at 651-201-6500 or email MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us with “County Fair Grants” in the subject line.

You can also visit our [County Fair Grant FAQ](#) webpage for answers to recent questions.

Ineligible expenses

Expenses must align with the specific purposes of each type of funding (AGRI or Legacy). The following expenses are ineligible under both programs. More specific examples of ineligible expenses for each program are included in the Appendix.

- Expenditures incurred before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties
- Expenses not approved or listed in the grant contract
- General purpose public use items and areas (e.g., restrooms, commissaries, roads, parking lots)
- General fair signage and parking lot signs
- Cash, gift cards, and awards, including trophies and ribbons
- Dog and pet show judges
- Entertainment, amusement, and social activities not meeting the objectives of the grant (selected exceptions made for Legacy projects)
- Meals, food, lodging, transportation, tickets to shows or sporting events, etc. Contact staff for exceptions.
- Advertising and public relations
- Donated or volunteer (in-kind) goods and services
- General operations, overhead, and indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project)
- Utilities
- Fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions
- Lobbyists, including costs of membership in organizations substantially engaged in lobbying, and political contributions

Application Review Policies

Review process

MDA staff and leadership will review all applications for appropriateness. If a particular project is considered inappropriate, MDA staff will inform the county fair of the ineligible components and will provide the county fair with another opportunity to submit an eligible project. The commissioner of agriculture is responsible for award decisions.

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 this program. 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 otherwise classified by law, including 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

Grant award agreement and payments

Upon approval of an application and before beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving reimbursements, the applicant is required to do the following:

- Complete an IRS W-9 form, register as a vendor in SWIFT (the state's accounting system), or confirm that the information we have in SWIFT is still correct.
- Submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.
- Sign a grant contract agreement for each category (AGRI or Legacy) showing their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreements also authorize the MDA to monitor the progress of the projects. Grant contract agreements 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.

- AGRI contracts will be effective for three years (to winter 2026 or spring 2027). These grant contract agreements may not extend beyond three years after the effective date of the contract.
- Legacy grant contract agreements will be effective until June 30, 2025.

AGRI payments

Grantees may request advance payment of 50% of their AGRI grant. County fairs that would like to use this option should indicate so in their application. The MDA has the right to not issue advance funds to a fair, including those that have open grants from prior years. Any cash advance that violates the terms of the grant contract agreement or is not adequately used to support the approved project will need to be repaid. Grantees that receive advance payments must submit annual reports until the grant is closed out. The remaining 50% will be available to grantees after completion of the entire project.

Legacy payments

Legacy grants will only be dispersed on a reimbursement basis.

Reimbursement procedures

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 through receipts; or contracts or invoices along with proof that the vendors have been paid.

- Receipt: an itemization of what was purchased and that the merchant was paid. Receipts are also proofs of payment.
- Contract: an agreement between two parties that creates an obligation to perform a particular duty, when it will be performed, and the amount of compensation owed.
- Invoice: a request for payment that itemizes the duties that were or will be performed. Invoices that show a zero balance are also proofs of payment.
- Proof of payment: documentation that shows that the contract or invoice was paid, such as cancelled checks or bank statements.

Each reimbursement request must be accompanied by a closeout form (found on the website). Fairs must submit this documentation within 30 days following the expiration of the grant contract agreement. We strongly encourage grantees to submit these requests as soon as the project is completed.

Bidding requirements

All funded applicants must follow the State's [bidding requirements](#) for larger purchases.

Publicity

All projects funded must publicly credit the AGRI and Legacy funding, including on the grantee's website when practical. Examples include, "Funds provided in part by the Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment" or "Funds provided in part by the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program".

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, the commissioner of administration, the legislative auditor, and 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](#)).

Background and Program Goals

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. AGRI funds are for projects that preserve and promote Minnesota agriculture.

The [Legacy Amendment](#) was established to support and preserve Minnesota’s arts, history, and cultural heritage. Legacy funds are used to support projects and events that enhance arts access and education and to preserve and promote Minnesota’s history and cultural heritage as embodied in its county fairs.

Application Questions

The application is available by logging into our online grants management system through a link on the [County Fair Grant webpage](#). Below is a preview of the questions you will be asked.

Contact information

Applicant information

- Contact person (first and last name)
- Name of county fair
- Fair mailing address
- Fair physical address
- Fair telephone
- Contact person's telephone
- Fair email
- Contact person's email
- Names of county agricultural society board members (maximum 2,000 characters, including spaces)

Contract signer

If awarded a grant, the person that will sign the County Fair Grant contract agreement(s) for this organization:

- First and last name
- Title
- Email
- Telephone

Eligibility

Are you representing the county agricultural society? (Yes or No)

AGRI: Promote and Preserve Minnesota Agriculture

Summary of AGRI proposed project

Briefly describe your AGRI project in a way that the public would easily understand. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

AGRI project potential impact

Explain how your AGRI project will preserve and promote Minnesota agriculture. If the proposal includes agricultural education, be specific what fairgoers will learn about Minnesota agriculture. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

AGRI budget

The budget table is an overview of how grant funds will be spent. Purchases made prior to a fully executed contract are not eligible for this grant, including any down payments or deposits on approved projects. Create a budget using the example format below. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

Item	Quantity	Cost per unit	Total estimate	Source of estimate
Hog Barn Concrete	1	\$15,000	\$15,000	ABC Concrete Company

Additional AGRI budget notes

Describe anything that may be unclear or need more explanation. For example, if you request funding for signs, indicate how they will be used and where they will be displayed. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

AGRI advance funds

Would you like to receive 50% of your AGRI award up front to assist with expenses? All previous years' contracts must be closed out to receive an advance. (Yes or No)

AGRI project oversight

List the name and title of individual who will oversee your AGRI project activities.

- Name
- Title

AGRI work plan

Create a work plan for your AGRI project using the example format shown below. You should include the steps you will take to successfully complete your project. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

Time frame	Description of task or action item
May 2024	Place order for fence panels

Legacy: Providing Access to the Arts or the State's Agricultural, Historical, and Cultural Heritage

Summary of proposed Legacy project

Briefly describe your Legacy project in a way that the public would easily understand. This description should be suitable for public dissemination. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

Legacy project potential impact

Explain how your Legacy project will provide access to the arts or Minnesota’s agricultural, historical, and/or cultural heritage. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

Subject areas

Select the subject areas that apply to your project:

- Agricultural heritage
- Arts
- Arts access
- Cultural heritage
- History
- Historic preservation

Legacy budget

The budget table is an overview of how grant funds will be spent. Purchases made prior to a fully executed contract are not eligible for this grant, including any down payments or deposits on approved projects. Create a budget using the example format below. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

Item	Quantity	Cost per unit	Total estimate	Source of estimate
Pottery Demonstration	1	\$500	\$500	Potters, Inc.

Additional Legacy budget notes

Describe anything that may be unclear or need more explanation. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

Verification of performers or dancers

Performers or dancers must primarily be from Minnesota. If acts include multiple performers, the members must primarily be from Minnesota. If you are hiring performers or dancers explain: 1) how they are connected to Minnesota, and 2) how did you verify this? (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

Demonstrations

Artists offering demonstrations do not have to be from Minnesota, but the demonstrations must clearly relate to Minnesota's arts or Minnesota’s agricultural, historical, or cultural heritage. If you are hiring someone to do demonstrations, tell us how they relate to Minnesota's arts or Minnesota’s agricultural, historical, or cultural heritage. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

Legacy project oversight

List the name and title of individual who will oversee your Legacy project activities.

- Name
- Title

Legacy work plan

Create a work plan for your Legacy project using the example format shown below. You should include the steps that you will take to successfully complete your project. (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

Time frame	Description of task or action item
May 2024	Sign work order with Potters, Inc.

Measurable outcomes

Describe or list the project’s proposed outcomes. These should be quantifiable (e.g., number of participants attending a workshop or performance or visiting a building). This description should include the plan for measuring and evaluating the results. For example, “We expect that 75 people will attend the lumberjack show. We will assign a volunteer to take attendance as people walk through the gates of the event.” (maximum 5,000 characters, including spaces)

Certification

I certify to the best of my knowledge that the information in this application is true and correct and that I am legally authorized to sign and submit this application on behalf of this organization, which is legally eligible to enter a grant contract agreement. (Yes or No)

Appendix (Examples)

AGRI Grant projects

Before submitting projects for approval, fairs should consider if they can justify how a project preserves and promotes Minnesota agriculture. All projects are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, but the following are examples of items that are generally eligible or ineligible.

All items must be purchased, including any down payments, within the effective dates of the AGRI grant contract agreement. (Contracts are only effective after all signers, including an MDA commissioner, have signed the contract and the contract has reached its effective date.)

Generally eligible

- Updates to improve functionality of livestock barns, livestock arenas, and buildings primarily used for other agricultural and horticultural purposes. This might include siding, roofing, ventilation, flooring, sound systems, electrical, lighting, seating, gates, cages, wash racks, fencing, manure pits, handwashing or hand sanitation stations, and plumbing if specifically used for the care or tending of livestock.
 - If rebates are offered for any items (such as LED lights through an electrical provider), the rebates must be subtracted from the costs eligible for reimbursement.
 - Paint is only eligible if it's used to improve structural integrity or weatherization, not purely for cosmetic reasons.
- Children's barnyard structures and educational activities
- Livestock, crop, and horticulture judges
 - While these judges are eligible, there are significant paperwork requirements to request grant reimbursement. Documentation includes vouchers signed by the judge that indicate what they judged and list all expenses (hourly or daily rates, meals, mileage, and similar costs) plus cancelled checks showing that the judge was paid.
 - Pet and dog show judges are not eligible. See the [Almost never eligible](#) list for others.
- Horse shows
- Veterinary services
- Manure removal
- Wood chips for livestock areas
- Educational events and displays focusing on current agricultural practices, such as changing technology, dairy production, and farm safety

Sometimes eligible

- Petting zoos, if the animals are livestock that are reasonably found on Minnesota farms for agricultural or commercial purposes. Reptiles, amphibians, and non-farm mammals such as lions, giraffes, and camels are not eligible.
- Signage, if used on agricultural buildings or barns or to specifically promote agricultural events.
- Grandstand activities, if they are agriculturally focused (such as rodeos and tractor pulls) and admission is free.
- Physical improvements to the fairgrounds, if they directly enhance agriculture. For example, light poles immediately adjacent to a barn or arena are eligible, but light poles on the roadway are not. Similarly, driveways for barns are eligible, but roads around the fairgrounds are not.

Almost never eligible

- General construction projects, such as restrooms, roads, and offices
- General and wayfinding signage
- Portable toilets
- Grandstand activities that are not related to agriculture
- Pet, craft, artistry, photography, or clothing judges
- Improvements that are reimbursed by other sources (such as LED light fixtures by an energy provider)
- Magicians, balloon artists, comedians, and similar performers (see Legacy section)
- Artistic and historical displays of agriculture (see Legacy section)
- Photographers and photography exhibits (see Legacy section)
- Crop art exhibits and supplies (see Legacy section)

Legacy grant projects

Before submitting projects for approval, fairs should consider if they can justify how the project provides access to or educates about Minnesota arts or the state's history or agricultural and cultural heritage. Performances must be open to the public without added fees beyond gate admission. All projects are reviewed on a case-by-case basis, but the following are examples of items that are generally eligible or ineligible.

All items must be purchased, including any down payments, within the effective dates of the Legacy grant contract agreement. (Contracts are only effective after all signers, including an MDA commissioner, have signed the contract and the contract has reached its effective date.)

Generally eligible

- Minnesota musical performers or dancers. If hired acts include multiple performers, the members must primarily be from Minnesota.
- Minnesota balloon artists, magicians, comedians, and similar performers
- Artists offering demonstrations clearly related to Minnesota arts and cultural heritage, such as pottery, spinning, and blacksmithing
- Indigenous storytelling
- Antique farming displays
- Lumberjack shows
- Crop art exhibits and supplies
- Upgrades and improvements to buildings or stages primarily used to host arts and cultural heritage events, including sound systems, lighting, seating, and accessibility (such as ramps, railings, and flooring)
- Veterans displays or memorials
- Draft horse shows
- Historical markers and history lectures about Minnesota heritage
- Photography and fine arts displays or lectures (includes improvements to these displays like track lighting)
- One-room schoolhouse restorations
- Agricultural museums and photography

Sometimes eligible

- Signage, if used to promote the arts, agricultural history, or cultural heritage. Eligible examples include a sign saying, “Creative Arts Building” and educational signs like “This is a tractor from 1940.” General signs for the public are not eligible. Signs explaining how to navigate the grounds, how to get to the fair, or a sign stating “Welcome to the County Fair” cannot be funded.
- Updates to 4-H, open class buildings, and other non-commercial buildings, if the project will meaningfully preserve or promote Minnesota arts, history, or agricultural and cultural heritage during the county fair. For example, adding track lighting to an open class building used for photography competitions is eligible.

Almost never eligible

- General construction projects, such as restrooms, roads, and offices
- Grandstand performances (unless they feature Minnesota performers and no additional admission is charged for the performance)
- Ribbons, awards, trophies, and prizes
- Judges (see AGRI section for limited exceptions)
- Upgrades and improvements to barns and arenas (see AGRI section)
- Rodeos (see AGRI section)