



Good Food Access Program Technical Assistance Grant

Fiscal Year 2024 Request for Proposals

Applications due by 4 p.m. on March 28, 2024

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651-201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711. The MDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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Grant Summary

Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the Good Food Access Program (GFAP) Technical Assistance Grant. Grant funds are available to support technical assistance providers in working with new or existing for-profit, not-for-profit, and cooperative self-service retail food establishments with needs-based assistance. GFAP funds are intended to increase the availability of and access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, for underserved communities in low- and moderate-income areas.

Funding availability

We expect to award approximately \$935,000 between the two GFAP grant programs: Technical Assistance (TA) Grants and Equipment and Physical Improvement Grants. We expect to award up to \$200,000 for TA projects and up to \$735,000 for Equipment and Physical Improvement projects using a competitive review process.

The maximum TA grant request is \$50,000, and the minimum request is \$5,000. Collaborative projects including multiple TA providers may request up to \$200,000. We anticipate that we will award three to four grants, but the final number depends on the size of the awards. Grants may cover up to 75% of eligible expenses. The MDA reserves the right to not award any grants through this request for proposals (RFP).

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 program will prioritize:

- Projects that address business succession planning
- Projects that help TA recipients access capital

How to apply

- Apply for the GFAP TA Grant using our [online application system](#).
 - If you're a new user, first create an account.
 - Once you're logged in to your account, select Good Food Access Program Technical Assistance.
- Applications are due by **4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Thursday, March 28, 2024**.
 - We will not accept late applications.
 - Apply early so that there is enough time to get help with the online application system if you need it. It's best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance.
 - We are not responsible for any technical or logistical problems that result in a late submission. It's your responsibility to ensure that we receive your application 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.

Tips for applicants

- Clearly explain the importance or potential impact of your project.
- Make sure your budget is realistic and includes only eligible items. Include a detailed budget that clearly explains how the money will be spent. More detail is better than less.
- Include just one or two clear objectives rather than trying to accomplish too much. Simple projects with one or two clear objectives tend to work better.
- Explain how the project will be evaluated or measured for success.

Timeline and deadlines

Thursday, March 21, 2024, 4 p.m. CT.....Deadline to ask grant program questions.

Thursday, March 28, 2024, 4 p.m. CT.....Applications due.

May 9, 2024.....Applicants notified of decisions; grant agreement negotiations begin.

June 6, 2024.....Anticipated project start date (after the grant contract is fully signed).

Questions

For questions on the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4 p.m. CT, Thursday, March 21, 2024**.
- Email MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us with “GFAP TA Grant” in the subject line.

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 with “GFAP TA” in the subject line.

Grant Eligibility

Eligible applicants

Nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and for-profit businesses with capabilities to provide technical assistance to eligible grocery stores and small food retailers are invited to apply. Examples of potential technical assistance providers include but are not limited to small business development centers, regional economic development organizations, community development financial institutions, regional public health organizations, and foundations.

Tribal communities and other organizations that serve Native American tribal communities are eligible and encouraged to apply.

Applicants must:

- 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.
- Not be an employee or spouse of an employee of the MDA.

Applicants should review the [conflicts of interest](#) section prior to applying. The selected grantee must agree to these rules as a part of signing their grant contract agreement.

Collaboration

Applicants are encouraged to work in partnership with other technical assistance providers who can expand the breadth or reach of the technical assistance. Projects that demonstrate a collaborative, regional approach to technical assistance will receive priority.

A letter of support from at least one eligible grocery store or food retailer will be required to show their commitment to the implementation of the proposal.

Eligible projects

GFAP Technical Assistance Grant projects include but are not limited to sustainability-focused individualized guidance, presentations, workshops, training, printed materials, mentorship opportunities, peer-to-peer opportunities, or other guidance and resources on relevant topics such as business planning, sales projections, cash flow, succession planning, financing, fundraising, marketing, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) eligibility, food procurement or distribution, handling and merchandising fresh foods, food preparation demonstrations, and workforce training.

Grocers and small food retailers receiving technical assistance under this grant must be located in or serve a census tract designated as a food desert or must serve a substantial subpopulation, such as the elderly or disabled or those in a low- or moderate- income census tract, who have low supermarket access. It is not a requirement that the grocer or small food retailer be in one of these areas, however they must serve its residents. A list of eligible areas is available at the [GFAP Eligible Areas](#) webpage.

Projects must:

- Increase the availability of and access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods (including produce) for underserved communities in low- and moderate-income areas.
- Be conducted in Minnesota.
- Not start until the grant contract is signed by all parties and has reached its start date.
- Be completed in three years or less. Contracts cannot be extended beyond three years.

Recipients of technical assistance must agree to the following conditions:

- Accept SNAP benefits;
- Comply with all data collection and reporting requirements established by the commissioner;
- Promote the hiring, training, and retention of local or regional residents from low- and moderate-income areas that reflect area demographics, including communities of color; and
- Allocate at least 30% of retail food space for the sale of affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods. This includes fruits and vegetables; low-fat and nonfat dairy; fortified dairy substitute beverages such as soy-based or nut-based dairy substitute beverages; whole grain-rich staple foods; and meats, poultry, fish, seafood, and other proteins consistent with nutrition standards in national guidelines described in the current United States Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Applicants that meet the definition of small food retailer are exempt from this requirement. Technical assistance providers that receive funding under this grant opportunity will be responsible for gathering and maintaining documentation pertaining to these requirements.

Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Wages and associated fringe for time spent directly on the grant project (provide justification for the hourly rate)
- Consultant fees (provide justification for the hourly rate)
- Durable equipment or other items necessary for the project valued at less than \$1,000 each
- Training and workshop fees for technical assistance recipients
- Project-related travel
- Postage, printing, and telephone expenses related to the project

In addition, technical assistance providers may request up to 5% or \$2,500, whichever is less, of the total project costs to be used to increase institutional knowledge that is directly related to the assistance that will be provided to technical assistance recipients. For example, a technical assistance provider may supply their staff with the tools to advise clients about produce safety by contracting a workshop with recognized produce safety experts.

Expenses may not be incurred until after a grant contract has been fully executed. Successful applicants should anticipate having contracts available to them around June 2024. Grant contract agreements will expire three years after the start date of the contract. Expenses may only be incurred during the grant contract period.

Ineligible expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Expenditures incurred before the grant agreement is signed by all parties
- General operating and overhead costs
- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists, 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. Minnesota will be considered the home state for deciding whether travel is out of state.
- Amusement, diversion, or social activity 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.
- Equipment, construction, or other physical improvements

Matching funds

The applicant is required to provide a 25% match of funds awarded. Grants may cover up to 75% of eligible expenses.

Sources of the matching funds 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, liquid capital assets dedicated to the project, or in-kind contributions from technical assistance providers.

Matching funds may be received from technical assistance recipients (grocers and small food retailers). For example, if you provide two hours of work to the grocer and normally charge a rate of \$50 per hour, \$75 may be paid for by the grant and the remaining \$25 could be paid for by the grocer or provided in-kind by you, the grantee. You will need to demonstrate how the costs were determined.

Application Review Policies

Review process

A review committee, composed of MDA staff and external reviewers, 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 consider 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 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 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

Pre-award risk assessment

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 being determined.

If the MDA determines that the awardee has substantial financial risks that inhibit its ability to perform the required duties under the grant contract agreement, then the MDA may either request more information for the purpose of satisfying the concerns, develop a risk mitigation plan to protect the interests of the state, or not award the grant.

Applicants will be required to comply with [Policy 08-06: Policy on Pre-Award Risk Assessment for Potential Grantees \(PDF\)](#), and will be asked to submit documents relevant to their entity.

Nonprofit organizations

All nonprofit organizations applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to receiving a grant award of \$50,000 and higher.

To comply with Policy 08-06, applicants may be asked to submit the following documents:

- A copy of the nonprofit's most recent Form 990 or Form 990-EZ with the Internal Revenue Service. If the nonprofit has not been in existence long enough or is not required to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ, then they must submit the following information:
 - Proof of its tax-exempt status
 - Most recent board-reviewed financial statements
 - Documentation of its internal controls
- Most recent certified financial audit if required to complete one under Section 309.53, Subd. 3.
- Confirmation that it is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Confirmation that it is registered with the Minnesota Attorney General's Office, unless otherwise exempt.
- Confirmation that none of its current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

Nonprofit 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.

For-profit businesses

All for-profit businesses selected for a grant award of \$50,000 must undergo a financial review prior to receiving a grant contract agreement.

To comply with Policy 08-06, applicants may be asked to submit the following documents:

- A copy of the business' most recent federal and state tax returns. If the business has not been in business long enough to have a tax return, then they must submit current financial statements and documentation of internal controls.
- Confirmation that the business entity is not under bankruptcy proceedings or have any liens on assets.
- Confirmation that the business is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Confirmation that none of its current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

All for-profit businesses selected for a grant award over \$100,000 must submit either a [Form REV 185i \(PDF\)](#) or [Form REV185b \(PDF\)](#) at the time of grant award notification. These forms give the Minnesota Department of Revenue permission to inform the MDA if the grantee owes any back taxes.

Political sub-divisions

All political sub-divisions selected for a grant award must undergo a financial review prior to receiving a grant contract agreement.

To comply with Policy 08-06, applicant must confirm that none of its current public officials, board members, or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

Accountability and reporting

Grantees will need to identify and report on measures related to increased access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods. Grantees will also be expected to provide high-level data on all technical assistance recipients (e.g., names, locations, and types of technical assistance received) and report on progress made towards the project's objectives and activities. Annual Progress Reports will be sent out in the fall and will be due in November 2024, 2025, and 2026. A final report must be submitted prior to receiving final payment.

An example of the evaluation is available by contacting the program administrator and includes the following components:

- Names and locations of retail food businesses that received technical assistance, and the type of technical assistance that they received.
- Number of minority-owned or female-owned businesses that received technical assistance.
- Amount of dollars leveraged or matched per technical assistance recipient.
- Collaborations and how they impacted the leveraged resources.
- Other measurable economic and health outcomes, such as increases in sales and consumption of locally sourced and other fresh fruits and vegetables, the number of construction and retail jobs retained or created, or any health initiatives associated with the program.

Grantees may use grant funding to support evaluation costs while the grant contract is effective. Costs of conducting evaluation outside of the contract period are the responsibility of the grantee. Failure to respond to an evaluation request may impact a grantee's likelihood to receive future grants from the MDA.

The MDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the project.

Information submitted in any report is a public record. If the grant recipient considers any information in the report to be trade secret protected, the grant recipient may request that the trade secret information be kept confidential and must specifically label that information. The MDA shall notify the grant recipient if a public records request is made for the information claimed as protected by the grant recipient.

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(s) and receiving reimbursements, the applicant must:

- 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, and
- Submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification, and
- Submit documentation to meet the pre-award financial review requirements.
- 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. Grant contracts will have an expected end date of June 1, 2027, and cannot 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.

Payroll records will be required to substantiate all personnel costs. Invoices and proofs of payment will be required for all non-personnel costs. Your grant award may be no more than 75% of your total eligible costs.

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 before a final payment is approved; grantees with awards of \$250,000 or more will receive annual monitoring visits. 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.

Publicity

All projects funded must publicly credit Good Food Access Program and the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Program, including on the grantee's website when practical.

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 MDA, the Department of Administration, and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 8](#)).

The grantee is responsible for the retention of documents and records relevant to the grant. 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](#)).

GFAP Background and Program Goals

The Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Program 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 Good Food Access Program (GFAP) was established to increase the availability of and access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food, including fresh fruits and vegetables, for underserved communities in low-income and moderate-income areas. These goals will be accomplished by providing financial and technical support and supporting sustainable public-private projects to open, renovate, or expand the operations of grocery stores and small food retailers; expanding access to credit and reducing barriers to investment in underserved communities in low- and moderate-income areas; and to provide technical assistance, primarily for small food retailers with demonstrated need.

The GFAP Advisory Committee advises the commissioner of agriculture on managing the program, establishing program criteria, establishing project eligibility guidelines, establishing application processes and additional selection criteria, establishing annual monitoring and accountability mechanisms, facilitating leverage of additional public and private investments, and promoting the program statewide. The MDA drafted this RFP in cooperation with the GFAP Advisory Committee.

Definitions

Retailer definitions

Farmers' market: An association of three or more persons who assemble at a defined location that is open to the public for the purpose of selling directly to the consumer the products of a farm or garden occupied and cultivated by the person selling the product.

Food hub: A centrally located facility with a business management structure that facilitates the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, marketing, and sale of locally or regionally produced food products, and which may include a small-scale retail grocery operation.

Grocery store: A for-profit, not-for-profit, or cooperative self-service retail establishment that sells primarily meat, fish, seafood, fruits, vegetables, dry groceries, and dairy products and may also sell household products, sundries, and other products. It includes a supermarket or large-, mid-, or small-scale retail grocery establishment and may include a mobile food market or a delivery service operation.

Mobile food market: A self-contained for-profit, not-for-profit, or cooperative retail grocery operation located in a movable new or renovated truck, bus, or other vehicle that is used to store, prepare, display, and sell primarily meat, fish, seafood, fruits, vegetables, dry groceries, and dairy products and may also be used to sell a nominal supply of cooking utensils and equipment and other household products and sundries.

Small food retailer: A small-scale retail food outlet, other than grocery store, as defined. It includes – but is not limited to — a corner store, convenience store, farmers' market, mobile food market, and a retail food outlet operated by an emergency food program or food hub.

Budget definitions

Cash match: Monetary contribution made by the grantee for eligible costs under this grant.

In-kind match: Non-cash donated goods or services with an associated monetary value that are eligible costs under this program and support grant outcomes. Grantees should keep careful documentation to support amounts claimed as a match and how the value of the service was determined.

Personnel: Names and titles of project leaders who will receive a salary from this project.

Supplies: A general list of types of supplies. Justify the purchase of electronic supplies such as phones, computers, and tablets.

Contractual services: Any entities outside the organization that will be retained on a temporary basis to work the project or provide a specific service. Include contractor's name and a short description of services to be provided. Provide the flat rate fee or total hourly rate for each contract.

Travel: Include anticipated destination, number of trips, purpose of trips, mode of travel, and anticipated cost per trip. Base costs on the current federal rate. Provide justification for out-of-state travel.

Communication: List type of expenses and estimated costs.

Other: Eligible expenses that don't fit any of the other budget categories.

Project Evaluation Profile

GFAP Technical Assistance evaluation criteria	Maximum score
Organizational capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates the capacity to successfully implement and sustain the project 	15
Community engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows community engagement and support for the project, such as through local, regional, or state partnerships 	15
Project design <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details content of technical assistance that will be provided through this project Details how technical assistance recipients will be identified Clearly describes delivery methods and increased capacity for delivering technical assistance to recipients 	10
Project sustainability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a viable plan for long-term sustainability of technical assistance recipients 	10
Project objectives, activities, and timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed objectives, activities, and timeline are realistic and support program goals 	15
Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Budget table and budget narrative are consistent Budget narrative clearly details all project costs and the source of estimates Clearly explains source and amount of cash match 	10
Evaluation and learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Details how the project will contribute to the network of technical assistance available to food retailers in Minnesota 	10
Racial equity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates experience providing technical assistance to communities of color and a commitment to these communities 	5
Minnesota agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advances Minnesota agriculture (i.e., creates or retains markets for Minnesota-grown or -raised products) 	5
Letter(s) of support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a strong letter of support from at least one retailer who will receive technical assistance under this grant 	5
Total	100

Application Questions

Contact information

Applicant information

- Organization name
- Point of contact name
- Point of contact mailing address
- Point of contact telephone
- Point of contact email
- Point of contact county
- Minnesota State House District (Use the [District Finder](#) if you don't know your district.)

Authorized representative

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

Eligibility

Confirm that the following statements apply to you and your business/organization.

- The business/organization does not owe the State of Minnesota any back taxes and has not defaulted on any Minnesota state-backed financing in the last seven years. (True)
- The business/organization is compliant with current state regulations. (True)
- The business/organization is in Minnesota or authorized to conduct business in Minnesota. (True)
- No one involved in the project or the application for the grant is an employee or spouse of an employee of the MDA. (True)
- I attest that I have the authority to apply on behalf of the business/organization and no other application is being submitted from this organization. (Yes)
- I attest that none of the organization's current board members, principals, or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years. (Yes)
- I understand that if my application is successful, the MDA cannot reimburse for any project expenses incurred or work performed prior to the start date of the contract (expected to be mid-June, 2024). (Yes)

Previous grants

- Have you previously received any grants from any source for similar projects? (Yes or No)
- Have you previously received a GFAP TA or Equipment Grant from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture? (Yes or No)
- If yes, briefly describe your previous grant project(s), including date(s), amount(s) awarded, and funding source(s). (1,000 characters, including spaces)

Project summary

Grant request

- Project name
- Total grant request. Maximum of \$50,000, minimum \$5,000.
- Applicant match
- Total project cost
- Expected project end date
 - Contracts may last a full three years from start date.
 - 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 description

Provide a brief description of your project and goals to be accomplished. The summary of this proposed project must be suitable for dissemination to the public. (1,200 characters, including spaces)

Business or organization overview

Describe the capacity of your business or organization to implement the project. Include information such as years of experience providing technical assistance; experience in the food retail environment or working with underserved populations; other experience with food retail businesses; track record of working with communities of color; community partners; organization's strengths; and any other information to demonstrate your organization's ability to execute the project. (2,400 characters, including spaces)

Key project partners

List the organizations and collaborators that will be involved in carrying out this project. Include a description of the relevant experience each will bring and what they will contribute. (2,400 characters, including spaces)

Geographic area

Describe the areas that you anticipate providing service through this grant opportunity. At minimum, list the Minnesota counties where the service will be provided. You may be more specific (e.g., Ramsey County with a focus on the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul). (2,400 characters, including spaces)

Project proposal

Content

Describe the content of technical assistance that your organization will be able to provide through this grant opportunity. (5,000 characters, including spaces)

Identification of retailers

Explain the process that will guide your organization in identifying and selecting grocers and small food retailers to receive technical assistance. See the [eligible projects](#) section in the RFP for details on eligible retailers. In addition, explain how newer, less-established retailers will be included in your plan. (2,400 characters, including spaces)

Approximately how many retailers do you anticipate serving through this grant-funded project?

Delivery methods

Describe the methods by which your organization will deliver technical assistance (e.g., one-on-one, in-person sessions, webinars, or large group presentations). Applicants should use methods that promote the ability for diverse and remote populations to actively engage. (5,000 characters, including spaces)

Increased capacity

Explain how grant funding will enable your organization to provide free or reduced cost technical assistance to grocers and small food retailers beyond your current capacity. (2,400 characters, including spaces)

Objectives, activities, and timeline

Clearly state your project objectives. Use statements that specifically describe the number of retailers that you expect to target, what you hope to accomplish, deadlines for accomplishing each activity, and responsible parties. Your project timeline should start no earlier than June 1, 2024. (10,000 characters, including spaces)

Example

Objective 1: By December 31, 2024, develop succession plans with at least six small food retailers who anticipate retirement in the next three to seven years.

- Activity: In partnership with the Minnesota Grocers Association, identify grocers in target geographical area that are expecting to retire.
- Who: Sarah Johnson, Business Transition Specialist (by August 2024)

Budget

Budget table

Complete the following table to outline the expected costs of your project. See the [budget definitions](#) section of the RFP for detailed descriptions. Payroll records will be required to substantiate all personnel costs. Invoices and proofs of payment will be required for all non-personnel costs. Your grant award may be no more than 75% of your total eligible costs. You may add additional lines or pages as necessary. The online application will have a table for you to download and re-attach to your application.

Category	Total costs
Personnel: Salaries	
Personnel: Fringe benefits	
Supplies	
Contracted services	
Travel	
Communications	
Other	
Total request	

Budget narrative

Respond to the following prompts. (6,000 characters, including spaces)

- Detail how the funds will be used and justify each expense listed in the budget table. Categories are explained in the budget definitions section of the RFP.
- Explain how the expenses outlined in the budget table connect to the project’s results.
- Explain how you arrived at the budget estimates.
- Detail the source or sources of current or pending cash match.

Evaluation and learning

Evaluation plan

Do you agree to report on the following measures related to increased access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods (evaluations due November 2024, 2025, and 2026)? (Yes or No)

Describe the methods that you will use to identify and report on the following measures related to increased access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods for five years.

- Names and locations of retail food businesses that received technical assistance, and the type of technical assistance that they received.
- Number of minority-owned or female-owned businesses that received technical assistance.
- Amount of dollars leveraged or matched per technical assistance recipient.
- Collaborations and how they impacted the leveraged resources.
- Other measurable economic and health outcomes, such as increases in sales and consumption of locally sourced and other fresh fruits and vegetables, the number of construction and retail jobs retained or created, and any health initiatives associated with the program.
- Overall sales of affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate foods (including fresh fruits and vegetables and locally sourced products).
- Progress made on each of the objectives identified in the objectives and activities listed in your application.

Organizational learning

Describe what you anticipate learning about the retail food sector through this project and how you would share this information with partner organizations to grow retail food technical assistance capacity in Minnesota. (2,400 characters, including spaces)

Letter(s) of support

You must include at least one letter of support from an eligible grocery or small food retailer who would receive technical assistance if you are awarded a grant. You may also include letters of support from key partners such as national, regional, and community partners that affirm your ability to successfully implement the project or that validate their partnership in the delivery of technical assistance.