

AGRI Dairy Farm Improvement Grant 2019 Request for Proposals

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Grant Summary

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the 2019 Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Dairy Farm Improvement Grant Program. The goal of this new program is to help improve the profitability of Minnesota cow dairies through investments in their capability to meet dairy farm and quality standards for Grade A milk production. We welcome applications from current producers of Grade A milk who wish to maintain their ability to produce Grade A milk as well as applications from producers of manufacturing grade milk (Grade B milk) who wish to start producing Grade A milk.

Application and Award Details

The MDA anticipates awarding up to \$250,000 in this round using a competitive review process. Grants can fully reimburse up to \$10,000 of eligible project costs.

The MDA must receive your proposal no later than **4:00 p.m. CDT on May 1, 2019** in order to be considered.

We encourage you to use our [online application](#). The application is accessed through a link on the [AGRI Dairy Farm Improvement Grant webpage](#) (www.mda.state.mn.us/dairyimprovement).

Contact Information

Direct questions about the grant program, completing the application, or additional accommodations in writing to:

Ashley Bress or Michael Greene

MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us

Minnesota Department of Agriculture

625 Robert St N

St. Paul, MN 55155-2538

Eligibility and Application Instructions

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must:

- Be the principal operator of a dairy cow operation that is currently producing Grade B milk or a Grade A cow milk producer who needs to make capital or operational improvements to ensure continued compliance with the Grade A requirements
- Be a resident of the State of Minnesota or be a business entity [authorized to farm in Minnesota](#).
- Be in good standing with the state of Minnesota (no back taxes)
- Not be an employee or spouse of an employee of the MDA

Who is a principal operator?

A principal operator is the person primarily responsible for the day-to-day operation of the farm. The principal operator could be an owner, hired manager, cash tenant, share tenant, and/or a partner.

Eligible Projects

This grant program only reimburses the cost of equipment, services, or physical improvements that will help the dairy operation to meet requirements for Grade A milk production as established by the [Pasteurized Milk Ordinance \(PMO\)](#). The list of proposed purchases requested by the applicant will be reviewed by MDA dairy inspectors to verify need and relevance to meeting or maintaining Grade A milk standards.

Only the services specifically needed to meet or maintain Grade A dairy farm and quality standards will be permitted. Examples include hiring a veterinarian or equipment consultant to troubleshoot milk quality issues, specifically with respect to bacteria and Somatic cell count. General operating expenses are not allowed under this grant.

If the MDA approves your proposal to be funded, we will reimburse eligible costs included in your project budget. To receive reimbursement, you will have to submit documentation such as invoices and proof of payment. You must be invoiced and pay for all project materials and services between April 1, 2019 and September 30, 2020. Any expenses incurred outside this timeframe are not eligible for reimbursement.

Funding Availability

The MDA anticipates awarding at least 25 grants totaling \$250,000 in grant awards. Applicants may apply for full reimbursement of up to \$10,000 of their project's total cost. The minimum grant award is \$1,000 and the maximum is \$10,000 per eligible applicant.

Application Instructions

We strongly encourage you to use our [online application](#). The application can also be accessed through a link on the [AGRI Dairy Farm Improvement Grant webpage](#) (www.mda.state.mn.us/dairyimprovement). If you cannot apply online, you can submit an application by email or mail by answering the questions at the end of this Request for Proposals (RFP). Answer each question to the best of your ability. Remember that reviewers have expertise in the dairy industry. It is important that you provide clear responses.

All applications **must** be received by the MDA no later than 4:00 p.m. CDT on May 1, 2019. Late applications **will not** be considered. Applicants must pay any costs incurred in responding to this RFP. The MDA is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems; it is your responsibility to ensure that we receive your submission before the deadline.

Application Review Process and Timeline

A committee of dairy experts will evaluate all eligible applications using the application scoring profile found on page 9. The list of proposed purchases requested by the applicant will be reviewed by MDA dairy program staff to verify need and relevance to Grade A milk standards. The Commissioner of Agriculture will review the committee's recommendations and make the final award decisions. The review committee and Commissioner may use rural/urban and geographic diversity when making their recommendations and decisions. We will notify all applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing regarding the outcome of their application.

RFP posted on the MDA website.....	March 15, 2019
Questions due no later than 4:00 p.m. CDT.....	April 24, 2019
Applications due no later than 4:00 p.m. CDT.....	May 1, 2019
Committee begins review of applications.....	May 3, 2019
Committee recommendations submitted to Commissioner for review.....	May 17, 2019
Notification of award status.....	June 1, 2019

Questions

You can submit questions by emailing MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us. You must submit your questions by 4:00 p.m. CDT on April 24, 2019. We post all questions and answers on the AGRI Dairy Farm Improvement Grant webpage.

Requirements for Projects Receiving Grant Funds

Grant Award Agreement and Payments

If your grant proposal is accepted, you will have to:

- Complete an IRS W-9 form within one week of notification that you've been selected for a grant
- Sign the Affidavit for Individuals within one week of notification that you've been selected for a grant
- Sign a Grant Award Agreement no later than June 30, 2019

If you fail to submit any piece of documentation on time, you may lose your grant. The MDA also reserves the right to verify Veteran status by requesting your discharge form (DD214) and to request documentation of participation in conservation programs.

Requests for reimbursement can only include items that appear in your budget (which will be part of your grant agreement). Grant program staff members compare all requests for reimbursement against the grant agreement and the grant expenditures to date before approving payment. You must submit proof of purchase and proof of payment with each request for reimbursement. Grantees will receive additional information regarding what qualifies as a proof of purchase and proof of payment.

Site Visits and Follow-ups

The grant agreement allows the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. Grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA through dairy inspections or by site visits planned by grant administrators. We also conduct follow-up surveys to help us determine the long-term impacts of the grants we award. Grantees may receive surveys for up to two years after contract has ended.

Grantee Bidding Requirements

All funded applicants must follow the State's [bidding requirements](#) for purchases larger than \$10,000.

Audits of Project

Per Minnesota's [Grants Management Process statute](#), a 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. 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.

Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Policy

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](#).

Grantees must agree 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. 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.

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 Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation 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 non public, although some or all of the data will become public at various points of the application process. Access to private or non public data is limited by law to MDA staff and contractors with a valid work assignment to access the data, parties authorized by the applicant, parties names in a valid court order, the state auditor, and the legislative auditor. If necessary, the MDA may also share the data with law enforcement.

Per the [Grants section](#) of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act:

- Names and addresses of grant applicants, and amount requested, will be public data once application responses are opened.
- All remaining data in application responses (except 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 be public data after the evaluation process is completed.
- [Trade secret information](#) submitted by an applicant is classified as private or nonpublic. In order to protect data as trade secret information, the application must identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that the applicant wishes to protect, and provide an explanation of the economic value of keeping the data from being generally known to other persons. Determining what constitutes trade secret information is ultimately the responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data marked by an applicant as trade secret information will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, that data will be public.

Conflicts of Interest

In managing grants, the MDA follows State [statute](#) and [policy](#) to prevent conflicts of interest with regard to both applicants and reviewers.

Conflicts of interest can occur when:

- a grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render 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 applicants or grantees will be notified. The MDA may disqualify applicants from consideration or terminate grant agreements.

Voter Registration Requirement

The grantee will comply with the statute on [Duties of State Agencies](#) by providing voter registration services for its employees.

AGRI Background and Program Goals

The [Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program \(AGRI\)](#) was established to advance Minnesota's agricultural and renewable energy industries. This program focuses on areas of greatest opportunity and potential economic impact to create agricultural jobs and profitable businesses in the areas of livestock investment, value-added businesses and market development, and renewable energy. The AGRI Dairy Farm Improvement Grant is intended to assist dairy producers in maximizing their profitability through investments necessary to produce Grade A milk.

Application Scoring Profile

Criteria	Strong	Average	Weak	No Evidence	Maximum Score
Economic Outcomes	Project likely to significantly impact the long-term financial viability of the farm (30-35 points)	Impact likely to be moderate (15-29 points)	Impact likely to be small (1-14 points)	Not mentioned (0 points)	35
Excellence in Conservation	Demonstrated serious commitment to conservation, evidenced through participation in specified programs (8-10 points)	Some commitment to conservation (4-7 points)	Limited commitment to conservation (1-3 points)	Not mentioned (0 points)	10
Farm Business Management	Currently participates in Farm Business Management (4-5 points)	Participated in Farm Business Management in the last 1-5 years (2-3 points)	Participated in Farm Business Management more than 5 years ago (1 point)	Has never participated in Farm Business Management (0 points)	5
Dairy Business Planning Grant	Currently has a Dairy Business Planning Grant (4-5 points)	Received a Dairy Business Planning Grant in the last 1-5 years (2-3 points)	Received a Dairy Business Planning Grant more than 5 years ago (1 point)	Has never received a Dairy Business Planning grant (0 points)	5
Dairy Profitability and Enhancement Team	Currently receives assistance via a Dairy Profitability and Enhancement Team (4-5 points)	Participated in a Dairy Profitability and Enhancement Team in the last 1-5 years (2-3 points)	Participated in a Dairy Profitability and Enhancement Team more than 5 years ago (1 point)	Has never participated in a Dairy Profitability and Enhancement Team (0 points)	5
Ability to Cover Project Costs	Demonstrated ability to cover up-front costs associated with the project (16-20 points)	Funding sources mentioned, but applicant provided limited evidence of them (8-15 points)	Funding sources mentioned, but applicant provided limited evidence of them (1-7 points)	Not mentioned (0 points)	20
Veteran-Status	Applicant is a Veteran of the US military	N/A	N/A	Applicant is not a Veteran of the US military	5
Completeness of Application	Complete, detailed, and instructions followed (11-15 points)	Problems are minor and do not detract greatly from application (6-10 points)	Problems are serious and detract from application (1-5 points)	Application not readable or instructions ignored (0 points)	15
TOTAL					100

AGRI Dairy Farm Improvement Grant Application

Applicant Information

Personal Information – must be the principal operator

- First Name
- Last Name
- Mailing Address
- City
- State
- Zip
- County
- Phone Number
- Email

Applicant Age

- Under 25
- 25-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56-65
- Over 65

Spouse Personal Information

- First Name
- Last Name
- Mailing Address (*if different from applicant*)
- City
- State
- Zip
- Phone Number
- Email

Name of Farm

Organizational Structure

- Sole Proprietorship
- Partnership
- LLP
- LLC
- Corporation (Incorporated)

- Estate
- Trust
- Other

Eligibility Requirements

- I am in good standing with the State of Minnesota (no back taxes).
- I am a current Minnesota resident or business entity authorized to farm in Minnesota.
- I am a principal operator of the farm (person most actively involved in the operation of the farm).
- I certify that expenses for this project will be incurred between April 1, 2019 and September 30, 2020.

Project Proposal

Project Summary

Describe your project including how it fits into your business plan. How will the equipment, services, or physical improvements aid your operation in either moving from Grade B to Grade A or in maintaining Grade A status? Include timelines for project construction or equipment purchase dates. *(3,400 Characters)*

Economic Outcomes

Provide a clear description of how this project will change the viability and economic health of your farm operation. *(2,800 Characters)*

Excellence in Conservation

Does your farm achieve excellence in conservation as evidenced by participation in the following programs? Your farm does not need to participate in one of these programs to be eligible for this grant program.

- Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program Yes/No
- Federal Conservation Security Program Yes/No
- A private whole-farm environmental stewardship program Yes/No
 - Please specify which program(s)

Farm Business Management

If you have ever participated in an approved Farm Business Management program, please answer the questions below about your enrollment. You do not need to participate in Farm Business Management to be eligible for this grant program.

- In what year were you last enrolled?
- Through which institution were you last enrolled?

Dairy Profitability and Enhancement Team

Do you currently or have you ever worked with a Dairy Profitability and Enhancement Team to improve the success and long-term sustainability of your farm? Your farm does not need to participate in a team to be eligible for this grant program. Yes/No

Dairy Business Planning Grant

Have you received a Dairy Business Planning Grant from the MDA to hire an independent third party to create a business plan for your operation and/or to test for stray voltage? Your farm does not need to have received a grant to be eligible for this grant program. Yes/No

Proposed Purchases

Provide a list of the services, equipment, and supplies that you would like to purchase for your project as well as each item’s estimated cost. Only eligible expenses should be included in the list. Refer to page 4 of this RFP for item eligibility.

Briefly, your project may include:

- Building improvements for the production of Grade A milk
- Equipment for the production of Grade A milk
- Services necessary to meet or maintain Grade A dairy farm and quality standards

Project Expense	Estimated Cost

Documentation of Ability to Cover Project Costs

Do you have the ability to cover costs associated with your project prior to being reimbursed by the MDA (through cash on hand, loan, or other sources)? Yes/No

Optional: Upload documentation to demonstrate your ability to cover these costs. For example, a letter from your bank saying you have adequate funds or financing available. Please black out any private information such as bank account numbers.

Veteran Status

Are you a Veteran of the United States Armed Forces? The MDA reserves the right to verify Veteran status by requesting your discharge form (DD214). Yes/No

Applicant certifies that:

1. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the data in this application is true and correct and supporting documentation for the claims and assertions made within this application is available to the MDA for its review.
 2. I understand that submitting false or misleading information in connection with this application may result in the applicant being found ineligible for financial assistance under the AGRI Dairy Farm Improvement Grant. I further understand that receiving public funds as a consequence of false representations constitutes an act of fraud.
 3. I understand that MDA may conduct audits, check references, and conduct site inspections after grants are awarded and prior to dollars being disbursed.
 4. I have read and understand the Privacy Notice and Data Classification provision in this application.
 5. I verify that all information supplied in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.
- Applicant's Signature
 - Date