

AGRI LIVESTOCK INVESTMENT GRANT - 2020 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

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AGRI LIVESTOCK INVESTMENT GRANT 2020 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Grant Summary

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the 2020 Agriculture Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Livestock Investment Grant Program. Grant funds are available for equipment purchases, physical improvements, and acquisition of facilities used to help start, improve, or expand livestock operations in the state of Minnesota.

Application and Award Details

The MDA anticipates awarding up to \$768,000 using a competitive review process. Applicants may apply for up to 10% of their project's total cost with a minimum expense of \$4,000 and a maximum expense of \$250,000. Grant awards can range in size from \$400 to \$25,000.

Each livestock operation is eligible to receive a lifetime maximum of \$50,000 from this grant program. The \$50,000 maximum for livestock operations applies at the entity level for partnerships, S corporations, C corporations, trusts, estates, and individuals. Married couples are also limited to \$50,000 for their livestock operation. Only one grant can be awarded per project.

To be eligible for reimbursement by this grant, you must be invoiced and pay for all project materials and services between January 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. Any expenses incurred outside this time frame are not eligible for reimbursement.

We must receive your proposal no later than **4:00 p.m. CST on Wednesday, December 18, 2019** for it to be considered. We encourage you to use our [online application](#).

If you cannot apply online, you can fill out the application at the end of this Request for Proposals. Send the completed application by email or mail to Michael Greene (contact information below). Answer each question to the best of your ability. Remember that reviewers have livestock expertise.

How to Submit Questions

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

Michael Greene
Michael.Greene@state.mn.us
Minnesota Department of Agriculture
625 Robert St N
St. Paul, MN 55155-2538

All questions should be submitted through writing by mail or email by **4:00 p.m. CST on Wednesday, December 11, 2019**. We post all questions and answers on the AGRI [Livestock Investment Grant webpage](#).

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

Application Review Process and Timeline

A review committee of livestock experts evaluates all eligible applications received by the deadline using the project evaluation profile. The Commissioner of Agriculture reviews the committee's recommendations and is responsible for 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.

Application period begins; RFP posted on the MDA website	September 25, 2019
Questions due no later than 4:00 pm CST.	December 11, 2019
Applications due no later than 4:00 pm CST	December 18, 2019
Committee recommendations submitted to Commissioner for review	January 15, 2020
Applicants notified of decisions; Grant agreement negotiations begin. . . .	February 3, 2020

Application Guidelines

- Write for reviewers who are generally knowledgeable but may not have a thorough or deep understanding of your livestock operation. Use plain, easily understood language.
- Answer all questions completely within the character or page limits specified in the grant application. Use 12-point font and single spacing.
- The Project Evaluation Profile included in this document will be used to score and compare the grant applications.

Eligibility and Application Instructions

Eligible Applicants

Applicants must:

- Be the principal operator of a livestock operation
- Be a resident of the state of Minnesota or be a business entity authorized to farm in Minnesota (see below)
- Have not already received the lifetime maximum \$50,000 in grant awards
- Hold an appropriate feedlot registration when applicable
- Be in good standing with the state of Minnesota (no back taxes)
- Not be an employee of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture

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.

What business entities need authorization to farm in Minnesota?

Minnesota Statute §500.24 requires that all pension or investment funds, corporations, limited partnerships, limited liability companies, and irrevocable trusts must be certified by the MDA before engaging in farming or having an interest in agricultural land.

How do business entities get authorization to farm in Minnesota?

Applications and additional information are available at: [Minnesota's Corporate Farm Report webpage](#).

How do I know if I need a feedlot registration?

For feedlot registration rules, contact your local feedlot officer or visit the [Minnesota Pollution Control Agency website](#).

Eligible Projects

For the purposes of this grant, livestock include beef cattle, dairy cattle, swine, poultry, goats, mules, bison, sheep, horses, farmed Cervidae (deer, elk), Ratitae (flightless birds including emu), and llamas. If the MDA accepts your proposal, we will reimburse eligible costs included in your project budget. You will have to submit documentation, like invoices and proof of payment. You must be invoiced and pay for all project materials and services between January 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021. Any expenses incurred outside this timeframe are not eligible for reimbursement.

This grant program funds the following activities:

- 1) Acquisition, construction, or improvement of buildings or facilities for the production of livestock or livestock products
- 2) Development of pasture for use by livestock including, but not limited to, the acquisition, development, or improvement of:
 - A. Lanes used by livestock that connect pastures to a central location
 - B. Watering systems for livestock on pasture including water lines, booster pumps, and well installations
 - C. Livestock stream crossing stabilization
 - D. Fences
- 3) Acquisition of equipment for livestock housing, confinement, feeding, and waste management including, but not limited to, the following:
 - A. Freestall barns
 - B. Watering facilities
 - C. Feed storage and handling equipment
 - D. Milking parlors
 - E. Robotic equipment
 - F. Scales
 - G. Milk storage and cooling facilities;
 - H. Bulk tanks
 - I. Computer hardware and software and associated equipment used to monitor the productivity and feeding of livestock
 - J. Manure pumping and storage facilities
 - K. Swine farrowing facilities
 - L. Swine and cattle finishing barns
 - M. Calving facilities
 - N. Digesters
 - O. Equipment used to produce energy
 - P. On-farm processing facilities equipment
 - Q. Fences, including but not limited to farmed Cervidae perimeter fences
 - R. Livestock pens and corrals and sorting, restraining, and loading chutes

Ineligible Expenses

Grant funds **may not** be used to buy or rent:

- 1) General purpose equipment (e.g. skid steer loaders, combines, tractors)
- 2) Animal feed or crop seed
- 3) Crop production equipment (except specialized forage/hay harvesting and handling equipment such as mowing equipment, tedding equipment, and hay balers)
- 4) Crop or pasture land
- 5) Livestock
- 6) Purchase of more than 10 acres of land used to construct livestock buildings or facilities
- 7) Rent-to-own lease agreements where property purchase is optional
- 8) Refinancing existing debt
- 9) Late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- 10) Items that are not allowed to be capitalized and deducted under either section 167 or 179 of the Internal Revenue Code in computing federal taxable income

Application Review Policies

Conflicts of Interest

The State will take steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per [Minn. Stat.16B.98](#) and [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making \(PDF\)](#).

Organizational conflicts of interest 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 and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

Privacy Notice and Data Classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant under the AGRI Program. 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 non public, 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 non public data is limited by law to the MDA staff and contractors with a valid work assignment to access the data, parties authorized by the applicant or by a valid court order, 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.

Per [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 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 (as defined in Minn. Stat. § 13.37) is classified as private or nonpublic. In order for an applicant to protect data submitted as part of this application as trade secret information, the applicant 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 or marked “confidential” will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, that data will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

Requirements for Grant Recipients

Grant Award Agreement and Payments

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

- Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the State’s accounting system, and submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification; and
- Sign a Grant Award Agreement indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreement also authorizes the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. The grant award document must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

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 receipts, invoices, and proof that the vendors have been paid.

Site Visits and Follow-ups

The grant agreement allows the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. The MDA conducts a site visit with all grantees who have awards of \$25,000 or more before we approve final payment. Other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA. 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.

Audits of Project

Per [Minn. Stat. §16B.98](#) Subd. 8, the grantee’s books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate. 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.

Bidding Requirements

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

Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Policy

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

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

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the **Minnesota Human Rights Act**.

Voter Registration Requirement

The grantee will comply with **Minn. Stat. §201.162** 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 (Minn. Stat. 41A.12). AGRI has made significant economic impacts by increasing productivity, improving efficiency, and assisting the development of agricultural products. The AGRI Livestock Investment Grant is intended to encourage long-term industry development for Minnesota livestock producers by encouraging investments in the facilities and the equipment of livestock operations (**Minn. Stat. 17.118**).

Project Evaluation Profile

Criteria	Strong	Average	Weak	No Points	Maximum Score
New Farmer	Farmer has been the principal operator for 3 years or less	Farmer has been principal operator between 4 and 7 years	Farmer has been principal operator between 7 and 10 years	Farmer has been principal operator greater than 10 years	10
Generational Transition	Generation transition completed in the next year	Generation transition part of near-term business plan	Generation transition part of long-term business plan	Not mentioned	10
Economic Outcomes	Efficiency and/or profitability significantly improved	Efficiency and/or profitability slightly improved	Efficiency and/or profitability maintained	Not mentioned	10
Farm Management Plans and Programs	Project greatly contributes to the implementation of a plan or program	Project partially contributes to the implementation of a plan or program	Project marginally contributes to the implementation of a plan or program	Not mentioned	10
Environmental Impact	Project fully addresses compliance issues with feedlot rules and/or provides major environmental benefits	Project partially addresses compliance issues with feedlot rules and/or provides some environmental benefits	Project provides minor environmental benefits	Not mentioned	10
Responding to Natural Disaster	Project primarily repairs damage caused by natural disaster	Part of the project repairs damage caused by natural disaster	A small part of the project repairs damage caused by natural disaster	Not mentioned	10
Farm Safety and Accessibility Improvements	Project fully addresses farm safety or accessibility needs of farmer or employees	Project partially addresses farm safety or accessibility needs of farmer or employees	Project begins to address the farm safety or accessibility needs of farmer or employees	Not mentioned	10
Diversity and Inclusion	Farm staff and ownership address inequities.	Farm staff and ownership somewhat address inequities.	Farm staff and ownership have a plan to address inequities.	Not mentioned	10
Market Demand for Animal Welfare	Project helps you to protect or expand market access by responding to demand for animal welfare.	---	---	Not mentioned	5
Robotic Dairy Milking Equipment	Project includes robotic dairy milking equipment.	---	---	Project does not include robotic dairy milking equipment.	5
Completeness of application	Complete, detailed, and instructions followed	Problems are minor and do not detract greatly from application	Problems are serious and detract from application	Application not readable or instructions ignored	10
Total					100

AGRI LIVESTOCK INVESTMENT GRANT 2020 APPLICATION

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Personal Information – must be the principal operator

First Name _____ Middle Initial _____ Last Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____

Phone Number _____ Cell Phone Number _____

Email _____

Spouse Personal Information

First Name _____ Middle Initial _____ Last Name _____

 Mailing Address *(if different from applicant)* _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ County _____

Phone Number _____ Cell Phone Number _____

Email _____

Farm Operation

Name of Farm (if applicable) _____

County	Township Name	Township Number (25-71 or 100-168)	Range Number (1-51)	Section Number (1--36)	Quarter Section (NW, NE, SW, SE)	Quarter Quarter Section (NW, NE, SW, SE)

(If applicable) What is your feedlot registration number? _____

Organizational structure

Sole Proprietorship	Partnership	LLP	LLC	Corporation
Estate	Trust	Other _____		

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ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Check all that apply. *Note: To be awarded a grant, all of the following must apply.*

- 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 hold a feedlot registration (if applicable)
- I certify that expenses for this project will be incurred between January 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Project Summary

Describe your project including how it fits into your business plan and the vision of your livestock operation. Include timelines for project construction or equipment purchase dates. (3000 characters, including spaces)

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New Farmers

Does this project support the startup of a new livestock operation? Yes No

If yes, please explain. (1500 characters, including spaces)

How many years have you farmed? _____

(Only count years where over 25% of the applicant's income came from farming)

Generational Transitions

Does this project support the generational transition of an existing livestock operation? Yes No

If yes, please explain, including how soon the transition is expected to occur. (1500 characters, including spaces)

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Economic Outcomes

How do you expect this project will improve the efficiency or profitability of your farm? Note that your operation does not need to be profitable currently. It is important that you provide a clear description of how this project will change the viability and economic health of your farm operation. (1500 characters, including spaces)

Farm Management Plans and Programs

Have you completed or do you plan on completing a conservation or management plan for your farm? Yes No

See examples of farm management plans and programs on next page (page 14)

If yes, please identify the plans/programs and describe how your proposed project relates to those plans or programs.
(1500 characters, including spaces)

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Examples of farm management plans and programs

- Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program
- Pork Quality Assurance
- Annual Nutrient Management Plan
- Regular Soil Testing
- Farm Energy Audits
- Green Star Farm Initiative
- Farmers Assuring Responsible Management™ (FARM)
- Environmental Quality Assurance (EQA)
- Organic System Plan
- USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service Programs
- Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)
- Other

Environmental Impact

Explain how this project will help bring your operation into compliance or keeps it compliant with feedlot rules.
(1500 characters, including spaces)

Describe any other positive effects this project will have on the environment? (1500 characters, including spaces)

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Responding to Natural Disasters

Are you rebuilding after a natural disaster that happened within the last two years? Yes No

If yes, please describe the natural disaster and the damage it caused. Indicate which parts of the project are related to repairing the damage. (1500 characters, including spaces)

Farm Safety and Accessibility Improvements

Describe the farm safety or accessibility improvements that would result from this project?

(1500 characters, including spaces)

- Farm safety improvements result in a work environment less likely to result in physical harm to workers.
- Accessibility improvements allow farmers or employees with disabilities and/or physical conditions to contribute to the day-to-day operations of the farm.

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Diversity and Inclusion

Provide a summary of how your farm operation addresses diversity and inclusion through hiring veterans, people with disabilities or physical conditions, people of color, and Native Americans. Include how your farm operation's staff and ownership reflect these communities. (1500 characters, including spaces)

Market Demand for Animal Welfare

Describe how your project will help you to respond to growing demand by consumers and retailers for animal welfare certification. How will this project protect or expand your market access? (1500 characters, including spaces)

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Robotic Dairy Milking Equipment

Does your project include the purchase of robotic milking equipment? Yes No

Previous Funding

Has your livestock operation previously received an AGRI Livestock Investment Grant? Yes No

If yes, briefly describe the previous project(s) funded by the grant awards, including the amount awarded.
(800 characters, including spaces)

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Proposed Purchases

Provide a list of the services, equipment, and supplies that you would like to purchase for your project. Also, provide each item’s estimated cost. Only eligible items should be included in the list. Read the Request for Proposals for project eligibility.

Briefly, your project may include:

- Buildings or building improvements for the production of livestock or livestock products
- Development of pasture for use by livestock (e.g. fencing, waterers, etc.)
- Equipment for livestock housing, confinement, feeding, and waste management

Project Items	Estimated Cost of Item

AGRI LIVESTOCK INVESTMENT GRANT 2020 APPLICATION

Number of Livestock

Use the following table to provide an estimate of the number of livestock on your operation. This is one way that the MDA measures the impact of this grant program. Please note that increasing the number or types of livestock on your operation is not required. The estimated number of livestock will not grant award decisions.

Livestock Type	Current Number (Before Project)	Estimated Number (After Project)
Beef Cattle		
Dairy Cattle		
Swine		
Sheep/Goats		
Poultry		
Horses		
Bison		
Other		

Optional documentation

You may attach up to three letters of support from someone other than yourself to enhance your application. (e.g. Lender, Farm Business Management, Extension Educator, Consultant, etc.)

Each letter can be no longer than two pages in length.