

AGRI Farm to School Rapid Response for Schools

Fiscal Year 2021 Request for Proposals

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Grant Summary

Application and Award Details

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) anticipates awarding grant funds to school districts and vendors to build their Farm to School capacity. Funding for the programs is available through the [Agricultural Growth, Research and Innovation \(AGRI\) Program](#) (Minnesota Statute 41A.12). A total of \$124,000 is available to be awarded between two (AGRI) Farm to School Mini-Grant opportunities. Eligible applicants may apply for \$1,000 to \$5,000 in grant funding. There is no set dollar amount for each grant. The MDA intends to strike a balance between the two grant opportunities based on strength of applicants.

The two Rapid Response funding opportunities for Farm to School are the following:

1. **School Districts, Food Service Management Companies** – Grants are intended for school districts to begin, diversify, and expand purchasing from Minnesota producers during the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily during the summer. School districts may apply for \$1,000 to \$5,000 and there is no match required. Applicants are asked to not request more funding than they think they can actually spend within the grant period. Food Service Management Companies may also apply, but the value of the grant must be credited to the school. School districts requesting funding should apply through this Request for Proposals. Food service management companies may apply for either grant.
2. **Food Producers, Restaurants, Processors, Food Hubs, Distributors, Food Service Management Companies** – Grants are intended to support equipment purchases for food vendors that will help them to meet the product needs of schools. Food producers (farmers, ranchers, agricultural cooperatives), restaurants, processors, food hubs, food distributors, and food service management companies are eligible to apply. The program aims to improve market access for local food vendors interested in selling to schools in Minnesota. These entities should apply for funding through the [Grant for Vendors](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/f2srapidresponsevendors) (www.mda.state.mn.us/f2srapidresponsevendors).

Applications must be submitted through our online system, accessible through links on the respective grant pages.

The MDA is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems resulting in the MDA not receiving the application on time. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that submission is received by the MDA before the deadline. If you are experiencing technical difficulties, please reach out for assistance.

How to Submit Questions

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

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

Grant Eligibility

Eligible Applicants

Schools or school districts (public or private), and food service companies they contract with, that:

1. participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
AND
2. serve food to K-12 students

are eligible to apply.

School districts serving sovereign nations are encouraged to apply.

Eligible Projects

Funds must be used to begin, diversify, or increase purchases directly from Minnesota producers or from Minnesota producers via distributors and food hubs. Examples of eligible purchases include:

- Beginning: purchasing Minnesota apples for the first time to include in grab-and-go meals or home deliveries
- Diversifying: adding new or additional Minnesota farmers or introducing a new product to your local sourcing
- Increasing: increasing the dollar value of a Minnesota product to use in school meals

Grant funds can only be used to cover expenses incurred after July 1, 2020 or the execution date of the grant contract, whichever is later; all funds must be spent by December 31, 2020.

Reimbursable Food Purchases

Supplanting Existing Purchases

The AGRI Farm to School Rapid Response Grant is intended to enable Minnesota schools to start, diversify, or increase their local purchasing of Minnesota grown and raised foods. Applicants must document how the grant funds will enable these purchases.

Encouraged Procurement Items

Applicants are encouraged to consider a wide range of Minnesota food and agricultural products for procurement under this grant. Priority will be placed on reimbursements for those products that are unprocessed or minimally-processed and retain their inherent character. The MDA will use the definition for “unprocessed locally grown or locally raised agricultural products” as outlined by the federal government in support of the [geographic preference procurement process](#).

Eligible procurement items may include but are not limited to including:

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Meats, Fish, Poultry
- Dairy
- Eggs
- Grains

Schools are encouraged to source directly from Emerging Farmers, or work with distributors, restaurants, and food hubs that source from Emerging Farmers.

Ineligible Procurement Items

The following items are not eligible for reimbursement under this grant:

- Fluid milk
- Produce grown in school gardens
- Food procured through the USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- Processed food products whose production technique is outside the scope of the food handling and preservation techniques outlined below
- Equipment, cooking supplies, and other non-food kitchen materials
- Staff-time for procurement, other food preparation, and related Farm to School planning
- Marketing and promotional items associated with Farm to School meals and events

Definitions

Minnesota Grown or Raised

Food is defined as Minnesota grown or raised if at least 80% of the product was produced and processed in Minnesota.

Local

For this grant, local means grown or raised in the State of Minnesota.

Unprocessed or Minimally-processed

The following processing methods are allowable: cooling; refrigerating; freezing; size adjustment made by peeling, slicing, dicing, cutting, chopping, shucking, and grinding; forming ground products into patties without any additives or fillers; drying/dehydration; washing; packaging (such as placing eggs in cartons), vacuum packing and bagging (such as placing vegetables in bags or combining two or more types of vegetables or fruits in a single package); the addition of ascorbic acid or other preservatives to prevent oxidation of produce; butchering livestock and poultry; and cleaning fish.

Emerging Farmer

The term Emerging Farmer encompasses several historically underserved communities including women, veterans, persons with disabilities, Native American/Alaskan Native, communities of color, young and

beginning farmers, and LGBTQ+ farmers. For more on Emerging Farmers, see the [Emerging Farmers Report](#) from the MDA.

Timeline and Deadlines for Grant Program

Applications will be accepted until August 12, 2020 or until all funds are awarded, whichever comes first. Applications will be reviewed and awarded on a biweekly basis during the application period, prioritizing applications intending to work with emerging farmers. To meaningfully ensure funds are available to emerging farmers, the review committee may put some applications on waitlist. Notification of final application status may take two to ten weeks. Availability of funds will be updated biweekly on our website.

Incomplete applications will not be considered; applications will not be added to the funding queue until the entire application is complete. We will not consider late applications. Applications must be submitted through our [online application system](#).

The MDA is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems resulting in the MDA not receiving the application on time. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that submission is received by the MDA before the deadline. If you are experiencing technical difficulties, please reach out for assistance.

After applications are received and reviewed, a grant contract will be drafted between the State of Minnesota and the eligible organization. Grant funds can only be used to cover expenses incurred after July 1, 2020, or the execution date of the grant contract, whichever is later. Any funds spent prior to the execution of the grant contract are not eligible for reimbursement. Projects must be completed by December 31, 2020.

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 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, the legislative auditor and any other entity or person authorized by state law, federal law, or federal subpoena. If necessary, MDA may also share the data with law enforcement or the office of the Minnesota Attorney General.

Per [Minnesota Statute 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 Minnesota Statute § 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, Reporting, and Payment

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 Minnesota grown and raised foods have been purchased through submitting receipts and invoices and proof that the vendors have been paid. A progress report narrative the grantee will report the following:

- Sources of local products, including Farmer Name, Farm, and County
- Varieties, quantities, and cost of local products

Food service management companies must also submit documentation that shows how the funds were credited to the school.

Audits

Per [Minnesota Statute 16B.98 Subdivision 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 ([Minnesota Statute 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](#).

Application Questions

Applicant Information

- Applicant Name
- Name of School District
- Mailing Address
- City
- State
- Zip
- Email Address
- Counties Served

Authorized Representative

If awarded a grant, the person that will sign the grant agreement contract for this organization.

- Name
- Telephone
- Email

Eligibility

Please answer each of the following questions.

- Applicant is a Minnesota school or school district serving K-12 students and participates in the NSLP (Yes/No)
- I have authority to apply for this grant. (Yes/No)

Executive Summary

Include a description of the project and goals to be accomplished. The executive summary of this proposed project must be suitable for dissemination to the public. If the applicant is a food service management company, this should include information about the school(s) that will benefit. *(Maximum 1,500 characters, including spaces)*

Amount of Grant Request (maximum of \$5,000, minimum of \$1,000)

Impact on Minnesota Agriculture

How have you engaged in Farm to School to date? If you have no Farm to School experience, please describe what interests you in purchasing Minnesota grown or raised food now. *(Maximum 1,500 characters, including spaces)*

What local foods do you plan to purchase? How will you source these foods and use them in your food program? *(Maximum 1,500 characters, including spaces)*

Please describe how you will source from emerging farmers, including Native American producers, immigrant farmers, and farmers of color, or female farmers. *(Maximum 1,500 characters, including spaces)*

Work Plan

Complete the following table. You should include the steps that you will take to successfully complete your project. For example, you might include target dates for finalizing the items you would like to procure, requesting bids, determining a menu schedule, or training staff. Not all areas will apply to all projects. To locate a Minnesota Grown producer or farmer please refer to the [Minnesota Grown Wholesale Directory](#).

Example:

Timeframe	Description of Task/Action Item	Responsible Party
July 2020	Contact 3 local apple orchards for bids to purchase apples in August	Nutrition Director

Work Plan Table:

Timeframe	Description of Task/Action Item	Responsible Party

Budget Table

Complete the following budget table. Include only eligible items you anticipate will be reimbursed with grant funds.

Minnesota Product	Quantity	Total Amount

How Applications Are Scored

The applications will be reviewed and scored by a committee. Applications with strong scores in all criteria will likely be funded quickly. Applications with low scores in one or more category may be waitlisted or denied. Waitlisted applications will be reconsidered for funding biweekly until all grant funds are awarded. The Commissioner of Agriculture makes final funding decisions for all grant applications.

The committee will evaluate the applications based upon the following criteria:

Category	Points
<p>The proposed project will allow school to start, increase, or diversify its students' access to and consumption of local, Minnesota Grown foods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal is clear, concise, and complete • Applicant demonstrates the capacity to implement the project 	25
Workplan is realistic and appropriate for proposed project	25
<p>Applicant has researched and adequately planned for sourcing, purchase, and uses of local food in project activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget reflects understanding of quantity, prices, and types of local food to be used • Strong letter of support from producer included • Amount of funding requested will be fully utilized by applicant 	25
Procurement activities increase market access and sales for Emerging Farmers, such as Native American producers, immigrant farmers, farmers of color, and women	25
TOTAL	100