

# **AGRI Farm to School Rapid Response for Food Vendors**

Equipment Mini-Grant for Producers, Processors,  
Food Hubs, and Distributors

Fiscal Year 2021 Request for Proposals

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.

AG4006 (06-15-2020)

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## Grant Summary

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### 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. **AGRI Farm to School Rapid Response for Schools** – 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. These entities should apply for funding through the [Grant for Schools](#) ([www.mda.state.mn.us/f2srapidresponseschools](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/f2srapidresponseschools)).
2. **AGRI Farm to School Rapid Response for Food Vendors** – 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 this Request for Proposals.

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:

Courtney VanderMey  
[Courtney.VanderMey@state.mn.us](mailto:Courtney.VanderMey@state.mn.us)  
Minnesota Department of Agriculture  
625 Robert St N  
St. Paul, MN 55155-2538

## Grant Eligibility

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### Eligible Applicants

Grants are available to food producers (farmers, ranchers, and agricultural cooperatives), food processors, restaurants, food hubs, and food distributors that are targeting sales of Minnesota grown and raised food to schools. All applicants must have been in operation prior to March 1, 2020.

In addition, 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 7 years.
  - Acceptable performance on past MDA grants.
  - Compliant with current state regulations.
- Currently reside in Minnesota or be authorized to conduct business in Minnesota.
- Not be an employee or spouse of an employee of the MDA.

### Eligible Expenses

Expenses must make immediate impact on your organization's ability to make food sales to schools in Minnesota.

Project examples include, but are not limited to, equipment for:

- Food storage
- Food safety (including record keeping and cleaning)
- Food packaging
- Food processing (dicing, chopping, etc.)
- Transportation

Contractor costs and materials for installation of approved equipment, including plumbing, drainage, venting, and electrical work are eligible. General operating expenses (such as salary, fringe, inventory, and supplies) are not eligible. Expenses related to food production (such as seeds and tractors) are not eligible.

### Matching Funds

Grant funding requires a 1:1 match. Matching funds can be in the form of cash, loans, other grants, or liquid capital assets dedicated to the project. However, other state funds, such as an AGRI Value-Added Grant, cannot be used for the matching funds. State funds are obtained through the budgeting process of the Minnesota Legislature or granted by a State agency.

## Timeline and Deadlines for Grant Program

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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 submitted by Emerging Farmers, including women, immigrant farmers, and farmers of color. (The Minnesota Department of Agriculture understands “Emerging Farmer” to include historically underserved communities including women, veterans, persons with disabilities, Native American/Alaska Native, communities of color, young and beginning farmers, LGBTQ+ farmers and more; see the [Emerging Farmers Legislative Report](#) for more details).

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 six 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](#). Applicants are also encouraged to email an [IRS Form W9](#) to [courtney.vandermeij@state.mn.us](mailto:courtney.vandermeij@state.mn.us) when submitting an application.

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. Projects must be completed by December 31, 2020.

## Privacy Notice and Data Classification

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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

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### Grant Award Agreement, Reporting, and Payment

Upon notification of approval for a grant award, 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 as a reimbursement for purchased goods and services. Grantees will only be reimbursed for eligible items listed in the Grant Award Agreement. To receive grant payments, grantees must provide proof that eligible purchases have been made by submitting itemized 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.

### 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

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### Applicant Information

- Applicant Name
- Organization Name
- Organization Mailing Address
- Organization Telephone
- Organization Email

### Authorized Representative

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

- Name
- Telephone
- Email

### Eligibility

Confirm that the following statements apply to your organization.

- The organization is in good standing with the State of Minnesota. (No back taxes owed, no defaults on Minnesota State backed financing for the past 7 seven years, in compliance with current state regulations, and acceptable performance on past MDA grants.)
- Your organization is in Minnesota or authorized to conduct business in Minnesota.
- No one involved in the project or the application for the grant is an employee or spouse of an employee of the MDA.

Please select which of the following categories describes your organization:

- Producer (farmer/rancher/cooperative)
- Restaurant
- Processor
- Food Hub
- Distributor
- Food Service Management Company/Caterer

Was the applicant's gross revenue in Calendar Year 2019 less than or greater than \$250,000?

- Less than \$250,000
- Greater than \$250,000



## Budget

- Total Project Cost
- Total Grant Request (up to 50% of the Total Project Cost; maximum of \$5,000, minimum of \$1,000)

Please complete the following budget table indicating the purchases you anticipate making. Each item must enhance your ability to market agricultural products to schools. Only expenses incurred after July 1, 2020 or the execution date of the grant contract, whichever is later, are eligible for reimbursement. The budget table will be reviewed by the MDA and incorporated into the grant contract.

Item	Quantity	Cost/Unit	Total Costs	Source of Estimate

### Budget Narrative

*(2,000 characters, including spaces)*

Justify your budget and explain how you plan to pay for your project.

- Explain how the equipment and services in the budget table will help you enter, increase, or diversify Farm to School sales. This can include processing more Minnesota agricultural products into value-added products (such as for a Grab 'N' Go meal delivery). If your marketing and business have been impacted by COVID-19, please explain how this funding will help you adapt and/or sell to schools as a new market.
- Explain how you plan to pay for your project (financing, other grants, private investment, personal investment, or organization funds, etc.). Other State funds cannot be used to provide the funding used to pay for this project.

(Optional) Submit documentation showing project costs and ability to pay for the project, such as:

- Quotes or estimates from businesses for equipment or services.
- Letters of commitment written by financial institutions or other organization that will be providing funding through loans or credit.
- Bank statements showing enough cash reserves to fund project.

## Workplan

Please complete the following workplan to outline the steps you will take to purchase the items listed in the budget table. Projects must be completed by December 31, 2020.

Date	Task	Responsible Individual

## Outcomes

*(1,500 characters, including spaces)*

How will this project enhance your ability to sell agricultural products to Minnesota Schools?

Describe how the grant funded project will positively impact emerging farmers, including Native American producers, immigrant farmers, farmers of color, and/or female farmers.

Upload a document that demonstrates your commitment to selling to schools. Strong submissions would include letters from schools confirming your business relationship or a short outline of your marketing plan.

## How Applications Are Scored

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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:

**(25 points)** Applicant explains how funding will help them adapt to impacts of COVID-19 on marketing/supply chains and/or enter the Farm to School market.

- Applicant demonstrates plan for how intended use of purchased equipment will produce marketable products for schools
- Products or producer will be new to school sales
- Applicant explains how funding will help them adapt to impacts of COVID-19 on marketing/supply chains and/or enter the Farm to School market

**(25 points)** Applicant has researched and adequately planned for marketing of products to schools.

- Costs included are realistic
- Includes a strong letter of support from a school
- Applicant provides realistic marketing plan to connect with schools

**(25 points)** You can cover the cost-share and budget is reasonable.

- Specific quotes from possible vendors included
- Applicant demonstrates ability to cover 1:1 cost share from allowed sources

**(25 points)** Procurement activities increase market access and sales for emerging farmers, such as Native American producers, immigrant farmers, or farmers of color.

- Applicant is an emerging farmer
- Applicant has gross revenue of less than \$250,000 per year
- Applicant cites emerging farmers they intend to source from
- Applicant provides plan for sourcing from emerging farmers