

# **AGRI Livestock Investment Grant 2021 Request for Proposals**

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## Grant Summary

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The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the 2021 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 \$789,000 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, 2021 and December 31, 2022 **Any expenses incurred outside this timeframe are not eligible for reimbursement.**

We must receive your proposal no later than **4:00 p.m. Central Time on Wednesday, November 4, 2020** 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 Courtney VanderMey (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:

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

All questions should be submitted through writing by mail or email by **4:00 p.m. Central Time on October 28, 2020**. We post all questions and answers on the [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 application scoring profile found on pages 10-11. 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.

Questions due no later than 4:00 pm CST.....October 28, 2020

Applications due no later than 4:00 pm CST.....November 4, 2020

Applicants notified of decisions; Grant agreement negotiations begin.....January 4, 2021

## 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.
- It is recommended to apply online, but if submitting in another format please use 12-point font and single spacing.
- Answer all questions completely within the character or page limits specified in the grant application.
- The Project Evaluation Profile included in this document will be used to score and compare the grant applications.

## Eligibility and Application Instructions

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### 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. (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).
- 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, please contact your local feedlot officer or visit the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency website at [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, 2021 and December 31, 2022. 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

### **Matching Funds**

You must provide documentation for at least 90% of the total project cost as a cash match (no in-kind matches). Matching funds can be in the form of cash, loans, other grants, or liquid capital assets dedicated to the project. However, other state funds 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.

# Application Review Policies

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## 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 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 by law 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 [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.

- **Procedure for Claiming Protection of Trade Secrets:**
  - Trade secret information (as defined in [Minn. Stat. § 13.37](#)) is classified as not public data. In order for an applicant to protect data submitted as part of this application as trade secret information, the applicant must clearly identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that the applicant believes to be a valid trade secret (as defined by Minnesota law), 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 otherwise 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 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 Contract 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.

Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the contract has been signed by all parties. Applicants should anticipate that grant contracts will have an end date in December 2022. Grant contracts may not extend beyond three years from the effective date of the contract.

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.

### Site Visits, Financial Reconciliations, and Follow-ups

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. Other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

Follow-up surveys are required to help us determine the long-term impacts of the grant. Grantees are required to respond to requests for follow-up information for three years beyond the term of the grant agreement. Failure to respond to these in a timely manner may impact your ability to secure future funding from the MDA.



## 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](#).

## Audits of Project

Per [Minn. Stat. 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.

## 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 infrastructure and the equipment of livestock operations ([Minn. Stat. 17.118](#)).

## Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score
<b>Project Addresses Goals of the AGRI Livestock Investment Grant</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant clearly articulates how the project helps start, improve, or expand livestock operations in the state of Minnesota</li> </ul>	5
<b>Project Readiness, Budget, Economic Outcomes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant demonstrates adequate planning and includes a work plan and timeline for their project (5pts)</li> <li>Applicant includes a budget that clearly details project costs (5pts)</li> <li>Applicant includes a plan for paying for the project, including the portions not reimbursed by this grant (5pts)</li> <li>Applicant details how their proposed project will improve profitability and efficiency(5pts)</li> </ul>	20
<b>New Farmer or Generational Transition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Farmer has been the principal operator for five years or less</li> <li>The project meaningfully contributes to a generational transition</li> </ul>	15
<b>Farm Safety and Accessibility Improvements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project addresses farm safety or accessibility needs of the farmer or employees</li> </ul>	10
<b>Environmental Impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project addresses major environmental benefits or corrects compliance issues with feedlot regulations</li> </ul>	10
<b>Responding to a Natural Disaster</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project repairs damage caused by a natural disaster</li> </ul>	10
<b>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant's operation is a woman-owned, minority-owned, or veteran-owned business (5pts)</li> <li>Applicant addresses diversity and inclusion on their operation, such as through hiring/staff in underserved communities or plans and provides plans on intent to process and sell product in an alternative market, such as Halal or Kosher. (5pts)</li> </ul>	10
<b>Robotic Dairy Milking Equipment and Technology Improvements</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project includes robotic dairy milking equipment (5pts)</li> <li>Project adequately describes technology updates that will improve efficiency for the operation (5pts)</li> </ul>	10
<b>Market Demand for Animal Welfare</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project helps protect or expand market access by responding to demand for animal welfare by improving conditions for livestock and/or contribute to better animal handling</li> </ul>	5
<b>Farm Management Plan and Programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project contributes to the implementation of a plan or program or leads to greater success in these programs.</li> </ul>	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

# Application

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## Application Information

### Contact Information

- Applicant Name
- Business Name
- Business Mailing Address
- Applicant Telephone
- Applicant Email

### Authorized Representative

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

- Name
- Telephone
- Email

### Business Partnership Contact Information

- Names of other individuals directly involved in the livestock operation (Spouse, business partners).

### Organizational Structure

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sole Proprietorship | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporation (Incorporated) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Partnership         | <input type="checkbox"/> Estate                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LLP                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Trust                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> LLC                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                      |

### Farm Operation

Name of Farm (if applicable)

Address of project if different from mailing address

County	Township Name	Township # (26 – 71 or 101 – 168)	Range # (1 – 51)	Section # (1 – 36)	Quarter Section (NW, NE, SW, SE)	Quarter Qtr Section (NW, NE, SW, SE)

(If applicable) What is your feedlot registration number?

# 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 hold a feedlot registration (if applicable).
- I certify that expenses for this project will be incurred between January 1, 2021 and June 30, 2023.

# Project Proposal

## Project Summary

Describe your project, including how it fits into your business plan and how the project helps start, improve, or expand your livestock operation. (3,000 characters, including spaces)

# Project Readiness, Budget, Economic Outcomes

## Budget

Complete the following table. You may add additional lines or pages as necessary. 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

If specific contractors are named in the application, grantees will not need to undergo a formal bidding process. This can save you time and effort later.

Example:

Item	Quantity	Cost per Unit	Total Estimate	Source of Estimate
Barn Concrete	1	\$15,000	\$15,000	ABC Concrete Company
Fence Panels	100	\$15	\$1,500	ABC Fleet

Item	Quantity	Cost Per Unit	Total Estimate	Source of Estimate

## Budget Narrative

Justify your budget and explain how you plan to pay for your project. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

- Explain how 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.
- 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.

## Work Plan and Timeline

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 requesting quotes, purchase or construction, and completion of the project. Not all areas will apply to all projects. You may add additional lines or pages as necessary.

Example:

Timeframe	Description of Task/Action Item	Responsible Party
October 2020	Request Quotes for Barn Concrete	Self
January 2021	Place order for fence panels	Self
April 2021	Break ground on project	Self/ABC Concrete

Timeframe	Description of Task/Action Item	Responsible Party

## Previous Funding

Has your livestock operation previously received an AGRI Livestock Investment Grant? If yes, briefly describe the previous project(s) funded by the grant awards, including the amount awarded. (800 characters, including spaces)

## New Farmers or Generational Transition

How many years have you farmed?

Does this project support the startup of a new livestock operation? A new livestock operation, for this application, is in business 5 years or less. If yes, please explain. (1,500 characters, including spaces)

Does this project meaningfully contribute to the generational transition of a livestock operation that will occur in the next 3 years? If yes, please explain. (1,500 characters, including spaces)

## **Farm Safety and Accessibility Improvements**

Describe the farm safety or accessibility improvements that would result from this project? *(1,500 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.

## **Environmental Impact**

Explain how this project provides major environmental benefits or corrects compliance issues, including feedlot regulations. *(1,500 characters, including spaces)*

## **Responding to Natural Disasters**

Are you rebuilding after a natural disaster that happened within the last two years? *(1,500 characters, including spaces)*

- If yes, describe the natural disaster and the damage it caused.
- Indicate which parts of the project are related to repairing the damage.

## **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

This grant program prioritizes woman-owned businesses, minority-owned businesses, veteran-owned businesses, and businesses that serve communities of color and Native American Tribal communities. Explain how these priorities are reflected in your livestock operation, if at all. *(500 characters, including spaces)*

Does your operation have specific plans to process and sell product in an alternative market, such as Halal or Kosher? *(500 characters, including spaces)*

## **Technology Improvements and Robotic Dairy Milking Equipment**

Describe any technology improvements included in your proposed project and how the improvements impact your operation.

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

## **Market Demand for Animal Welfare**

Describe how your project will help protect or expand market access by responding to demand for animal welfare. This includes improving conditions for livestock and/or contributing to better animal handling. *(1,500 characters, including spaces)*

## Farm Management Plans and Programs

Explain how your project contributes to the implementation of a farm management plan or program or leads to greater success in an existing program. Example plans are listed below. If your project does not contribute to one of these plans, say "Not Applicable". (500 characters, including spaces)

Examples of farm management plans and programs:

- Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program
- Pork Quality Assurance
- Beef 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

## 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 3 letters from someone other than yourself to provide additional support your application responses. (e.g. Lender, Farm Business Management, Extension Educator, Consultant, etc.) Each letter can be no longer than 2 pages in length.