

# **AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant**

## **2022 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.

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# Grant Summary

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## Overview

The AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant (SustAg) program is designed to demonstrate and publicize the energy efficiency, environmental benefit, or profitability of sustainable agriculture techniques or systems from production through marketing. Grants fund research or demonstrations on Minnesota farms that explore sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable, resource efficient, and personally satisfying. Findings are published in the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s (MDA’s) annual [Greenbook](#).

Projects must have a duration of at least two years but may last no more than three. Projects culminate through an outreach event in the form of a field day or other virtual event during the final season/year of the project to share outcomes with other producers.

## Funding Availability

The MDA anticipates awarding approximately \$250,000 this year. We expect to award approximately 8-15 grants, but the final number depends on the size of the awards.

**Applicants may request up to \$50,000 per project. The first \$25,000 does not need to be matched by the applicant. For requests between \$25,000 and \$50,000, applicants must provide a dollar-for-dollar match on the amount above \$25,000.**

### Example 1

The project’s total cost is \$25,000. The applicant may apply for up to \$25,000 without providing a match.

Project Cost	Match Requirements	Total Grant Award
\$25,000	\$0	\$25,000

### Example 2

The project’s total cost is \$45,000. The first \$25,000 of expenses will be funded by the grant. The remaining \$20,000 requires a one-to-one match with the grantee contributing \$10,000 and grant funding contributing \$10,000. In total, the grantee would be eligible for \$35,000 in grant funds from the state and would need to provide a match of \$10,000.

Project Cost	Match Requirement	Total Grant Award
First \$25,000	\$0	\$25,000
Remaining \$20,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Total Cost: \$45,000	\$10,000	\$35,000

## Priorities

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making.

[Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities. The primary goal of the AGRI SustAg Grant is to support farmers, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions with innovative on-farm research and demonstration funding to explore sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable, resource efficient, or personally satisfying.

This grant will prioritize:

- Projects led by a farmer or group of farmers.
- Emerging farmers, including historically underserved communities, such as immigrants, women, veterans, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ people, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) or Native American Tribal Communities, and other minorities.

## How to Submit Questions

All questions should be submitted by email to [MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us) with “AGRI SustAg Questions” in the subject line by **4:00 p.m. Central Time on December 2, 2021**. We will post responses to all questions regarding the application on the [Questions and Answers](#) portion of the AGRI SustAg 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.

Technical assistance with the online application system can be provided until the submission deadline by calling 651-201-6500 or emailing [MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us) with “AGRI SustAg Questions” in the subject line.

## Timeline and Deadlines for Grant Program

We must receive your application by **4:00 p.m. Central Time on December 9, 2021** to be considered for funding. It is best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance to prevent unforeseen delays. Applications will not be accepted after the grant deadline under any circumstances.

Questions due no later than 4:00 pm Central Time ..... December 2, 2021  
Applications due no later than 4:00 pm Central Time ..... December 9, 2021  
Applicants notified of decisions; grant agreement negotiations begin ..... January 27, 2022

You must use our [online application system](#) to submit your proposal.

**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.**

## Application Guidelines

- Write for reviewers who are generally knowledgeable but may not have a thorough or deep understanding of your proposed research area. Use plain, easily understood language.
- The [Project Evaluation Profile](#) included in this document will be used to score and compare the grant applications.

## Tips for Applicants

- Clearly explain the importance or potential impact of the project. The proposal should show that the findings are going to benefit more farmers than just the applicant and why this project is important for the agricultural community.
- Explain how the project will demonstrate a new or different technique or approach that others could benefit from.
- Make sure your budget is realistic, includes only eligible items, and doesn't have excessive purchased services or consultant costs (more than 50% of the total cost).
- Include a well detailed budget that clearly explains how the money will be spent. More detail is better than less.
- Ensure that you have appropriate technical and/or farmer cooperators and that they're right cooperators for your project.
- Provide thorough detail about the plan to share information and lessons learned. Provide ample detail about the outreach event you plan to complete.
- Include just one or two clear objectives rather than trying to accomplish too much. Simple projects with one or two clear objectives tend to score better.
- Explain how the project will be evaluated or measured for success.

## Grant Eligibility

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### Eligible Applicants

Minnesota farmers, educational institutions, individuals at educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. Other government entities such as municipalities and counties are not eligible. Applicants must be Minnesota residents. Projects must take place on Minnesota farms. Projects led by a farmer or group of farmers receive priority. An applicant may be awarded only one SustAg grant in this round of grants.

A farmer is someone who cultivates, operates, or manages a farm for profit, and who grows or raises at least \$1,000 of agricultural products for sale annually.

MDA employees and their spouses are not eligible to receive grants from this program.

**Applicants must:**

- Be in good standing with the State of Minnesota.
- Owe no back taxes.
- Have no defaults on Minnesota State-backed financing for the last seven years.
- Have acceptable performance on past MDA grants.
- Be compliant with current state regulations.

## Collaboration

Eligible applicants may collaborate with other farmers or farms, but it is not required. Farmers must collaborate with technical cooperators; other types of applicants must meaningfully collaborate with farmers. See the [Cooperators and Cooperator Letters](#) section for more detail.

## Cooperators and Cooperator Letters

**If you are a farmer:**

You must involve at least one **Technical Cooperator**. They should have technical expertise that will strengthen the project. It might be assistance in soil science, biology, agronomy, horticulture, entomology, engineering, marketing, finance, data collection, statistics, etc. Technical cooperators may be from University Extension, community colleges, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), or other similar organizations. Technical Cooperators can help design the project, carry it out, and/or review and interpret the results. This person is expected to serve as an advisor – not someone you pay to do the project for you. A Technical Cooperator cannot be a family member.

Applications must include a letter of commitment from at least one Technical Cooperator. In the letter, the Technical Cooperator must explain how they will contribute to the project. If the budget contains funds for the Technical Cooperator, the letter must include the hourly rate that they will charge. If your application does not include a Technical Cooperator, you will not be eligible to receive grant funds.

**If you are NOT a farmer:**

You must have at least one **Farmer Cooperator** who is meaningfully involved in designing and carrying out the project. The budget should include funds to compensate the farmer for their involvement. The farmer is expected to be involved in project – not simply provide land where the project can be conducted.

Applications must include a letter of commitment from the farmer(s). In the letter, the farmer must explain how they will be involved in the project. If your application does not include a Farmer Cooperator, you will not be eligible to receive grant funds.

## Eligible Projects

### Projects must show:

- The ability to maximize direct or indirect energy savings or production;
- A positive effect or reduced adverse effect on the environment; or
- Increased profitability for the individual farm by reducing costs or improving marketing opportunities.

### Every project must:

- Be located in Minnesota.
- Publicize and hold an outreach event in the form of a field day or other virtual event in the final season/year of the project. Examples of outreach events include, but are not limited to field days, video diaries, how-to guides, blog posts, podcast interviews, presentations at ag-based conferences or meetings, etc.
- Not start until the grant contract is signed by all parties and has reached its start date.
- Be completed in three years or less. Contracts cannot be extended beyond three years.

### Project examples include but are not limited to:

- Increased environmental sustainability and improved soil health
- Conservation tillage and weed management
- Novel cover crops and crop rotations
- Nutrient and pesticide management, including runoff protection
- Farm-based energy efficiency or production such as wind, methane, or biomass
- Integrated pest management systems for insects, weeds, and diseases
- Seed breeding and/or conservation
- Livestock production systems or management strategies
- Developing/refining/improving marketing opportunities, including season extension and post-harvest storage and handling
- Novel enterprise diversification, including organic production, using traditional and non-traditional crops and livestock
- Other creative ideas that address farm input reduction or management, conservation, energy, and/or profitability

**Reviewers are looking for interesting ideas that may or may not work. Ideas do not have to be brand new but should be new to Minnesota or the part of the state where they're being proposed.** For more ideas, see previously funded projects summarized in the [Greenbook](#).

## Eligible Expenses

Eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Wages for time spent directly on the grant project (beyond normal farming operations). Provide justification for the hourly rate.
- Consultant fees. Provide justification for the hourly rate.
- Costs to lease or use farm equipment needed for the project
- Special purpose equipment or other items necessary to achieve the objectives of the project (valued at less than \$1,500 each)
- Project-related services such as soil testing or other analyses
- Project-related travel
- Postage, printing, and telephone expenses related to the project
- Outreach expenses (advertising, handouts, refreshments, etc.) for one outreach event in the final year

See the template included in the [Budget Table](#) section of the application for a breakdown of eligible expense categories.

## Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Long lasting, general purpose equipment. Examples include tractors, motorized vehicles, buildings (including greenhouses and high tunnels), windmills or wind turbines, building construction, and computers. However, these items may be rented as needed to conduct the project.
- Project specific equipment items that cost more than \$1,500 each
- Compensation for a grant writing consultant or grant manager
- General operating costs and indirect costs
- Business or organizational start-up costs (i.e., starting a farm) or expansion costs
- Pre-award costs (expenses incurred before a contract is signed)
- Advertising, public relations, entertainment, and amusement costs
- Donated or volunteer (in-kind) contributions, including property and services. While these may be furnished to an applicant by professional and technical personnel, consultants, and other skilled and unskilled labor, the value of these services is not an eligible cost. See the [Matching Funds](#) section for exceptions related to land use.
- Fines, penalties, and other settlement expenses resulting from failure of the applicant to comply with Federal, State, local, or Indian tribal laws and regulations
- Indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project)
- Fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions



- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists and political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, legal costs, or contingency funds
- Parking or traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses. Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state. Contact staff if you would like us to consider an exception.

## Matching Funds

Projects that are receiving more than \$25,000 in state funding require matching funds; otherwise, no cash match is required.

In general, all matches must be in the form of cash. Sources of the cash-match may include non-state funds (funds that were NOT obtained through the budgeting process of the MN legislature or granted by a State agency) in the form of cash, loans, other grants, liquid capital assets dedicated to the project. If a proposed project has been submitted to or funded by a Federal grant program, please specify the grantor, the funding amount, and the purpose of that grant funding.

The only in-kind source of the match that will be accepted is the value of the applicant's or cooperator's land used to conduct the grant project. Applicants must use [average farmland rental rates](#) or [farmland rent](#) from University of Minnesota Extension to calculate the value. If land will be rented or leased to conduct this project (listed as a cost item in the budget), then the value of this land cannot also be claimed as an in-kind match.

## Application Review Policies

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### Review and Award Process

A review committee comprised of soil scientists, agronomists, postsecondary educators, ag marketing specialists, sustainable and organic farmers, MDA staff, or other agricultural experts evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria in the Project Evaluation Profile. Reviewers may recommend whole or partial funding of a project. The Commissioner of Agriculture reviews the committee recommendations and is responsible for award decisions. The Review Committee and Commissioner may use rural/urban, geographic distribution, services to special populations, applicant's history as a state grantee, and capacity to perform the work when making their decisions. The MDA will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing. Applicants may request a summary of reviewer comments.

### Conflicts of Interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98](#) and [Policy 08-01: Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making \[Word\]](#)).

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.

## Data Collection, 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 to those authorized by law, including but not necessarily limited 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 for data classified as agricultural data [[MINN. STAT. 13.643, subd. 1](#)] and 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 is classified as not public data. In order to qualify as trade secret information, the data in question must be provided to the MDA by the affected person (i.e. the data must be about the applicant) and otherwise meet the legal definition ([MINN. STAT. 13.37, subd. 1\[b\]](#)). In order for an applicant to assert trade secret protection for data submitted as part of this application: the applicant must: 1) clearly identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique, or process that the applicant believes to be trade secret information; 2) describe what efforts the applicant takes to maintain the secrecy of the data; and 3) adequately explain

how the data derive(s) independent economic value from not being generally known to, and not readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons. Merely asserting trade secret protection does not, in and of itself, classify the data in question as not public; determining what data meet the definition of trade secret information is ultimately the legal responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data identified as trade secret information by an applicant will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, the data in question will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

## Requirements for Grant Recipients

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### Pre-Award Financial Review

All Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to a grant award made of \$25,000 and higher. **All for-profit organizations (including individuals and farms) and the University of Minnesota are excluded from this requirement.**

To comply with [Policy 08-06: Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations \(PDF\)](#), you may be asked to submit one of the following documents:

- Grant applicants with annual income of under \$50,000, or who have not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990 or audit, should submit their most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of \$50,000 or more and less than \$750,000 should submit their most recent IRS Form 990.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of over \$750,000 should submit their most recent certified financial audit.

### Accountability and Reporting

The MDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the project. Information submitted in any report will be a public record.

Annual progress and financial reports are sent out in November and due to the MDA in February of each project year. The progress report explains the activities and results achieved during the year; it includes pictures, tables, and figures and is the basis for each article in the next *Greenbook*. Captions and alternative text for pictures and figures will be requested as well. The financial report details all the grant project expenditures made during each calendar year alongside the approved budget. Payments will not be made until progress and financial reports have been received and reviewed by the MDA.

*Greenbook* articles are written by MDA staff and are sent to grantees for review prior to being published. Each article highlights results of the project, provides practical and technical information on each project, and includes personal observations and management tips from the grantee.

## Grant Award Agreement

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review in the “Forms and FAQs” tab of the [Office of Grants Management Policies, Statutes, and Forms](#) website.

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
- Complete and submit a Grant Affidavit for Individuals if receiving a grant as an individual/sole proprietor (i.e. tie grant to your social security number) within 30 days of receipt of the award; 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 early 2025. Grant contracts may not extend beyond three years from the effective date of the contract.

## Payments

SustAg grantees can request up to ten percent of annual funds up-front each year of their project, as outlined in their approved budget. **You must indicate in the Budget section of the application if you are requesting advance funds.** If you do not request advance funds, all payments will be made on a reimbursement basis. Advance funds must be reconciled within one year of each request. Additional payments will not be made until advanced payments have been accounted for. The MDA reserves the right to not honor requests for initial or subsequent advanced payments.

### Example:

The grantee’s year one costs are estimated to be \$1,000. The grantee receives \$100 in advance funds. The grantee submits a reimbursement request for \$1,000. The grantee will receive a payment of \$900 (\$1,000 reimbursement request - \$100 advance funds = \$900 payment).

The remainder of 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.

To receive grant payments, grantees must complete and submit an annual progress and financial report to the MDA each February during the duration of the project. The progress report explains the activities and results achieved during the year; it includes pictures, tables, and figures and is the basis for each article in the next *Greenbook*. The financial report details all the grant project expenditures made during each calendar year alongside the approved budget. The progress report needs to be approved by the MDA before the grantee receives the following year’s advance payment. Ten percent

of a grantee's award is retained and paid to the grantee, according to actual project expenditures, after approval of their final progress financial reports in addition to completion of the final outreach event. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension. Grantees are required to return any funds that are not used to the State of Minnesota according to the terms of the contract.

## Site Visits and Financial Reconciliations

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; grantees with awards of \$250,000 or more will receive annual monitoring visits. Other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation of at least one invoice on grants greater than or equal to \$50,000; financial reconciliation may be performed on additional payment requests at the discretion of the MDA. For this purpose, the grantee must provide expense receipts, employee timesheets, invoices, and any other supporting documents requested by the state.

## 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

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 ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subdivision 8](#)). 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

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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 primary goal of the AGRI SustAg Grant is to support innovative on-farm research and demonstrations to explore sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable, resource efficient, and personally satisfying. Findings are published in the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's annual [Greenbook](#).

# Project Evaluation Profile

EVALUATION CRITERIA	MAXIMUM SCORE
Is the project leader a farmer or group of farmers?	5
Does this project show positive effects on the environment, farm profitability, or energy savings or production?	10
Technical or Farmer Cooperator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do Technical Cooperators provide the expertise this project needs?</li> <li>• Are the Farmer Cooperators meaningfully involved?</li> <li>• Do Commitment Letter(s) describe the expertise, role in project, and hourly rate charged (if any) of the Cooperator?</li> <li>• Do the applicant(s) seem to have the necessary qualifications to do this project?</li> <li>• Are emerging farmers meaningfully involved in carrying out the project?</li> </ul>	15
Project Rationale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a compelling reason to do this project?</li> <li>• Will this project inform or demonstrate best management practices?</li> <li>• Could the demonstrated technologies or techniques be adopted and used by other farmers?</li> </ul>	15
Project Design and Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the design and methods follow from the rationale and objectives?</li> <li>• Are the objectives clear and answerable?</li> <li>• Will the plan of work accomplish the objectives?</li> <li>• Are there supporting documents detailing the design of the project?</li> </ul>	15
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a plan for measuring and evaluating project outcomes (preferably for each objective)?</li> <li>• Does the project include a basis of comparison (for example, a control plot or treatment)?</li> </ul>	15
Outreach Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How effective is the plan to share information about the project with farmers and the broader agricultural community?</li> <li>• Does the outreach planning meaningfully provide access to emerging farmers?</li> </ul>	10
Budget Details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the budget appropriate for the project as described? Are the itemized costs realistic?</li> <li>• Is the budget detail sufficient to justify the request?</li> <li>• Are consulting/purchased service charges less than 50% of the total cost and are reasonable?</li> <li>• Does the budget clearly explain sources and amount of applicant's funds?</li> </ul>	15
Are the Commitment Letter(s) from Farmer or Technical Cooperator(s) included?	Yes/No
Is an outreach event planned for the final year?	Yes/No
<b>Total Points Possible</b>	<b>100</b>

# Application Questions

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## Contact Information

### Applicant Information

- Contact Person's Name
- Organization/Business Name
- Organization Mailing Address
- Contact Person's Telephone
- Contact Person's Email
- Legislative District(s) where your project is located (*find this information at [Who Represents Me?](#)*)

### Authorized Representative

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

- Name
- Email
- Telephone

## Eligibility

Confirm that the following statements apply to you and your organization.

- I have authority to apply for this grant (*Yes/No*)
- Our organization is in good standing with the State of Minnesota. (No back taxes owed, no defaults on Minnesota State backed financing for the past seven years, in compliance with current state regulations, and acceptable performance on past MDA grants.) (*Yes/No*)
- Our organization is in Minnesota or authorized to conduct business in Minnesota. (*Yes/No*)
- My spouse and I are not employees of the MDA. (*True/False*)
- No MDA employee will financially benefit from this project. (*True/False*)

Has work started on your proposed project, or will work start before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties? (*Yes/No*) (*The MDA is unable to pay for any work that is performed prior to the start date of the contract.*)

## Previous SustAg Grant Funding

Have you received a previous SustAg Grant? (*Yes/No*)

If yes, briefly describe your previous grant project(s), including date(s) and amount(s) awarded. (*1,000 characters, including spaces*)



# Project Summary

## Grant Request

- Project Name
- County(ies) where project will take place
- Total Grant Funds Requested
- Applicant's Matching Funds
- Source of Matching Funds (cash, land, or both)
- Total Project Cost (Grant Funds + Matching Funds, if applicable)
- Project Duration (may not start until after the grant agreement contract is signed and must last between two and three years)
  - Expected Project Start and End Dates and Total Project Duration:
    - Contracts must last between two and three years from start date; anticipate contracts to be signed March 2022.
    - Projects may not be started and funds may not be spent before the grant contract is completely signed by both the Grantee and the State.
    - Upon completion of your final outreach event, the remaining 10% of your award will be paid. You will have up to two months after your contract end date to submit for a reimbursement.
    - All items and services must be paid for by the end date of the contract.

## Project Description

Include a description of the project and objectives to be accomplished. The summary of this proposed project must be suitable for dissemination to the public. *(1,200 characters, including spaces)*

List the topic(s) involved in this project (soil fertility, livestock, fruits and vegetables, energy, cropping systems, and/or alternative markets and specialty crops). *(250 characters, including spaces)*

## Farmer Applicants

Do you meet the definition of a farmer as defined in the Eligible Applicants section of this proposal? *(Yes/No) (A farmer is someone who cultivates, operates, or manages a farm for profit, and who grows or raises at least \$1,000 of agricultural products for sale annually.)*

### If Yes:

- Briefly describe your background as a farmer and business goals. How many years have you been farming? What percent of labor do you contribute to your farm? How do you market your farm products? Do you belong to any farm or agricultural organizations? If so, please list them below. *(2,500 characters, including spaces)*

- List the Technical Cooperator(s) involved in your project (include name(s), type of expertise, and how each cooperator will be involved in the project.) (2,500 characters including spaces)

*Note: You must include a Cooperator Commitment Letter for each Technical Cooperator with your application. This letter should describe the Cooperator's expertise and their role in the project. If the Cooperator will be paid, the letter must include their hourly rate of pay for the type of work.*

#### **If No:**

- You do not qualify to apply as a farmer for this program. You need to apply as a Non-Farmer Applicant.

## **Non-Farmer Applicants**

What category of non-farmer applicant best describes you?

- Minnesota non-profit organization
- Minnesota educational institution
- Individual at a Minnesota educational institution

List the Farmer Cooperator(s) involved in your project (include name(s), type of expertise, and how each cooperator will be involved in the project.) (2,500 characters, including spaces)

*Note: You must include a Cooperator Commitment Letter for each Farmer Cooperator with your application. This letter should describe the Cooperator's expertise and their role in the project. If the Cooperator will be paid, the letter must include their hourly rate of pay for the type of work.*

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

This grant program prioritizes emerging farmers, including historically underserved communities such as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, immigrants, women, veterans, persons with disabilities, persons who are LGBTQ+, and other minorities. Explain how these priorities will be reflected in your grant project, if at all. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

## **Project Details**

### **Description of the Farming Operation(s) involved**

*(1,500 characters, including spaces)*

Describe the type of farm, general location, what has been and is grown, raised, or produced by the operation, and who the agricultural products are sold to.

Describe your background experiences that will enable you to conduct this project, such as when the applicant or cooperator started farming, relevant education/coursework, etc.

## **Project Rationale**

*(3,500 characters, including spaces)*

What is the purpose of this project?

Why is it important?

How will this project benefit other farm businesses?

## **Project Design and Methods**

*(5,000 characters, including spaces)*

What are you going to do? Describe in detail how you will do your project from beginning to end. Be as specific as you can. Use a timeline and drawings or diagrams (for example: field map, crop rotation plan, building or paddock design, layout of test/demonstration plots, etc.)

Provide the name(s) and occupation(s) of the person responsible for carrying out and reporting on this project.

Name who is going to do each step of the project – list each participant’s role in the design, implementation, analysis of the results, and outreach steps.

*Note: additional documents can be uploaded. Please clearly label and identify each additional document.*

## **Evaluation**

*(3,000 characters, including spaces)*

How will you document what happens throughout your project? For each of the objectives you listed in the Project Summary, what information will you collect to be able determine whether your grant project works and whether you’d recommend it to other farmers? Be specific.

*Note: projects do not have to work out the way you think or want them to in order to be successful. Often, it’s equally important to know what doesn’t work or what not to do so don’t be afraid to try something others might consider risky.*

## **Outreach Plan**

*(2,500 characters, including spaces)*

How will you share what you learn so Minnesota farmers, including how emerging farmers can benefit from your work? All projects must have an outreach event in the final year of the project. We encourage you to hold a field day, either in-person or virtually, if possible. In your budget, you can request funds for one outreach event.

Examples of outreach events may include, but are not limited to in-person or virtual field days, video diaries, how-to guides, blog posts, podcast interviews, presentations at ag-based conferences or meetings, etc.

## Budget Details

### Budget Table

Complete your budget using the [2022 SustAg Application Budget Spreadsheet](#). Use realistic costs and justify each expenditure, including the purpose and the quantity. Budget categories include:

- Analysis of Samples
- Consultants and Other Purchased Services (contractors, bookkeepers, paid consultants, technical assistance, etc.)
- Personnel (Labor – family or hired. Only include labor directly related to grant activities over and above time spent on normal farm operations.)
- Supplies, Materials, and Equipment (seed, fuel, purchased inputs, plot markers, office supplies, project specific equipment)
- Use or Rental of Farm Equipment
- Outreach and Communication (field day and other costs associated with holding an outreach event and publicity)
- Travel (base on \$0.56 cents per mile although this may change dependent on IRS mileage rates)

### Budget Narrative

Provide a justification for each cost included in your budget table. Include as much detail as possible to help reviewers understand why each cost is necessary. *(2,500 characters, including spaces)*

### Matching Funds

If you are applying for more than \$25,000 in grant award funds, list the source and amount of each type of match. The only in-kind contribution allowed is the value of land set aside to conduct the grant project. You must use [average farmland rental rates](#) or [farmland rent](#) from University of Minnesota Extension to calculate the value if a rate is available. *(2,000 characters, including spaces)*

### Project Expenditures

Provide estimated grant project expenditures for each calendar year during the grant period.

- Year 1, March 2022 to December 2022:
  - Are you requesting advance funds (10%) for Year 1? *(Yes/No)*
- Year 2, January 2023 to December 2023:
  - Are you requesting advance funds (10%) for Year 2? *(Yes/No)*
- Year 3, January 2024 to end of grant contract (approximately February 2025):
  - Are you requesting advance funds (10%) for Year 3? *(Yes/No)*

## **Other Sources of Funding**

Have you received, applied for, or do you plan to apply for other sources of funding to support this project? If yes, explain. *(500 characters, including spaces)*

## **Additional Documents (Optional)**

If applicable, attach additional documents that provide a visual representation of your proposed project. Examples include maps, charts, graphs, photos, etc. Please clearly label and identify each additional document.