AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant 2023 Request for Proposals

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Grant Summary

Overview

The AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant (SustAg) program is administered by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA).

This 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 MDA's annual Greenbook.

Projects must last at least two years but no more than three. During the final year of the project, grantees share outcomes with other producers at a field day or other type of outreach event.

Funding availability

We anticipate awarding approximately $250,000 this year. We expect to fund approximately 8 to 15 grants, but the final number depends on the size of the awards. In this round of funding, applicants may only receive one SustAg grant.

You may request up to $50,000 per project.

- The first $25,000 does not need to be matched.
- For requests between $25,000 and $50,000, you must provide a dollar-for-dollar match on the amount above $25,000.

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.

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, persons who are LGBTQ+, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), Native American Tribal Communities, and other minorities.

Grant outcomes will include:

- Supporting farmers, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions in completing innovative on-farm research and demonstration.

- Exploring sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable, resource efficient, or personally satisfying.

- Testing and demonstrating on-farm practices that will benefit a broad range of farmers.

How to apply

- Apply for the AGRI SustAg Grant using our online application system.
  - We must receive your application by **4:00 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Thursday, December 8, 2022**, to be considered for funding. We will not accept late applications.
- Be sure to apply early so there is enough time to get technical assistance if needed.
  - It's best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance.

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

- Use plain, easily understood language. Write for reviewers who are generally knowledgeable but may not have a thorough or deep understanding of your organization or project.

- Answer all questions completely within the character limits specified in the grant application.

- Review the Project Evaluation Profile included in this document as it is used to score and compare the grant applications.

Timeline and deadlines

December 1, 2022, 4:00 p.m. CT....Last time to submit questions on the grant program

December 8, 2022, 4:00 p.m. CT....Applications due

January 27, 2023..........................Notification of decisions; start grant agreement negotiations

March 2023...................................Anticipated project start date (after the grant contract is fully signed)

Questions

For questions on the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4:00 p.m. Central Time on December 1, 2022**.

- Email MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us with "AGRI SustAg Grant" in the subject line.

We will post responses to all program questions on the [Questions and Answers](#) section 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.

For help with the online application system:

- Call 651-201-6500 or email MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us for technical assistance.
  - Include "AGRI SustAg Grant" in the subject line.

Tips for applicants

- Clearly explain the importance or potential impact of your project. The proposal should show that the findings are going to benefit other farmers besides you and why this project is important for the agricultural community.

- Explain how your project will demonstrate a new or different technique or approach that could benefit others.

- Make sure your budget is realistic, includes only eligible items, and does not have excessive purchased services or consultant costs (more than 50% of the total cost).

- Include a 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 are the 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 work better.

- Explain how the project will be evaluated or measured for success.

Grant Eligibility

Eligible applicants

Applicants must:

- Be a Minnesota farmer, educational institution, individual at an educational institution, or a nonprofit organization.
  - For this program, 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.
  - Other government entities such as municipalities and counties are not eligible.
- 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.

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

If applying as an individual versus an organization, you must not have been convicted of a state or federal criminal offense which includes theft, embezzlement of public funds, and forgery.

Collaboration

If you are a farmer or group of farmers:

- You must involve at least one **Technical Cooperator**.

The cooperator 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.

- Your application 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 you are NOT a farmer:

- You must have at least one **Farmer Cooperator.**

The farmer or farmers must be meaningfully involved in designing and carrying out the project. The budget should include funds to compensate the farmer(s) for their involvement. Farmers are expected to be involved in project – not simply provide land where the project can be conducted.

- Your application must include a **letter of commitment** from the farmer(s).

In the letter, the farmer cooperator must explain how they will be involved in the project.

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.

Projects must:

- Be conducted on a Minnesota farm or farms.
- 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

We 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. In general, this equipment may not exceed $1,500 per item. At the MDA's discretion, you may be permitted to use grant funds towards more expensive special purpose equipment and be reimbursed up to $1500 of the total purchase price.
- 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
- Expenditures incurred prior to contract execution
- Owner and employees' wages and benefits. Please contact staff for exceptions.
- Advertising, public relations, entertainment, and amusement costs
- Donated or volunteer (in-kind) 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.
- Donations and in-kind contributions, including property and services, made by the applicant (regardless of the recipient)
- Fines, penalties, and other settlement expenses resulting from failure of the applicant to comply with federal, state, local, or Native American 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.

Matching funds

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

Example 1

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

Total 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.

Total 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

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 Minnesota legislature or granted by a state agency) in the form of cash, loans, other grants, or 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. You must use average farmland rental rates or farmland rent from University of Minnesota Extension to calculate the value if a rate is available. If land will be rented or leased to conduct this project (as a cost item in the budget) then the value of this land cannot also be claimed as in-kind match.

Application Review Policies

Review process

A review committee comprised of soil scientists, agronomists, post-secondary educators, agricultural 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 Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making, 2022 (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.

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 Minnesota's statute on grants (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 Department of Agriculture 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 found in statute (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.

All persons, businesses, and individuals applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must comply with applicable laws. Under the law titled Right Of Setoff (MINN STAT 270C.65, Subd. 3), a grantee consents to disclosure of its social security number, federal employer tax identification number, and/or Minnesota tax identification number, already provided to the State, to federal and state tax agencies, and to state personnel involved in the payment of state obligations. These identification numbers may be used in the enforcement of federal and state tax laws which could result in action requiring a grantee to file state tax returns and pay delinquent state tax liabilities, if any.

Requirements for Grant Recipients

Pre-award financial review

All non-governmental organizations (NGOs) applying for grants from 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 but 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 January of each project year.

- The progress report should explain the activities and results achieved during the year; it can include pictures, tables, and figures and is the basis for each article in the next *Greenbook*. We will also request captions and alternative text for pictures and figures.

- The financial report details all the grant project expenditures made during each calendar year alongside the approved budget. You will not receive further payments until progress and financial reports have been received and reviewed by the MDA.

Greenbook articles are edited 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 and payments

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review on the Office of Grants Management Forms and FAQs webpage.

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.

- If receiving a grant as an individual or sole proprietor, complete and submit a Grant Affidavit for Individuals within 30 days of receipt of the award; this ties the grant to your social security number.

- Sign a grant contract agreement indicating your 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 you.

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 2026. Grant contracts may not extend beyond three years from the effective date of the contract.

SustAg grantees may request reimbursement of expenses up to four times each year by submitting a reimbursement request form and project status update. The MDA will retain the final 10% of a grantee's award, according to actual project expenditures, until final progress financial reports are approved and the outreach event is completed. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

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. 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, subd. 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 provide voter registration services for its employees (MINN. STAT. 201.162).

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 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
Technical or farmer cooperator(s) • Do technical cooperators provide the expertise this project needs? • Are the farmer cooperators meaningfully involved? • Do commitment letter(s) describe the expertise, role in project, and hourly rate charged (if any) of the cooperator? • Do the applicant(s) seem to have the necessary qualifications to do this project?	15
Diversity, equity, and inclusion • Are emerging farmers meaningfully involved in carrying out the project? • Does the outreach planning provide access to emerging farmers?	10
Project rationale • Does this project show positive effects on the environment, farm profitability, energy savings, or production? • Is there a compelling reason to do this project? • Will this project inform or demonstrate best management practices? • Could the demonstrated technologies or techniques be adopted and used by other farmers?	20
Project design and methods • Do the design and methods follow from the rationale and objectives? • Are the objectives clear and measurable? • Will the work plan accomplish the objectives? Are there supporting documents detailing the design of the project?	15
Evaluation • Is there a plan for measuring and evaluating project outcomes (preferably for each objective)? • Does the project include a basis of comparison (for example, a control plot or treatment)?	15
Outreach plan • How effective is the plan to share information about the project with farmers and the broader agricultural community?	5
Budget details • Is the budget appropriate for the project as described? Are the itemized costs realistic? • Is the budget detail sufficient to justify the request? • Are consulting/purchased service charges less than 50% of the total cost and are reasonable? • If applicable, does the budget clearly explain sources and amount of applicant's funds?	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
Total points possible	**100**

Application Questions

Contact information

Applicant information

- Contact person's name
- Organization/business name (if applicable)
- Contact person's mailing address
- Contact person's telephone
- Contact Person's Email
- Minnesota State House 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 AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant contract agreement for this organization:

- Name
- Telephone
- Email

Eligibility

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

- I have authority to apply for this grant (Yes/No)

- My 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)

- My organization is in Minnesota or authorized to conduct business in Minnesota. (Yes/No)

- No one involved in the project or the application for the grant is an employee or spouse of an employee of the MDA. (Yes/No)

- No MDA employee will financially benefit from this project. (Yes/No)

- I attest that I have not been convicted for a of criminal offense, such as theft, embezzlement, and forgery, related to state grant agreement. (Yes/No)

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

Previous AGRI SustAg Grants

Have you received a previous AGRI 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 award funds requested (equal to the total project cost minus the required match; cannot exceed $50,000)
- Applicant's matching funds
- Source of matching funds (cash, land, or both)
- Total project cost (grant funds plus matching funds, if applicable; cannot exceed $75,000)
- 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 2023.
        - 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, based on actual eligible expenses incurred, 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 primary objectives to be accomplished. The summary of this proposed project must be suitable for dissemination to the public. *(1,200 characters, including spaces)*

Choose the topic that best describes this project:

- Soil Fertility
- Livestock
- Fruits and Vegetables
- Energy
- Cropping Systems
- Alternative Markets and Specialty Crops

Farmer applicants

Do you meet the definition of a farmer as defined in the Request for Proposals? *(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.)* (Yes/No)

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 from 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 nonprofit 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 from 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 projects that serve emerging farmers, including historically underserved communities such as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), immigrants, women, veterans, persons with disabilities, persons who are LGBTQ+, and other minorities. Explain how your grant project will serve these communities, 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?

How does this project show positive effects on the environment, farm profitability, or energy savings or production?

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

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. *(3,000 characters, including spaces)*

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 does not work or what not to do so do not be afraid to try something others might consider risky.

Outreach plan

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 outreach events. *(2,500 characters, including spaces)*

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 2023 SustAg Application Budget Spreadsheet. Use realistic costs and justify each expenditure, including the purpose and the quantity. The budget table needs to include the total project costs. Budget categories include:

- Analysis of samples
- Consultants and other purchased services (contractors, 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 $0.625 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 2023 to December 2023:
- Year 2, January 2024 to December 2024:
- Year 3, January 2025 to end of grant contract (approximately February 2026):

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.