

# The Emerging Farmer Working Group Bylaws

Revised 10/2022

## Part 1. General Provisions

### Section A. Vision/Values/Core Agreements of the Emerging Farmer Working Group

#### **History and Inception of Emerging Farmer Working Group:**

Agriculture has been and continues to be a foundation for Minnesota's economy. Minnesota ranks fifth in the nation in terms of agricultural production, and there are over 430,000 agricultural related jobs in the state. Minnesota has 68,500 farms covering 25.5 million acres. Agriculture also plays a large role in Minnesota's culture and heritage, and many Minnesotans feel connected to agriculture even if they themselves have no formal role in the industry. However, agricultural opportunity is not equally available to all Minnesotans.

One of the recommendations that came from the listening sessions was to establish an **Emerging Farmers' Working Group** that would provide guidance to the MDA Commissioner on programs and initiatives that would support emerging farmers. This request was addressed during the 2020 Legislative session with the directive to establish a working group for emerging farmers. The EFWG was signed into law on May 15, 2020.

*"To advise the commissioner and legislature regarding the development and implementation of programs and initiatives that support emerging farmers in this state, the commissioner must periodically convene a working group consisting, to the extent possible, of persons who are, and organizations that represent, farmers or aspiring farmers who are women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, members of a community of color, young, and urban, and any other emerging farmers as determined by the commissioner. No later than January 15 each year, the commissioner must update the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over agriculture regarding the working group's activities and recommendations."*

*"Because of the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) farmers, women farmers, veteran farmers, and other farmers from historically underrepresented and underserved communities who are contributing their voices and ideas as part of the Emerging Farmers Work Group, we are creating an agricultural future where it is easier for all new farmers to take their first steps into the field. It is with a deep appreciation for the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for their continued dedication to this important conversation and bringing people's voices to the table."*

*-Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan*

Vision:

- \* Emerging Farmers Working Group “Minnesota is made stronger by our diversity.”

Values:

- \* Be consistent, proactive, and represent diverse communities.
- \* Celebrate and know that within communities there is diversity.
- \* Dig deep into the root issues and possible solutions.

Core agreements:

- \* *Everyone is heard*: practice active listening, build connections to others before and after meetings, and include opportunities for stakeholder input.
- \* *All voices are honored*: practice compassionate accountability and withhold judgment.
- \* *Have integrity*: practice honestly, put aside personal gain, prioritize attending meetings.
- \* *Empower people*: practice speaking up courageously; reach out to other communities and each other for input.
- \* *Embrace tension*: practice addressing issues where there isn't clear agreement, spend time and opportunity ensuring everyone feels safe to discuss their point of view.

## Section B. Creation of the Emerging Farmer Working Group

[Laws of Minnesota 2020, Chapter 89, Article 17.055](#) established the *Emerging Farmer Working Group*. The purpose of the working group is to advise the commissioner and legislature regarding the development and implementation of programs and initiatives that support emerging farmers in the State of Minnesota.

## Section C. Emerging Farmers Working Group must consist of:

- \* Assistant Commissioner and Chair: Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture (*ex-officio*)
- \* No fewer than 12 and no more than 20 members appointed by the commissioner of agriculture.
- \* ***The working group must consist, to the extent possible, of persons who are, and organizations that represent, farmers or aspiring farmers who are women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, members of a community of color, young, and urban, and any other emerging farmers as determined by the commissioner.***

The Assistant Commissioner shall direct the development of guidelines defining the membership of the working group; setting out definitions; and developing priorities for the working group and working group members.

## Section D: Duties of the Working Group

### The Emerging Farmer Working Group shall:

- \* The responsibilities that members of the working group carryout are essential and much needed to help remove historical barriers, however the beneficiaries of this work are not in the room. The goal is open the door for those that are thinking about getting into agriculture or those that are already in agriculture and are looking for ways to go from a consumer to a producer. The recommendations you will provide to the MDA will make entry into agriculture easier for all emerging farmers.
- \* Be aware that there are many aspiring and emerging farmers throughout the state and may not be aware of this working group. One of the purposes of this working group is to be a voice for people aspiring to get into agriculture who are not in the room and understanding the history of MDA and its programs. It is also important that each member understand the legislative process and be a strong advocate for ALL emerging farmers. Engage in mutual learning essential for achieving equity in Minnesota's agricultural economy.
- \* Review agency policy and programs to make recommendations to the commissioner for improving existing policies and programs and/or recommending new policies and programs that remove barriers for entry into agriculture.
- \* Provide recommendations to Commissioner/designee to help build capacity throughout the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.
- \* As needed, working group members will contribute to an annual legislative report by making recommendations that is to be submitted by January 15 of each year to: MDA Legislative Director, Agriculture Committee Chair and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over agriculture regarding the working group's activities and recommendations.
- \* Be prepared to testify or interact with state legislators if asked by chair.

## Section E. Governance and Decision Making

The working group will strive to make decisions on a consensus basis. If necessary, the group will use the [Fist of Five](#) consensus process to make group decisions.

- \* Decisions and votes will be reflected in the meeting minutes. Meeting minutes will be taken at time of meeting. The meeting minutes will be sent out via email and the website after the monthly meeting. Meeting minutes are the official record of the meeting. On occasion the working group meeting may be recorded.
- \* According to the open meeting law, members may not create social media pages (**Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn** or other like venues to discuss working group business and activities outside of the official meetings. Additionally, the agenda will be posted on the MDA Emerging Farmers Working Group webpage three days before the official meeting. Please read and be familiar with the Open Meeting Law which is found here: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/13D>

- \* A 51% quorum is necessary if there is a need for a group vote or decision; This includes participation by internet, tele-conferencing, and in-person.

**Section F. Meeting Schedule and Member Commitment**

The working group will meet only 5 times per year:

- Nov. 18, 2022.
- Jan. 13, 2023.
- March 10, 2023.
- May 12, 2023 (*optional meeting with the facilitator and without the MDA staff present*)
- Aug. 11, 2023.
- Oct. 13, 2023

**Mark your calendars and please make attendance a priority. Per Assistant Commissioner’s discretion members who miss more than two meetings may be dismissed from the working group.**

- \* Minimum of five meetings per year annually though the expiration date.
- \* A quorum is established with a majority (minimum of 51%) of the voting members are present.
- \* The agenda, meeting materials, including meeting minutes, will be sent to working group and posted online at least three days prior to scheduled meetings.
- \* On occasion, a member may be asked to provide suggestions on agenda items.
- \* Members may also be asked to attend community events, conferences, etcetera to support and share the work of the Emerging Farmers Working Group and the Emerging Farmers Office.

**Section G. Distribution of Meeting Materials**

Agendas, approved meeting minutes and adopted group documents will be published on the Department of Agriculture Emerging Farmers Working Group website.

**Section H. Expiration - The working group expires on August 1, 2025.**

**Part 2. Working Group Members**

**Section A. Working Group Membership**

Members are appointed by the Commissioner of the MDA and must consist, to the extent possible, of persons who are, and organizations that represent:

- \* Women
- \* Veterans
- \* Persons with disabilities
- \* American Indian or Alaskan Natives,
- \* Members of a community of color
- \* Recent high school or college graduates focused on agricultural careers
- \* Urban and rural community members focused on agriculture
- \* LGBTQIA+ community
- \* Any other emerging farmers as determined by the commissioner.

## **Section B. First appointments and first meeting.**

The commissioner/designee shall appoint at least 12 members. The first annual meeting of each year will be held in November.

## **Section C. Terms for Working Group Members**

- \* All members shall serve two-year appointments.
- \* If a member cannot finish their term, it is their responsibility of the member to immediately inform the Assistant Commissioner. Per Assistant Commissioner's discretion, members who miss *more than two meetings* may be dismissed from the working group.
- \* The commissioner/designee shall make appointments to replace vacating members by September of every year.

## **Section D. Duties of working group members**

The members of the working group shall:

- \* Be respectful to one another in that each person has a right to be heard.
- \* Attend and be on time to participate in **ALL** scheduled meetings. *(If you are unable to attend a meeting or will be late, let MDA staff know right away).*
- \* Throughout the course of our meetings, we put together a series of speakers both from the community around the state and MDA staff that will come and speak to members about various parts of the agency.
- \* Come to each meeting prepared to participate by reviewing meeting notes and agendas prior to the scheduled meeting.
- \* Communicate with MDA Emerging Working Group staff in a timely manner regarding any working group business, conflicts or missed meetings at least 2 weeks prior to scheduled meeting.
- \* Maintain open communication channels with respective constituencies.
- \* Work with Emerging Farmer Office coordinator with ideas and collaborate on efforts to support barriers that affect All emerging farmers in the state in conjunction with the Emerging Farmer office.
- \* Avoid monopolizing the conversation for one's personal gain. Remember that we are here to advocate for others and remind oneself of the commitment to represent ALL Emerging farmers throughout the state regardless of zip code.
- \* Be sure to communicate with MDA Emerging Farmers Working Group Staff on events, activities happening in the community to add to our newsletter.
- \* Participate in any activities the MDA staff and facilitator deem appropriate and necessary to facilitate the goals and duties of the working group.

## **Section F. Compensation**

The MDA recognizes that your TIME, Participation in this working group is invaluable. The MDA provides an **optional stipend** for your contributions as critical expert consultation in your community. The first step would be to [register to become a vendor](#) with the State of Minnesota.

- \* The MDA will provide a stipend to each participant at a rate of \$40 per meeting.
- \* MDA will have a limited window for completing the necessary paperwork each year for this stipend. There will be No exceptions beyond the window time allotted by the MDA.
- \* Members are not obligated to accept the stipend.
- \* Each member must inform the working group Chair of their decision of whether they plan to accept or deny the stipend.

## **Section G. The Emerging Farmer Office and Office Coordinator**

- \* Responsible for the overall implementation of outreach and engagement activities and strategies related to Emerging farmers.
- \* Attends events to advocate for emerging farmers and to create awareness of the office – connects emerging farmers to external and internal stakeholders and partners as needed.
- \* Collaborates with internal MDA divisions on policy, procedures, programs, and grants (local, state, federal) that impact emerging farmers across the state.
- \* Works with the MDA and other stakeholders, as well as our local and Federal partners around the state on timely and coordinated responses to emerging farmers inquiries.
- \* Assists with the coordination of the Emerging Farmers Working Group meetings and communication (newsletters, press releases, social media posts etc.).
- \* The Emerging Farmer Working Group works closely with the Emerging Farmer Office coordinator and MDA staff on ideas, desired discussion topics, engagement and any relevant opportunities that support emerging farmers.

## **Part 3. Duties of the Commissioner or designee**

**Section A.** The commissioner of agriculture or the commissioner's designee shall:

- \* Maintain the function or working group established by [Minnesota legislature statute](#).
- \* Chair working group and receive recommendations from the working group to help enhance or change existing MDA programs.
- \* Supervise and coordinate policies for emerging farmers who experience disparities in access and outcomes.
- \* Identify rules, policies, programs, and/or statues affecting emerging farmers that may need to be revised.
- \* Investigate and implement cost effective models of programs and policies to serve emerging farmers.
- \* Gather recommendations of the working group, review identified agency policies and/or programs that create or maintain barriers for emerging farmers.

#### Part 4. Code of Conduct

- \* Working group members will adhere to MDA standards of Ethics and Conflict of Interest and will comply with all pertinent state laws and regulations.
- \* If a member has a conflict of interest in a matter before the working group, the member shall declare the conflict to Assistant Commissioner/Chair, refrain from discussion, and will not vote on the matter.
- \* If a working group member misses two meetings, the working group staff will note and inform the commissioner or designee. The commissioner or designee will contact the member and discuss the potential dismissal of the member.
- \* Please read and be familiar with the **Open Meeting Law** which is found here: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/13D>