

# Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Grant 2024 Request for Proposals

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# Request for Proposals

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## Grant Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is accepting applications for the Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Grant. Counties, municipalities, Tribal nations, and weed management entities (including weed management areas) may apply for grants to address noxious weeds and invasive plants. The MDA anticipates awarding up to \$150,000 in grant funding during this granting cycle using a competitive review process. Submitted proposals should be for on-the-ground noxious weed management or equipment purchases that will assist entities long-term with management.

## Funding Availability

Applicants may request a maximum award of \$15,000 and a minimum award of \$500 for an individual project. Any funds remaining after the first round of grant awards will be made available via a separate Request for Proposals in FY25.

## Timeline and Deadlines for Grant Program

**Applications will be accepted until September 22, 2023.** Incomplete applications will not be considered. We will not consider late applications. Applications must be submitted through our online application system.

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.

After applications are received and reviewed, a grant contract will be drafted between the State of Minnesota and the eligible organization.

## Project Goals

The goal of this appropriation and grant program is to provide financial assistance to Tribal Nations, counties, municipalities, and weed management entities (including weed management areas) for identification, monitoring, education, control, and eradication activities of priority noxious weed species in their jurisdictions.

- Preference will be given to projects that include land management practices that limit erosion, reduce runoff, store water, protect native species, and projects located within a vital ecosystem (e.g., knotweed infestations along waterways, non-native phragmites in a lake).

## Questions

Direct questions about the grant program, completing the application, or additional accommodations to:

Emilie Justen

[emilie.justen@state.mn.us](mailto:emilie.justen@state.mn.us)

MDA Noxious Weed Law Coordinator

Plant Protection Division

625 Robert Street North

St. Paul MN 55155-2538

Questions regarding the Request for Proposals (RFP) must be submitted in writing (mail or email) by 12:00 p.m. on September 8, 2023. Answers will be posted for all applicants to review on the MDA's [Noxious Weed Grant FAQs webpage](#).

## Background

The funding for this grant originates from the 2023 Laws of Minnesota, Chapter 43, Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 2 (d). This program funds projects to local communities to help combat infestations of noxious weeds and invasive plants.

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process with review by the MDA Noxious Weed Program and the Noxious Weed Advisory Committee (NWAC). Selected grantees will be announced in early 2024. If selected, grantees may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract is fully executed, and the grant has reached its effective date.

# Eligibility and Application Instructions

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## Eligible Applicants

**Any authorized representative of a county, municipality, or weed management entity in Minnesota may apply.**

- Applicants not from tribal nations must consult with [their county agricultural inspector \(CAI\)](#) to discuss the RFP prior to submitting a project.
- Prior to submitting an application, applicants must have approval from their financial authority to participate with this grant.

## Eligible Projects and Expenses

**Projects must focus on noxious weeds or invasive plant species.**

Applicants for this grant must consider the specific provisions in the appropriation language and the Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Species Assistance Account below. [Minnesota Statute 18.90](#).

- (a) The commissioner shall receive applications... for any of the following eligible purposes:
- (1) to demonstrate innovative control methods or land management practices which have the potential to reduce landowner costs to control noxious weeds or improve the effectiveness of noxious weed control;
  - (2) to encourage the ongoing support of weed management areas;
  - (3) to respond to introductions or infestations of invasive plants that threaten or potentially threaten the productivity of cropland and rangeland over a wide area;
  - (4) to respond to introductions or infestations of invasive plant species that threaten or potentially threaten the productivity of biodiversity of wildlife and fishery habitats on public and private lands;
  - (5) to respond to special weed control problems involving weeds not included in the list of noxious weeds published and distributed by the commissioner;
  - (6) to conduct monitoring or surveillance activities to detect, map, or determine the distribution of invasive plant species and to determine susceptible locations for the introduction or spread of invasive plant species; and
  - (7) to conduct educational activities.
- (b) The commissioner shall select and prioritize applications for assistance under this section based on the following considerations:
- (1) the seriousness of the noxious weed or invasive plant problem or potential problem addressed by the project;
  - (2) the ability of the project to provide timely intervention to save current and future costs of control and eradication;
  - (3) the likelihood that the project will prevent or resolve the problem or increase knowledge about resolving similar problems in the future;
  - (4) the extent to which the project will leverage federal funds and other non-state funds;
  - (5) the extent to which the applicant has made progress in addressing noxious weed or invasive plant problems;
  - (6) the extent to which the project will provide a comprehensive approach to the control or eradication of noxious weeds;
  - (7) the extent to which the project will reduce the total population or area of infestation of a noxious weed;
  - (8) the extent to which the project uses the principles of integrated vegetation management and sound science; and
  - (9) other factors that the commissioner determines to be relevant.
- (c) Nothing in this section may be construed to relieve a person of the duty or responsibility to control the spread of noxious weeds on lands owned and controlled by the person.

Eligible expenses include expenses encumbered by the applicant to address:

- Equipment purchases can be awarded up to \$5,000 from grant maximum of \$15,000.
- Postage and printing related to the project.
- Contracted services such as hiring a private applicator to treat roadsides.
- Staff time/billable hours and mileage to complete project work must not be more than 25% of total project expenses.
- Materials for restoration allowed up to 10% of total project expenses.

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Expenditures incurred prior to grant contract execution.
- Applicant or partner agency overhead or administrative costs not related to the grant.
- Fundraising including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions regardless of the purpose for which the funds will be used.
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services.
- Lobbyists, political contributions.
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds.
- 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.
- 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).
- Capital expenses above \$5,000.

## Application Instructions

Submit grant proposals through our [online application system](#).

All applications must be received by **3:00 p.m. on September 22, 2023**. Late applications will not be considered. 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 management area. Use plain, easily understood language.
- Answer all questions completely within the character or page limits specified in the grant application.
- The Project Evaluation Profile included in this document will be used to score and compare the grant applications.

## Budget Guidelines

The budget narrative is a detailed description of each of the costs in the grant project per line item.

The budget table is an overview of how grant funds will be spent by category. Create a budget table that includes grant funds requested. Upload a budget as an Excel or Word file.

Example:

Category	Grant Request
Personnel – number of hours @ wage rate	80 hrs. @ \$50/hr. = \$3,000
Equipment, tools, supplies, herbicide	\$5,000
Education and outreach materials	\$1,400
Contracted services	\$3,100
In-state travel (mileage rate)	\$0
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$12,500</b>

## Application Review Policies

### 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 Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant 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 Government Data Practices Act as private or nonpublic, although some or all the data will generally become public at various points of the application process unless the data are otherwise classified by state or federal law. Access to private or nonpublic data is limited by law to MDA staff and contractors with a valid work assignment to access the data, parties authorized by the applicant, parties identified in a valid court order or federal subpoena, Minnesota Management and Budget, Minnesota Department of Administration, the state auditor, and the legislative auditor. If necessary, the MDA may also share the data with law enforcement or the Office of the Attorney General.

Per [Minnesota Statute 13.599](#):

- Names and addresses of grant applicants, and the grant amount requested, will be public data once application responses are opened.
- All remaining data in application responses (except trade secret information, see below) becomes public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).
- All data created or maintained by the MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret information, see below) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed.
- Trade secret information (as defined in [Minnesota Statute § 13.37](#)) is classified as private or nonpublic. In order for an applicant to protect data submitted as part of this application as trade secret information, the applicant must identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that the applicant wishes to protect, and provide an explanation of the economic value of keeping the data from being generally known to other persons. Determining what constitutes trade secret information is ultimately the responsibility of MDA, and MDA cannot guarantee that data marked by an applicant as trade secret information or marked "confidential" will be classified as such. If MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, that data will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

### Conflicts of Interest

The State will take steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per [Minnesota Statute 16B.98](#) and [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making \(PDF\)](#).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the MDA due to competing duties or loyalties.
- A grantee’s or applicant’s objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

### Review Process and Policies

A review committee, composed of MDA staff and external reviewers, evaluates all eligible applications. 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 and geographic diversity when making their decisions. We will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing. Applicants may request a summary of reviewer comments.

### Timeline

Process	Deadline
RFP posted on the Noxious Weed Program Website	August 11, 2023
Questions due no later than 4:00 p.m. CDT	September 8, 2023
Applications due no later than 4:00 p.m. CDT	September 22, 2023
Grant review process	Six to eight weeks
Committee recommendations submitted to commissioner for approval	December 2023
MDA notifies conditionally approved applicants	January 2024
Work plans approved and grant begins	March 1, 2024
Final reports due	November 30, 2024



# Requirements for Grant Recipients

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## Grant Award Agreement

Upon approval of an application and prior to beginning work on the Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Grant 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.
- Complete a Revenue 185 form that allows the MDA to check for state tax status.
- Sign a Grant Award Agreement indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreement also authorizes the MDA to monitor the progress of the project.

All successful applicants must complete a grant agreement with the MDA prior to establishing the grant period and beginning work on the project. The grant agreement will specify the grant period, work plan, duties, timeline of activities, and consideration of payment among other contractual details.

Grant Award Agreements must be signed by the applicant's Authorized Representative and returned to the MDA within 30 days of receipt. Failure to submit the signed agreement may result in loss of the grant award.

## Grant Payments

Grant funds are disbursed on a reimbursable basis. To receive grant payments, grantees must provide a progress report, 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. Upon completion of the grant project, submission and approval of a final progress report will be required to receive the final payment.

## Reporting Requirements

All grantees must submit a final report to the MDA no later than November 30, 2024. The final report should include:

- Plants targeted
- Number of acres treated
- Activities completed
- Itemized list of how, when and where the grant funds were spent
- Project impacts and significance – how the project has reduced the threat of noxious weeds and invasive plants in Minnesota
- Any challenges encountered and how they were overcome
- Any interesting observations that were made

The MDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the course of the project. Information submitted in any report is a public record. If the grant recipient considers any information in the report to be trade-secret protected, the grant recipient may request that trade-secret information be kept confidential and must specifically label that information. The MDA shall notify the grant recipient if a public records request is made for the information claimed as protected by the grant recipient.

## Bidding Requirements

All funded applicants will be required to abide by the state's bidding requirements for larger purchases. Review the state's [bidding requirements](#) for details.

## Audits

Per [Minnesota Statute 16B.98 Subdivision 8](#), the grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the commissioner, the granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

## Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Requirements

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. ([Minnesota Statute 363A.02](#)). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. ([Minnesota Rules, part 5000.3500](#)).

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the [Minnesota Human Rights Act](#).

## Voter Registration Requirement

The grantee will comply with [Minnesota Statute 201.162](#) by providing voter registration services for its employees.

# Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score
<b>Early Detection and Rapid Response</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted species are on the Prohibited Eradicate list</li> <li>Targeted species are considered early detection and include justification for why they are targeted</li> <li>Addresses other listed noxious weeds and includes justification for why they are targeted</li> <li>Includes a brief management plan for the targeted species</li> </ul>	20
<b>Local and statewide impacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly details how it will benefit/solve local or state weed management issues</li> <li>Describes level of impact on the specific region of the State of MN</li> <li>Describes meaningful, long-term impact</li> </ul>	15
<b>Project objectives and deliverables</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defines the need for and goals of the project</li> <li>Deliverables are clear and appropriate</li> <li>Project objectives are aligned with the budget and timeline</li> </ul>	15
<b>Work plan</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work plan is thorough and realistic</li> <li>Includes detailed descriptions of the project activities</li> <li>Includes cost estimates and budget timeline</li> </ul>	10
<b>Budget and narrative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains how budget estimates were developed</li> <li>Budget timeline includes budgets for both FY24 and FY25, if applicable</li> <li>Justifies and explains each budget line item</li> </ul>	10
<b>Demonstrated knowledge</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly demonstrates the knowledge and expertise required to successfully implement the proposed activities</li> <li>Includes plan for collecting data to document and report on the deliverables</li> </ul>	10
<b>Eligible purposes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meets requirements of M.S. 18.90, has specific purposes and considerations detailed</li> <li>If not from a Tribal Nation, verifies that CAI was contacted about the application</li> </ul>	5
<b>Preference</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes land management practices that limit erosion, reduce runoff, store water, protects native species</li> <li>Project is located within a vital ecosystem (e.g., knotweed infestations along waterways, non-native phragmites in a lake)</li> </ul>	10
<b>Overall quality of proposal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Application is complete, clear, and concise</li> <li>Includes detailed descriptions of the plants and itemized costs</li> </ul>	5
<b>Maximum possible points</b>	<b>100</b>

# Application Form Questions

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- Project Name
- Name of Contact Person
- Organization Name
- Organization Mailing Address
- County
- Office Phone Number
- Cell Phone Number
- Email

## Eligibility

Please confirm your eligibility by checking the appropriate boxes.

- ☐ I am from a Tribal Nation OR I am a County Agricultural Inspector or County Designated Employee OR my CAI/CDE has approved the application.
- ☐ I have obtained approval from my county board to receive grant funds.
- ☐ I agree that no work has started on the proposed project nor will start until the grant agreement is fully signed.
- ☐ IF I plan to use grant funds for conducting survey work, I agree to submit records of infestations to EDDMapS and to submit treatment records to ISMTrack.

## Proposal Summary

Review the Request for Proposals (RFP) before submitting your application. Details on the requirements may be found in the [Grant Overview](#) section and the [Project Evaluation Profiles](#).

Award amount requested \$

Number of acres targeted for treatment

The project must address at least one of the eligible purposes outlined in M.S. 18.90(a) listed here. Check all that apply.

- ☐ Innovative control or land management practices
- ☐ Support of weed management areas
- ☐ Cropland or rangeland protection
- ☐ Protection of wildlife and fisheries biodiversity
- ☐ Special weed control problems – not listed by the MDA
- ☐ Monitoring and surveillance to detect, map, or determine the distribution of invasive plant species
- ☐ Educational activities

## Target Plants

Please check all species from this list you will be targeting:

### Targeted Prohibited Eradicate Species

- ☐ Black swallow-wort
- ☐ Brown knapweed
- ☐ Common teasel
- ☐ Cutleaf teasel
- ☐ Dalmatian toadflax
- ☐ Diffuse knapweed
- ☐ Giant hogweed
- ☐ Grecian foxglove
- ☐ Japanese honeysuckle
- ☐ Japanese hops
- ☐ Johnsongrass
- ☐ Pale swallow-wort
- ☐ Palmer amaranth
- ☐ Red hailstone
- ☐ Tree of heaven
- ☐ Yellow starthistle

### Targeted Prohibited Control Species

- ☐ Bohemian knotweed
- ☐ Canada thistle
- ☐ Common barberry
- ☐ Common tansy
- ☐ Giant knotweed
- ☐ Japanese knotweed
- ☐ Leafy spurge
- ☐ Meadow knapweed
- ☐ Narrowleaf bittercress
- ☐ Non-native phragmites
- ☐ Plumeless thistle
- ☐ Purple loosestrife
- ☐ Round leaf bittersweet
- ☐ Spotted knapweed
- ☐ Wild parsnip

### Targeted Restricted Species

- ☐ Amur honeysuckle
- ☐ Amur silvergrass
- ☐ Bell's honeysuckle
- ☐ Black locust
- ☐ Common buckthorn
- ☐ Crown vetch
- ☐ European alder
- ☐ Garlic mustard
- ☐ Glossy buckthorn
- ☐ Japanese barberry cultivars
- ☐ Lesser celandine
- ☐ Morrow's honeysuckle
- ☐ Multiflora rose
- ☐ Porcelain berry
- ☐ Saltcedar
- ☐ Siberian peashrub
- ☐ Tatarian honeysuckle
- ☐ Wild carrot
- ☐ Winged burning bush

### Targeted Specially Regulated Plants

- ☐ Amur corktree
- ☐ Amur maple
- ☐ Callery pear
- ☐ Norway maple
- ☐ Poison ivy
- ☐ Tatarian maple

### Other Targeted Species

- ☐ Please list:

## Narrative Questions

Please give concise explanations for each section. Project timeline should start no earlier than February 1, 2024

### Project Justification

*(Limit: 5,000 characters)*

What is the problem this application seeks to address? Are the target species early detection and rapid response species in your area? What are the benefits of this project at the local, regional, and state levels?

**Example:** *Hennepin County has documented 20 acres infested with cutleaf teasel on private land.*

If the project includes a non-regulated terrestrial invasive plant(s), please provide evidence why it should be prioritized for this grant appropriation.

### Objectives and Deliverables

*(Limit: 5,000 characters)*

What are the project objectives that will directly address the problem stated above? How will objectives be measured to determine the success of the project? Clearly state objectives; use statements that specifically describe the targeted plants you expect to address.

**Example:** *Objective 1 – By December 30, 2021, treat 20 acres of cutleaf teasel in Hennepin County.*

### Work Plan

*(Limit: 7,000 characters)*

Provide a step by step description of the grant project – how and when you will carry out each item or activity of your grant project. What actions will you take to address the problem stated above? Describe the specific activities that will achieve each of the objectives, deadlines for accomplishing each activity, and responsible parties.

**Example:**

*Activities – In partnership with townships and private landowners, identify and treat infestations of cutleaf teasel in Hennepin County.*

- 1. Who: John Johnson, Hennepin County Ag Inspector (By July 2021). Set up meetings with landowners adjacent to known cutleaf teasel infestations to discuss identifying, mapping, and management options.*
- 2. Who: John Johnson, Hennepin County Ag Inspector (By October 2021). Ensure completion of cutleaf teasel treatments.*
- 3. Who: John Johnson, Hennepin County Ag Inspector (By December 15, 2021). Submit invoices for reimbursement and final report to MDA, submit treatment records to ISMTrack.*

## Budget

### Budget Narrative

(Limit: 6,000 characters)

The budget narrative is a detailed description of each of the costs in the grant project per line item. Justify your budget and explain how you plan to pay for your project.

- A cost estimate is required for all Personnel; Equipment, Tools, Supplies, Herbicides; Education and Outreach Materials; Contracted Services; In-State Travel; Other.
- Explain how you developed the budget estimates. Please indicate if specific vendors or contractors have been identified. You do not need actual bids at the time of application.

### Budget Table

The budget table is an overview of how grant funds will be spent by category and budget year. Create a budget table that includes grant funds requested. Upload a budget in the following format:

Category	Grant Request
Personnel – number of hours @ wage rate	
Equipment, tools, supplies, herbicides (maximum \$5,000 for equipment purchases)	
Education and outreach materials	
Contracted services	
In-state travel (mileage rate, per diem)	
Other (specify what the expense is for)	
<b>Total</b>	

## Certification

I certify that:

- To the best of my knowledge and belief, the data in this application is true and correct and supporting documentation for the claims and assertions made within this application is available to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for its review.
- I understand that submitting false or misleading information in connection with this application may result in the applicant being found ineligible for financial assistance under the Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Grant Program. I further understand that receiving public funds as a consequence of false representations constitutes an act of fraud.
- I understand that MDA may conduct audits, check references, and conduct site inspections after grants are awarded and prior to dollars being disbursed.
- I understand that the data provided in this application is subject to the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and have read and understand the Data Privacy Notice contained herein. I verify all information supplied in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Applicant's signature (Required)

Date