



AGRI Value-Added Grant

Fiscal Year 2025 Request for Proposals

Applications due by 4 p.m. on October 23, 2024

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.

Contents

- Grant Summary1
- Overview.....1
- Relationship to the AGRI Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Grant.....1
- Funding availability.....1
- Priorities1
- How to apply.....2
- Grant Eligibility3
- Eligible applicants3
- Collaboration3
- Eligible projects and expenses.....3
- Ineligible expenses4
- Matching funds.....4
- Application Review Policies6
- Review process6
- Conflicts of interest6
- Privacy notice and data classification.....6
- Requirements for Grant Recipients.....8
- Pre-award risk assessment8
- Grant award agreement9
- Accountability and reporting.....9
- Payments9
- Site visits..... 10
- Bidding requirements..... 10
- Publicity 10
- Affirmative action and non-discrimination policy..... 10
- Audits of project 10
- Voter registration requirement..... 11
- AGRI Background and Program Goals 11
- Project Evaluation Profile 12
- Application Questions 13
- Contact information 13
- Eligibility 13
- Previous AGRI grants 13
- Project summary 14
- Business readiness and financial sustainability 14
- Impact on Minnesota agriculture 15
- Priority areas 16
- Agricultural impact letters (optional)..... 16
- Project plan..... 16
- Budget narrative and match..... 17

Grant Summary

Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Value-Added Grant.

This grant provides funding for value-added businesses (including bioenergy producers and hemp processors) to invest in equipment. The program is intended to increase sales of Minnesota agricultural products by investing in production capacity, market diversification, and market access for value-added products. For the purposes of this grant, value-added is defined as the addition of value to an agricultural product through processing.

Relationship to the AGRI Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Grant

The fiscal year (FY) 2025 AGRI Value-Added and the FY 2025 Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk (MPEM) Grants will be administered as a single program with two application tracks. Value-added businesses should use this application as it is tailored to their businesses.

The [AGRI MPEM Grant](#) is available to facilitate the start-up, modernization, or expansion of meat, poultry, egg, and milk processing businesses. The program aims to increase sales of Minnesota-raised livestock products by investing in equipment and physical improvements that support processing, capacity, market diversification, and market access.

Funding availability

Approximately \$2.5 million is available between the Value-Added and MPEM programs. Of this amount, \$1.17 million is set aside for meat, poultry, egg, and milk processing businesses.

We expect to award 30 to 50 grants between the two programs, but the final number depends on the size of awards.

The maximum equipment award is \$150,000, and the minimum award is \$1,000. Although applicants may request up to \$150,000, applicants should expect that very few, if any, applicants will receive more than \$100,000. There will only be one round of funding this fiscal year.

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 \(PDF\)](#) sets up the expectation that grant programs intentionally show how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities or disparities.

This grant program serves to increase sales of Minnesota agriculture products by investing in production capacity, market diversification, and market access for value-added products. The program will prioritize:

- Projects that increase food safety.
- Projects that increase hemp fiber processing capacity.

How to apply

- Apply for the AGRI Value-Added Grant using our [online application system](#).
 - If you're a new user, you need to create an account first.
 - Once you're logged in, select "AGRI Value-Added Grant."
- Applications are due by **4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Wednesday, October 23, 2024**.
 - We will not accept late applications.
 - Apply early so there is enough time to get help with the online application system if you need it. It's best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance.
 - We are not responsible for any technical or logistical problems that result in a late submission. It is your responsibility to ensure we receive your application before the deadline.

Application guidelines

- Use plain, easily understood language. Write for reviewers who have general knowledge 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

October 16, 2024, at 4 p.m. CTDeadline to ask grant program questions.

October 23, 2024, at 4 p.m. CTApplications due.

December 15, 2024Applicants notified of decisions; grant agreement negotiations begin.

January 15, 2025Anticipated start date for projects awarded funding.

Questions

For questions on the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4 p.m. CT on Wednesday, October 16, 2024**.
- Email MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us with "Value-Added Grant" in the subject line.

Note: MDA employees are not authorized to give 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 with "Value-Added Grant" in the subject line.

Grant Eligibility

Eligible applicants

Applicants must:

- Intend to or be engaged in the processing of Minnesota agricultural products.
- Be an individual (including farmers), business, agricultural cooperative, nonprofit, educational institution, a local unit of government, or Native American tribal government.
- Be located or reside in Minnesota and be authorized to conduct business in Minnesota.

MDA employees, their spouses, and businesses owned by them are not eligible to apply.

Examples of applicants:

- Fruit and vegetable processors, including Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms
- Honey processors
- Renewable energy producers
- Soy processors
- Consumer packaged goods (CPG) companies

Collaboration

Eligible applicants may collaborate with other value-added processors, but it's not required. If eligible organizations are submitting a joint application, they must determine which business or organization will have the grant contract agreement with the MDA and work directly with the MDA to meet grant reporting requirements. Note that this organization will receive a 1099 from the State of Minnesota for income tax purposes.

All applicants are strongly encouraged to provide letters from farmers who are directly impacted by the project.

Eligible projects and expenses

Projects must aim to increase sales of Minnesota agricultural products by increasing production capacity, diversifying markets, or increasing market access for value-added products. Project must be conducted in Minnesota.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- Purchase and installation of equipment used in the production of value-added agricultural products
- Aquaponics systems
- Grading, packing, labeling, packaging, or sorting equipment
- Equipment that helps to maintain the identity and traceability of products
- Processing equipment or physical improvements to a value-added processing facility to reduce food safety risks

- Cooler walls and refrigeration units
- Contractor costs and materials for installation of approved equipment, including plumbing, drainage, venting, and electrical work
- Refrigerated trucks to access new markets (not routine replacement)
- Equipment that improves process efficiency at biofuel plants
- Renewable energy production equipment, particularly biothermal where the biomass is sustainably sourced from agricultural products (including biomass sourced from agroforestry)

Ineligible expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- General operating and overhead costs
- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists, 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 deciding whether travel is out of state.
- Amusement, diversion, or social activity costs
- Donated or volunteer (in-kind) services. While these may be given 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.
- Construction or improvements made outside of the state of Minnesota
- Owner and employee wages and benefits. Contact MDA staff for exceptions.
- Land purchases
- Beginning inventory costs, start-up costs, beginning working capital costs, and license fees
- Supplies, consumables, ingredients, and items that are not reusable
- Expenditures incurred prior to the full execution of the grant contract agreement or its start date, whichever occurs later, or those incurred after the expiration of the grant contract agreement
- Equipment and facilities used for agriculture plant or livestock production. Examples include watering systems, harvesting equipment, and equipment or facilities used for livestock care and feeding. This type of equipment may be eligible for the [AGRI Livestock Investment Program Grant](#).
- Construction or expansion of a restaurant or grocery store and restaurant equipment or furniture. Grocery store equipment may be eligible for a [Good Food Access Program Grant](#).

Matching funds

The AGRI Value-Added Grant is a reimbursement grant. You must supply documentation showing payment for the full cost of the project to receive the awarded reimbursement amount. The minimum award is \$1,000 and the maximum award is \$150,000.

For the match:

- You are responsible for 50% of the first \$50,000 to receive up to a \$25,000 reimbursement.
- For costs after the first \$50,000, you are responsible for 75% of the total remaining cost to receive 25% reimbursement, up to a maximum grant award of \$150,000.

Sources of the matching funds may include cash, loans, other grants, and liquid capital assets dedicated to the project. State grant funds cannot be used as matching funds, but non-forgivable loans from the state may be used as a match.

Example:

A grantee is working on a project that is expected to cost \$400,000. The first \$50,000 of expenses will be reimbursed at 50% (up to \$25,000). After that, the grantee would be eligible for \$87,500 in grant reimbursement from the state and would have to contribute the remaining \$262,500. In total, the grantee would be eligible for \$112,500 from the state and would be responsible for the other \$287,500.

Table 1. Example \$400,000 project showing the reimbursement amount and the grantee's contribution.

Project Cost	Grant Reimbursement	Grantee Cost
First \$50,000	\$25,000	\$25,000
Remaining \$350,000	\$87,500	\$262,500
Total Cost: \$400,000	\$112,500	\$287,500

Application Review Policies

Review process

A review committee made up of MDA staff and external reviewers evaluates 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 makes the award decisions. Both the review committee and commissioner may consider geographic distribution, applicant's history as a state grantee including progress made on previous grants, compliance with state rules and regulations, and capacity to perform the work.

We 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 give 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.

An example of a conflict of interest would be an equipment vendor writing an application beyond providing budget details, bids, or quotes for a processor when the equipment vendor stands to profit from the grant award.

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicant or grantee 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 this 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 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 otherwise classified by law, including 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 generally 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 risk assessment

Under [Policy 08-06: Policy on Pre-Award Risk Assessment for Potential Grantees \(PDF\)](#) the MDA is required to complete a pre-award risk assessment of grantees selected to receive a grant award of \$50,000 or greater. Applicants will be asked to submit documents relevant to their entity.

If the MDA determines that the awardee has substantial risks that inhibit its ability to perform the required duties under the grant contract agreement, then the MDA may either request more information for the purpose of satisfying the concerns, develop a risk mitigation plan to protect the interests of the state, or not award the grant.

For-profit businesses

- A copy of the business' most recent federal and state tax returns. If the business has not been in operation long enough to have a tax return, then they must submit documentation of internal controls.
- Current financial statements including a balance sheet, income statement, and statement of cashflows.
- Confirmation that the business entity is not under bankruptcy proceedings nor has any liens on assets.
- Confirmation that the business is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Confirmation that none of its current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

Nonprofit organizations

- A copy of the nonprofit's most recent Form 990 or Form 990-EZ with the Internal Revenue Service. If the nonprofit has not been in existence long enough or is not required to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ, then they must submit the following information:
 - Proof of its tax-exempt status
 - Most recent board-reviewed financial statements
 - Documentation of its internal controls
- Most recent certified financial audit if required to complete one under Section 309.53, Subd. 3.
- Confirmation that it is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Confirmation that none of its current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

Political subdivisions

Political subdivisions, including counties, towns, cities, school districts, and other municipal corporations or political subdivisions of the state authorized to enter into contracts will need to certify that none of its current public officials, board members, or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

Individuals

Individuals will need to certify that they have not been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

Grant award agreement

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review on the [Office of Grants Management Forms and FAQs](#) webpage.

Upon approval of an application, completion of the pre-award risk assessment, and before beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving reimbursements, the applicant must:

- Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, or confirm that the information in SWIFT is still correct.
- Submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.
- Sign a grant contract agreement showing their intention to complete the proposed tasks. This agreement must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

Accountability and reporting

Grantees will be required to submit annual progress reports during the grant period, a final report at the completion of the project, and additional information about the long-term impact for up to three years after the grant period. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

Information reported to the MDA may be classified as public data. Failure to regularly report, respond to surveys, and promptly respond to information requests may impact the grantee's ability to secure future funding from the MDA.

Payments

Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the grant contract agreement has been signed by all parties.

Grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget.

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.

Grant payments may be used to fulfill federal and state tax liabilities or may be withheld until the grantee has paid any tax liabilities (MINN. STAT. 270C.65, Subd. 3 and other applicable laws).

Site visits

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 more than \$25,000 before a final payment is approved. Other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

Bidding requirements

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

Publicity

All projects funded must publicly credit AGRI funding, including on the grantee's website when practical.

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 MDA, the Department of Administration, and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 8](#)).

The grantee is responsible for the retention of documents and records relevant to the grant. 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 Value-Added Grant is to increase sales of Minnesota-raised livestock products by investing in equipment and physical improvements that support processing, capacity, market diversification, and market access.

Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation criteria	Maximum score
Project addresses goals of the AGRI Value-Added Grant	Yes or No
Business readiness, financial sustainability, and experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant demonstrates sound business management, financial aptitude, and stability. • Applicant describes the financial benefit of doing the grant project. 	25
Impact on Minnesota agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan to increase processing of Minnesota agricultural products is achievable. • Expected amount of Minnesota agricultural product processing capacity is realistic. • Project meaningfully adds resiliency in the supply chain. • Impact is appropriate for the size of the budget request. 	25
Priority areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant clearly and compellingly describes how the project contributes to a food safety plan or increases food safety. • Project will increase hemp fiber processing capacity. 	15
Measurable outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives of project are measurable and clearly stated. • Applicant describes how the project will achieve objectives of the grant program and benefit the business. 	10
Project plan – workplan and timeline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workplan is thorough and realistic. • A detailed description of each step of the grant project is provided with estimated dates. 	10
Budget narrative and match <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget clearly details all project costs. • Budget estimates are clearly based on vendor quotes and market research. • Budget clearly explains source and amount of applicant’s funds (cash match). • Budget is cost effective and planned purchases are backed by quotes or other sources. 	15
Total	100

Application Questions

Contact information

Applicant information

- Point of contact name
- Point of contact telephone
- Point of contact email
- Organization name
- Organization mailing address
- Organization county
- Organization telephone
- Organization email
- Minnesota State House District (use the [District Finder](#) if you don't know your district.)

Authorized representative

- If awarded a grant, is the person authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the organization the same as the point of contact person listed above? (Yes or No)
 - If no, please provide the following authorized representative information for signing any resulting grant contract agreement:
 - Name
 - Telephone
 - Email

Eligibility

- Confirm that the following statements apply to your organization.
 - The business does not owe the State of Minnesota any back taxes and has not defaulted on any State of Minnesota backed financing in the last seven years. (True)
 - The business is compliant with current state regulations, or this project will support the organization becoming compliant. (True)
- Is this business owned by a Minnesota Department of Agriculture employee or their spouse? These businesses are not eligible to apply. (Yes or 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 or No)

Previous AGRI grants

- Have you previously received an AGRI Value-Added Grant; AGRI Meat, Poultry, Egg, and Milk Processing Grant; Rapid Response Grant for Livestock Processing; or grants from any other source? (Yes or No)
 - If yes, briefly describe your previous grant project(s), including date(s), amount(s) awarded, and funding source(s). (1,000 characters, including spaces)

Project summary

Grant request

- Project name (Business name, summary title for project)
 - Example: ABC Cidery, Bottling Expansion
- Total project cost
- Total grant request (The first \$25,000 requires a 50% match; afterwards a 75% match.) Maximum \$150,000, minimum \$1,000.
- Expected project start date
 - Must be after both you and the State of Minnesota sign the contract.
 - Award notification is in early December and contracts may be signed as early as mid-January.
 - You may not order equipment until after the grant contract agreement is signed.
- Expected project end date
 - Contracts may last a full three years from the start date.
 - 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 and installed by the end date of the contract.

Project description

- Provide a brief description of your project, outlining what you plan to purchase and why. Limit your description to three sentences. (500 characters, including spaces)

Business readiness and financial sustainability

Organization summary

- Provide a summary of your organization (2,000 characters, including spaces). The summary should stand alone to describe:
 - The mission and goals of your organization.
 - The services and products provided by your organization.
 - The ownership and leadership of your organization.
- Provide a summary of your organization's capacity (2,000 characters, including spaces)
 - Describe your organization's capacity to manage the grant, if received.
 - Describe your history of performing the work that will be funded by the grant.
- Describe any other relevant information such as key personnel, current budget, past grant experience, or internal financial policies or controls to demonstrate your organization's capacity to manage the grant.

Business plan summary

- Provide a summary of your business plan. (2,000 characters, including spaces)
 - Describe the financial health and cash flow of your organization over the past year.
 - Explain how your organization is looking to grow or remain competitive.
 - Tell us how this project fits into your business plan and how this project will financially benefit your organization.

Business plan submission

- If you're requesting a grant of \$100,000 or more, you must submit your full business plan. This is optional if you are requesting less than \$100,000.
 - Redact confidential information and trade secrets included in your business plan.

Business readiness letters (optional)

- Submit letters of support written by:
 - Financial or business contacts that can attest to your organization's sound business management, financial aptitude, and stability.
 - Contacts in your value-added profession or previous co-workers who can verify you have the experience or skills necessary to successfully complete the project.

Impact on Minnesota agriculture

Increasing sales

- Describe how your project will increase the sales of Minnesota agricultural products. Compare the total dollar value of Minnesota agricultural products sold by your business between January 1, 2023, and December 31, 2023, to an estimate of the dollar value of sales of Minnesota agricultural products the first calendar year after your project is complete. (2,000 characters, including spaces)
- Estimate how this project will impact your gross revenue. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

Sources of Minnesota products

- List your current or anticipated sources of Minnesota agricultural products, and the estimated amount by year. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

Example: Vista Acres Cattle, New Ulm, MN (2023 – 50 beef); Happy Hogs Processing, Inc., Thief River Falls, MN (2023 – 1,500 pork bellies); dairy farmers, SE Minnesota (2023 – 15,000 cwt, 20 producers); blueberry grower, Cambridge (2023 – 50 pounds)

Market expansion and diversification

- Describe how the project plans to diversify markets and increase market access. (2,000 characters, including spaces)
 - If you expect to increase the number or types of market outlets from this project, estimate the increase(s) and explain how the project will achieve these goals.

Example: In 2023, we sold to 10 schools and with the grant we expect to be able to sell to 20 schools.

Market outlets

- Estimate the number of market outlets used by your organization between January 1, 2023, and December 31, 2023. Examples of market outlets include wholesale distributors, direct-to-consumer channels, retail stores, and farmers’ markets. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

Measurable outcomes

- Describe how you plan to measure the outcomes of your project, including impact on your organization, increased sale of Minnesota agricultural products, and number of market outlets. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

Priority areas

- Does your project contribute to a food safety plan or improve food safety? (Yes or No)
 - If yes, describe how the project contributes to a food safety plan or improves food safety. (500 characters, including spaces)
- Does your project increase hemp fiber processing capacity? (Yes or No)
 - If yes, describe how it increases hemp fiber processing capacity. (500 characters, including spaces)

Agricultural impact letters (optional)

- Optional, but strongly encouraged. Submit letters of support written by:
 - Current or potential sources of Minnesota-grown products.
 - Current or potential buyers expressing support for the project.
 - Organizations citing the potential of your project to impact farmers and producers.

Project plan

Workplan and timeline

- Create a workplan using the example format shown below. You should include the steps that you will take to successfully complete your project. For example, you might include target dates for requesting quotes, installing and testing equipment, and full launch of the equipment. You may also upload a workplan as an Excel or Word file.

Example:

Timeframe	Description of task or action item	Responsible party
March 2025	Request bids for cheesemaker	Project director
April 2025	Sign contract with Cheese Marketers Association	CEO

Budget narrative and match

Budget

- Create a budget using the example format below. We prefer an uploaded Excel or Word file, but you may use the space in this online application if needed. Don't attach bid sheets or quotes from vendors instead of a budget in this format.

Example:

Item	Quantity	Cost per Unit	Total Estimate	Source of Estimate
Pasteurizer	1	\$15,000	\$15,000	Cheesy Equipment Dealers
Contractor Hours	50	\$100	\$5,000	Cheese Marketers Association
Total	--	--	\$20,000	--

Budget narrative

- Justify your budget and explain how you plan to pay for your project. (2,000 characters, including spaces)
 - Explain how the equipment and services in the budget table will help you process more Minnesota agricultural products into value-added products or diversify or expand your market outlets.
 - Explain how you plan to pay for your project (financing, other grants, private investment, personal investment, organization funds, etc.). Other state grant funds cannot be used to pay for this project, but non-forgivable loans from the state may be used as a match.

Documents showing project costs and ability to pay for project (optional)

- Submit documents such as:
 - Quotes or estimates from businesses for equipment or services.
 - Letters of commitment written by financial institutions or other organizations that will be providing funding through loans or credit.
 - Letters from your financial institutions indicating you have sufficient cash reserves to fund this project.