

## Tips for Writing Helpful Reviewer Comments

Thank you for agreeing to be a reviewer for one of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's many grant programs! We appreciate the time you have set aside to help us determine which grant proposals we should fund. Your reviewer comments, in addition to your scores, are crucial and will assist the Commissioner of Agriculture in making final funding decisions. Before you start your review, please take a minute to read through the following tips for writing helpful reviewer comments.

### Reviewer Comment Dos

- Do make sure your feedback is constructive
- Do provide well written and detailed validation for each of your scores
- Do focus on strengths and weaknesses
  - Strength – “The impact of this project is clear and supported through the letter of support.”
  - Weakness – “Additional details about how the proposed activities will lead to additional purchases from Minnesota farmers would improve the proposal.”

### Reviewer Comment Don'ts

- Don't leave comment sections blank
- Don't simply summarize the proposal
- Don't be mean – but do be clear, straightforward, and honest
- Don't give feedback that is vague or not constructive
  - Strength – “Good example on page 2”
  - Weakness – “Seems like a waste of funding”

### Reviewer Comments Checklist

While you are crafting your reviewer comments keep the following thoughts in mind.

- Is my feedback clear and actionable?
- Is my feedback offensive?
- Do my comments reflect that I have closely reviewed the materials submitted by the applicant?
- Do my comments align with the amount of points awarded?

### Additional Information

Not everybody is an experienced grant writer. Try to look beyond the applicant's writing ability when considering the merits of the application.

Please remember that the comments you write as a reviewer will be made available to applicants upon request. These comments can often help applicants refine their proposals before the next round of funding.

If you are unable to attend a review session to express your scores and reviewer comments, an MDA employee will be appointed to represent you. Please make sure to express your feedback thoroughly so that your thoughts are well represented during the review session.

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