

# **Soil Health Financial Assistance Program FY2026 Request for Proposals**

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# Grant Overview

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The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the Fiscal Year 2026 Soil Health Financial Assistance Program, in accordance with [MINN. STAT. 17.134](#). Grant funds are available for purchasing and retrofitting equipment that will assist with implementing soil health farming practices. This grant program was established in 2022 to support healthy soil management practices in Minnesota. This program is administered by the Pesticide and Fertilizer Management Division, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA).

The program is anticipated to support healthy soil management practices by providing cost share for the purchase of soil health equipment. ([MINN STAT 17.134](#)). For the purposes of this proposal, soil health practices include, but are not limited to, practices that minimize soil disturbance, keep the soil covered, maximize plant diversity, maintain living roots, and integrate livestock. All information about the program is available on the program's [webpage \(www.mda.state.mn.us/soil-health-grant\)](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/soil-health-grant). Applications will be accepted until August 29, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. Central Standard Time.

## Funding availability

The MDA anticipates awarding approximately \$4.36 Million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2026. Awards will be made using a competitive process.

One round of awards is planned, but if funding is not exhausted, a second request for proposals will be issued. Unsuccessful applicants from the first round can reapply if a second round is offered. Funding sources include \$639,000 from Minnesota's General Fund ([2025 Minn. Laws ch. 34, art. 1, §2\(b\)](#)), \$1,750,000 from Minnesota's Clean Water Fund ([2025 Minn. Laws ch. 36, art. 2, §2\(3\)\(j\)](#)), and \$1,974,286 through the [Minnesota Climate Smart Food Systems \(CSFS\) Initiative](#).

Applicants may apply for up to 50% of their project's total cost with a minimum grant award of \$500 and a maximum grant award of \$45,000. Eligible applicants include individual farmers, producer groups, and local government units (LGUs). Applicants may only receive one Soil Health Financial Assistance Program grant in FY 2026. Unsuccessful applicants from the first round can reapply if a second round is offered.

Applicants should anticipate that grant contracts will have a start date of January or February 2026 and an end date of January or February 2027. We expect to notify selected grantees for this funding by January 2026. If selected for an award, the grantee may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed, the grant has reached its effective date, and the grantee has been notified by the state's authorized representative that they may begin work. **Any expenses incurred prior to the effective date of the contract are not eligible for reimbursement.** Grant contracts are effective for one 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.

The Office of Grant Management (OGM) [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 supports individual farmers, producer groups, and local government unit to purchase soil health equipment and will prioritize:

- Beginning Farmers (farming for 10 years or fewer)
- Geographic diversity of grant awardees in Minnesota
- **Grant applicants that have not been previously awarded a Soil Health Financial Assistance Program grant**, as required under [MINN. STAT. 17.134\(3\)](#).
- Grant applicants who are certified or assessed and working towards certification in the [Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program](#), as required under [MINN. STAT. 17.134\(3\)](#).

Grant outcomes will include improvements in access to soil health equipment and increased acres of soil health practices across Minnesota.

## How to apply

- Apply for the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program using our [online application system](#).
  - Grant applications must be received by **4:00 p.m. Central Time (CT) on August 29, 2025**, to be considered for funding. Late applications will not be accepted.
- Apply early so that there is enough time to receive technical assistance if needed.
  - It is 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.**

Incomplete applications will be rejected and not evaluated. Applications must include all required application materials, including attachments. Do not provide any materials that are not requested in this RFP, as such materials will not be considered nor evaluated.

The MDA reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet these requirements.

By submitting an application, each applicant warrants that the information provided is true, correct, and reliable for purposes of evaluation for potential grant award. The submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the award, as well as subject the applicant to suspension or debarment proceedings and other remedies available by law.

**All costs incurred in responding to this RFP will be borne by the applicant.**

## 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 farming operation, organization, or soil health initiative.
- Answer all questions completely within the character limits specified in the grant application.
- Review the [Project Evaluation Profile](#) included in this document at page 17 as it is used to score and compare the grant applications.

## Timeline and deadlines

August 22, 2025, 4:00 p.m. CT    Deadline to submit questions

August 29, 2025, 4:00 p.m. CT    Applications due

January 1, 2026

Notification of decisions are made by this date

January/February 2026

Anticipated start date for projects awarded funding

## How to submit questions

For questions on the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4:00 p.m. Central Time on August 22, 2025**.
- Email [jessica.jurcek@state.mn.us](mailto:jessica.jurcek@state.mn.us) or [brad.jordahlredlin@state.mn.us](mailto:brad.jordahlredlin@state.mn.us) with “Soil Health Grant” in the subject line.
- Questions and answers will be posted online on the [MDA Soil Health Grant page](#).

*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 651-802-3059 or
- Email [jessica.jurcek@state.mn.us](mailto:jessica.jurcek@state.mn.us) or [brad.jordahlredlin@state.mn.us](mailto:brad.jordahlredlin@state.mn.us) and include “Soil Health Grant” in the subject line.

## Grant Eligibility

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### Eligible applicants

#### Applicants must:

- Be an owner or lessee of farmland in Minnesota or a local government unit (LGU), including cities, towns, counties, soil and water conservation districts, Tribal Nations, and joint powers boards.
- Be in good standing with the State of Minnesota:
  - No back taxes owed
  - No defaults on Minnesota state-backed financing for the last seven years
  - Acceptable performance on past grants with the MDA and other state agencies
- Be licensed and authorized to conduct business in Minnesota
- Not be an employee or spouse of an employee of the state of Minnesota.

**All applicants (except LGUs) will be asked to provide proof of lease or ownership of land at time of award.**

#### Applicants who are lessees must:

- Have their lease agreement in writing at the time of application and provide a signed and dated copy of the lease agreement at the time of award.
- Have confirmation in writing at the time of award by the owner of the land that the lease agreement will accommodate the soil health practice proposed in the application and that the lease agreement will extend to or beyond the end date of the grant period.

## Collaboration

Eligible applicants may and are encouraged to collaborate with other operations, but this is not required. If eligible organizations or operations are submitting a joint application, they must determine which individual or entity will sign 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.

## Eligible expenses

Grant applications must be for the purchase of equipment that will be used to establish, improve, or accelerate soil health. This equipment can be new or used. Parts and materials used to retrofit existing equipment (excluding tools that can be reused on another project) may also be eligible.

If we accept your proposal, we will reimburse eligible costs included in your project budget. You will have to submit documentation including invoices and proof of payment.

- You must be invoiced and pay for all project materials and services within 12 months from the grant agreement start date.
- Any expenses incurred outside this timeframe are not eligible for reimbursement without a formal amendment to your contract.
- **Any expense incurred before the grant agreement execution date will NOT be reimbursed.**

### Equipment purchases must:

- Aim to improve or build soil health.
- Not start until the effective date or the date the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties, whichever is later. The grantee must not begin work (purchase equipment) under the contract until the contract is fully executed and the grantee has been notified by the State Authorized Representatives to begin work.
- Be completed in the 12-month term of the grant contract. Grant contracts can be extended if approved but cannot be extended beyond three years.
- Be conducted in Minnesota.

### Examples include but are not limited to:

- Purchase of new or used equipment that will aid the applicant in using soil health practices in a farming operation.
  - Air seeders
  - No till drill
  - Drop seeders
  - Broadcast seeders
  - Crimpers
- Purchase of materials to retrofit existing equipment to be used for soil health practices
  - Retrofitting a corn planter to function as a cover crop seeder
  - Conditioning strips for no till planting
  - Crimper modifications

## Ineligible expenses

The following items are not eligible for reimbursement under this grant:

- **Any equipment purchased from a family member** as defined in the Internal Revenue Code, Section 267(c)(4), including siblings, parents, grandchildren, and spouses.
- Any equipment purchased from an entity with which you or your spouse own an interest, or an entity of which you are an employee.
- Expenditures incurred before the grant agreement is signed by all parties. Any payments made by the grantee before a grant contract agreement is fully executed are at the applicant's risk and not eligible for reimbursement; payments made after a fully executed grant contract may be eligible for reimbursement.
- Expenses paid for in cash. Some limited exclusions may apply, contact us for exceptions.
- Crop or pastureland
- Tillage equipment and attachments, except equipment for strip tillage
- Site treatment equipment (example: brush mowers)
- Stand-alone fertilizer application equipment (ex: fertilizer carts)
- Mowers
- Haymaking equipment
- Manure spreaders that are not low disturbance
- Tile drainage materials & equipment
- Pesticide application equipment
- General use equipment, including trucks, tractors, skid steers, and utility vehicles
- Other equipment that does not have soil health as its primary purpose
- Labor and other expenses for repairs to equipment or supplies
- Expenses for maintenance or service calls to maintain equipment or supplies
- Labor incurred to establish a soil health feature or practice
- Labor incurred to retrofit or install parts on equipment
- Tools, equipment rental, facilities, and fuel needed for assembly and retrofit of equipment covered by grant funds
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or legal costs
- Refinancing existing debt
- Late payment fees, finance charges, bad debts, legal costs, or contingency funds
- Owner and employees' wages and benefits
- 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 Tribal laws and regulations
- Indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project)
- General operating and overhead costs
- 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 or political contributions
- 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
- Construction or improvements outside of the state of Minnesota.
- Investments to farmland no longer meeting the grant program's eligibility requirements as owned or leased property.

The practices listed above are not an exhaustive list. Other practices not explicitly listed here may be deemed ineligible by the grant review committee or the Commissioner.

## Matching funds

The Soil Health Financial Assistance Program is a reimbursement grant for up to 50% of the project cost, not to exceed \$45,000. You must provide documentation for the total cost of the project to receive the awarded reimbursement amount.

Sources of the matching funds include cash, loans, other grants, or 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, such as the [Ag BMP Loan Program](#). Non-cash, in-kind matches of goods and services are not allowable.

## Application Review Policies and Procedures

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### Review process

A review committee, composed of MDA staff and external reviewers, evaluates all eligible applications based on the criteria in the [Project Evaluation Profile](#) (pages 17–18 of this RFP). 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 geographic distribution, soil management practices, impacted acres, services to prioritized populations, applicant's history as a state grantee, capacity to perform the work, and more when making their decisions. The MDA will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing.

MDA staff and external reviewers 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 recommendations and makes the award decisions. Reviewers, staff, and the commissioner may consider geographic distribution as well as the 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.

### 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 per [Minnesota Statutes § 16B.98 Subd. 2-3](#) and [OGM Policy 08-01 Conflict of Interest in State Grant-Making Policy](#).

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, including when grantees or applicants are an employee or spouse of an MDA employee.

- 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 a vendor writing an application (beyond providing budget details, bids, or quotes) for the applicant when the vendor stands to profit from the grant award.

In cases where a conflict of interest is in question or disclosed, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to, revising the grant work plan or grantee duties to mitigate the risk, requesting the grant applicant to submit an organizational conflict of interest mitigation plan, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, amending the grant, or termination of the grant contract 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 Soil Health Financial Assistance 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 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 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 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.

## Organizational Capacity Assessment

Grant applicants may be required to submit financial, capacity, and internal control documents prior to a grant award based on state or federal requirements.

All applicants may be required to submit additional documents, including descriptions of internal controls over business expenditures and outcomes of grant funds.

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.

## Requirements for Grant Recipients

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### Grant Contract Agreements

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

1. Register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, or confirm that the information in an existing SWIFT profile is still correct.
2. Submit applicable certifications, including of the grantee's capacity to perform grant duties, good standing with the State of Minnesota, lack of suspension or debarment by the state of Minnesota or federal government, and lack of conviction of felony financial crimes.
3. Submit other required documentation within 15 calendar days of award notification.
4. Sign a grant contract agreement showing their intention to complete the proposed tasks. This agreement must be signed within 30 calendar days of being sent to the grantee.

The grant contract agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation for the project. Grantees should read the grant contract agreement, sign, and once signed, comply with all conditions of the grant contract agreement.

No work on grant activities can begin until a fully executed grant contract agreement is in place and the State's Authorized Representative has notified the Grantee that work may start. The funded applicant will be legally

responsible for assuring implementation of the work plan and compliance with all applicable state requirements including worker's compensation insurance, nondiscrimination, data privacy, budget compliance, and reporting.

## Accountability and Reporting

Grantees will be required to provide evidence of progress together with each request for reimbursement and may be requested to provide 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.

## Authorized Representatives

Pursuant to [MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 5\(d\)](#), grantees must clearly post on the grantee's website the names of, and contact information for, the grantee's leadership and the employee or other person who directly manages and oversees a grant contract agreement on behalf of the grantee.

## Payments

Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the contract has been signed by all parties. Grant contracts may not extend beyond three years from the effective date of the contract.

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

Requests must include two types of proof for each expense: proof of purchase (e.g., invoices, itemized receipts, etc.) and proof of payment (e.g., cleared checks, credit card statements, bank statements, etc.). Ineligible items and their cost must be clearly delineated in the proof of purchase. Additional details can be found in the SHFAP Reimbursement Guide, which will be shared at time of award. The MDA will generally not reimburse expenses paid for in cash. Please contact the MDA for exceptions.

The grantee will receive 90% of eligible expenses not to exceed the grant award amount, upon submitting proof of purchase and payment. The remaining 10% will be distributed after the applicant completes reporting documents. Reporting documents can be submitted as soon as the equipment has been used for the soil health activities outlined in the grant application or up to 12 months after the contract start date, whichever comes first. However, it's important to note that the grantee must submit all required reporting documents within 12 months of the contract start date to receive the final 10% of the award. The reporting documents are a short form provided by the MDA requesting the number of acres on which equipment was used, a description of the soil health practice, or an explanation of why the equipment was not used within the 12-month contract length, along with other brief details about the grant award performance.

Grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. To receive grant payments, grantees must provide proof that the equipment was purchased by submitting details of each purchase on receipts and invoices, and proof that the vendors have been paid via bank statements, loan agreements, cashed checks (front and bank), and credit card statements. The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation during the grant contract period. 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).

## Monitoring and 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 \$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 monitoring visit for all grantees who purchase their equipment from a private seller. All grantees must provide expense receipts, invoices, and any other documents requested by the state.

MDA will monitor the progress of the project. The MDA may perform a monitoring visit for all grantees with awards of \$25,000 or more before a final payment is approved. Awards less than \$25,000 will receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA. The MDA will perform a monitoring visit for all grantees who purchase their equipment from a private seller, regardless of the award. All grantees must provide expense receipts, invoices, and any other documents requested by the state.

### No Sale for 10 years

Applicants receiving a grant award are prohibited from selling the equipment purchased with grant funds for a period of ten years, beginning at the execution date of the grant agreement as required under MINN. STAT. 17.134(3a). Exceptions to this requirement may be made by the Commissioner for unforeseen circumstances, such as death or farm sale. MDA reserves the right to require verification that the equipment has not been sold throughout the ten-year period. Verification could include an attestation that the equipment has not been sold, a dated photo of the equipment, a site visit, and/or another method determined by the MDA.

## Contract and Bidding requirements

### A. Municipalities

Grantees that are political subdivisions or municipalities must use these guidelines:

- A. Municipalities are required to comply with [Minnesota Statutes § 471.345, Uniform Municipal Contracting Law](#).
- B. The Grantee and any subrecipients must comply with prevailing wage rules per [Minnesota Statutes §§ 177.41 through 177.50](#), as applicable.
- C. Municipalities and any subrecipients must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government: [Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement](#).
- D. The Grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.

### B. Nongovernmental entities

Grantees that are nongovernmental entities must use these guidelines:

- A. Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.
- B. Services and/or materials that are expected to cost between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.
- C. The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:
  - a. State Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List
  - b. Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business Program
  - c. Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: Central Certification Directory
- D. The grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts.
- E. The grantee must maintain support documentation of the purchasing or bidding process used to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single source bid, if applicable.
- F. Notwithstanding the above, the State may waive bidding process requirements when:
  - a. Vendors included in response to competitive grant request for proposal process were approved and incorporated as an approved work plan for the grant; or
  - b. It is determined there is only one reasonable and available source for such materials or services and that grantee has established a fair and reasonable price.
- G. The Grantee and any subrecipients must comply with prevailing wage rules per [Minnesota Statutes §§177.41](#) through [177.50](#), as applicable.

The grantee and any subrecipients must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government: Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement.

## Publicity

All projects funded must publicly credit PMFD Conservation Services Section and include that information on the grantee's website when practical.

## Grant Provisions

This grant program is authorized by [MINN. STAT. 17.134](#). This program exists to support healthy soil management practices in Minnesota. Funding for this RFP comes from three sources:

- \$639,000 from Minnesota's General Fund ([2025 Minn. Laws ch. 34, art. 1, §2\(b\)](#))
- \$1,750,000 from Minnesota's Clean Water Fund ([2025 Minn. Laws ch. 36, art. 2, §2\(3\)\(j\)](#))
- \$1,974,286 through the [Minnesota Climate Smart Food Systems \(CSFS\) Initiative](#).

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review at: [Office of Grants Management Policies, Statutes, and Forms/Forms and FAQs tab](#).

## 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 per [Minnesota Statutes § 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 Commissioner of Administration, the state granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate as established under [Minnesota Statutes § 16B.98 Subdivision 8](#). This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant contract 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](#)).

# Soil Health Financial Assistance Program Background and Goals

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The Soil Health Financial Assistance Program was established to advance soil health in Minnesota's agricultural industry ([MINN. STAT. 17.134](#)). The Soil Health Financial Assistance Program stands out among other financial assistance opportunities because it allows producers, groups of producers, and LGUs to be reimbursed for equipment purchases. The primary goal of the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program Grant is to encourage agricultural producers to implement soil health practices by offsetting the costs of obtaining the equipment necessary to successfully engage in these practices.



# Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score
<b>Proposed equipment addresses goals of the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program Grant</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant clearly articulates how the equipment they plan to buy will help start, improve, or expand soil health practices in Minnesota.</li> </ul>	Yes/No
<b>Grant request impacts a Highly Vulnerable Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA).</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant will use the equipment in a highly vulnerable <a href="#">DWSMA</a> and has provided verification by uploading FSA maps along with their application. (5 pts)</li> </ul>	5
<b>Diversity, equity, and inclusion</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant is a beginning farmer (farming 10 years or fewer) or for LGU, applicant prioritizes beginning farmers (10pts)</li> </ul>	10
<b>Applicant readiness, budget, economic outcomes</b> Applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Includes a budget that clearly details costs, including those not covered by the grant (5 pts)</li> <li>Clearly explains the importance of this grant to purchasing the equipment (5 pts)</li> </ul>	10
<b>Conservation Planning and Multiple Benefits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant's operation is actively certified through the <a href="#">Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program</a> (MAWQCP) OR for LGUS, organization is assisting producers with whole farm conservation planning through the MAWQCP (25 pts)</li> <li>Applicant's operation is assessed and working towards certification in the MAWQCP (20 pts)</li> </ul>	25
<b>Equipment is identified as having a high benefit to soil health.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The equipment being purchased will benefit soil health on the applicant's operation (15 pts)</li> <li>The equipment being purchased will allow the applicant to incorporate a new or expand an existing soil health practice on their operation (15 pts)</li> <li>Explanation of how equipment will be used relates to at least one of the five Principles of Soil Health: Keep the soil covered, minimize disturbance, keep living roots in the ground, diversify rotations, integrate livestock (15 pts)</li> </ul>	45
<b>Cost Efficiency Ratio</b>  <i>Up to 25 points are possible – grant request divided by the impacted acres. If a ratio falls on the threshold between two points, award the higher point value.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75:1 or greater (5 pts)</li> <li>25:1 – 75:1 (10 pts)</li> <li>10:1 – 25:1 (15 pts)</li> <li>5:1 – 10:1 (20 pts)</li> <li>5:1 or less (25 pts)</li> </ul>	25

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Score
Total	120

# Application Questions

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## Contact information

### Applicant information

- Applicant name
- Mailing address
- Mailing city
- State
- Zip code
- Applicant telephone
- Applicant email
- County

### Authorized representative

If awarded a grant, the person that will sign the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program Grant contract agreement for this organization. This is often yourself or other leadership in your operation/organization.

- Name
- Telephone
- Email

### Who should the grant agreement be issued to?

If awarded a grant, in what name should MDA draft your grant agreement contract? This could be the same as the authorized representative, or it could be your entity/business name. **Please note that the name on the grant contract must match the name under which you make your equipment purchases**, so please think ahead. For example, if you will purchase your equipment under the “Smith Farms LLC,” you should answer “Smith Farms LLC” for this question.

### Farm operation or LGU

What type of application are you submitting?

- Individual
- Group
- Local Government Unit (LGU)

Provide the address of the operation headquarters for each operation involved in the proposal.

- Name
- Address
- County

## Eligibility

Confirm that the following statements apply to your organization.

- Are you a current Minnesota resident or organization authorized to farm in Minnesota? (Yes/No) (NA for LGU)
- Are you the principal operator or do you have authority to apply on behalf of the organization? (Yes/No)  
Or for LGU: I warrant that I have the authority to apply to this grant opportunity on behalf of my organization, and no other application is being submitted from this organization. (Yes/No)
- Are you or your spouse employees of the state of Minnesota? (Yes/No) (NA for LGU)
- Are you an owner or lessee of farmland, and can you provide documentation to verify your status as an owner or lessee of farmland? *Awarded applicants will be asked to provide documentation of their ownership or lessee status at the time of award.* (Yes/No) (NA for LGU)
- Office of Grants Management (OGM) Policy 08-04: *Grant Contract Agreements and Grant Award Notifications* requires that agencies must not award a grant to a vendor or grantee that has been suspended or debarred from doing business with the State of Minnesota or with the federal government. By answering "yes," I warrant that my organization has not been suspended or debarred from doing business with the State of Minnesota or with the federal government. (Yes/No)
- **The MDA is unable to reimburse for equipment purchases from a family member, including siblings, parents, grandchildren, and spouses.** Family member is defined as found in Internal Revenue Code, Section 267(c)(4). (Yes/No) (NA for LGU)
- **The MDA is unable to reimburse for any work that is performed prior to the start date of the grant contract agreement.** Do you acknowledge this statement? (Yes/No)
- Describe your history of performing the work that will be funded by the grant or duties similar to those required.
- Have you been awarded a grant from the state of MN in the past 5 years? (Yes/No)
- If you answered yes to the previous question, please provide the details of the award amount, the duties, and the outcomes of your grant. If you answered no, please type "NA."
- I attest and understand that all information supplied in this application is true, correct, and reliable to the best of my knowledge. (Yes/No)
- I attest and understand that the submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the grant contract agreement award and may subject me and my organization to suspension or debarment proceedings, as well as other remedies available by law to the state. (Yes/No)
- I attest and understand that the supporting documentation for the claims and assertions made within this application is available to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for its review. (Yes/No)

## Project Summary

As you answer the following questions, please keep the Five Principles of Soil Health in mind:

- Keep the soil covered
- Minimize disturbance
- Keep living roots in the ground
- Diversify rotations
- Integrate livestock

Please briefly describe your farming operation. (200 characters, including spaces). (NA for LGUs).

What equipment do you plan to buy? Please review the eligible and ineligible equipment descriptions on pages 6-8 of the Request for Proposals to be sure the equipment you are applying for is not ineligible. *(500 characters, including spaces)*

What specific soil health practices will this new equipment allow you to implement? For example, seeding cover crops, no-till planting, low-disturbance manure application, etc. *(500 characters, including spaces)*

Please describe why this new equipment will improve soil health on your operation. OR for LGU, please describe why this new equipment will improve soil health in your area. *(1,500 characters, including spaces)*

Will this be different from your current management? If so, please explain what you will change, improve, or do differently compared to your current system. *(1,500 characters, including spaces)*

## Readiness, budget, and economic outcomes

### Grant request

- Total cost *(number only)*
- Total grant request (The grant reimburses for up to 50% of the first \$90,000.) Maximum award \$45,000, minimum award \$500 *(number only)*

### Budget

Create a budget using the example format below. Do not attach bid sheets or quotes from vendors in lieu of providing a budget in this format. You may also upload a budget as an Excel or Word file. See the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program RFP for examples of eligible and ineligible expenses.

#### Online Application Example:

Item, Quantity, Cost Per Unit, Total Estimate, Source of Estimate

No till planter – new, 1, \$73,000, \$73,000, ABC Implement Dealer

#### Excel or Word file Example:

Item	Quantity	Cost Per Unit	Total Estimate	Source of Estimate
<b><i>No till planter – new</i></b>	<b><i>1</i></b>	<b><i>\$73,000</i></b>	<b><i>\$73,000</i></b>	<b><i>ABC Implement Dealer</i></b>

### Budget narrative

*(1,000 characters, including spaces)*

#### Justify your budget and explain how you plan to pay for your equipment.

- Explain how you plan to pay for your project (financing, other grants, private investment, personal investment, or organization funds, etc.) and explain the importance of this grant to purchasing your equipment.

#### When do you expect to purchase your equipment? *(150 characters, including spaces)*

- Please note that these grants are for reimbursement only, and eligible purchases cannot be made until after a grant has been awarded and a grant contract agreement has been signed by the Commissioner's Office. We anticipate announcing awards by January 1. Once awards are announced, it can take up to two weeks for grant contract agreements to be fully signed.

## Impacted Acres

On how many acres annually will the equipment purchased or retrofitted with funds from this grant be used?  
(Number only)

## No equipment purchases before contract execution.

I understand that any equipment purchased prior to my contract execution date (after funding notifications are made) will be ineligible for reimbursement under the Soil Health Financial Assistance Program. (Yes)

## Beginning Farmer Status

### Beginning farmer status

Are you a beginning farmer (farming 10 years or fewer)? OR for LGUs, does your entity/organization/soil health initiative prioritize beginning farmers? (Yes/No)

If yes, please explain. (250 characters, including spaces)

## Conservation Plans & Multiple Benefits

### MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program Participation

Is your operation actively certified or assessed and working towards certification with the Minnesota Ag Water Quality Certification Program (MAWQCP)? OR for LGUs, will the equipment further whole farm conservation planning and implementation through MAWQCP? (Yes/No)

### MN Ag Water Quality Certification Program Status

If yes, please explain. Indicate your MAWQCP certification status (certified, applied and assessed, or applied and not assessed yet). If you are working towards MAWQCP certification but have not been certified yet, please provide the date you applied and the name of the certifier you are working with. If you are neither certified nor have applied for certification, type "NA." (500 characters, including spaces)

### Highly Vulnerable Drinking Water Supply Management Area

Will this equipment be used in a highly vulnerable Drinking Water Supply Management Area (DWSMA)? If you select "yes" you must upload proof below. Please provide FSA maps showing the parcels you farm that are located within a highly vulnerable DWSMA. You can locate highly vulnerable DWSMAs using the Minnesota Department of Health's online [Source Water Protection Web Map](#). (Yes/No)

### Proof for highly vulnerable DWSMA points

You **must** upload FSA maps or other proof that you farm parcels located in a highly vulnerable DWSMA to claim points if you answered "yes" above. File Size Limit: 4 MB

## **(Optional) Supporting Documentation**

You may attach up to three letters of support from someone other than yourself (e.g., Lender, Farm Business Management Instructor, Extension Educator, Consultant, Partners in a Soil Health initiative, Ag Retailer, etc.) Each letter can be no longer than two pages in length. Examples of supporting documentation may include:

- 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.
- Letters or documents from your agronomist or conservationist.