



Agricultural Research and Education Council (AFREC) Grant Round

Fiscal Year 2026 Request for Proposals (RFP)

Applications due by 11:59 p.m. Central Time (CT) on November 20, 2025

IMPORTANT DATES AND INFORMATION

- **Proposals Due: November 20, 2025**, by 11:59 p.m. CT in the MDA online application system
- Available AFREC Funding: Up to \$1,250,000.00
- AFREC Council reviews RFP applications: January 5, 2026

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.

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Grant Summary

Overview

The Minnesota Legislature established the Minnesota Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Program for identifying soil fertility priorities and providing funding for fertilizer research and outreach programs. Enabling legislation establishing the governing Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council (referred to as “AFREC” or “Council”) and associated program are in Minnesota Statutes 18C.70, 18C.71, and 18C.80. Additional information about AFREC, its membership, and funded projects is available at the following websites [Minnesota Department of Agriculture | AFREC](https://mda.state.mn.us/afrec) (mda.state.mn.us/afrec) and [AFREC Agricultural Fertilizer Research & Education Council](https://mnsoilfertility.com) (mnsoilfertility.com).

Funding availability

The Minnesota Legislature also established the funding mechanism for the AFREC program. This year, approximately \$1,250,000 will be available from fertilizer sales sold from July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2025. **Please note** that there are two separate RFPs described within this document. In the first RFP, there will be approximately \$1,220,000 available for research and/or education and outreach projects. In the second RFP, a maximum of \$30,000 has been set aside for the [Research and Outreach Coordinator](#) position for a one-year duration. Only one award will be made for the Research and Outreach Coordinator position. For those considering submitting a new project proposal, the project must be **highly specific** to the priorities provided under [Priorities for Research and Education/Outreach Grants](#). The vast majority of the available 2025-2026 funding will be used for "Continuations". Continuations are multi-year research projects that were funded for one year.

The Council will review, score, consider guidance regarding technical aspects of the proposed research design, then vote on funding allocation for each project. The Council’s goal is to have projects selected and grants executed prior to the 2026 cropping/planting season. Interested parties need to be aware of the timelines for the development of proposals, the review process, and the grant documentation process.

The AFREC Council expects to award \$1.250 million through the Agricultural Fertilizer Research & Education grant program. The maximum award is \$1.250 million. We expect to award between 0 and 30 grants projects, however, the total number of awards and the funding per award will be determined by the AFREC Council’s review process.

Applicants awarded a grant may be offered a contract to cover up to five years (e.g. five cropping seasons of research), although most grants will be for a shorter duration. If selected, a Grantee may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract is signed and executed by all parties. Grant contracts may be extended if approved by the AFREC Council.

A funding match is not required.

The AFREC Council consisting of 15 persons representing 11 MN commodity groups and four legislatively required specialists that have been nominated (or vetted) and appointed by the Commissioner of Agriculture will review and score proposals through a competitive review process. MDA anticipates it will notify applicants of their funding status in January 2026.

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 Grants Management \(OGM\) Policies, Statutes, and Forms website](#) provides [OGM Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#), which establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally show how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities or disparities.

This grant will prioritize research and education on agricultural fertility that is environmentally and economically sound.

This commitment is demonstrated through a criterion in the proposal evaluation process ([Selection Criteria and Weight](#)) and examples of previously awarded projects are available online at [AFREC Agricultural Fertilizer Research & Education Council](#) (mnsoilfertility.com).

Eligible project activities include research, education, and technology transfer related to the production and application of fertilizer, soil amendments, and other plant amendments, regenerative agriculture, and the protection of clean water. Chosen projects must contain a component of outreach that achieves a timely dissemination of findings and their applicability to the production agricultural community or metropolitan fertilizer users (MINN. STAT. § 18C.71).

Grant outcomes will include deliverables identified in the workplan of eligible projects. Some examples include:

- Develop fertilizer research and management recommendations for crops and cropping systems from across Minnesota including multiple geographic regions.
- Evaluate the effect of different management strategies including timing and placement of fertilizer and cover crops
- Better understand mechanisms of nutrient cycling and impacts on yield and loss
- Develop tools that aid in fertilizer management or application of recommendations
- Provide transferrable and beneficial outcomes for groups other than the grantee.

Priorities For Research and Education/Outreach Grants

Continuation studies (projects previously funded in prior grant cycles) **will have priority for 2025-2026 funding** for only the time/length and dollars stated in original RFP approved for funding. “Continuations” are defined in this RFP as projects that have been previously funded by AFREC for shorter durations than the length specified in the original proposal. Adjustments to the original budget due to inflation or other increased costs are acceptable and should be explained. If the current project has not completed goals, timetables and reporting, the project may not be considered for continuation status.

RFP priorities for new research and education grants in 2025-2026 include:

1. Soil health/soil productivity projects that concentrate on interactions of soil and crop nutrients, cover crops, environmental outcomes, and soil health measurements. Proposals should include their methods of measuring soil health.
2. Research to evaluate the impacts of Minnesota’s climate change on the nitrogen and carbon cycle, fertilizer recommendations, impacts on the range of EONR (Economic Optimum Nitrogen Rate) and subsequent losses to the environment.

3. Research to reevaluate/revise current fertilizer recommendations and technical guidance for Minnesota's secondary crops (defined as those with acreage of less than 2% of MN's cropland acres such as oats, winter barley, dryland edible beans, sunflowers, etc.) and newly developed crops through the Forever Green Initiative.
4. Research to update agronomic information for oat production including interactions between nitrogen rates, yield, protein and lodging. This may also include water quality assessments to evaluate nitrate-nitrogen losses at the edge-of-field or in-field locations.
5. Conduct a literature review on current fertilizer recommendations for sugarbeet production, then develop and implement an educational program/materials.
6. Compiling and mining data from previous plot and on-farm soil fertility and nutrient management research for developing A.I.-based (machine learning) nutrient management strategies and finding additional trends. The goal should be to broaden the scope of predictability with language models or A.I.
7. Develop a scoping document outlining the required research and data analysis needed to develop or update manure management or fertilizer best management practices (BMPs) specifically for areas where surface water or groundwater are vulnerable to nitrate-nitrogen losses. This may include the adjustment of BMPs based on vulnerability such as coarse textured soils, soils with shallow bedrock, and karst geology. The scoping document should include an overview of a workplan, timeline and budget, and outline future work that when completed would result in a set of nitrogen management recommendations specific to vulnerable areas. The scoping document may specify BMP region-specific work as needed.
8. Manure management project that updates the University of Minnesota guidance on availability of nitrogen by manure type and livestock species based on management. This may include research, data analysis, and/or development of educational materials and updated summaries of the best management practices (BMPs) to share with farmers.
9. Evaluation of nutrient sensing technology that can enhance the precision of land applied manure. This may include in-field evaluations and recommendations for appropriate use of the technology.
10. Continued AFREC Research Outreach Coordinator support to 1) develop and implement a work plan for the annual research RFP, 2) facilitate AFREC Council meetings and conference calls, 3) assist with technical aspects of the RFP and assemble a peer review committee, 4) coordinate various information outlets with AFREC, including with the legislature, 5) formal reporting between the Council and the MDA and updates to the annual report, 6) represent AFREC and the MDA at related soil fertility research meetings, and 7) coordinate and engage industry partners and others.

Components for Research and Outreach Coordinator (ROC)

The "Components" listed below are the fundamental elements that must be completed over the life of the project. All components listed below must be addressed in the proposal. Respondents are encouraged to consider additional components and/or propose additional tasks that are related and consistent with AFREC's mission.

Component 1-Develop and implement a work plan for the annual research Request for Proposals

Component 2-Facilitate AFREC Council meetings and conference calls

Component 3-Assist with technical aspects of the RFP and assemble a peer review committee

Component 4-Coordinate various information outlets with AFREC

Component 5-Formal reporting between the Council and the MDA

Component 6-Represent AFREC and the MDA at related soil fertility research meetings

Component 7-Coordinate partnerships

Component 8-Additional related tasks developed by the respondent

How to apply

- Applicants must meet the minimum requirements as outlined in this RFP to be considered for this grant opportunity
- **Grant applicants are required to submit proposals through our [online application system](https://grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=statemn)** (grantinterface.com/Home/Logon?urlkey=statemn). If you are unable to use the online application system, contact Margaret Wagner (margaret.wagner@state.mn.us) to request other arrangements.
- **All applications must be received online by 11:59 p.m. CT on November 20, 2025.**
 - MDA will not accept late applications.
 - Apply early so there is enough time to get help with the online application system if needed. It's best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance.
 - MDA is 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.
 - You will receive an automated confirmation email after submitting your application using on-line system. Contact: Margaret Wagner (margaret.wagner@state.mn.us) if you have issue or require other conformation.
- You must submit all sections of the application for it to be considered complete, including attachments.
 - MDA will reject incomplete applications, and they may not be evaluated.
 - Don't provide any materials the MDA hasn't asked for in this RFP – they will not be considered or evaluated.
 - If you can't use the online application system, contact us to request other arrangements. Margaret Wagner (margaret.wagner@state.mn.us)

The MDA reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet these requirements. All costs incurred in responding to this RFP will be borne by the applicant.

By applying, each applicant warrants that the information provided is true, correct, and reliable for purposes of evaluation for a potential grant award. Submitting 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 to the State, by law.

All "new" project proposals will be required to make a 5 minute on-line Teams or Zoom presentation (or in person: Farm Bureau office building 3080 Eagandale PL, Eagan, MN 55121) to the AFREC Council on December 1, 2025. Scheduling for this presentation will be determined after the closing of this AFREC RFP.

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.
- Although some questions are labeled as optional, we strongly recommend responding to those questions or uploading the appropriate documents.
- Ensure your application is your own and is unique to your proposed project.
- Make sure your budget is realistic and includes only eligible items. Write a detailed budget narrative that clearly explains how the money will be spent.
- Review the [Project Evaluation Profile](#) included in this RFP, as it is used to score and compare the grant applications.

Timeline and deadlines

September 29, 2025	RFP posted on the MDA web site
October 24, 2025	Technical questions due 4:30 pm Central Time
November 20, 2025	Applications due 4:30 pm Central Time
December 1, 2025	Reviewers begin evaluation and scoring of applications
January 2026	Applicants selected for funding notified in writing for capacity review
January 2026	Applicants notified of funding status

How to ask questions

For questions about the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **11:59 pm CT on October 24, 2025**.
- Email Margaret Wagner (margaret.wagner@state.mn.us) with AFREC RFP Question(s) in the subject line.

MDA will post all questions and responses to program questions on the Questions and Answers (Q&A) section of the MDA AFREC RFP webpage as we receive them.

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 using the online application system:

- Call Margaret Wagner (margaret.wagner@state.mn.us) 651-201-6488, or
- Email Margaret Wagner (margaret.wagner@state.mn.us) with AFREC on-line application question in the subject line.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants – Minimum requirements apply to both the Research and Education & the Research Outreach Coordinator Request for Proposals

Applicants must meet the following minimum requirements to be considered for this grant opportunity.

Applicants must:

- Be an organization, research entity, individual, business, or Tribal entity with agricultural research capabilities and authorized to do business in Minnesota.
- Propose a project with activities that include research, education, and technology transfer related to the production and application of fertilizer, soil amendments, and other plant amendments, regenerative agriculture, and the protection of clean water. Chosen projects must contain a component of outreach that achieves a timely dissemination of findings and their applicability to the production agricultural community or metropolitan fertilizer users.

Applicants must 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 MDA grants.
- Compliant with current state regulations.
- Be appropriately licensed and authorized to conduct business in Minnesota.
- Not debarred or suspended from doing business with the State of Minnesota or the federal government.
- No current principals have been conviction of felony financial crimes in the past 10 years. Principals include board members and staff who have access to grant funds.

Examples of eligible applicants include but are not limited to the following entities with the requisite research capabilities:

- Individuals
- Farmers/ farmer networks
- Researchers in private and public institutions of higher education
- Research institutions
- Agricultural cooperatives
- Agricultural businesses
- Nonprofit organizations
- Municipalities and Local units of government
- Tribal research institutions
- Tribal Sovereign Nations

Eligible projects

Funds awarded to Grantees will be used to further increase fertilizer (or soil amendments) research or education in Minnesota.

Projects must:

- Aim to further increase fertilizer (or soil amendments) research or education in Minnesota.
- Be conducted in the State of Minnesota or neighboring states or equivalent soil or cropping system.
- Not start and not incur expenses until the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties and has reached its start date listed in the grant contract agreement.
- Be completed in 5 years or less.
- Provide a complete application in response to this RFP.
- Propose activities that further increase fertilizer (or soil amendments) research or education in Minnesota and address [research priorities](#) listed earlier in this Request for Proposals.

Project examples include but are not limited to a project that:

- Develop fertilizer research and management recommendations for crops and cropping systems across Minnesota including multiple geographic regions. “Fertilizer” includes all types of nutrients including nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, sulfur, boron, calcium, and soil amendments, etc.
- Evaluate the effect of different agricultural cropping systems and management strategies including cover crops.
- Promote a better understanding of mechanisms of nutrient cycling and impacts on crop yield and nutrient loss.
- Develop tools to aid in fertilizer management or on farm adoption of recommendations.

Previously funded projects can be found on the [AFREC Agricultural Fertilizer Research & Education Council](#) website (mnsoilfertility.com).

If the MDA accepts your proposal, the MDA will reimburse eligible costs included in your project budget.

- You will have to submit documentation including invoices and proof of payment.
- Invoice and pay for all approved purchase within 30 calendar days from the end of the grant contract award.
- 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.

Collaboration

Eligible applicants may, but are not required, to collaborate with other research institutions, universities, individuals, small business, or nonprofit organizations. If eligible applicants are submitting a joint application with collaborators, they must provide a written description of the proposed collaboration and determine which business, or organization will have the grant contract agreement with the MDA and will work directly with the MDA to meet grant reporting requirements. Note that this entity will receive a 1099 from the State of Minnesota for income tax purposes.

Eligible project expenses

- Eligible expenses are costs that are directly related to the proposed project.
- Personnel costs including salaries,
- Fringe benefit expenses, including FICA/ Medicare, retirement, and health insurance,
- Professional and technical services specified in the approved work plan,
- Equipment, tools, materials, and supplies specific to the project and incoming freight charges for them.
- Publication costs and expenses related to printing. copying.

- In-state transportation and travel expenses such as lodging, meals, and mileage of personnel directly involved in the project in the same manner and in no greater amount than provided for in the current Commissioner's plan promulgated by the Commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget.

Please note funds are awarded on a reimbursement basis, unless otherwise authorized, and all eligible expenses will need to be documented.

Ineligible expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Expenditures incurred prior to the full execution of the grant contract agreement or its start date, or those incurred after the grant contract agreement expires. Any payments made by the Grantee before a grant contract agreement is signed by all parties and reached its start date are at the applicant's risk and not eligible for reimbursement.
- College tuition in credit and fees for undergraduate and graduate students.
- Publication costs for graduate student thesis.
- Expenditures incurred after the expiration of the grant contract agreement.
- Expenses paid for with cash.
- General operating costs or indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project)
- Donations and in-kind contributions, including property and services, made by the applicant (regardless of the recipient).
- Late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds.
- Advertising, public relations, entertainment, alcohol, and amusement costs.
- Fundraising.
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services and payroll taxes.
- Fines, penalties, and other settlement expenses resulting from failure of the applicant to follow federal, state, local, or Tribal nation laws and regulations.
- Lobbyists, political contributions.
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds.
- Parking violations and traffic violations.
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses. Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state.
- Entertainment and alcohol
- Expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any federal, state, or local government funding. Projects which have already received funding from another federal grant or subaward programs may not receive funding for the same activities and expenses

Matching funds

- Applicants do not have to provide matching funds.

Application Review Processes and Procedures

Review process

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process. MDA staff and external reviewers will evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria and weight provided in the Project Evaluation Profile. Only applications that are complete and received by the deadline will be reviewed.

Reviewers may recommend whole or partial funding of a project. The commissioner of agriculture receives the recommendations of the reviewers and makes the award decisions on behalf of the AFREC Council. Reviewers, staff, and the commissioner may consider the applicant's history as a state Grantee—including performance on previous grants, and applicant's capacity to perform the work related to the grant request.

The MDA will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing.

Grantee Capacity Review

The MDA is required to consider a grant applicant's past performance and financial and operational capacity before awarding grants ([Minnesota Statute §16B.981](#), [OGM Policy 08-02: Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#), and [OGM Policy 08-06: Preaward Risk Assessment of Potential Grantees \(PDF\)](#))).

All applicants will complete the capacity summary describing previous grants from the MDA and history of performing work related to the grant request as a part of their response to the Request for Proposals. Applicants being considered for an award of \$50,000 or greater will be required to submit additional financial and capacity documents including financial reports and a description of internal controls over business expenditures as part of their response to this Request for Proposals.

If the MDA determines that the applicant selected for funding 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.

Individuals must submit the following review components:

- A capacity performance summary which may include a description of the applicant's capacity to complete the proposed grant project including staffing, budgets and a description of internal controls over project expenditures. Applicants may be asked to describe experience performing similar work and list previous grants received from MDA over the last five years. Certification of no conviction of a felony financial crime the last 10 years.

Nongovernmental organizations must submit the following review components:

- A capacity performance summary
- Certifications of Good Standing with the Secretary of State
- Certification that the applicant is not suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government
- Certification that none of the current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.
- Conflict of Interest Disclosures
- Financial Documents

- **Nonprofit entities** selected for an award will provide:
 - Two most recent IRS Form(s) 990 or Form(s) 990-EZ and, if applicable,
 - The audited financial statement of the charitable organization which has received total revenue in excess of \$750,000 for the 12 months of operations covered by the statement ([MINN. STAT. § 309.53](#)).
 - If the nonprofit organization is not required to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ or has not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990, Form 990-EZ, or audit, the organization will be required to submit their board-reviewed financial statements, proof of tax-exempt status, and documentation of internal controls.
- **For-profit entities** selected for an award will provide:
 - Two most recent federal and state tax returns.
 - Two most recent financial statements including balance sheets, income statements, and statements of cashflows.
 - If the for-profit entity has not been in business long enough to have filed a tax return, it will be required to submit documentation of the entity's internal controls and their current financial statements.
 - A for-profit entity will also certify that the business is not under bankruptcy proceedings and will disclose any liens on assets.

Political subdivisions and municipalities must submit the following review components:

- A capacity performance summary
- Certification that none of the current board members, advisory board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

If the MDA determines that the applicant selected for funding 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.

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 [MINN. STAT. § 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 render impartial assistance or advice to the MDA due to competing duties or loyalties or
- a Grantees' 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 external party (such as a distributor or vendor) writing an application 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 applicant or Grantee 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.

Applicants should review the [conflicts of interest Statewide policy](#) at prior to applying. Grantees must agree to the State's rules on conflicts of interests as a part 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 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 may 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 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 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 proposal responses (except trade secret data as defined and classified in [§13.37](#)) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant, data will be considered public when all the grant contract agreements have been fully executed.
- All data created or maintained by the MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret data as defined and classified in [§13.37](#)) will 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 [Minnesota Statute § 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 ([Minnesota Statute 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 of Grant Recipients

Grant contract agreement

Each Grantee must formally enter into a grant contract agreement. 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 or the State's Authorized Project Manager** 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 and federal requirements including worker's compensation insurance, nondiscrimination, data privacy, budget compliance, and reporting.

Upon approval of an application, completion of the organizational capacity review and before beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving reimbursements, the applicant selected for a grant award 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 correct.
- Submit other required documentation and certifications within 30 of calendar days of award notification.
- Sign a grant contract agreement showing their intention to complete the proposed tasks within 30 calendar days of being sent to the Grantee. Failure to sign the contract within 30 calendar days may result in the award being rescinded.

Accountability and reporting

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to monitor progress on state grants by requiring Grantees to submit written progress reports at least annually until all grant funds have been expended and all of the terms in the Grant Contract Agreement have been met.

Grantees will be required to submit progress reports during the grant period, and a final report at the completion of the project. Both progress reports and invoices are due within 30 days after the end of each calendar quarter and must be received by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture before expenses can be reimbursed. The final report and final invoice for the project shall be due no later than 30 days after the expiration date of the grant contract agreement.

The MDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements throughout the grant. Grant payments will not be made on grants with past-due progress reports or if required documentation related to the invoice or financial

reconciliation is missing. 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.

Monitoring

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 approving final payment and annual monitoring visits for all Grantees receiving more than \$250,000. Other Grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation of at least one invoice on grants greater than \$25,000. 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.

Payments

Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the contract has been signed by all parties and the grant contract agreement has reached its effective (start) date, whichever is later. Applicants should anticipate that grant periods will not extend beyond five years from the effective (start) date of the grant contract agreement.

Grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis. All requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. The MDA shall review each request for reimbursement against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to date, and the latest grant progress report before approving payment.

Requests must include two types of proof for each expense: 1. proof of purchase (e.g., invoices, itemized receipts, payroll reports, etc.) and 2. proof of payment (e.g., cleared checks, credit card statements, bank statements, proof of payment of payroll etc.). Documentation must be included with the invoice at the time of submission for reimbursement. A financial reconciliation will be performed, and any additional requests must be submitted prior to the reimbursement.

Grant payments will not be made on grants with past due progress reports or if required documentation related to the invoice or financial reconciliation is missing.

The MDA retains the option to hold back the final 10% of each grant award until the final report has been approved by the MDA authorized representative or the MDA authorized project manager.

Grant payments may be used to fulfill federal and state tax liabilities or may be withheld until the Grantee has paid any tax liabilities ([Minnesota Statutes § 270C.65, Subd. 3](#)) and other applicable laws.

Authorized Representatives

Pursuant to [Minnesota Statutes §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. Grantees who are individuals and do not have a website are exempt from this requirement.

Contract and bidding requirements

All grantees must abide by the state's bidding requirements, based on their entity type.

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 and SAM.gov.
- 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. Any services and/or materials that are expected to cost \$100,000 or more must undergo a formal notice and bidding process.
- B. 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.
- C. 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.
- D. 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
- E. 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.
- F. 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.
- G. 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 reasonably able and available source for such materials or services and that Grantee has established a fair and reasonable price.
- H. The Grantee and any subrecipients must comply with prevailing wage rules per Minnesota

Statutes §§177.41 through 177.50, as applicable.

- I. 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.

Audits

Per Minnesota Statutes § 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 of Administration, the State granting agency, the State Auditor, the Attorney General, and the Legislative Auditor as appropriate. 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.

Publicity

All projects funded by the MDA must publicly credit the AFREC program funding in all public communications, presentations and printed materials and include that information on the Grantee's website. As stated under the Authorized Representatives section of this Request for Proposals, the project's Authorized Representative must also ensure the website of Grantees who are nongovernmental entities (e.g., organizations, businesses, and LLCs) include:

- The names and contact information for the Grantee's leadership, and
- The names and contact information for the employee or other person who directly manages and oversees the grant contract agreement on behalf of the.

Grant provisions

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. 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

The Grantee will comply with [Minnesota Statutes §201.162](#) by providing voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the Grantee.

Right of Cancellation

The State reserves the right to cancel this solicitation if it is considered to be in its best interest. The State reserves the right to negotiate modifications to the application or to reject any and all applications received as a result of this Request for Proposals. The State does not intend to award a grant contract agreement solely on the basis of any response made to this request or pay for information solicited or obtained. The State reserves the right to cancel this solicitation if it is considered to be in its best interest.

SELECTION CRITERIA AND WEIGHT

The AFREC review committee will be reviewing each response on a 100-point scale. This year \$1,250,000 is available for AFREC grant funding through this RFP.

A “Peer Review Team” will make technical recommendations to the AFREC council prior to completion of their initial scoring. AFREC reserves the right, based on the scores of the proposals, to create a short-listing of responders who have received the highest scores to make an oral presentation. The 100-point scale used to create the final evaluation recommendation is as follows: Table 1. Scoring Criteria for Rating Research Proposals, Table 2. Scoring Criteria for Rating Educational and Outreach Proposals, Table 3. Scoring Criteria for Rating Research and Outreach Coordinator.

Table 1. Scoring Criteria for Rating Research Proposals

Criteria for RESEARCH Projects Only	Points
Relation to Council priorities	20
Technical soundness and scientific merit	15
Capabilities of investigator and collaborators	10
Economic impact on expected return	10
Outreach component and networking abilities	15
Overall rating relative to other projects	10
Relevance and transferability to Minnesota agriculture	10
Presentation and responses	10
Total Points	100
Preference for Targeted Group businesses, Economically Disadvantaged businesses, or Veteran Owned businesses	Possible 6 bonus points
Total Possible Points	106

Table 2. Scoring Criteria for Rating Educational Proposals

Criteria for EDUCATION AND OUTREACH Projects Only	Points
Innovation and approach	15
Likelihood of influencing a behavioral change	20
Relevance and transferability to Minnesota agriculture	15
Audience consideration and size	10
Capabilities of proposer and collaborators	10
Integration into existing outreach networks	10
Overall rating relative to other projects	10
Presentation and responses	10
Total Points	100
Preference for Targeting businesses, Economically Disadvantaged business, or Veteran Owned businesses	Possible 6 bonus points
Total Possible Points	106

Table 3. Scoring Criteria for Research and Outreach Coordinator (ROC) Proposals

Criteria for RESEARCH AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR (ROC) Only	Points
Does this responder clearly understand the mission and nature of the Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council (AFREC)?	5
Does this responder have experience in facilitating discussion with a broad range of audiences to include geographic, cultural, language, cropping system, farming size/style and successfully extracting opinions and attitudes in a constructive and interactive fashion?	5
Does responder have a highly advanced understanding of the fertilizer industry, a network of state and national industry contacts, and an apparent high level of respect/trust?	5
Does responder have the ability to gather and synthesize a wide variety of opinions and visions into a structured set of recommendations?	5
Does responder have a highly advanced understanding of soil fertility research needs and technology advancements?	5
Does responder have a strong record of accomplishment in working cooperatively with land grant universities, private research firms, and other potential research partners?	5
Are the responses for Mandatory Components 1-5 reasonable, complete, and logical?	30
Are the responses to the Optional Components reasonable and do they add overall value to the program?	10
Project Cost	30
Total Points	100
Preference for Targeted Group business, Economically Disadvantaged business, or veteran owned businesses	Possible 6 bonus points
Total Possible Points	106

(c) 18C.71 required that “each project meeting the basic qualifications is subject to a “yes” or “no” vote by each Council member”. Projects chosen to receive funding must achieve an affirmative vote from at least eight of the 12 Council members or two-thirds of the voting members present.

Project Evaluation Profile

REVIEW PROCESS AND TIMELINE

The AFREC Council will review all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline. **The award decisions of the AFREC Council are final and not subject to appeal. This Request for Proposals (RFP) does not obligate the State to award a Grantee or complete the project.**

Table 5. Timetable for the Application Process

Order	Steps	Associated Date(s)
Step 1	RFP posted on the MDA website	September 29,2025
Step 2	Questions due no later than 11:59 p.m. Central Time deadline.	October 24, 2025
Step 3	Grant proposals submitted to the MDA no later than 11:59 p.m. Central Time deadline.	November 20, 2025
Step 4	MDA staff eliminates any “ineligible projects” using MN Statutes 18C.70 and 18C.71 as guidance and forwards all <i>eligible</i> projects to the Council.	November 20-26 2025
Step 5	Technical Review committee completes reviews of applications	November 20-26, 2025
Step 6	“New” projects make a 5 minute presentation to the Council on the merits of the project on December 1. Each Council member completes the reviews for all projects making the first cut and does the initial ranking for projects using a standardized method.	December 1- 31, 2025
Step 7	Council forwards initial rankings to the MDA. MDA staff combines the rankings from the entire Council.	December 31, 2025
Step 8	“New” projects make 10 minutes presentation (with questions) to the Council. The Council finalizes their individual and group rankings. Council deliberates and conducts official vote on each project. Council selects projects until the available funding spent.	January 5, 2026
Step 10	Successful proposers contacted. Successful responder should go to Table 6.	January 9, 2026

Table 6. Timetable for Successful Applicants

(Specific dates for Quarterly Progress Reports and Annual Reports will be included in the actual grant/work plan)

Order	Proposed Steps	Associated Date(s)
Step 1	The MDA assists successful applicants in the development of the work plan and budget needed for the grant.	January 12-23, 2026
Step 2	All proposal and budget adjustments finalized. Grant paperwork begins.	February 13, 2026
Step 3	Work plans, associated budgets, and grants finalized with the MDA.	March 2, 2026 or sooner
Step 4	Projects from successful grant applications begin	April 1, 2026 *or upon negotiated grant execution. (*project start dates are negotiable)
Step 5	Quarterly Progress Reports and Billings	July, Oct, Jan, and April during the life of the project
Step 6	Annual oral or written presentation to the Council	August or Early December
Step 7	Submission of annual written report	March 1st of each year or one month after negotiated end date of the grant agreement
Step 8	Final Report and budget report to MDA	Submission 30 days after the end of the grant period

Project Evaluation Profile

Application Questions

Contact information

Applicant information

- Legal name of business entity
- Assumed name(s), if any, of business entity
- Physical address of applicant
- Name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address of Project Manager or Principal Investigator for this proposed project
- Name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address of Project Financial contact

- Minnesota State House District (use the [District Finder](#) if you don't know your district. Use the project location.)

Authorized representative

- If awarded a grant, is the person authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the organization or institution the same as Project Manager listed above? (Yes or No)
 - If no, provide the following Authorized Representative information for signing any resulting grant contract agreement:
 - Name
 - Mailing address
 - Telephone
 - Email

Eligibility

- Confirm that the following statements apply to your business.
 - 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 suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government? If your project is recommended for phase two of the review process, you will need to sign a certification. (Yes or No)
- Is this business in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State? If your project is recommended for phase two of the review process, you will need to sign a certification. (Yes or No)
- Have any of your business' current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years? If your project is recommended for phase two of the review process, you will need to sign a certification. (Yes or No)
- Is this business owned or principally operated by a Minnesota Department of Agriculture employee or their spouse? These farms or 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)
- I attest that all information supplied in this application is true, correct, and reliable to the best of my knowledge. (Yes or 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 or 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 or No)

Previous MDA grants

- Has your business or organization or unit of local government received previous MDA grant? (Yes or No)
 - If yes, briefly describe your previous grant project(s), including date(s) and amount(s) awarded, and outcome of the grant.
- Have you previously submitted a grant proposal application to other programs for this specific project in the past (and were not awarded funding)? (Yes or No)
 - If yes, how many times and when did you previously apply?

Previous experience

- Do you have prior experience conducting activities related to this grant? (Yes or No)
 - If yes, briefly describe your prior experience with activities related to this grant and the specific activities you have proposed in the application.

Important

Redact all confidential information and trade secrets included in your application materials.