DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant 2026 Request for Proposals (RFP)

Applications due by 4 p.m. on December 17, 2025

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Grant Summary

Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration (SustAg) Grant. These grants fund research or demonstrations that explore sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable or resource efficient. The Minnesota Legislature created this program in 1988 to demonstrate and publicize the energy efficiency, environmental benefit, or profitability of sustainable agriculture techniques or systems from production through marketing.

Projects must take place on Minnesota farms and final reports are published by the MDA in the Greenbook so that others can learn from them. Projects must last at least two years but no more than three. In addition to Greenbook publications, grantees share outcomes with other producers at a field day or other type of outreach event during the last year of the project.

The program is authorized under Minn. Stat. 17.116 and funded through Laws of Minnesota, 2025, Regular Session, Chapter 34, Article 1, Section 2, Subdivision 3(e). All information about the program is available on the Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration (SustAg) Grant program webpage. Applications will be accepted until December 17, 2025, at 4 p.m. CT.

Funding availability

This year, we plan to award approximately $350,000 using a competitive review process. We expect to fund 8 to 15 grants, but the final number depends on the size of the awards. In this round of funding, applicants may only receive one SustAg grant.

You may request up to $50,000 for your project.

- The first $25,000 does **not** need to be matched.
- For requests between $25,000 and $50,000, you must supply a dollar-for-dollar match (cash and/or in-kind) on the amount above $25,000.
- We issue payments when you submit receipts or other documentation that corresponds to your project budget (up to four times per year).
- We withhold the final 10% of your award until you complete an outreach project and turn in your final report.

Projects will begin in spring of 2026 (after contracts are signed by all parties) and continue for two or three years depending on what is stated in the work plan. Progress reports must be submitted annually in January. A final report will be due in January of the last year of the grant, 2028 for two-year projects, and 2029 for three-year projects. Grant contracts will not be extended beyond three years.

If selected, a grantee may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract is signed by all parties, and the grant has reached its effective date.

Note: The AGRI SustAg Grant is a reimbursement grant. You must supply documentation showing payment for the full cost of the project to receive the entire awarded amount. Reimbursements may be requested up to four times per year.

Priorities

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making.

Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review (PDF) sets up the expectation that grant programs intentionally show how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities or disparities.

This grant program prioritizes projects led by a farmer or group of farmers. As indicated in the Project Evaluation Profile, priority points will be awarded to projects proposed by farmers.

This program aims to:

- Support farmers, organizations, and educational institutions in completing innovative on-farm research and demonstrations.
- Explore sustainable agriculture practices and systems that could make farming more profitable or resource efficient.
- Test and demonstrate on-farm practices that will benefit a broad range of farmers.

How to apply

Applications are due by **4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Wednesday, December 17, 2025**.

- Apply for the AGRI SustAg Grant using our online application system.
    - If you're a new user, you need to create an account first.
    - Once you're logged in, select "AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant."
- We will not accept late applications.
    - Submit early so that there is enough time to get help with the online application system. It's best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline.

We are not responsible for any technical or logistical problems that result in a late submission. It's your responsibility to ensure we receive your application 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 applying, 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.

Timeline and deadlines

December 10, 2025, 4 p.m. CT   Deadline to ask grant program questions.

December 17, 2025, 4 p.m. CT   Applications due.

Week of February 23, 2026   Applicants notified of award decisions.

April 2026   Anticipated project start date (after the grant contract is fully signed).

Questions

For questions on the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4 p.m. CT on December 10, 2025**.
- Email MDA.AGRIgrants@state.mn.us with "SustAg Grant" in the subject line.
- We will post responses to all program questions on the Questions and Answers section of the Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant website.

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 651-201-6500 or
- Email MDA.AGRIgrants@state.mn.us and include "SustAg Grant" in the subject line.

Grant Eligibility

We are looking for interesting ideas that have the potential to make farming more profitable, or resource efficient. Ideas do not have to be brand new but should be new to Minnesota or uncommon in the part of the state where they're being proposed. For inspiration, see previously funded projects summarized in the Greenbook.

Eligible projects

Projects must:

- Show the ability to:
    - Increase direct or indirect energy savings or production.
    - Have a positive effect or reduce harmful effects on the environment; and/or
    - Demonstrate increased profitability for the individual farm by reducing costs or improving marketing opportunities.
- Be conducted on a Minnesota farm or farms.
- Publicize and hold an outreach event in the form of a field day, event, or other resource in the final season or year of the project. Examples include but are not limited to field days, video diaries, how-to guides, blog posts, podcast interviews, presentations at ag-based conferences or meetings, etc.
- Not start until the grant contract is signed by all parties and has reached its start date.
- Be conducted over a minimum of two years but no more than three years. Grant contract agreements will not be extended beyond three years.

Project examples include but are not limited to:

- Increased environmental sustainability and improved soil health
- Conservation tillage and weed management
- Novel cover crops and crop rotations
- Nutrient and pesticide management, including runoff protection
- Farm-based energy efficiency or production such as wind, methane, or biomass
- Integrated pest management systems for insects, weeds, and diseases
- Seed breeding or conservation
- Livestock production systems or management strategies
- Developing or improving marketing opportunities, including season extension and post-harvest storage and handling
- Novel enterprise diversification, including organic production, using traditional and non-traditional crops and livestock
- Other creative ideas that address farm input reduction or management, conservation, energy, or profitability

See past projects for more examples.

Eligible applicants

Applicants must:

- Be a Minnesota farmer, individual at an educational institution, organization residing or located in the state for research or demonstration on farms in the state, Tribal sovereign nation, Tribal organization or educational institution, or local unit of government.
    - For this program, a farmer is someone who cultivates, operates, or manages a farm for profit, and who grows or raises at least $1,000 of agricultural products for sale annually.
    - Examples of eligible applicants include farms, agricultural cooperatives, educational institutions, nonprofits, Tribal governments, and local units of government (such as Soil and Water Conservation Districts).
- 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.
- Be compliant with current state regulations.
- Not be suspended or debarred from doing business with the State of Minnesota or the federal government.
- Have no conviction of felony financial crimes for the past ten years of principals (for nongovernment and local government applicants).

MDA employees, their spouses, and farms/businesses owned or principally operated by them are not eligible to apply for or receive grants from this program.

Collaboration

If you are a farmer or group of farmers:

- You must involve at least one **technical cooperator**.
    - The cooperator should have technical expertise that will strengthen the project, such as knowledge of soil science, biology, agronomy, horticulture, entomology, engineering, business and marketing, finance, data collection, statistics, etc.
    - Technical cooperators may be from University of Minnesota Extension, community colleges, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), or other similar organizations. Technical cooperators may also be private individuals or individuals from private companies who are knowledgeable in the subject matter.
    - Technical cooperators can help design the project, carry it out, and review and interpret the results. This person is expected to serve as an advisor, not someone you hire to do the project for you.
    - A technical cooperator cannot be a family member.
- Your application must include a **letter of commitment** from at least one technical cooperator.
    - In the letter, the technical cooperator must explain how they will contribute to the project. If the budget contains funds for the technical cooperator, the letter must include the hourly rate or fee schedule for the work they will do.

If you are not a farmer:

- You must have at least one **farmer cooperator**.
  - The farmer or farmers must be meaningfully involved in designing and carrying out the project.
  - The budget should include funds to compensate the farmer(s) for their time and expertise.
  - Farmers are expected to be involved in the project, not simply supply the land where the project can be conducted.
- Your application must include a **letter of commitment** from the farmer(s).
  - In the letter, the farmer cooperator must explain how they will be involved in the project.

Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Wages for **your time** spent on grant project activities (beyond normal farming operations). Include any fringe or rental rates and explain how you determined these rates for you or any staff/contractors.
- Consultant fees. Provide justification for the hourly rate.
  - Note: The consultant's hourly rate must be included in their letter of commitment.
- Costs to lease or use farm equipment needed for the project.
- Special-purpose equipment or other items necessary to achieve the objectives of the project. In general, this equipment may not exceed $1,500 per item. With the MDA's permission, you may be allowed to use grant funds towards more expensive special-purpose equipment and be reimbursed up to $1,500 of the total purchase price.
- Project-related services such as soil testing or other analyses.
- Project-related travel.
- Postage and printing related to the project.
- Outreach expenses (advertising, handouts, refreshments, etc.) for one outreach event in the final year.

See the 2026 SustAg Application Budget Spreadsheet template included in the application for a breakdown of eligible expense categories.

Ineligible expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Expenditures incurred before all parties sign the grant contract agreement or its start date, whichever occurs later, or those incurred after the contract agreement expires.
- The purchase of long-lasting, general-purpose equipment that is intended to be used beyond the life of the grant. Examples include tractors, motorized vehicles, buildings (including greenhouses and high tunnels), windmills or wind turbines, solar panels (except for those needed to power grant-specific equipment), fencing, gates, building construction, and computers.
  - The project may rent these items from your farm, or a different farm as needed to conduct the project. If standard rental rates for the item or service are not available, explain the rental rate in your budget summary. Standard rates for many services are available in the [2025 Iowa Custom Farm Rate Survey (PDF)](#).
- Livestock of any kind.
- Feed for livestock unless the feed is specifically relevant to your demonstration/experiment (e.g., a feeding trial).
- Project-specific equipment items that cost more than $1,500 each.
- Compensation for a grant writing consultant or grant manager.
- General operating costs and indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project).
- Business or organizational start-up costs (e.g., starting a farm) or expansion costs.
- Advertising (except for your outreach event), public relations, entertainment, and amusement costs.
- Fines, penalties, and other settlement expenses resulting from failure of the applicant to follow federal, state, local, or Tribal nation laws and regulations.
- 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 and payroll taxes.
- Lobbyists and political contributions.
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, legal costs, or contingency funds.
- Parking or traffic violations.
- Out-of-state transportation and travel expenses unless there's a specific need that cannot be met with in-state resources. In this case, contact MDA program staff for prior approval.

Matching funds

Projects receiving more than $25,000 in state funding require matching funds; otherwise, no match is required. Matching funds can be a cash-match, or you may use in-kind goods or services as a grant match. In-kind matching funds must be included in the budget as an estimated number of hours with the hourly rate for labor or use of equipment.

Sources of the cash match may include non-state funds (funds that were not obtained through the budgeting process of the Minnesota Legislature or granted by a state agency) in the form of cash, loans, other grants, or liquid capital assets dedicated to the project. If a proposed project has been submitted to or funded by a federal grant program, specify the grantor, the funding amount, and the purpose of that grant funding.

The value of the land used to conduct the grant project may also be used as an in-kind match. You must use average cropland rental rates or farmland rental rates from University of Minnesota Extension to calculate the value, if a rate is available. If land will be rented or leased to conduct this project (as a cost item in the budget), then the value of this land cannot also be claimed as in-kind match.

Example 1

The project's total cost is $25,000. The applicant may apply for up to $25,000 without providing a match.

Total project cost	Match requirements	Total grant award
$25,000	$0	$25,000

Example 2

The project's total cost is $45,000. The first $25,000 of expenses will be funded by the grant. The remaining $20,000 requires a one-to-one match, with the applicant contributing $10,000 and grant funding contributing $10,000. In total, the applicant would be eligible for $35,000 in grant funds from the state and would need to provide a match of $10,000.

Total project cost	Match requirement	Total grant award
First $25,000	$0	$25,000
Remaining $20,000	$10,000	$10,000
Total Cost: $45,000	$10,000	$35,000

Letters of commitment

Applicants for the SustAg Grant must obtain letters of commitment for the proposed project.

- Farmer applicants must include a letter of commitment from their technical cooperator(s).
- Non-farmer applicants must include a letter of commitment from the farmer(s) they work with.
- If you include a hired consultant as a budget item, their hourly rate must be included in the letter of commitment.

Letters of support can be typed on letterhead, hand-written, or sent by email to the applicant. Copies of the letters should be combined into one document and uploaded as a part of the application process.

Application Guidelines

- Use plain, easily understood language. Write for reviewers who have general knowledge of your farming practice but may not have a thorough or deep understanding of your organization or project.

- Clearly describe the importance or potential impact of your project. Your proposal should show that the findings are going to help other farmers besides you and should explain why the project is important for the agricultural community.

- Explain how your project will involve a new, different, or modified technique or approach that could benefit others.
    - Note: reviewers don't have to be convinced that your project will work, just that you are likely to discover something interesting or helpful along the way.

- Include just two or three clear objectives rather than trying to accomplish too much. Simple projects tend to work better than complex ones.

- Include a detailed budget that clearly explains how the money will be spent. More detail is better than less.

- Make sure your budget is realistic, includes only eligible items, and doesn't include excessive purchased services or consultant costs (more than 50% of the total cost).

- Make sure you have technical or farmer cooperators and that they are the right cooperators for your project.

- Describe your plan to share information and lessons learned with the agricultural community. Provide details about your field day or outreach event.

- Use simple data collection or other evaluation techniques to measure progress toward meeting your objectives.

- Review the Project Evaluation Profile included in this document. It is used to score and rank the grant applications.

Application Review Policies and Processes

Review process

During the first phase of the review process, A review committee composed of soil scientists, agronomists, post-secondary educators, agricultural marketing specialists, sustainable and organic farmers, MDA staff, or other agricultural experts evaluates all eligible applications based on the criteria in the Project Evaluation Profile in this document. Reviewers can recommend whole or partial funding of a project. The commissioner of agriculture considers the committee's recommendations and decides which proposals to fund. Both the review committee and 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.

Grants of $50,000 will go through a second phase of review. During the second phase of the review process, applicants that made it past the first phase will be contacted by MDA staff to submit additional documentation required for the Organizational Capacity Review.

The MDA will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing during the second phase. Applicants may request a summary of reviewer comments.

Conflicts of interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers (MINN. STAT.16B.98 and Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making, 2022 (PDF)).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

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

An example of a conflict of interest would be a vendor writing an application (beyond providing budget details, bids, or quotes) for an organization 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.

Applicants should review the conflicts of interest State-wide policy prior to applying. Grantees must agree to the State's rules on conflicts of interests as a part the grant contract agreement.

Organizational Capacity Review (only for grants of $50,000)

In accordance with MINN. STAT. 16B.981, Office of Grants Management (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), it is required to consider a grant applicant's past performance and financial and operational capacity before awarding grants of $50,000 or more. Upon request, applicants need to submit the following documents within 30 days:

Individuals

- Certification that they have not been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.
- Certification that they have not been suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government.
- A performance capacity summary which may include a description of your capacity to complete the project; staffing; budget; and previous experience performing similar work. You will also need to name as a part of this description a list of the previous grants you have received from MDA over the last five years.

For-profit businesses

- A copy of the business' two most recent federal and state tax returns. If the business has not been in business long enough to have a tax return, then they must submit current financial statements and documentation of internal controls.
- Current financial statements for the two most recent years including a balance sheet, income statement, and statement of cashflows.
- Confirmation that the business entity is not under bankruptcy proceedings or have any liens on assets.
- Certification that the business is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Certification that none of the business' current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.
- Certification that the entity is not suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government.
- A performance capacity summary which may include a description of your organization's capacity to complete the project; staffing; budget; and previous experience performing similar work. You will also need to name as a part of this description a list of the previous grants you have received from MDA over the last five years.

Nonprofit organizations

- A copy of the non-profit's two most recent Internal Revenue Service Forms Form 990 or 990-EZ. If the non-profit has not been in existence long enough or is not required to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ, then they must submit the following information:
  - Proof of its tax-exempt status
  - Board-reviewed financial statements for the two most recent business years, or for new organizations, actual financial statements for the periods that are available and pro forma financial projections for at least a two-year period.
  - Documentation of its internal controls
  - The two most recent certified financial audits if required to complete one under MINN.STAT. 309.53, Subd. 3.

- Certification that it is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Certification that none of its current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years.
- Certification that the organization is not suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government.
- A performance capacity summary which may include a description of your organization's capacity to complete the project; staffing; budget; and previous experience performing similar work. You will also need to name as a part of this description a list of the previous grants you have received from MDA over the last five years.

Political subdivisions

- Certification that none of its current public officials, board members, or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last ten years.
- Certification that the entity is not suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government.
- A performance capacity summary which may include a description of your capacity to complete the project; staffing; budget; and previous experience performing similar work. You will also need to name as a part of this description a list of the previous grants you have received from MDA over the last five years.

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.

In addition, applicants who are recommended for funding must also complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, or confirm that the information in SWIFT is still correct.

Privacy notice and data classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant under this program. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete this application without any legal consequence. However, only completed applications will be considered for a grant; incomplete applications will not be considered.

Data provided in this application is initially classified by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act as private or nonpublic, although some or all 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 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 proposal responses (except trade secret data as defined and classified in MINN. STAT. 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 MINN. STAT. 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 (MINN. STAT. 13.37, Subd. 1(b)). In order for an applicant to assert trade secret protection for data submitted as part of this application: the applicant must: 1) clearly identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that the applicant believes to be trade secret information; 2) describe what efforts the applicant takes to maintain the secrecy of the data; and 3) adequately explain how the data derive(s) independent economic value from not being generally known to, and not readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons. Merely asserting trade secret protection does not, in and of itself, classify the data in question as not public; determining what data meet the definition of trade secret information is ultimately the legal responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data identified as trade secret information by an applicant will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, the data in question will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

All persons, businesses, and individuals applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must comply with applicable laws. Under the law titled Right of Setoff (MINN STAT 270C.65, Subd. 3), a grantee consents to disclosure of its social security number, federal employer tax identification number, and/or Minnesota tax identification number, already provided to the State, to federal and state tax agencies, and to state personnel involved in the payment of state obligations. These identification numbers may be used in the enforcement of federal and state tax laws which could result in action requiring a grantee to file state tax returns and pay delinquent state tax liabilities, if any.

Requirements for Grant Recipients

Grant award agreement

Upon approval of an application, and submission of required certification and other documents, the applicant must sign a grant contract agreement showing their intention to complete the proposed tasks. This agreement must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee. Failure to sign the contract within 30 calendar days may result in the award being rescinded.

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.

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

Accountability and reporting

Annual progress reports must be submitted each fall through 2029, or until all grant funds have been expended and all the terms in the grant agreement have been met, whichever is first. 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 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 and the grant contract agreement has reached its effective (start) date, whichever is later. Applicants should anticipate that grant periods will not extend beyond three years from the effective 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 will 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: 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 [MDA Reimbursement Guide (PDF)](#). The MDA will generally not reimburse expenses paid for in cash. Please contact the MDA for exceptions.

Grantees may submit reimbursement requests on a timeline that makes the most sense for their organization throughout the grant performance period. Grant payments will not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

The MDA will hold back the final 10% of each grant award until your outreach project is completed and you turn in your final report.

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 more than $25,000 before a final payment is approved 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.

Bidding requirements

All funded applicants must abide by the state's bidding requirements. See a list of the state's [bidding requirements](#) for details. We anticipate that most grantees will need to follow the non-governmental/nonprofit organization tab. The grantee and any subrecipients must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government.

Project audits

Per [MINN. STAT. 16B.98 Subd. 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 to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

Publicity

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

Affirmative action and non-discrimination policy

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

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

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

Voter registration requirement

The grantee will provide voter registration services for its employees (MINN. STAT. 201.162).

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.

AGRI Background and Program Goals

The Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program (AGRI) was established to advance Minnesota's agricultural and renewable energy industries (MINN. STAT. 41A.12). AGRI has made significant economic impacts by increasing productivity, improving efficiency, and assisting the development of agricultural products. The goal of the AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant is to demonstrate and publicize the energy efficiency, environmental benefit, or profitability of sustainable agriculture techniques or systems from production through marketing.

Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation criteria	Maximum score
The project is led by a farmer or group of farmers.	5
Technical or farmer cooperator(s) • Technical cooperators provide the expertise this project needs. • Farmer cooperators are meaningfully involved. • Commitment letter(s) describe the cooperator's expertise, role in project, and hourly rate charged (if any). • The technical and farmer cooperators have the necessary qualifications to do this project.	15
Project rationale • The project will show positive effects on the environment, farm profitability, energy savings, or production. • There is a compelling reason to do this project. • The project informs or demonstrates best management practices. • The demonstrated technologies and techniques can be adopted and used by other farmers.	20
Project design and methods • The design and methods follow from the rationale and objectives in the application. • Objectives of the project are measurable and clearly stated. • The work plan details the design of the project and how it will accomplish the proposed objectives.	15
Evaluation • The project includes a plan for measuring and evaluating outcomes for each objective. • The project includes a basis of comparison (for example, a control plot or treatment).	15
Outreach plan • The plan to share information about the project with farmers and the broader agricultural community is well thought out.	15
Budget details • The budget clearly details all project costs. • Itemized costs are realistic. • Estimates are clearly based on vendor quotes and market research. • The budget clearly explains source and amount of applicant's funds (cash match). • The budget is cost-effective, and planned purchases are backed by quotes or other sources. • Charges for consulting and purchased services are less than 50% of the total cost.	15
Are commitment letter(s) from farmer(s) or technical cooperator(s) included?	Yes/No
Is an outreach event planned for the final year?	Yes/No
Total	**100**

Application Questions

This section previews questions asked in the [online application system](#).

Contact information

Applicant information

- Contact person's name
- Organization or business name (if applicable)
- Contact person's mailing address
- Contact person's telephone
- Contact person's email
- Minnesota State House District(s) where your project is located (find this information at [Who Represents Me?](#))

Authorized representative

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

Eligibility

- Confirm that the following statements apply to you or your organization. For this application, the grant recipient (organization, business, or individual) is the applicant.
  - My organization is in good standing with the Minnesota Secretary of State. (True)
  - I attest that I have the authority to apply on behalf of the organization and no other application is being submitted from this organization. (True)
  - The applicant or organizations leadership have not been convicted of a financial crime such as theft, embezzlement, or forgery in the last 10 years. Principals include public officials, board members, and staff with the authority to access funds provided by the MDA or determine how those funds are used. (True)
  - Is the applicant 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)
  - The applicant 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)
  - I attest that all information supplied in this application is true, correct and reliable to the best of my knowledge. (Yes or No)

- o 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)
  - o 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)
- Is the applicant an MDA employee, spouse of an employee, or a business owned or principally operated by one of them? (Yes or No)
- The MDA is unable to reimburse for any work that is performed prior to the start date of the contract. Has work started on your proposed project or will work start before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties? (Yes or No)

Previous AGRI SustAg Grants

- Have you received a previous AGRI SustAg Grant? (Yes or No)
  - o If yes, briefly describe your previous grant project(s), including date(s) and amount(s) awarded. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

Project summary

Grant request

- Project name
- County or counties where project will take place
- Grant funds requested (equal to the total project cost minus the required match; cannot exceed $50,000). Grantees awarded $50,000 will be required to comply with the Organizational Capacity Review described in the request for proposals (RFP).
- Applicant's matching funds if total project cost is over $25,000
  - o Source of matching funds (cash, land, in-kind, or combination)
- Total project cost (grant funds plus matching funds, if applicable; cannot exceed $75,000)
- Project duration (may not start until after the grant agreement contract is signed and must last between two and three years)
  - o Expected project start and end dates and total project duration:
    - ▪ Contracts must last between two and three years from start date; expect contracts to be signed in March 2026.
    - ▪ Projects may not start, and funds may not be spent before the grant contract is signed by both the grantee and the State.
    - ▪ Upon completion of your final outreach event, the remaining 10% of your award, based on actual eligible expenses incurred, will be paid. You will have up to two months after your contract end date to submit for a reimbursement.
    - ▪ All items and services must be paid for by the end date of the contract.

Project summary

- Describe your project and the question or problem you plan to address. If relevant, list your hypothesis statement. The summary of this proposed project must be suitable for dissemination to the public. (1,200 characters, including spaces)
- Choose the topic that best describes this project:
    - Soil fertility
    - Livestock
    - Fruits and vegetables
    - Energy
    - Cropping systems
    - Alternative markets and specialty crops

Project objectives

- List two to three primary objectives you plan to accomplish with your project. Objectives must be suitable for dissemination to the public. (1,200 characters, including spaces)

Farmer applicants

- Do you meet the definition of a farmer as defined in the RFP? (A farmer is someone who cultivates, operates, or manages a farm for profit, and who grows or raises at least $1,000 of agricultural products for sale annually.) (Yes or No)
- If yes:
    - Briefly describe your background as a farmer and business goals. How many years have you been farming? What percent of labor do you contribute to your farm? How do you market your farm products? Do you belong to any farm or agricultural organizations? If so, which ones? (2,500 characters, including spaces)
    - List the technical cooperator(s) involved in your project (include name(s), type of expertise, and how each cooperator will be involved in the project). (2,500 characters including spaces)
    - Note: You must include a cooperator commitment letter from each technical cooperator with your application. This letter should describe the cooperator's expertise and their role in the project. If the cooperator will be paid, the letter must include their hourly rate of pay for the type of work.
- If no:
    - You do not qualify to apply as a farmer for this program. You need to apply as a non-farmer applicant.

Non-farmer applicants

- What category of non-farmer applicant best describes you?
    - Minnesota nonprofit organization
    - Minnesota educational institution
    - Individual at a Minnesota educational institution
    - Tribal government entity
    - Other government entity
    - Other non-government entity

- List the farmer cooperator(s) involved in your project (include name(s), type of expertise, and how each cooperator will be involved in the project). (2,500 characters, including spaces)
- Note: You must include a cooperator commitment letter from each farmer cooperator with your application. This letter should describe the cooperator's expertise and their role in the project. If the cooperator will be paid, the letter must include their hourly rate of pay for the type of work.

Project details

Description of the farming operation(s) involved

- Tell us about the farming operation(s) involved. (1,500 characters, including spaces)
    - Describe the type of farm; general location; what has been and is grown, raised, or produced by the operation; and who the agricultural products are sold to.
    - Describe your background experiences that will enable you to conduct this project, such as when the applicant or cooperating farmer started farming, relevant education and coursework, etc.

Project rationale

- Explain the rationale for your project. (3,500 characters, including spaces)
    - What is the purpose of this project?
    - Why is it important?
    - How will this project help other farm businesses?
    - How does this project show positive effects on the environment, farm profitability, or energy savings or production?

Project design and methods

- What are you going to do? Describe in detail how you will do your project from beginning to end. Be as specific as you can. Use a timeline and drawings or diagrams (for example: field map, crop rotation plan, building or paddock design, layout of test or demonstration plots, etc.) (5,000 characters, including spaces)
    - Supply the name(s) and occupation(s) of the person(s) responsible for carrying out and reporting on this project.
    - Name who is going to do each step of the project. List each participant's role in the design, implementation, analysis of the results, and outreach steps.
    - Note: Additional documents can be uploaded. Clearly label and identify each additional document.

Evaluation

- How will you document what happens throughout your project? For each of the objectives you listed in the project summary, what information will you collect to determine whether your grant project worked and if you'd recommend it to other farmers? Be specific. (3,000 characters, including spaces)
    - Note: Projects don't have to work out the way you think or want them to turn out. Often, it's equally important to know what doesn't work or what not to do. Don't be afraid to try something others might consider risky.

Outreach plan

- All projects must have an outreach event in the project's final year. How will you share what you learn with Minnesota farmers, and the broader agricultural community? We encourage you to hold a field day, either in-person or virtually. In your budget, you can request funds for outreach events. (2,500 characters, including spaces)
  - Examples of outreach events may include — but are not limited to — in-person or virtual field days, video diaries, how-to guides, blog posts, podcast interviews, presentations at ag-based conferences or meetings, etc.

Budget details

Budget table

- Complete your budget using the 2026 SustAg Application Budget Spreadsheet. Download the file as an Excel spreadsheet, save it to your computer, add your budget information, and upload the completed document to your online application. Use realistic costs and justify each expenditure, including the purpose and the quantity. The budget table must include the total project cost and matching funds. Budget categories include:
  - Consultants and other purchased services (contractors, paid consultants, technical assistance, analysis, etc.) A letter of cooperation that includes rates charged must be included for all contracted labor or service.
  - Personnel (labor – family or hired). Only include labor directly related to grant activities over and above time spent on normal farm operations.
  - Supplies and equipment (e.g., seed, fuel, purchased inputs, plot markers, office supplies, project specific equipment purchased or rented)
  - Travel (based on 0.70 cents per mile, although this may change depending on IRS mileage rates)

Budget narrative

- Justify each cost in your budget table. Include as much detail as possible to help reviewers understand why the cost is necessary. (2,500 characters, including spaces)

Matching funds

- If you are applying for more than $25,000 in grant award funds, list the source and amount of each type of match: in-kind land use or services provided by the grantee, or cash in the form of purchased goods or services. These should also be listed in your budget table. Provide any additional information about each match item listed in the budget table.
  - Use the 2025 Iowa Custom Farm Rate Survey (PDF) as a guideline for deciding the value of in-kind services. If your rates are different, justify.
  - For land rent counting toward your match, you must use average cropland rental rates or farmland rental rates from University of Minnesota Extension to calculate the value, if available. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

Other sources of funding

- Have you received or applied for, or do you plan to apply for, other sources of funding to support this project? If yes, explain. (500 characters, including spaces)

Additional documents (optional)

- If applicable, attach documents that give a visual representation of your proposed project. Examples include maps, charts, graphs, photos, etc. Clearly label and identify each additional document. You can use any common file format (i.e., JPG, PNG, and PDF). Please avoid Apple-specific file types such as Numbers since our reviewers may have trouble opening them.