



Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Fiscal Year 2026 and 2027 Request for Proposal (RFP)

Applications due by 4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Thursday, March 26, 2026

02/06/2026

Minnesota Department of Agriculture
625 Robert Street N
St. Paul, MN 55155
mda.state.mn.us

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.

Table of Contents

Grant Summary.....	3
Overview.....	3
Funding availability.....	3
Match requirement	3
Timeline and deadlines.....	4
Priorities	4
How to apply.....	5
How to submit questions.....	6
Application guidelines	6
Eligibility	7
Eligible applicants	7
Eligible projects	8
Eligible expenses.....	8
Ineligible expenses	8
Application Review Process.....	10
Review process	10
Pre-award risk assessment.....	10
Award notice	10
Conflicts of interest	11
Privacy notice and data classification.....	11
Requirements for Grant Recipients.....	13
Grant contract agreement.....	13
Accountability and reporting.....	13
Monitoring.....	14
Grantee evaluation.....	14
Payments	14
Contract and bidding requirements	15
Grantee website and publicity	16
Audits and record retention	16
Affirmative action and non-discrimination	16
Voter registration requirement.....	16
Right of Cancellation	17
Program Background.....	17
Definitions	18
Application Scoring Sheet.....	19
Application Questions	20
Contact information	20
Eligibility	20
Budget	24

Grant Summary

Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 and 2027 Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grant. Applications will be accepted until 4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Thursday, March 26, 2026. Information about the program is available on the [Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grant](#) webpage.

The Minnesota Legislature established this program to support new farmers’ ability to access equipment and develop infrastructure that will be crucial to the future of their farm businesses.

The program is authorized under MINN. STAT. 17.055. Funding for this year’s program is available through Laws of Minnesota, 2025, Chapter 34, Article 1, Section 2, Subd. 4(f).

Funding availability

We expect to award approximately \$700,000 through a competitive review process. The maximum award is \$10,000 and the minimum award is \$1,000.

We expect to award between 70 and 95 grants; however, the final number depends on the size of the awards and will be determined through the proposal review process.

We will accept only one application per individual and per farm.

Match requirement

The Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grant is a reimbursement grant. You must supply documentation showing payment for the full cost of the project to receive the awarded reimbursement amount.

A match is your contribution to the project that will not be reimbursed.

For proposals up to \$2,000, no match is required, 100% of the costs can be reimbursed.

For proposals requesting more than \$2,000, grantees may be reimbursed up to 75% of their costs up to \$10,000.

For example:

Equipment or infrastructure cost:	Reimbursement %	Amount you may request from the grant program:	Amount you are responsible to pay:
\$1,500	100%	\$1,500	\$0
\$2,000	100%	\$2,000	\$0
\$5,000	75%	\$3,750	\$1,250
\$10,000	75%	\$7,500	\$2,500
\$13,333	75%	\$10,000	\$3,333

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

In the budget section of your application, you must identify the source of the match as a contribution from the applicant. The match cannot be committed to any other grant and must be an eligible and approved project expense during the project period. Ineligible expenses listed in this RFP cannot be applied as matching contribution. Proof of the match will be required with each reimbursement request.

Timeline and deadlines

- February 6, 2026** RFP released.
- March 19, 2026 at 4 p.m. CT** Deadline to ask grant program questions.
- March 26, 2026 at 4 p.m. CT** Applications due.
- April 2026** Phase one of the review process.
- May 2026** Phase two of the review process (pre-award risk assessments).
- May-June 2026** Applicants notified of award decisions. Grant contracting begins with selected applicants.
- June-July 2026** Expected project start date.

We anticipate grant contract agreements to start in May 2026 at the earliest and last for at least one year. We do not anticipate being able to extend any grant contract agreements.

If selected, grantees may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed (signed by all parties), the grant agreement has reached its effective date, and the grantee has been notified that they may begin work.

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 grantmaking.

The Department of Administration Office of Grants Management [OGM] [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. Applicants from Native American Tribal communities are encouraged to apply.

This grant program will specifically prioritize:

- Beginning farmers,
- Farmers with limited land access, and
- Farmers with limited market access.

A beginning farmer is defined as someone who:

- Entered into farming within the last 10 years, AND
- Is a principal operator on a farm (see [Definitions](#)), AND
- Has some farming experience and knowledge.

A farmer is considered to have “limited access to markets”, if they sold less than \$100,000 of their farm products in the 2024 tax year. For applicants not yet farming in 2024, farm product sales from 2025 will be used.

A farmer is considered to have limited access to land for their farm business, when they:

- Do not own farmland, AND
- Lease or rent land, EITHER:
 - With a three-year or shorter term agreement from a person who is not related to the individual or the individual's spouse by blood or marriage, OR
 - From an incubator farm (see [Definitions](#)).

Read the full [Application Scoring Sheet](#) for the scoring criteria and weight that will be used by reviewers to evaluate your application.

How to apply

Applications must be received no later than **4 p.m. CT on Thursday, March 26, 2026**. Late applications will not be accepted.

- Apply using our [online application system](#).
 - If you're a new user, you need to create an account first. Use this [how-to guide \(PDF\)](#) to help set up your account.
 - Once logged in, select “Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grant FY26.”
 - After you have submitted your application, you will receive a confirmation email. Contact beginning.farmer.grant.mda@state.mn.us if you do not receive this email.
- 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.

For help using the online application system:

- Call 651-201-6500, or
- Email beginning.farmer.grant.mda@state.mn.us with “Beginning Farmer Grant Online Application Help” in the subject line. We encourage reaching out for help early as we may not be able to assist with last-minute requests.

We are not responsible for any technical or logistical problems that result in a late submission. It is your responsibility as the applicant to ensure we receive your application before the deadline.

Incomplete applications will be rejected and not evaluated. Do not provide any materials that are not requested in this RFP; these materials will not be considered nor evaluated. The MDA reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet the requirements of this RFP.

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 or preparing the application are the responsibility of the applicant.

How to submit questions

For questions about the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4 p.m. CT on Thursday, March 19, 2026.**
- Email beginning.farmer.grant.mda@state.mn.us with “Beginning Farmer Grant Question” in the subject line.

The MDA will post responses to program questions on the Questions and Answers (Q&A) section of the [Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grant](#) webpage as we receive them. You can also read answers to past questions.

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.

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 project, production practices, or farm.
- 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, a unique proposal designed to respond to the RFP.
- Make your budget realistic, include only eligible items, and clearly explain how the money will be spent.
- Answer all questions completely within the character limits specified in the grant application.
- Review the [Application Scoring Sheet](#) included in this RFP, as it is used to score and compare grant applications.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants

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

Applicants must:

- Be farming within the borders of Minnesota or be a business entity authorized to farm in Minnesota.
- Be a beginning farmer, defined as a person who:
 - Entered into farming within the last 10 years, and
 - Is a principal operator on a farm (see [Definitions](#)), and
 - Has some farming experience and knowledge.
- Have sold between \$1,000-\$500,000 of farm products in the 2024 tax year. For individuals not yet farming in 2024, use 2025 farm product sales.
- Have filed a Schedule F or other tax documents to report farm-related income in 2024, unless they began farming in 2025.
- Meet the requirements of the [Pre-award Risk Assessment](#).
- Be in good standing with the State of Minnesota:
 - No back taxes owed.
 - No defaults on Minnesota state-backed financing for the last seven years.
 - Acceptable performance on past grants from the MDA or other state agencies.
 - Appropriately licensed and compliant with current state regulations or this project will support the business in becoming compliant.
 - Not debarred or suspended from doing business with the State of Minnesota or the federal government.
 - Registered with the Secretary of State and the Corporate Farm Law program, if accepting the award as a business entity.
 - No conviction of felony financial crimes of its principals for the past 10 years.

If offered an award, applicants are required to submit their 2024 farm-related tax return, such as their Schedule F, in order to verify their farm product revenue. For farms established in 2025, an alternate financial statement template will be available.

Applicants must apply as individuals.

MDA employees and their spouses, farms, or businesses principally owned or operated by them are not eligible applicants and are not eligible to receive funds from this grant program.

Individuals who previously received the Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grant may not apply.

Eligible projects

Eligible projects will:

- Aim to significantly strengthen a beginning farmer's business, resulting in a long-term impact for the business.
- Be conducted in Minnesota.
- Be completed before June 30, 2027.
- Not start until the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties and has reached its start date. No purchasing or contracting of goods and services may occur prior to the full execution of the grant contract agreement or the effective date, whichever is later.

Eligible projects include:

- **Agriculture-specific equipment** needed to grow crops, raise livestock, or store related farm products. "Agriculture-specific" refers to equipment that is designed specifically for farm activities. This is different than general purpose equipment. This includes a large variety of items – if you want to check the eligibility of a specific type of equipment, contact the grant administrator. Also, see [Ineligible Expenses](#).
- **Farm infrastructure investments** related to water access; irrigation; fencing; electricity; walk-in coolers; livestock handling; grain storage; production-related structures such as barns, livestock buildings, and greenhouses; and other farm infrastructure.

Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses are costs directly related to the agriculture equipment purchase or farm infrastructure project. Examples of eligible expenses for this grant program include but are not limited to:

- Equipment, new or used
- Supplies and materials
- Professional and technical services

If the MDA accepts your proposal, the MDA will reimburse eligible costs included in the MDA-approved project budget. You must be invoiced and pay for all project materials and services between the contract start and end date listed in your grant contract agreement. All requests for reimbursement must be documented and submitted to the MDA no later than 30 calendar days after the grant end date.

Ineligible expenses

Recipients may not make purchases from vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government: [Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement](#).

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- General equipment and vehicles that are not specific to agricultural use such as:
 - Mowers
 - Skid steers
 - Semi-trucks
 - Flatbed trailers
 - Trucks, vans, or cars
- General purpose office supplies and equipment such as a computer, tablet or smart phone purchase.
- Improvements to residential infrastructure located on a farm.
- Processing and packaging equipment or infrastructure.
- Equipment or services purchased from a direct family member, as defined by the Internal Revenue Code, Section 267(c)(4), including siblings, parents, grandparents, and spouses.
- Any equipment or services purchased from an entity where you or your spouse own an interest, or an entity of which you are an employee.
- Expenditures incurred before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties and has reached its effective (start) date, whichever occurs later; and expenditures incurred after the grant contract agreement expires.
- General operating costs or indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project).
- Expenses paid for with cash.
- Farmer, owner, staff wages.
- Donations and in-kind contributions, including property and services, made by the applicant (regardless of the recipient).
- Advertising, public relations, entertainment, alcohol, and amusement costs.
- 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, including parking and traffic violations.
- Fundraising.
- Payments to lobbyists and political contributions incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions regardless of purpose for which funds will be used.
- Late payment fees, finance charges, legal costs, bad debts, or contingency funds.
- Fees for legal services and compensation for accountants, consultants, and grant writers.
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses. Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state.
- Expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any federal, state, or local government funding or other grants.
- Projects that have received funding or are receiving funding from another federal grant, subgrant, grant, appropriation, or other contribution, may not receive funding for the same activities and expenses.

You must be invoiced for and receive all project materials and services between the effective start date and end date listed on your grant contract agreement. Any expenses incurred outside of this timeframe are not eligible for reimbursement.

Application Review Process

Review process

Funding will be awarded through a competitive process. During the first phase of the review process, MDA staff and external reviewers from relevant sectors will evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria and weight in the [Application Scoring Sheet](#).

Reviewers and staff will meet and discuss the proposals and then recommend projects for whole or partial funding to the commissioner of agriculture, who reviews the recommendations and makes the award decisions. Reviewers, staff, and the commissioner may consider geographic distribution, services to prioritized populations, and other information when evaluating applications. The MDA reserves the right to offer partial awards based on an assessment of the proposal, the pool of applicants, funding availability, or overall objectives of the grant program.

The timeline for the review process is listed in the [Timeline and Deadlines](#) section.

Pre-award risk assessment

During the second phase of the review process, applicants that have been advanced from the first phase of review will be contacted by MDA staff to submit any additional documentation required for the pre-award risk assessment, including:

- A copy of the individual's or farm entity's 2024 Schedule F. If you did not begin farming until 2025, an alternative form will be made available.
- Certification that you or your farm entity have not been suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or with the federal government.
- If you receive the grant as a business entity, documentation that the entity is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State and the Corporate Farm Law program.

The MDA is required to consider a grant applicant's past performance and financial and operational capacity before awarding grants, in accordance with [MINN. STAT. 16B.981, Subd.2-5](#), [OGM Policy 08-02: Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#), and [OGM Policy 08-06: Pre-award Risk Assessment of Potential Grantees \(PDF\)](#).

If the MDA determines that the applicant 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.

Award notice

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

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: Grants Conflict of Interest \(PDF\)](#).

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.

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicant or grantee will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to, revising the grant work plan, amending the grantee duties in the grant contract agreement to mitigate the conflict of interest, requesting the grant applicant to submit a conflict of interest mitigation plan, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, or termination of the grant contract agreement.

Privacy notice and data classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant under 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 Data Practices Act](#) as private or nonpublic, although some or all of the data will generally become public at various points of the application process unless the data are otherwise classified by state or federal law. Access to private or nonpublic data is limited to those authorized by law, including but not necessarily limited to MDA staff and contractors with a valid work assignment to access the data, parties authorized by the applicant, parties identified in a valid court order or federal subpoena, Minnesota Management and Budget, Minnesota Department of Administration, the state auditor, and the legislative auditor. If necessary, the MDA may also share the data with law enforcement or the office of the attorney general.

Per Minnesota's statute on grants ([MINN. STAT. 13.599](#)):

- Names and addresses of grant applicants, and the grant amount requested, will be public data once application responses are opened.
- All remaining data in proposal responses (except for data otherwise classified by law, including trade secret information as described below) becomes public data after the evaluation process is completed.
- All data created or maintained by the MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret information) will generally be public data after the evaluation process is completed.

Procedure for claiming protection of trade secrets:

- Trade secret information is classified as not public data. In order to qualify as trade secret information, the data in question must be provided to the MDA by the affected person (i.e. the data must be about the applicant) and otherwise meet the legal definition found in statute ([MINN. STAT. 13.37, subd. 1\(b\)](#)). In order for an applicant to assert trade secret protection for data submitted as part of this application: the applicant must: 1) clearly identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that the applicant believes to be trade secret information; 2) describe what efforts the applicant takes to maintain the secrecy of the data; and 3) adequately explain how the data derive(s) independent economic value from not being generally known to, and not readily ascertainable by proper means by, other persons. Merely asserting trade secret protection does not, in and of itself, classify the data in question as not public; determining what data meet the definition of trade secret information is ultimately the legal responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data identified as trade secret information by an applicant will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, the data in question will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

All persons, businesses, and individuals applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must comply with applicable laws. Under the law titled Right of Setoff ([MINN STAT 270C.65, subd. 3](#)), a grantee consents to disclosure of its social security number, federal employer tax identification number, and/or Minnesota tax identification number, already provided to the State of Minnesota, 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 contract agreement

Each grantee must formally enter into a grant contract agreement with the MDA. The grant contract agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation for the project. Grant contract agreement templates are available for review on the [OGM Forms and FAQs webpage](#). The MDA reserves the right to adjust these templates.

Upon approval of an application and before beginning work on the grant project and incurring any grant expenses, the applicant selected for a grant award must:

- Register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, or confirm that the information in SWIFT is correct.
- If required, submit other documentation and certifications within 15 calendar days of award notification.
- Read and sign a grant contract agreement 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.

You cannot begin work on grant activities or incur any grant expenses until a fully executed grant contract agreement is in place and you have been notified by the State's Authorized Representative that work may start. A fully executed grant contract agreement is one that has been signed by all parties and reached its start date, whichever is later. You must comply with the conditions and of the grant contract agreement, and you will be legally responsible for assuring implementation of the grantee duties and compliance with all applicable state requirements including worker's compensation insurance, nondiscrimination, data privacy, budget compliance, and reporting.

Grantees must agree in their contract agreement not to sell the equipment and infrastructure purchased with Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grant Program funds for a period of three years after the date of reimbursement. This will be monitored via an annual online survey and a potential monitoring visit to a grantee.

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 the terms in the grant contract agreement have been met. A final report may also be required at the completion of the project.

Information about the long-term impact of this grant program will be collected via an online survey for up to three years after the grant period. Grantees are required to fill out this survey.

The MDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements throughout the grant.

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 or other state agencies.

Information submitted in any report or survey will be classified as public data. If the grantee considers any information in the report to be trade secret, the grantee may request that the trade secret information be kept confidential and must specifically label that information. The MDA will notify the grantee if a public records request is made for the information claimed as protected by the grantee.

Monitoring

The MDA monitors grantees to ensure that work is progressing within the required time frame, to collect data on outcomes, determine if financial procedures are followed accurately and appropriately, and/or verify purchases made with grant funds. Grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

Monitoring visits are typically done in-person at the project site, but may also be done via phone or video conferencing and may include review and discussion of financial and program information (sometimes called “desk audits”).

The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation of at least one payment request. Financial reconciliation may be performed on additional payment requests at the discretion of the MDA. For this purpose, the grantee must provide cost documentation showing proof of purchase and payment, such as invoices, expense receipts, cleared checks, bank or credit card statements, and any other supporting documents requested by the MDA.

Grantee evaluation

Prior to the closeout of the grant, the MDA will evaluate the performance of all grantees. The evaluation will include the purpose of the grant; the amount provided to the grantee; information about the grantee's timeliness, quality, and overall performance in meeting the terms and objectives of the grant; if the grant was terminated; and any concerns with the grantee's use of State funds. Evaluations are considered public data ([MINN. STAT. 13.599](#)).

Payments

Grant funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis. Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the grant contract agreement has been signed by all parties and it has reached its start date, whichever is later.

All requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget and be tied to documented progress on the approved project. 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.

Typically, reimbursement requests will need to include two types of proof for each expense: proof of purchase (e.g., invoices, itemized receipts) and proof of payment (e.g., cleared checks, bank and credit card statements, etc.). Ineligible items and their cost must be clearly delineated in the proof of purchase. The MDA will review the submitted documents, and any additional documentation requested by the grant administrator must be submitted by the grantee before the MDA provides the reimbursement.

Details regarding documentation needed for reimbursement can be found in the Beginning Farm Equipment and Infrastructure Grant program's Reimbursement Guide, available on the program webpage.

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, unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

Reimbursement requests may be submitted throughout the grant contract period, with no more than three requests from a grantee for the life of their grant. All requests for reimbursement must be submitted to the MDA no later than 30 calendar days after the grant end date.

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).

Contract and bidding requirements

All grantees must follow the State's bidding requirements for nongovernmental entities (including businesses, nonprofits, and individuals) when buying supplies or services based on their entity type and the size of the purchase.

- Any services and/or materials that are expected to cost \$100,000 or more must use a formal notice and bidding process.
- 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 verbal quotes or bids or be awarded to a targeted vendor.
- 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 verbal quotes or bids or be awarded to a targeted vendor.
- The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to ensure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:
 - [Office of State Procurement – Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged, and Veteran-Owned Vendor List](#)
 - [Metropolitan Council Underutilized Business \(MCUB\) Program Directory](#)
 - [Central Certification \(CERT\) Directory](#)
- The grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing their actions and the actions of its employees if applicable for the selection, award, and administration of contracts.
- 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.
- The MDA may waive bidding process requirements when:
 - Vendors included in the response to a competitive grant request for proposal process were approved and incorporated as an approved work plan for the grant; or
 - It is determined there is only one reasonably able and available source for such materials or services and that the grantee has established a fair and reasonable price.
- The grantee and any subrecipients/subcontractors must comply with prevailing wage rules, as applicable ([MINN. STAT. 177.41](#) through [MINN. STAT. 177.50](#)).
- The grantee and any subrecipients/subcontractors must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government. See [Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement](#) and [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](#).

Grantee website and publicity

All grant projects must publicly credit the MDA funding in all public communications, presentations, and printed materials and include that information on the grantee's website. Additionally, grantees with a website must clearly post on their website the names and contact information for the grantee's leadership and the employee(s) or other person(s) who directly manages and oversees the grant contract agreement on behalf of the grantee (the authorized representative) ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 5 \(d\)](#)).

Audits and record retention

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 MDA, the state auditor, the attorney general, and the legislative auditor, as appropriate ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 8](#)). This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

Grantees are responsible for the retention of documents and records relevant to their grants. Grantees should maintain a project file containing copies of all invoices, receipts, proofs of payment, reimbursement requests, important correspondence with the MDA, progress reports, and any other documents associated with the project. Upon request by the State, the grantee shall produce a legible copy of the records saved in their project file.

Affirmative action and non-discrimination

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, 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 and for the public served by the grantee ([MINN. STAT. 201.162](#)).

Right of Cancellation

This RFP does not obligate the MDA to award any grant(s). The State reserves the right to cancel this RFP if it is considered to be in the best interest of the program, agency, or the State of Minnesota. The State reserves the right to negotiate modifications to the application or to reject any and all applications received as a result of this RFP. 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.

Program Background

The Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grant was established to advance Minnesota's agriculture economy by supporting new farmers to start and sustain their businesses. This program was first offered in fiscal year 2025 when 97 grantees received support through the program. Read more about the first round of the program in the MDA's [June 2025 news release](#).

Definitions

Beginning farmer

A **beginning farmer** is a person who:

- Entered into farming within the last 10 years, and
- Is a principal operator on a farm, and
- Has some farming experience and knowledge.

Incubator farm

An **incubator farm** refers to a farm where:

- Individuals are given temporary, exclusive, and affordable access to small parcels of land, infrastructure, and often training, for the purpose of honing skills and launching a farm business; AND
- A majority of the individuals farming the small parcels of land grow industrial hemp, cannabis, or one or more of the following specialty crops as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture for purposes of the specialty crop block grant program: fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, medicinal plants, culinary herbs and spices, horticulture crops, floriculture crops, and nursery crops.

Limited access to land

Limited access to land is a designation given to a farmer who:

- Does not own farmland, AND
- Leases or rents land, EITHER:
 - With a three-year-or-shorter term agreement from a person who is not related to the individual or the individual's spouse by blood or marriage, OR
 - From an incubator farm.

Limited access to markets

Limited access to markets is a designation given to a farmer who sold less than \$100,000 of their farm products in the 2024 tax year. For applicants not yet farming in 2024, farm product sales from 2025 will be used.

Principal operator

A **principal operator** is the person primarily responsible for the day-to-day operation of the farm, limited liability corporation (LLC), or other nongovernmental organization. The principal operator could be an owner, hired manager, cash tenant, share tenant, or partner.

Application Scoring Sheet

Evaluation criteria	Maximum score
<p>Required criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant is a beginning farmer; see definition in Eligible applicants. • Applicant’s farm is located in Minnesota. • Applicant sold at least \$1,000 — and no more than \$500,000 — of farm products in 2024, or 2025 if they did not begin farming until 2025. • Applicant’s request is for agriculture-specific equipment or farm infrastructure development. • Applicant did not receive a Beginning Farmer Equipment and Infrastructure Grant in FY 2025. 	Yes/No
<p>Beginning Farmer equipment and/or infrastructure development goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant’s proposed equipment purchase(s) or infrastructure development is clearly explained. (15 points) • The proposed purchases align with the farm’s overall business development. (10 points) 	25
<p>Impact on farm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested use for the funds will significantly develop the farm business, providing a transformative impact. (10 points) • The equipment or infrastructure investment will have a sustained impact on the farm business with long-term benefits. (10 points) • Applicant gives specific and compelling explanation of the investment’s impact on their farm, such as estimated revenue improvement, estimated labor reduction, or other type of measurable change for their farm. (5 points) • The grant funds are important for the completion of the project. (5 points) 	30
<p>Budget and budget narrative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes a detailed budget and all costs are clearly explained. (10 points) • Budget shows evidence of being based on quotes or other cited costs. (10 points) • All expenses align with agriculture-specific equipment and/or farm infrastructure development. (5 points) 	25
<p>Priority areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant demonstrates limited market access; see definition in Priorities. (10 points) • Applicant demonstrates limited land access; see definition in Priorities. (10 points) 	20
Total	100

Application Questions

Contact information

- Applicant first name
- Applicant last name
- Farm street address, including city and state
- Minnesota county where farm is located
- Applicant mailing address, including city and state (if different than farm address)
- Applicant telephone
- Applicant email
- Website (if you have one)
- Minnesota State House District (use the [District Finder](#) if you don't know your district)
- Feedlot registration number (if applicable)

Eligibility

Note: Applicant must be a beginning farmer, defined as a person who entered into farming within the last 10 years, is a principal operator on a farm, and has some farming experience and knowledge.

Confirm that the following statements apply to you and your business/organization.

- I started farming within the last 10 years. (Yes)
 - Select year when you first sold more than \$1,000 of farm products.
- I am a principal operator on a farm. (Yes)
 - A principal operator is the person primarily responsible for the day-to-day operation of the farm, LLC, or other nongovernmental organization. The principal operator could be an owner, hired manager, cash tenant, share tenant, or partner.
- I have some farming experience and knowledge. (Yes)
- The proposed work serves a farm located in the state of Minnesota, including Tribal lands. (Yes)
- My farm business sold at least \$1,000 of farm products in the 2024 tax year (if you didn't start farming until 2025, refer to your 2025 farm product sales).
- My farm business sold no more than \$500,000 of farm products in the 2024 tax year (if you didn't start farming until 2025, refer to your 2025 farm product sales).
- I/We do not owe the State of Minnesota any back taxes and have not defaulted on any State of Minnesota-backed financing in the last seven years. (True)
- My farm business is compliant with current state regulations. (True)
- I attest that no other application is being submitted from this farm. (Yes)
- I attest that none of the farm's staff with authority to access grant funds (including the farmer) have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years. (Yes)
- I understand that if my application is successful, the MDA cannot reimburse for any expenses incurred or work performed prior to the start date of the contract (expected to be May 2026). (Yes)
- I am not an employee of the MDA or part of an MDA employee's family or household. (Yes)

Authorized representative

- If awarded a grant, would you accept the grant as an individual or farm entity?
 - Individual
 - Farm entity
- If choosing farm entity for an award contract, are you authorized to sign the contract agreement for your farm entity? (Yes/No)
 - If no, share the full name, telephone and email for the authorized representative.

Prior grants

- Do you have any pending or awarded grant(s) from any source for a similar purpose? (Yes/No)
 - If yes, briefly describe any pending or awarded grant applications for this purpose including funding source, grant purpose, date, and amount awarded (where applicable).
- Have you or your farm previously received any grants from the MDA? (Yes/No)
 - If yes, list your previous awards including grant program name, award amount, and date.

Farm information

- Farm name (if applicable)
- Farm's organization structure (select one):
 - Sole proprietorship or individual
 - Partnership
 - Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)
 - Limited Liability Corporation (LLC)
 - Corporation (incorporated)
 - Estate
 - Trust
 - Non-profit
 - Other
- Describe your farm. (1,000-character limit)
- Briefly explain your farming experience and knowledge. (400-character limit)
- What crops do you grow or intend to grow?
 - Barley
 - Beans, edible
 - Cannabis
 - Corn, field corn
 - Corn, sweet corn
 - Hay
 - Hemp, industrial
 - Herbs and spices
 - Flowers
 - Fruit
 - Medicinal plants
 - Nursery crops

- Oats
- Soybeans
- Sugar beets
- Sunflower
- Tree nuts
- Wheat
- Vegetables
- Other (please list):
- Not growing crops
- What livestock do you raise or intend to raise?
 - Beef cattle/calves
 - Bees
 - Bison
 - Dairy cattle/calves
 - Goats
 - Hogs
 - Horses
 - Poultry
 - Sheep
 - Other (please list):
 - Not raising livestock
- What plants or animals do you forage or wild harvest for the purpose of selling?
 - Berries
 - Cattail
 - Fiddleheads
 - Fish
 - Hazelnuts
 - Leeks
 - Maple syrup
 - Medicinal plants
 - Milkweed pods
 - Mushrooms
 - Nuts
 - Spruce tips
 - Wild rice
 - Other (please list):
 - None
- Where do you sell your farm products? (400-character limit)

Farm equipment and infrastructure development need

- Briefly explain the equipment or infrastructure purchase you want to make with this grant and what need this meets for your farm. (1,000-character limit)
- Explain how this purchase builds on your past efforts to grow and develop your farm. (1,000-character limit)

Impact on farm

- Explain how these funds can provide a **transformative impact** for the future of your farm business. Transformative means that it would make a significant impact for your overall farm business. (1,000-character limit)
- Explain why this investment would result in a **sustained impact** for your farm business, meaning that it would have a long-term impact for years to come. (800-character limit)
- Give one or more **measurable impacts** this equipment or infrastructure investment will make for your farm. Examples of measurable impacts include estimated revenue improvement, estimated labor reduction, or other type of quantified change. This is important for reviewers to know because it helps them compare the size of impact between different applications. (500-character limit)
- Describe the necessity for grant funding to complete this project. Where applicable, note what other funds and resources besides this grant will be used. (500-character limit)

Priority audience

Regarding the land you use to farm:

- Do you own any of the land where you farm? Yes/No
- Do you lease any of the land where you farm? Yes/No
 - If you lease land to farm, is your rental agreement a term of **three years or less** and from a person who you or your spouse are not related to by blood or marriage? Yes/No
- Do you farm at an incubator farm? Yes/No
- Is there any other information you would like to share or clarify regarding your access to farmland? (400-character limit)

If you were already farming in 2024, fill out section A. Or, if you did not sell farm products until 2025, fill out section B.

Section A.

- In 2024, what were your total sales from farm products, in dollars?
 - Use your farm business tax filing for 2024 to complete this question. If using your farm's 2024 Schedule F tax form, calculate your total farm product sales by adding Line 1c to Line 2. If you did not sell farm products in 2024, write \$0.
 - (Number only)
 - Which tax document will you provide to verify your 2024 farm product sales if offered a grant award?
 - Schedule F
 - Other business tax filing
 - I was not in business in 2024

Section B.

- If you began selling farm products for the first time in 2025, what were your total sales from farm products, in dollars?
 - (Number only)

Budget

- Total project cost.
 - (Number only)
- Grant funds requested. (Minimum \$1,000, maximum of \$10,000)
 - (Number only)
- Expected start date for using these funds. (No earlier than May 2026)
- Complete a budget table detailing all expenses that will be paid for by the grant funds. The budget table should reflect the total grant funds requested. (15 rows available in budget table)

Item	Quantity	Rate	Total amount	Source of estimate
Example: Water line installation	1	\$1,671	\$1,671	Smith's Septic and Excavating Company quote
Example: Irrigation hoses, ¾" x 100'	3	\$155	\$465	Farm Supply Co. website
--	-	\$	\$	--
--	-	\$	\$	--

- Optional – budget upload. If your budget exceeds 15 items and cannot fit into the table, upload full budget as a separate file. Budget uploaded should maintain the information requested in the table.

Budget narrative

- Justify your budget by explaining: (1,200-character limit)
 - How you came to the cost estimates included in your budget, and
 - How each expense listed in the budget table aligns with your proposed equipment purchase or infrastructure project.
- Upload one or more files supporting your budget, such as a service quote or equipment listing.
- If you are requesting more than \$2,000, you will be reimbursed up to 75% of the project budget up to a maximum of \$10,000 reimbursement. Tell us how you will cover the remaining cost of the project not reimbursed by this grant.