



Utility Infrastructure Study Grant Request for Proposal (RFP) Fiscal Year 2026

Applications due by 4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Thursday, April 30, 2026

March 31, 2026

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Grant Summary

Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the [Utility Infrastructure Study Grant](https://mda.state.mn.us/utility-infrastructure-study-grant.com) (mda.state.mn.us/utility-infrastructure-study-grant.com) for improved safety of underground utilities. Applications will be accepted until 4 p.m. CT on Thursday, April 30, 2026.

The legislature has directed the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to conduct a study that examines market and workforce factors that may contribute to incorrect marking for the installation of underground utility infrastructure, particularly in areas where ground disturbing activities cross or are located within ten feet of existing utilities.

The study will investigate the causes of errors and inaccuracies in marking the locations of underground utilities before ground disturbing activities are conducted. These inaccuracies can lead to safety hazards and damage to critical infrastructure.

The program was established by Minnesota Legislature to establish an impartial assessment of market and workforce factors contributing to inaccurate utility-locating marks to Minnesota decision-makers. Once these factors are identified, the study will offer recommendations for legislators, regulators, and utilities that utilize location services. This assessment should be informed by industry data, stakeholder interviews, and best practices and include recommendations to the legislature and be submitted to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees and divisions with jurisdiction over agriculture policy and finance by June 1, 2027.

The program is authorized under Minn. Stat. 17.1017 and funded through Laws of Minnesota, 2025, Regular Session, Chapter 34, Article 1, Section 2, Subdivision 4(k).

Funding availability

We expect to award one grant for up to \$50,000 through a competitive review process. We anticipate the grant contract agreement to start in May or June 2026 and end in June 2027 and will not be extended.

Deliverables

The grant will be awarded to an applicant demonstrating capacity to achieve the deliverables outlined below.

Grant deliverables will include preliminary research, stakeholder interviews, surveys, and comprehensive analysis and recommendations for the State Legislature. A final draft report will be due to the Commissioner of Agriculture by May 1, 2027, and final report prepared for submission to the Minnesota State Legislature by June 1, 2027.

Scope of the project: Conduct a study that delivers to Minnesota decision-makers an impartial assessment of the market and workforce factors that lead to incorrect utility-locating marks for the installation of underground telecommunications infrastructure that is informed by industry data, stakeholder interviews, and a survey of best practices from Minnesota and other jurisdictions. Once such factors have been identified, the study will provide a set of recommendations for legislators, regulators, and utilities that employ location services.

The study will be comprised of:

- Preliminary research including industry and workforce data to establish baseline indicators and inform stakeholder interests.
- High-level analysis of the operations and performance of utility location services – including a comprehensive review of publicly available incident data, utility filings, and industry standards and industry literature focusing on location errors.
- Surveys and structured interviews to collect insights from a diverse group of stakeholders.

The final report is accountable to providing outcomes to the following questions:

- What are the primary challenges faced overall by utility locate services in Minnesota?
- What are the challenges and limitations faced by the utility locate workforce?
- What are the challenges and limitations faced by utility companies? Are adequate accountability mechanisms and enforcement measures in place to identify and rectify inadequate, unsafe, or unlawful locate practices that lead to locate errors?
- What commonalities are observed in instances of inadequate, unsafe, or unlawful locate practices which result in incorrect markings (location/region, type of operator, type of project, type of locator)?
- What are the standards or best practices for locate meetings and how do they impact locate errors? What communication improvement opportunities are possible between utility operators, locators, and excavators that can be universally applied and operational across all platforms?
- What data-specific findings describe the difference between a) single locator contractors handling multiple utilities versus b) contractors handling single utilities?
- How can technology be responsibly used to improve the accuracy and efficiency of utility locates in Minnesota?
- Can improvements be made to the quarterly damage reporting system which took effect last year to improve the accuracy of locate practices?

The final report will assess complex variables and their impacts on location errors, including but not limited to:

- Staffing challenges for locate companies in rural vs. urban areas.
- Employee turnover rates at locate companies and how employee churn affects accuracy.
- Whether locators have specialized training for telecom verses. electric verses gas.
- Workload pressure: number of tickets per locator per day.
- Locators incentivizing speed over accuracy.
- How contract structures (per-ticket vs. hourly) influence locator behavior.
- Average time spent per ticket.
- Communication gaps between locators, excavators, and facility owners.
- Appropriate use of technology to address ticket volume and workforce shortages.
- Review of factors that affect hiring/retaining of locate contractors, such as salary, length of tenure, training burdens, and education.
- Factors affecting all users of the right of way for telecommunications as well as other right of way entities (gas, electric, water, and sewer).

The study's interviews, fact-finding, and analysis will consider variables impacting outcomes, including but not limited to:

- Years of experience with the entities comprising the current 811 utility infrastructure environment, including years of experience of operators, excavators, locators, and others with responsibilities that take place before ground-disturbing activities are conducted.
- Contextual factors contributing to frequency of location errors, including the context where the annual ticket volume is above 5,000, as separate and distinguishable from location errors in the context of ticket volumes classed under 5,000 tickets.

The final draft report and final submission copy of the report must meet the [State of Minnesota Digital Accessibility Standard \(PDF\)](#).

How to apply

- Apply for the Utility Infrastructure Study Grant using the [MDA's 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 Utility Infrastructure Study Grant.
 - After you have submitted your application, you will receive a confirmation email. Contact Kaelene.ArvidsonHicks@state.mn.us if you do not receive this email.
- Applications are due by **4 p.m. CT on Thursday, April 30, 2026**.
 - 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.
 - The MDA will not accept late applications.
 - The MDA is 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.

For help with the online application system:

- Call 651-201-6500, or
- Email Kaelene.ArvidsonHicks@state.mn.us with Utility Infrastructure Study in the subject line. We encourage reaching out for help early as we may not be able to assist with last-minute requests.

Incomplete applications will be rejected and not evaluated. Do not provide any materials that are not requested in this Request for Proposals (RFP), additional materials including links to external webpage content will not be considered nor evaluated. The MDA reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet these requirements.

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

The applicant is responsible for all costs associated with submitting a response to this RFP.

How to submit questions

For questions about the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4 p.m. CT on Thursday, April 23, 2026**.
- Email Kaelene.ArvidsonHicks@state.mn.us with Utility Infrastructure Study in the subject line.

The MDA will post responses to program questions on the Questions and Answers (Q&A) section of the [Utility Infrastructure Study Grant](#) webpage as we receive them.

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

Timeline and deadlines

March 31, 2026 RFP posted on the MDA website.

April 23, 2026 at 4 p.m. CT Deadline to ask grant program questions.

April 30, 2026 at 4 p.m. CT Application period closes.

May 2026 Applicants notified of funding decisions.

May – June, 2026 Expected start date once the contract is signed by all parties.

The grant contracts will expire on June 30, 2027, and may not be extended.

The entity awarded this grant may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract agreement is fully executed, the grant has reached its effective date, and the Grantee has been notified by the state’s authorized representative that they may begin work.

Priorities

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

The Department of Administration Office of Grants Management (OGM) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally show how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities or disparities. ([OGM Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#)). Applicants that are nonprofit organizations that are led by, impact, or serve Native American Tribal communities are encouraged to apply.

This grant prioritizes projects with a demonstrated capacity to engage and sustain stakeholder involvement in the study. This priority is reflected in the selection criteria reflected in the [Project Evaluation Profile](#).

Eligibility

Eligible applicants

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

Applicants must:

- Be entities that are not for-profit and authorized to do business in the state of Minnesota.
- Demonstrated capacity to conduct a study with the scope and priorities detailed in this RFP.
- Demonstrated capacity to engage and sustain stakeholder involvement in the study.
- Demonstrated familiarity with:
 - The 811 utility infrastructure ecosystem in Minnesota including requirements (state and federal law) for safe excavation and inspections.
 - Underground utility construction, including FTTP overbuild process and community impacts.
 - Oversight and accountabilities held and shared by Minnesota's GopherState One system, the Minnesota Office of Pipeline Safety, Minnesota Department of Labor Industry, and Minnesota's Office of Broadband Development.
 - Entities that own and operate Minnesota's underground utility infrastructure.
 - Entities that locate and install Minnesota's underground utility infrastructure.
- Be in good standing in the State of Minnesota:
 - No back taxes owed.
 - No defaults on Minnesota state-backed financing for the last seven years.
 - Acceptable performance on past grants with Minnesota state agencies if previously received.
 - Be appropriately licensed and authorized to conduct business in Minnesota.
 - Not suspended or debarred from doing business with the State of Minnesota or the federal government.
 - No conviction of felony financial crimes of its principals for the past 10 years.
 - Registered and current with annual reporting requirements to the Minnesota Attorney General's office if required under [MINN.STAT. 309.53](#) and [MINN. STAT. Chapter 309](#).
 - Compliant with current state regulations and statutes.

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

We encourage organizations that are not for-profit entities that are owned, operated by, or serving Native American tribal communities to apply.

Applicants should review the [Conflicts of Interest](#) section prior to applying. The selected Grantee must agree to these rules as a part of signing their grant contract agreement.

Eligible project expenses

Funds awarded to Grantees must be used to pay for expenses related to the planning and execution of the Utility Infrastructure Study.

Eligible project expenses will:

- Be direct expenses related to planning, conducting and publishing findings and recommendations to the Minnesota State Legislature.
- Be incurred and paid for by June 30, 2027.
- Be conducted in and benefit the State of Minnesota.

Examples of eligible expenses are those related to the funded activities needed for data collection, data analysis, stakeholder outreach, interviews, surveys, research and report production. Costs will be described in a budget and budget narrative as:

- personnel costs (salaries/wages) and fringe benefit expenses including FICA/Medical, retirement, and health insurance to carrying out the proposed project.
- materials and supplies related to the project.
- postage, printing, and telephone expenses related to the project.
- project-related in-state travel.
- professional and technical services specified in the approved work plan.

No purchasing or contracting of goods and services may occur prior to the full execution of the grant contract agreement or its effective date, whichever is later.

Ineligible expenses

You must be invoiced and pay for 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.

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Expenditures incurred before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties and reached its effective (start) date, whichever occurs later; and
- Expenditures incurred or paid after the grant contract agreement expires.
- Expenses paid for with cash.
- Gift cards or vouchers; gas cards; and other forms of pre-paid cards, vouchers, or compensation.
- General operating, overhead, or indirect costs (expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with the project).
- Donations and in-kind contributions, including property and services, made by the applicant (regardless of the recipient) or provided to the applicant by a third party.
- Advertising (except outreach to promote the technical assistance services and resources offered as part of the project), public relations, entertainment, alcohol, and amusement costs.
- Payment of fees or incentives to participate in the study.
- Any purchases from an entity with which the applicant, its board members, spouses of board members owns an interest, or an entity of which they are an employee.
- 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 which have already received funding from another federal grant or subaward programs may not receive funding for the same activities and expenses.
- Costs of goods or services for personal use of employees, capital improvements, or training costs.

Matching funds

Matching funds are not required.

Application review process

Review process

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

Reviewers and staff will meet and discuss the proposal and then recommend 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 applicant's history as a state Grantee, including performance on previous grants, compliance with state rules and regulations, and capacity to perform the work. 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.

Preaward risk assessment

The MDA is required to consider a grant applicant's past performance and financial and operational capacity before awarding grants. ([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: Preaward Risk Assessment of Potential Grantees \(PDF\)](#))

Applicants' capacity to perform work related to the grant will be evaluated as part of their response to this RFP. Applicants being considered for an award may also be required to submit additional documents, such as financial reports, descriptions of internal controls, or information about the performance on previous state grants, prior to being approved by MDA for an award.

Applicants being considered for an award of less than \$50,000 or less will submit the following:

- Certification that you or your entity have not been suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or with the federal government.
- Documentation that it is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State and registered with the Attorney General's office, if required for your organization, in accordance with [MINN.STAT. 309.515](#), [309.52](#), and [309.53](#).
- Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Applicants being considered for an award of \$50,000 or greater

Applicants being considered for an award of \$50,000 or greater will be required to submit additional documents for review and analysis.

Nonprofit organizations will submit the following:

- A description of your capacity to complete the project. This may include your current staffing, project partners, current budget, and previous experience performing similar work. You will also need to provide information on any grants received from the MDA or other state agency in the last five years.
- A copy of your organization's two most recent Form 990 or Form 990-EZ with the Internal Revenue Service. If your organization has not been in existence long enough or is not required to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ, then you must submit the following information:
 - Proof of your organization's 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 your organization's internal controls.
- The two most recent certified financial audits if required to complete one under [MINN.STAT. 309.53](#), [Subd. 3](#) (if the organization has received total revenue in excess of \$750,000 for the 12 months of operations covered by the statement).
- Certification that you or your entity has not been suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or with the federal government.
- Documentation that your organization is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State and registered with the Attorney General's office, and current on its annual reporting requirements, if required for your organization ([MINN.STAT. 309.515](#), [309.52](#), and [309.53](#)).
- Certification that you, your board members, staff, or anyone else with authority to access grant funds have not been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years ([MINN.STAT. 309.53](#), [Subd. 3](#)).

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. ([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 render impartial assistance or advice to the MDA due to competing duties or loyalties, or
- 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 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 a conflict of interest mitigation plan, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, amending the grant, or termination of the grant contract agreement.

Privacy notice and data classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant under 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 application responses (except for data otherwise classified by law, including trade secret information, see 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, see below) will generally be public data after the evaluation process is completed.

Procedure for claiming protection of trade secrets:

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

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

- Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, or confirm that the information in SWIFT is correct.
- 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.

Accountability and reporting

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

Grantees will be required to submit progress reports throughout the grant period. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports without a written extension. The MDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements throughout the grant.

Progress reports will be due quarterly, a final draft report due May 1, 2027, and final report to the State Legislature due June 30, 2027. A final grant report is due to the MDA 30 calendar days after the expiration date listed in the grant contract agreement and must be approved by the Authorized Representative before the final request for reimbursement is paid.

Failure to regularly report on progress and promptly respond to information requests may impact the Grantee's ability to secure future funding from the MDA or other state agencies.

Information reported to the MDA may 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. The MDA monitors all Grantees with awards greater than \$25,000 before approving final payment. 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 cost documentation showing proof of purchase and payment, such as invoices, expense receipts, employee timesheets, employee time log including activities completed, cleared checks, bank or credit card statements, and any other supporting documents requested by the MDA.

Payments

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

Typically, requests for reimbursement must include two types of proof for each expense: proof of purchase (e.g., invoices, itemized receipts, payroll reports, etc.); and proof of payment (e.g., cleared checks, credit card statements, bank statements, proof of payroll payment, etc.). Time sheets and time logs that include activities completed each day are also needed for personnel costs.

Reimbursement requests will be submitted with progress reports quarterly, at the time the final draft report is due to MDA, May 1, 2027. A final request for reimbursement must be submitted to the MDA no later than 30 calendar days after the grant end date.

The MDA may, at its discretion, hold back the final 10% of the grant award until the Grantee demonstrates completion of their objectives described in their proposal, including completion of reporting, unless otherwise approved by the MDA.

The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation. Any additional requests must be submitted by the Grantee before the MDA provides reimbursement. Grant payments will not be made on grants if required documentation related to the invoice or financial reconciliation is missing.

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

Nongovernmental entities

Grantees that are nongovernmental entities, including businesses and nonprofit organizations, must use these guidelines:

- Any services and/or materials that are expected to cost \$100,000 or more must undergo 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 assure 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](#)
 - Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: [Central Certification \(CERT\) Directory](#).
- The Grantee must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.
- 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.
- Notwithstanding the above, 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 must comply with prevailing wage rules, as applicable ([MINN. STAT. 177.41](#) through [MINN. STAT. 177.50](#)).
- The Grantee and any subrecipients must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government: [Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement](#) and [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](#).

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; an appraisal of 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 Grantees use of State funds. Evaluations of Grantee performance for grant contract agreements greater than \$25,000 must be provided by the MDA to the Minnesota Department of Administration (MINN.STAT. 16B.98, subd. 12). Evaluations are considered public data (MINN. STAT. 13.599).

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 state granting agency, 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 contract agreement end date; receipt and approval of all final reports; or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

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, in accordance with [MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 5 \(d\)](#), 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).

Affirmative action and nondiscrimination

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, familial status 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

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 Request for Proposal does not obligate the MDA to award a grant. The MDA reserves the right to cancel this Request for Proposal, if in the best interest of the program, agency, or the State of Minnesota. The State also 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.

Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation criteria	Maximum score
<p>Applicant’s capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant demonstrates the capacity to successfully implement and complete the study. • Applicant demonstrates knowledge and experience using utility locate data. • Applicant demonstrates familiarity with Minnesota’s utility locate ecosystem. 	15
<p>Project design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates clearly identified outputs and benchmarks to complete the project. • Proposed objectives and activities are realistic and support the deliverables. • Applicant clearly describes stakeholder groups and any third parties or collaborators they plan to contract with or engage with and their qualifications to complete the work. 	20
<p>Policy-relevant report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant demonstrates commitment and experience developing a policy-relevant report. • Project identifies data sources and establishes data collection and research methods. 	10
<p>Stakeholder engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a feasible plan to engage diverse stakeholders. • Applicant has prior experience or similar work studying utility locate data and engaging stakeholder interests to create a policy-relevant report. 	15
<p>Work plan and timeline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work plan describes activities in detail that lead to the required deliverables. • A detailed description of each step of the project, including estimated dates, is provided. 	15
<p>Budget table and narrative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget tables and narrative clearly detail all project costs. • Budget clearly explains how requested expenditures are necessary for outcomes. • Budget is cost effective and purchases are backed by quotes or other sources. 	15
<p>Priority areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project demonstrates capacity to engage and sustain stakeholder involvement and conduct an impartial assessment of the data. 	10
Total	100

The scoring criteria of this grant program gives weight to projects with demonstrated capacity to engage and sustain stakeholder involvement in the study.

Application Questions

We're providing this preview of the application questions for your convenience. You will answer these questions in our online application system. Please log in and review the online application before you begin preparing your answers. Additional instructions for the questions may be provided within the full online application.

Contact information

Type of Applicant

- Nonprofit organization
- Individual

Applicant information

- Applicant name
- Applicant mailing address
- Applicant physical address
- Applicant telephone number
- Applicant email
- Applicant website (if applicable)

Point of contact

If awarded a grant, the person who will be responsible for the project and serve as the point of contact.

- Point of contact person name (first and last name)
- Point of contact title
- Point of contact telephone number
- Point of contact email address
- Point of contact mailing address

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, please provide the following authorized representative information for signing any resulting grant contract agreement:
 - Authorized representative name (first and last name)
 - Authorized representative title
 - Authorized representative telephone number

- Authorized representative email address
- Authorized representative mailing address

Eligibility

Confirm that the following statements are true for you and your organization. You must respond “True” to all the statements to be eligible to apply for this grant.

- The applicant is not suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or the federal government. If your project is recommended for a grant award, you will need to sign a certification. (True or False)
- The applicant is registered and in good standing with the Minnesota of the Secretary of State (SOS) or is not required to maintain a registration with the SOS. If your project is recommended for a grant award, you will need to sign a certification. You can verify that you are registered and in good standing by searching for your entity’s name on the [SOS website](#).) (True or False)
- The applicant that is a nonprofit entity is registered with the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office and is current on its annual reporting requirements or is exempt from the registration requirement. See [MINN.STAT. 309.515](#) for more information on registration exemptions. You can verify that you are registered and have an active status by searching for your entity’s name on the [Attorney General’s Office website](#). (True or False)
- The applicant’s current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have not been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years. If your project is recommended for a grant award you will need to sign a certification. (A principal is defined as a public official, a board member, or staff (paid or volunteer) with the authority to access funds provided by this grant opportunity or to determine how those funds are used.) (True or False)
- 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 or False)
- The applicant is compliant with current state and federal regulations. (True or False)
- The applicant is not an MDA employee, their spouse or domestic partner, or a non-profit organization principally owned or operated by one of them. (True or False)

Verifications

Individuals If the applicants is an individual, complete the following questions.

- Is the applicant, who is an individual, an MDA employee?
- Is the applicant, who is an individual, a State of Minnesota employee? If your project is recommended for a grant award, you will need to disclose your employment and contractor status as part of the pre-award conflict of interest review. (Yes or No)
- Is the applicant, who is an individual, an employee or contractor in the utility locate industry? If your project is recommended for a grant award, you will need to disclose your employment and contractor status as part of the pre-award conflict of interest review. (Yes or No)
- Is the applicant who is an individual a former employee or contractor in the utility locate industry over the last two years? If your project is recommended for a grant award, you will need to disclose your employment and contractor status as part of the pre-award conflict of interest review. (Yes or No)

Organizations - If the applicant is a non-profit organization, complete the following questions.

- Does the organization’s leadership, staff (paid or volunteer), board of directors, or governing body include any MDA employees or their spouses or domestic partners? If your project is recommended for a grant award, you will need to disclose additional information as part of the pre-award conflict of interest review. (Yes or No)
- Does the organization’s leadership, staff (paid or volunteer) board of directors, or governing body include any State of Minnesota employees or their spouses or domestic partners? If your project is recommended for a grant award, you will need to disclose additional information as part of the pre-award conflict of interest review. (Yes or No)
- Is the organization or any of its principals service providers or contractors in the utility locate industry? If your project is recommended for a grant award, you will need to disclose the role(s) and contractor status as part of the pre-award conflict of interest review. (Yes or No)
- Was the organization or any of its principals service providers or contractors in the utility locate industry over the last two years? If your project is recommended a grant award, you will need to disclose your recent role(s) and contractor status as part of the pre-award conflict of interest review. (Yes or No)

Attestations

- I attest that I have the authority to apply for this grant. (Yes or No)
- I attest that all information supplied in this application is true, correct and reliable to the best of my knowledge. (Yes or No)
- I attest and understand that the submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the grant contract agreement award and may subject me and my organization to suspension or debarment proceedings, as well as other remedies available to the State, by law. (Yes or No)
- I attest and understand that the supporting documentation for the claims and assertions made within this application is available to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for its review. (Yes or No)
- I attest and understand that the submission of additional documents, as described in the RFP, may be required as part of the pre-award risk assessment if my project is recommended for a grant award.
- I attest that work has not started on the proposed project and we will not start before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties and has reached its start date, whichever is later. The MDA is unable to reimburse for any work that is performed prior to the effective start date of the grant contract agreement. (Yes or No)

Previous grants

- Have you received previous grant funding from the State of Minnesota in the past five years? (Yes or No)
 - If yes, provide the details of the award amount(s), the duties, and the outcomes of the grants(s). (1,500 characters, including spaces)

Project summary

- Provide a project summary suitable for public dissemination stating the scope of the utility locate study. A project summary provides a brief, two or three sentence description of your project and includes:

- The name of the applicant organization that will lead and execute the project.
- The project’s purpose, deliverables, and expected outcomes.
- A description of the activities to be completed during the project period to meet the deliverables.
- Describe the data collection methods or research approach that will be used.

Applicant’s capacity

In this section describe your capacity to design and implement the study, complete the deliverables and follow-through on grant reporting requirements.

- Describe your history of performing work similar to the study being funded by this grant. Applicants may describe studies and projects completed under contracts or subcontracts, the nature of the project(s) and its deliverable(s). (1,500 characters, including spaces)
- Describe the applicant’s knowledge, expertise and familiarity with the utility infrastructure and providers. (1,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe your expertise in designing a study and policy-relevant reports. Applicants applying as an organization should include in their response a summary of the services or expertise provided by your organization, and how the Utility Infrastructure Study fits into your organization’s priorities. Applicants applying as individuals should provide a summary of their services or expertise, and how the Utility Infrastructure Study fits into their portfolio. (1,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe your financial management system, including tracking grant expenditures, implementing segregation of duties, tracking and reporting staff time to specific projects. (1,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe the individuals, partners, or third parties you plan to contract with or use to facilitate any of the work and a short description of their relevant abilities and qualifications to contribute to this project (if any). (1,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe any other relevant information that demonstrates your capacity to achieve the required deliverables and manage the grant. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

Project design

In the table, list the study’s objectives to achieve the required deliverables of the study. In the "Objective name" column, provide a short title that summarizes each of your objectives (e.g., Objective 1: Assess utility locate data; Objective 2: Design stakeholder survey, etc.). (250 characters per objective name, including spaces)

In the "Objective description" column, provide a very brief description of what you will accomplish and a general plan on what activities or strategies you will use to accomplish the objective within the time frame of the grant. (250 characters per description, including spaces)

Objective name	Objective description
-	-
-	-
-	-
-	-

Objective name	Objective description
-	-

Describe additional information about your project design as needed. (3,500 characters, including spaces)

Policy-relevant report

Describe how your project will provide the policy-relevant report requested by the Minnesota legislature to assess market and labor factors contributing to inaccurate markings of underground utilities through your project design and implementation plan.

- Describe how the required deliverables will be met because of your project design and implementation plan. (2,500 characters, including spaces)
- Describe what methods or methodology you will use to collect data needed to identify market and workforce factors contributing to inaccurate markings in underground utility-locates. (2,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe how you use the data to assess what factors may be contributing to incorrect marking and provide recommendations to the Minnesota State Legislature. (2,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe what indicators or approach, if known, would be used to test recommended outcomes of the study. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

Stakeholder engagement

- Describe how stakeholders will be identified. (1,500 characters, including spaces)
- Name stakeholder sectors and participants in the utility locate ecosystem that you anticipate inviting to participate in the study. (1,500 characters, including spaces)
- Describe how you will ensure broad participation of stakeholder groups. (2,500 characters, including spaces)
- Describe how you will ensure representative sample of the interest groups crucial to the successful outcome of the study. (2,500 characters, including spaces)
- Describe the methods or methodology you will use to incorporate insights and interests of diverse stakeholders for the study (2,500 characters, including spaces)
- Optional: Discuss how stakeholder involvement will impact the success of the study. (1,500 characters, including spaces)
- Optional: Demonstrate how you are positioned to ensure neutrality and impartiality in conducting the study and making final recommendations. (1,500 characters, including spaces)

Workplan and timetable

Complete the following table with milestone for your project that lists, a timeline broken down by estimated dates/months, description of tasks or key activities, and responsible party/individuals for each activity. The timeline will be used to monitor the study’s progress and production of the final report. For example, you might include target dates key benchmarks listed in the required deliverables or estimated dates for interviews and data collection activities.

Timeframe [month, year]	Description of task or action item	Person responsible
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-
-	-	-

Optional: You may upload a workplan in Excel or Word in the same format as above if there is not enough space provided in the table provided in this application.

Additional workplan notes

- Describe anything about the workplan that may need more explanation. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

Budget and budget narrative

Complete the following budget tables and justifications. In each table, only fill in the number of rows you need for your budget. You do not need to fill all rows. Your budget should:

- Clearly detail all anticipated project costs,
- Describe how you arrived at the budget estimates, and
- Justify why costs in each budget category are necessary.

Important: Fill out all budget tables with total anticipated costs. The "Amount requested" column in each budget table should include the total amount for the line item.

Budget summary

The Budget Summary table is an overview of how grant funds will be spent. The Budget Summary table should provide the total amount requested in each of the following tables. The total amount requested cannot exceed \$50,000. There is no match requirement.

NOTE: Purchases/payments made prior to a fully executed contract are not eligible for reimbursement from this grant.

Expense category	Total requested
Personnel – salaries	\$
Personnel – fringe benefits	\$
Travel	\$
Supplies	\$
Contractual	\$
Other	\$
Total direct project costs	\$
Total project costs	\$

Optional: You may upload estimates/quotes provided by any third parties or vendors. If you have multiple estimates/quotes to upload, merge them into a single file before uploading.

Budget narrative

In each budget table, you will be able to include up to 10 lines. You are not required to use every line.

Personnel expenses

Personnel expenses are salaries, wages, and fringe benefits for the number of hours or proportion of time an employee devotes to the grant-supported project or program. Under the formally established policies of the organization, salaries, wages, and fringe benefits must be consistently applied, reasonable for the services rendered, and supported with adequate documentation, such as timesheets or payroll reports.

Personnel – salaries and wages

List salary and wage costs for people employed by your organization whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to this project’s activities.

Employee name	Employee title	Level of effort (# of hours or % of full-time equivalents [FTE])	Amount Requested
-	-	-	\$
-	-	-	\$
-	-	-	\$
Personnel subtotal	-	-	\$

Personnel justification

By name and title, describe the activities each person will complete, which objectives they will be working towards and approximately when they will occur. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

Personnel – fringe benefits

List fringe benefit rates (e.g., workers comp costs, insurance benefits, retirement benefits, etc.), in percentages, for each of the employees listed in the personnel budget and total grant funds requested for each employee’s fringe costs.

Employee name and title	Fringe benefits rate	Level of effort (# of hours or % of full-time equivalents [FTE])	Amount requested
-	%	-	\$
-	%	-	\$
-	%	-	\$
Fringe benefits subtotal	-	-	\$

Travel

List costs for travel that will be needed to conduct this project.

Travel and subsistence expenses are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy and may not exceed the amounts allowed in Chapter 15 of the current [Non-represented Employees Compensation Plan](#), published by the Commissioner of Minnesota Management and Budget.

Trip destination and description	Type of expense (e.g., mileage, car rental, hotel, etc.)	Unit of measure and number/cost per unit (e.g., 1 night @ \$120/night)	Amount requested
-	-	-	\$
-	-	-	\$
-	-	-	\$
Travel subtotal	-	-	\$

Travel justification

For each trip listed, describe the purpose of each trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Include approximate date(s) or month of travel for each trip. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

By checking this box, I confirm that my organization’s established travel policies will be adhered to when completing the above-mentioned trips in accordance with the Commissioner’s Plan as applicable.

Confirmation to adhere to organization's travel policies

Applicants must confirm their organization’s established travel policies will be adhered to when completing the above-mentioned trips in accordance with the Commissioner’s Plan at Chapter 15 of the [Non-represented Employees Compensation Plan](#) as applicable. Check the appropriate box for your application.

- My organization’s established travel policies will be adhered to if awarded this grant.
- I am applying for this grant as an individual, not an organization.

Supplies

List costs for supplies that are necessary for the completion of your project.

Supplies are materials and supplies costing less than \$10,000 per unit that are essential to the performance of the grant project.

Supplies item description	Cost per unit	Number of units	Amount requested
-	\$	#	\$
-	\$	#	\$
-	\$	#	\$
Supplies subtotal	\$	#	\$

Supplies justification

Describe the purpose of the supplies listed in the table above and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s). (1,000 characters, including spaces)

Contractual/consultant

List costs for work on the project that will be performed by individuals or organizations other than the applicant (e.g., consultants, contractors, partner organizations, etc.).

Contractual/consultant services are those performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant that is in a particular profession or with a special skill. These services are paid for through a subcontract.

- Compensation for contractor or consultant services should be reasonable and consistent with that paid for similar services in the marketplace. Note that we do not allow indirect costs for contractors and consultants.
- Any subcontract must be a written agreement between the Grantee and the third party. The contract must, as appropriate, state the activities to be performed; the timeline to perform the stated activities and provide specific deliverables; the policies and requirements that apply to the contractor; the maximum amount of money for which the Grantee may become liable to the third party under the agreement; and the cost principles to be used in determining allowable costs in the case of cost-type contracts.

Contractual/consultant justification

For each contractual line item listed in your contractual budget, describe how it is necessary to your project and how it will be used to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. You must also include a justification for why contractual/consultant services are to be used to meet the anticipated outcomes and objectives. Include an estimated timeline for when the contractual work will be performed. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

Confirmation

Applicants must follow the same policies and procedures used for procurement from non-state sources (which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations) in creating their project budget. Check the appropriate box for your application.

- I confirm that my organization followed our procurement policies and procedures in creating this project budget.
- I am applying for this grant as an individual, not an organization.

Other

List any costs not covered in any of the previous budget categories.

Other costs may include meetings and conferences; communications; rental expenses; and any costs associated with data collection, a project survey or focus group, etc. Meeting meals cannot be associated with entertainment nor included in a per diem travel cost.

Other item description	Cost per unit	Number of units	Amount requested
-	\$	#	\$
-	\$	#	\$
-	\$	#	\$

Other item description	Cost per unit	Number of units	Amount requested
Other subtotal	\$	#	\$

Other justification

Describe the purpose of each item listed above and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s). For meals, the costs must be reasonable, and a justification must be included to show that such activity maintains the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the participants attending the meeting. (2,000 characters, including spaces).

Other funds

Are any portions of your project being paid for by another grant or other restricted funding? (Yes or No)

- If yes, please explain the other source of funds and what parts of the proposed activities would be paid for by that funding.

Priority areas

This grant program prioritizes projects with a demonstrated capacity to engage and sustain stakeholder involvement in the study. Describe how you will be able to engage and sustain stakeholders' participation and complete an impartial assessment of the data collected. (1,800 characters, including spaces)

Reimbursement acknowledgement

I understand that all payments on this grant project will be made on a reimbursement basis based on the terms outlined in the Payments section of the RFP. (Yes or No)