



# **AGRI Specialty Crop Preparing for Extreme Weather Grant Fiscal Year 2027 Grant Request for Proposal (RFP)**

**Applications due by 4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on November 17, 2026**

09/17/2026

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# Grant Summary

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## Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Agriculture Growth, Research, and Innovation (AGRI) Specialty Crop Preparing for Extreme Weather Grant (Prepare) Program. Grant funds are available to help Minnesota specialty crop producers buy and install supplies or equipment that will help make their production more resilient to extreme weather, including drought, flooding, hail, and severe weather events like storms, tornadoes, and straight-line winds. Eligible entities include individual, nonprofit organization, for-profit business, and Tribal governments.

Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, and floriculture. See [USDA's list of Specialty Crops](#).

The program is authorized under MINN. STAT. 41A.12 and funded through Laws of Minnesota, 2025, Regular Session, Chapter 34, Article 1, Section 2, Subdivision 3(e). All information about the program is available on the [Prepare Grant webpage](#). Applications will be accepted until Tuesday, November 17, 2026, at 4 p.m. Central Time (CT).

## Funding availability

We expect to award approximately \$500,000 using a competitive review process. The maximum award is \$10,000, and the minimum award is \$500.

We expect to award between 40 to 50 grants; however, the final number depends on the size of the awards and will be determined through the proposal review process.

An individual, farm, or Tribal government may only receive one Prepare Grant in FY 2027.

## FY 2027 program changes

Beginning in FY 2027, the Prepare Grant Program will no longer fund livestock-related projects. Applicants seeking support for livestock related improvements should instead apply through the [AGRI Livestock Investment Grant Program](#). The Prepare Grant will focus solely on projects related to specialty crops.

## Match requirement

Matching funds are required. The AGRI Prepare Grant is a reimbursement grant.

Applicants must commit at least 50% of the total project cost as a cash match. The Prepare Grant is a reimbursement grant for up to 50% of the project cost. The state's portion will not exceed \$10,000. You must provide documentation for the total cost of the project to receive the awarded reimbursement amount.

Sources of the matching funds can be cash, loans, other grants, or liquid capital assets dedicated to the project. Grant funds awarded by the MDA or another state or federal agency cannot be used as matching funds, including funds obtained through the budgeting process of the Minnesota legislature or granted by a state agency. Non-forgivable loans from the state may be used as a match. Non-cash, in-kind matches of goods and services are not allowable as match.

For example, a grantee is working on a project that is expected to cost a total of \$8,000. The grantee will be responsible for \$4,000 and the MDA will reimburse \$4,000.

**Table 1. Example \$8,000 project showing the reimbursement amount and the grantee's contribution.**

| Project cost | Grant reimbursement rate | Grant reimbursement amount | Grantee cost |
|--------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------|
| \$8,000      | 50%                      | \$4,000                    | \$4,000      |

## 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) [OGM Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally show how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities or disparities. Applicants with projects that are led by, impact, or serve Minnesota Tribal Nations and members of Tribal Nations members are encouraged to apply.

The scoring criteria of this grant program prioritize:

- Beginning farmers and farms owned or principally operated by beginning farmers. A beginning farmer is defined as someone who has farmed 10 years or fewer.

These priorities and the desired impacts/outcomes of grant projects are reflected in the [Project Evaluation Profile](#), which describes the scoring criteria and weight that will be used by reviewers to evaluate your application.

## How to apply

Applications are due by **4 p.m. CT on Tuesday, November 17, 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 [Online Grant Application Guide \(PDF\)](#) to help set up your account.
  - Once logged in, select "AGRI FY27 Specialty Crop Preparing for Extreme Weather Grant".
  - We will only accept one application per farm.
  - After you have submitted your application, you should receive a confirmation email. If you don't receive this email, contact [MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us).
- 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.
- Email [MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us) with "Prepare 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 technical or logistical problems that result in a late submission. It is your responsibility as the applicant to ensure your application is submitted before the deadline.

Applications that are started in the online application system but are not submitted will not be 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 to the State 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 Tuesday, November 10, 2026**.
- Email [MDA.agrigrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.agrigrants@state.mn.us) with "Prepare Grant Question" in the subject line.

We will post responses to program questions on the [Questions and Answers \(Q&A\) section](#) of the Prepare Grant webpage as we receive them.

MDA employees are not authorized to give applicants advice on their 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, organization, or industry.
- 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, 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.
- Review the Project Evaluation Profile included in this RFP, as it is used to score and compare grant applications.

**Timeline and deadlines**

- September 17, 2026**.....RFP posted on the MDA website.
- November 10, 2026 at 4 p.m. CT**.....Deadline to ask grant program questions.
- November 17, 2026 at 4 p.m. CT**.....Applications due.
- November 2026**.....Phase one review.
- February 2027**.....Phase two review (pre-award risk assessments).
- April 2027**.....Applicants notified of award decisions.
- May 2027**.....Expected project start date.
- April 2030**.....Latest possible project end date.

Grants may last up to three years from the contract start date. We anticipate grant contract agreements to start in May 2027 and end no later than April 2030. Grant contract agreements will not be extended.

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.

## Eligibility

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### Eligible applicants

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

Applicants must:

- Be a resident of the state of Minnesota, a business entity authorized to farm in Minnesota, or a unit of Tribal government.
- Be the principal operator of specialty crop farm. Specialty crops include fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops, and floriculture. See [USDA's list of Specialty Crops](#).
- Sell at least \$1,000 of specialty crops annually or normally would sell at least \$1,000 of specialty crops in a typical year.
- Meet the requirements of the [Pre-award Risk Assessment](#).

Examples of applicants include but are not limited to:

- Individuals (including farmers)
- Farm entity
- Tribal governments and entities

MDA employees, their spouses/domestic partners, or any farms or businesses owned or principally operated by them or their spouses/domestic partners are not eligible applicants and are not eligible to receive funds from this grant program. In the application, applicants must also disclose the names and roles of any MDA employees or their spouses/domestic partners who are part of their organization's leadership, board of directors, or governing body.

### Who is a principal operator?

A principal operator is the person primarily responsible for the day-to-day operation of the farm. The principal operator could be an owner, hired manager, cash tenant, share tenant, or partner.

## **What business entities need authorization to farm in Minnesota?**

The statute on farming by business organizations ([MINN. STAT. 500.24](#)) requires that all pension or investment funds, corporations, limited partnerships, limited liability companies, and irrevocable trusts be certified by the MDA before engaging in farming or having an interest in agricultural land.

## **How do business entities get authorization to farm in Minnesota?**

Go to the [Minnesota's Corporate Farm Report webpage](#) for applications and more information.

## **Collaboration**

Eligible applicants may collaborate with another farm, but this is not required. If eligible applicants are submitting a joint application with collaborators, they must determine which business or organization will have the grant contract agreement with the MDA and work directly with the MDA to meet grant reporting requirements. This entity will receive a 1099 from the State of Minnesota for income tax purposes. Letters of support from collaborators can be provided as part of the application.

## **Eligible projects**

Eligible projects will:

- Add resiliency against extreme weather to a specialty crop operation.
- Be completed in three years or less; contracts cannot be extended beyond three years.
- Be conducted in Minnesota.
- Not start until the grant contract is signed by all parties and has reached its start date.

Examples of eligible projects include but are not limited to:

- Water tanks
- Pipelines
- Water wagons/trailers
- Wells (new improvements, fixes, replacement pumps)
- Irrigation equipment (including drip irrigation)
- Hoses
- Soil moisture sensors
- Nozzles
- Rain barrels
- Cover crops
- Hail netting
- Frost protection

## Eligible expenses

Eligible expenses are costs directly related to the project budget.

Examples of eligible expenses for this grant program include but are not limited to:

- Equipment
- Supplies and materials
- Construction/contractual costs

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

You may not incur any obligations to pay for goods or services (and may not incur an obligation to pay for goods and services) before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties and reaches its start date. Examples of "obligations to pay" for goods or services include purchase orders, retainer agreements, sales orders, and any transactions creating an invoice. All requests for reimbursement must be documented and submitted to the MDA no later than 60 calendar days after the grant end date.

## Ineligible expenses

The expenses listed below are not exhaustive. The MDA may determine that other expenses not specifically mentioned are also ineligible.

- Expenditures incurred before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties and reached its start date, whichever occurs later, or those incurred after the grant contract agreement expires
- Expenses for any "obligations to pay" created prior to the start date of the grant contract agreement Examples of "obligations to pay" include purchase orders, retainer agreements, sales orders, and any transactions creating an invoice
- Expenses paid for with cash
- Owner and employees' wages and benefits
- General purpose equipment (e.g., skid steer loaders, combines, tractors)
- General purpose buildings (e.g., general equipment storage building, farm shop)
- Crop seed to be harvested
- Crop or pastureland
- Land
- Gift cards or vouchers; gas cards; and other forms of pre-paid cards, vouchers, or compensation
- General operating costs, 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)
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- 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
- Late payment fees, finance charges, bad debts, fees for legal services, or contingency funds
- Expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any federal, state, or local government funding or other grants (e.g., no “double dipping”)
- Purchases of items and services from staff, board members, farms owned/operated by staff or board members, or other individuals with whom they have an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest (see Conflicts of Interest section for exceptions)
- Purchases of items or services from MDA employees, their spouses/domestic partners, or any farms or businesses owned or principally operated by them or their spouses/domestic partners
- Any equipment purchased from a family member, as defined in the Internal Revenue Code, Section 267(c)(4), including siblings, parents, grandchildren, and spouses
- Any equipment purchased from an entity with which you or your spouse own an interest, or an entity of which you are an employee
- Subscriptions
- Rent-to-own lease agreements where property purchase is optional
- Construction or improvements outside of the state of Minnesota
- Refinancing existing debt
- Construction or improvements outside of the state of Minnesota

## Application Review Process

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Funding will be awarded through a competitive process. 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.

There will be two phases of the review process.

### Phase one: initial review

During the first phase of the review process, MDA staff and external reviewers will evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria and weight in the Project Evaluation Profile. Individuals involved in Minnesota’s agricultural community will be selected to act as external reviewers of the applications.

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.

In addition to the Project Evaluation Profile, reviewers, staff, and the commissioner may consider:

- Geographic distribution of projects
- Delivery of services to prioritized areas or populations
- An 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 timeline for the review process is listed in the [Timeline and Deadlines](#) section.

## **Phase two: SWIFT vendor verification and pre-award risk assessment**

### **SWIFT vendor verification**

All applicants that advance to phase two of the review process will need to register as an individual payee or supplier with [Minnesota's SWIFT system](#), if they do not already have an account. Those that already have a SWIFT account will need to verify that the information in their account is accurate. During this phase, applicants will be asked to provide their SWIFT vendor ID number and SWIFT vendor name (the name you are doing business under).

### **Pre-award risk assessment**

Also in phase two, MDA staff will contact applicants to submit any additional documentation required for the pre-award risk assessment, as described in this section.

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: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#), and [OGM Policy 08-06: Pre-award Risk Assessment of Potential Grantees \(PDF\)](#)).

All applicants' capacity to perform work related to the grant and performance on previous state grants will be evaluated as part of their response to this RFP.

Applicants being considered for an award will submit the following:

- Certification that they have not been suspended or debarred by the State of Minnesota or with the federal government. See the [Suspended and Debarred Vendors, Minnesota Office of State Procurement](#) and [System for Award Management \(SAM.gov\)](#).
- Certification that they, their entities, and key personnel of entities, including board members, officers, executives, employees, or agents with authority over or access to grant funds, or an individual in a position of fiduciary responsibility related to the grant, have not been convicted of a criminal offense relating to a State grant agreement. ([MINN. STAT. 16B.991 subd. 1](#)).

- Documentation that they are in good standing with the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State, registered with the Minnesota 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](#)).
- Documentation that they are compliant with the Minnesota Corporate Farm law, as applicable.

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 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(s) or grantee(s) 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 for the MDA's review, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, or termination of the grant contract agreement.

Grantees may not purchase items and services from staff, board members, farms owned/operated by staff or board members, or other individuals with whom they have an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest. If grantees want to consider any of these individuals/organizations when making purchases, they must submit a conflict-of-interest disclosure and mitigation plan to the MDA for pre-approval. The plan must address how any conflicts of interest will be mitigated, including a plan for selecting vendors that includes meaningful involvement from non-board/staff members.

Grantees may not purchase items or services from MDA employees, their spouses/domestic partners, or any farms or businesses owned or principally operated by them or their spouses/domestic partners.

## 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 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

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### 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 Resources 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:

- 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 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.

## **Project changes**

Some changes may become necessary during your project. Before making any changes to your project, you should consult with the State's Authorized Representative listed in the contract about those changes. Changes that alter the scope, objectives, outcomes, key personnel or staff time devoted to the project, work plan, or budget require an amendment to the grant contract agreement.

## **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 agreement have been met.

Grantees will be required to submit annual progress reports during the grant period, a final report on the completion of the project, and additional information about the long-term impact for up to three years after the grant period. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

Applicants should be aware of the following:

- 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. The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation of at least one payment on grants greater than \$25,000 and will require the submission and review of cost documentation showing proof of purchase and payment described in the [Reimbursement payments](#)

section. Financial reconciliation may be performed on additional payment requests at the discretion of the MDA.

Before approving final payment, the MDA performs at least one monitoring visit for all grantees with awards greater than \$25,000. Other 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 (sometimes called “desk audits”) and may include review and discussion of financial and program information.

## **Reimbursement payments**

Grant funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis. 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 need to include two types of cost documentation for each expense: proof of purchase (e.g., invoices, itemized receipts, and proof of payment (e.g., cleared checks, bank and credit card statements). Ineligible items and their cost must be clearly delineated in the proof of purchase. The MDA doesn’t reimburse expenses paid for in cash.

The MDA will review the submitted documents and determine if any additional documentation needs to be submitted by the grantee. Any additional documentation must be submitted by the grantee and reviewed and approved by the grant administrator before the MDA provides the reimbursement. Additional details can be found in the [MDA Reimbursement Guide \(PDF\)](#). Applicants should be aware of the following:

- Matching contributions will require the same cost documentation as other expenses being reimbursed by grant payment.
- 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.
- All requests for reimbursement must be submitted to the MDA no later than 60 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).
- The MDA retains the option to hold back the final 10% of each grant award until the MDA Authorized Representative has approved the final report.

- The MDA may request that grantees who have not completed the project described in their proposal at the completion of the performance period return any grant funds.

## Contract and bidding requirements

All grantees must follow the State's bidding requirements when buying supplies or services based on their entity type and the cost of the purchase.

### Nongovernmental entities

Grantees that are nongovernmental entities, including businesses, nonprofits, University of Minnesota and Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, and individuals, must use these guidelines:

- 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 \(TG/ED/VO\) 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, printed materials, and on the grantee's website. Additionally, grantees with a website to 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 \(d\)](#)).

## **Grantee obligation to inform**

Immediately notify the state if the grantee, or its Authorized Representative, key personnel, board members, officers or public officials, executives, employees or staff (paid or volunteer), agents, or any individuals with authority to access, manage, or use grant funds or in a position of fiduciary responsibility related to the grant, is suspended or debarred from doing business with the State of Minnesota or the federal government (MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 1) or is convicted of felony financial crime or a criminal offense related to a State grant agreement.

## **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 grantee's 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 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 contract agreement end date, 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 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**

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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 also 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 RFP or pay for information solicited or obtained.

## Background and Program Goals

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### AGRI background and program goals

The Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program (AGRI) was established to advance Minnesota's agricultural and renewable energy industries ([MINN. STAT. 41A.12](#)). AGRI has made significant economic impacts by increasing productivity, improving efficiency, and assisting the development of agricultural products. The primary goal of the AGRI Prepare Grant is to help Minnesota specialty crop producers buy and install supplies or equipment that will make their operations more resilient to extreme weather.

## Project Evaluation Profile

| Evaluation criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Maximum score |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Project description</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant clearly describes their project.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 15            |
| <b>Project need</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant clearly and compellingly describes the need for the project, including the type(s) of extreme weather the operation has or expects to experience.</li> <li>Applicant describes how their project is directly related to weather resiliency and not a general farm improvement.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                              | 20            |
| <b>Project impact</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applicant clearly and compellingly describes how the project will reduce the impact of extreme weather.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 25            |
| <b>Long-term sustainability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project materials are useable from year to year or the applicant details how they will continue the practice. (5 pts)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 10            |
| <b>Priorities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Beginning farmer – has been farming for 10 years or less (5 pts).</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 5             |
| <b>Project readiness, budget, work plan</b><br>Applicant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documents all project costs and the budget is cost effective (5 pts).</li> <li>Includes a plan for paying for the project, including the portions not reimbursed by this grant (5 pts).</li> <li>Clearly explains the importance of this grant to completing the project (5 pts).</li> <li>Demonstrates adequate planning, including quotes (5 pts).</li> <li>Includes a work plan for their project that is realistic (5 pts).</li> </ul> | 25            |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>100</b>    |

# Application Questions

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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 application. For questions that include a narrative response, be sure to give enough details for reviewers to be able to evaluate your response.

## Contact information

### Applicant information

- Applicant legal name
- Applicant assumed name(s), if any (e.g., a “doing business as” name or DBA)
- Applicant physical address (e.g., PO Box 1, St. Paul, MN 55101)
- Applicant mailing address (e.g., 123 Smith Street, St. Paul, MN 55101)
- Farm address (e.g., 123 Smith Street, St. Paul, MN 55101)
- Applicant telephone number
- Applicant email
- Applicant website
- Applicant county
- Applicant's Minnesota State House District (Use the [District Finder](#) if you don't know your district.)

### Authorized representative

If awarded a grant, the person that is legally authorized to and will sign the grant contract agreement for this organization. This is often you or other leadership on your farm. It may not be a grant writer or a 1099 contractor as these individuals typically would not have authority to enter the grant contract agreement with the MDA. This may be the same as the contact information listed above:

- Authorized representative name (first and last name)
- Authorized representative title
- Authorized representative telephone number
- Authorized representative email
- Authorized representative mailing address

## Farm operation

- Farm name (if applicable)
- Organizational structure (select one):
  - Sole proprietorship or individual
  - Partnership
  - LLP
  - LLC
  - Corporation (Incorporated)
  - Estate
  - Trust
  - Other
- If awarded a grant, would you accept the grant as an individual, farm entity, or Tribal government?
  - Individual
  - Farm entity
  - Tribal government

## Eligibility

- Confirm the following statements. You must respond “True” to all the statements to be eligible to apply for this grant. If your project is recommended for phase two of the review process, you will need to sign a certification for some of these statements.
- I am a current Minnesota resident, my business is authorized to farm in Minnesota under [MINN. STAT. 500.24](#), or I am applying on behalf of a Tribal government. (True or False)
- If my entity is a pension or investment fund, corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, or irrevocable trust, I am certified by the MDA to be engaging in farming or having an interest in agricultural land. If awarded a grant, the State will verify that the entity is listed on the [MDA Corporate Farm Search](#). (True, False, or Not applicable, the farm business is not a corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, irrevocable trust, pension or investment fund)
- The farm or ranch is in Minnesota and produces and sells at least \$1,000 of specialty crops annually or normally would sell at least \$1,000 of specialty crops in a typical year. (True or False)
- The applicant, farm entity, farm owner, or principal operator, nor any individual with authority over or access to grant funds or in a position of fiduciary responsibility related to the grant, has been convicted of a criminal offense related to a state grant agreement. (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. 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's principals with authority to access grant funds have not been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years. 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, or this project will support the organization becoming compliant. (True or False)
- This is the only application being submitted on behalf of this farm. (True or False)
- The applicant is not an MDA employee, spouse or domestic partner of an employee, or a farm or business principally owned by one of them. (True or False)
- Does the applicant's leadership, board of directors, or governing body include any MDA employees or their spouses/domestic partners, or is the applicant a State of Minnesota employee, spouse or domestic part of a State of Minnesota employee, or a farm or business principally owned by one of them? (Yes or No)
- If yes, list their name(s) and role(s) in the applying organization.

### Organization eligibility

- Is your organization a for-profit business, nonprofit organization, or some other type of entity?
  - For-profit business
  - Nonprofit organization
  - Another type of entity, such as an individual, local unit of government, or Tribal government
- If you selected for-profit business: The applicant is not under bankruptcy proceedings. (True or False)
- If you selected nonprofit organization: The applicant 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)

## Farm entity eligibility

- If you will receive the grant as a farm entity, do you acknowledge you have read the following? (Yes)
  - To accept this award as a farm entity, your entity must be authorized to farm or have an exemption with the MDA. This requirement comes from the farming by business organizations statute (MINN. STAT. 500.24).
  - If your entity is a pension or investment fund, corporation, limited partnership, limited liability company, or irrevocable trust, you must be certified by the MDA to be engaging in farming or having an interest in agricultural land. If awarded a grant, we will verify that your entity is listed on the [MDA Corporate Farm Search](#).
  - If awarded a grant, we will verify that your farm entity is registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State.

## Attestations

Attest to the following statements. You must respond “Yes” to all the statements to apply for this grant. If your project is recommended for phase two of the review process, you will need to sign a certification for some of these statements.

- 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 that the supporting documentation for the claims and assertions made within this application is available to the MDA 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 phase two of the review process. (Yes or No)
- I understand the MDA is unable to reimburse for any obligations to pay for goods or services ordered prior to the effective start date of the grant contract agreement. Examples of "obligations to pay" for goods or services include purchase orders, retainer agreements, sales orders, and any transactions creating an invoice. (Yes or No)
- I attest and understand that receiving public funds as a consequence of false representations constitutes an act of fraud. (Yes or No)

## Other State of Minnesota grants

- Have you been awarded a grant from the State of Minnesota in the past five years or do you anticipate applying for other funds that may contribute to this project? (Yes or No)
  - If yes, provide the details of the award amount(s), the duties, and the outcomes of the grant(s), or the name of other grant programs to which you are applying. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

## Project summary

### Grant request

- Project name: Applicant or farm name, item requested. (100 characters, including spaces)
  - Examples: Petersen Farm, irrigation improvement; Easy 8 Farm, hail netting
- Total project cost (grant + match)
- Total project request (maximum of \$10,000, minimum \$500, up to 50% total project costs)
- Expected project start date
  - Must be after the grant contract agreement is executed (signed by all parties and reached its start date, whichever is later). You may not incur any project expenses before your grant contract agreement is executed.
- Expected project end date
  - You will have up to 60 calendar days after your contract end date to submit expenses for reimbursement.
  - All items and services must be invoiced, paid for, and complete between the contract start and end date listed in your grant contract agreement.

### Farm description

Briefly describe your farming or ranching operation. (500 characters, including spaces)

### Type(s) of specialty crops

Select all specialty crops that this project will affect:

- Fruits and tree nuts
- Vegetables
- Culinary herbs and spices
- Medicinal plants
- Nursery plants
- Floriculture

## **Project area**

Select which area your project will protect against (select all that apply):

- Drought
- Flood
- Extreme heat
- Straight-line winds
- Hail
- Early or late frost
- Tornadoes
- Winter storms
- Other

## **Project description**

Provide a brief description of your project outlining what you plan to do and why. Include the name of your farm. Limit your description to three sentences. This project description may be shared with the public through press releases, the MDA website, legislative reports, and other publications. (500 characters, including spaces)

## **Diagram**

- Attach a visual diagram that shows your project and how the proposed work will be organized and carried out on your operation.

## **Project need, impact, and sustainability**

### **Project need**

- Describe the specific ways extreme weather conditions have affected your operation. Include details such as the types of weather events experienced, when they occurred, the parts of your operation that were impacted, and any measurable losses, delays, or changes you had to make in response. (1,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe how your project is not a general farm improvement. (500 characters, including spaces)

## Project impact

- Describe how the project will reduce the impact of extreme weather and increase weather resiliency on your farm. Include both short-term and long-term impacts. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

## Long-term sustainability

- How will this project be maintained or sustained in future years? (1,000 characters, including spaces)

## Performance capacity

Describe your capacity to perform the kind of work that would be funded by the grant or similar work, including your history of performing this kind of work. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

## Priority areas

- Are you a beginning farmer? For this application, a beginning farmer is a person who has been farming for 10 years or less. (Yes or No)
  - If yes, how long have you been farming?
  - If yes, explain your role on the farm. (1,500 characters, including spaces)

## Work plan and timeline

Complete the following table with your work plan. You should include the steps that you will take to complete your project. The timeline will be used to monitor high level progress of projects and should include discrete, measurable goals. Tasks and key activities should relate to overall program goals to increase resiliency against extreme weather. The party/individual responsible column must include the roles and responsibilities of any formal partners as applicable. For example, you might include target dates for requesting quotes, placing order, and installing equipment.

Example:

| Timeframe      | Description of task or key activity | Responsible party/individuals |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| July 2027      | Request bids for hail netting       | Self                          |
| August 2027    | Order hail netting                  | Self                          |
| September 2027 | Install hail netting                | Self                          |

## Budget and match

Complete the following budget tables and justifications. You will first fill out a budget summary table with four categories then fill out detailed tables for each of the budget categories.

If you are selected for a grant, portions of this section will become a part of your grant contract agreement. Your budget should:

- Clearly detail all project costs.
- Be reasonable and describe how you arrived at the budget estimates.
- Justify why costs in each budget category are necessary.
- Explain the source and amount of cash match.

Important: Fill out all budget tables with total project costs. The Anticipated Total Cost column in each budget table should include the total amount for the line item, including both the portion that will be reimbursed by grant funds, as well as the portion that will be paid with cash match.

Optional: For each category you may upload estimates/quotes provided by third parties or vendors to show how you arrived at the budget estimates. If you have multiple estimates/quotes to upload, merge them into a single file before uploading.

### Budget summary

This table is an overview of how grant funds will be spent. The category totals in the summary table should match the totals in each individual category table following it.

| Budget category            | Anticipated total cost |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Equipment and supplies     | \$                     |
| Contractual                | \$                     |
| Other                      | \$                     |
| <b>Total project costs</b> | <b>\$</b>              |

### Budget categories

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

#### Equipment and supplies

List costs for necessary equipment and supplies that will be purchased under the grant. Equipment and supplies are materials, supplies, tools, parts, and equipment that are necessary for the completion of your project. Examples of eligible equipment and supplies are water tanks, wells, hail netting, cover crop seed, and drip tape.

General-purpose equipment such as skid steer loaders, combines, and tractors are not eligible.

| Equipment and supplies description | Cost per unit | Number of units | Anticipated total cost | Vendor/supplier |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| -                                  | \$            | -               | \$                     | -               |
| -                                  | \$            | -               | \$                     | -               |
| -                                  | \$            | -               | \$                     | -               |
| <b>Supplies subtotal</b>           | <b>\$</b>     | <b>-</b>        | <b>\$</b>              | <b>-</b>        |

### Equipment and supplies justification

Describe the purpose of the equipment supplies listed in the table above and how it is necessary for the completion of the project. (2,000 characters, including spaces)

### Equipment and supplies upload (optional)

Upload estimates/quotes provided by third parties or vendors to show how you arrived at the equipment and supplies budget estimates. If you have multiple estimates/quotes to upload, merge them into a single file before uploading.

### Contractual

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

Contractual 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 should be reasonable and consistent with that paid for similar services in the marketplace.
- 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 is obligated to pay the third party under the agreement; and the cost principles to be used in determining allowable costs in the case of cost-type contracts.
- Contracts or bids that are signed prior to an executed grant award are not eligible for reimbursement.

| Contractor name or organization | Service provided/work to be completed | Anticipated total cost |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| -                               | \$                                    | \$                     |
| -                               | \$                                    | \$                     |
| -                               | \$                                    | \$                     |
| <b>Contractual subtotal</b>     | -                                     | \$                     |

### Contractual 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 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)

### Contractual upload (optional)

Upload estimates/quotes provided by third parties or vendors to show how you arrived at the contractual budget estimates. If you have multiple estimates/quotes to upload, merge them into a single file before uploading.

### Other

List any costs not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Equipment rental, such as a backhoe or dumpster, to complete the project is the most typical expense that fits into this category.

| Other item description | Cost per unit | Number of units | Anticipated total cost |
|------------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| -                      | \$            | -               | \$                     |
| -                      | \$            | -               | \$                     |
| -                      | \$            | -               | \$                     |
| <b>Other subtotal</b>  | \$            | -               | \$                     |

### 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). (2,000 characters, including spaces).

### **Other upload (optional)**

Upload estimates/quotes provided by third parties or vendors to show how you arrived at the other budget estimates. If you have multiple estimates/quotes to upload, merge them into a single file before uploading.

### **Matching funds**

This grant requires a 50% cash match. Describe the amount(s) and source(s) of your required cash match. (See the [Match Requirement](#) section for eligible sources of cash matching funds.) (1,000 characters, including spaces)

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

- If yes, explain the other source of funds and what parts of the project are being paid for by that funding. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

### **Supporting documentation (Optional)**

You may attach up to three letters of support from someone other than yourself (e.g., lender, Farm Business Management instructor, Extension educator, consultant, etc.). Each letter can be no longer than two pages. **Note:** Combine all files into one document before uploading. You may do this by scanning the letters together to create one document.

### **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 [Reimbursement payments](#) section of the RFP. (Yes or No)