

Noxious Weed And Invasive Plant Grant Program

Request for Proposal

Grant Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is seeking proposal applications from counties and municipalities for grants to address noxious weeds and invasive plants, with priority given to Palmer amaranth or other species on the Prohibited-Eradicate Noxious Weed List.

This grant request is not to be confused with the Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) grant program administered by the MN Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR). This is a specific appropriation for funding years 2018 and 2019 to assist local units of government with noxious and invasive weed control issues per Minnesota Statute 18.90.

Funding Availability

The Minnesota Legislature recently appropriated \$300,000 into the Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Species Assistance Account for Fiscal Year 2019 to administer a grant program for counties and municipalities to address priority noxious weed and invasive plant issues. This will be a one-time transfer for the fiscal year.

- There is no minimum ask and grants may be awarded up to \$20,000 per applicant.
- Grants will be awarded based on number of applicants until the \$300,000 appropriation is met.

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process with review by the MDA Noxious Weed Program and the Noxious Weed Advisory Committee (NWAC). We expect to announce selected grantees in January 2019. If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant contract is fully executed and the grant has reached its effective date. Seventy-five percent of the funds can be obtained up-front with the remaining 25% being dispersed upon completion of the grant and submission of a status report.

Minimum Requirements

- Applicant must be a local unit of government
- Project must focus on noxious weeds and/or invasive plant species

Project Goals

The goal of this appropriation and grant program is to provide financial assistance to counties and municipalities for identification, monitoring, education, control and eradication of priority noxious weed species in their jurisdictions. Preference will be given to applicants proposing to address Palmer amaranth and other Prohibited-Eradicate Noxious Weeds.

Eligibility

Any representative of a local unit of government in Minnesota may apply. If an applicant is not a County Agricultural Inspector (CAI), please contact your local CAI to discuss the RFP prior to submitting a project. For a list of CAIs, visit: www.mda.state.mn.us/plants/pestmanagement/weedcontrol/caiist

Competitive Priorities and Selection Criteria

This is a competitive grant program. Proposal applications will be scored using the following evaluation profile table and ranked on their relative merit in each category. Give special attention to the evaluation profile when answering the questions on the application. The review committee will determine priority for plants based on application and proposed work. **County Noxious Weeds do not qualify.**

| Evaluation Item | 3 Points | 5 Points | 10 Points | 15 Points | 25 Points |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|
| Project goals and deliverables | Does not clearly define project goals and deliverables | Defines project goals and deliverables, but does not align with budget | Defines project goals and deliverables and aligns with budget | Summarizes project goals and deliverables and aligns with budget | Clearly organizes and details project goals and deliverables, aligns with budget and timeline |
| Impacts to local and state weed issues | Does not clearly define impacts to local or state weed issues | Identifies the impacts to local or state weed issues; description is vague | Demonstrates how project will benefit/ solves issues to local or state weed issues | Summarizes how project will benefit/ solve issues to local or state weed issues | Clearly proposes and details how project will benefit/solve issues to local or state weed issues |
| Budget | Information or details are missing | Budget is not reasonable for proposed work | Completed budget and budget narrative | Completed budget and budget narrative, timeline is appropriate | Adequately explains and justifies each budget line item, timeline and estimates are appropriate and aligns with project objectives and goals |
| Evaluation Item | 2 Points | 4 Points | 6 Points | 8 Points | 10 Points |
| Demonstrated Knowledge | Application lacks demonstrated knowledge of subject plant's impacts, biology, and/or management | Limited knowledge demonstrated of subject plant's impacts, biology, and/or management | Demonstrates sufficient knowledge of subject plant's impacts, biology and/or management | Demonstrates some knowledge and expertise to successfully implement proposed activities | Clearly demonstrates knowledge and expertise to successfully implement proposed activities |
| Evaluation Item | 1 Point | 2 Points | 3 Points | 4 Points | 5 Points |
| Addresses Palmer or other Eradicate species | Does not address listed noxious weeds | Addresses Restricted Noxious Weeds and Specially Regulated Plants of lower priority | Addresses high priority Restricted Noxious Weeds and Specially Regulated Plants or Prohibited Control Species | Addresses High Priority Prohibited Control Species | Addresses Palmer amaranth and other Eradicate Species |
| Meets the eligible purposes and considerations listed in MS 18.90 (a) and (b) | Application does not meet any requirements in 18.90 | Addresses issues in MS 18.90 that are not part of the funding language | Meets some requirements of 18.90, but does not address preferred species in funding language | Generally meets requirements of 18.90 and funding language preferences | Meets requirement of 18.90 and has specific purposes and considerations detailed throughout |
| Overall quality of proposal | Application incomplete, lacks details | Application complete but not legible and lacks clarity | Application is complete and legible | Application is complete and easy to read, general description of plans, costs and indirects provided | Application is complete, clear, and concise; detailed description of plans, itemized costs and indirects provided |

Collaboration

Projects that propose multiple-organization involvement are not necessary, but are encouraged. If an applicant proposes to work with multiple-organizations, the applicant must be the project lead and be responsible for coordinating all efforts among project partners to make the project successful and complete. The MDA is only responsible for the grant contract executed with the successful applicant and has no responsibility thereafter.

Proposal Application Questions

Questions regarding the RFP may be submitted by phone or email to Emilie Justen at 651-201-6360 / emilie.justen@state.mn.us. Questions must be received by October 1, 2018. Answers to questions will be posted for all applicants to review on the MDA's Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant webpage within 48 hours of being received by the MDA: www.mda.state.mn.us/plants-insects/noxious-weed-and-invasive-plant-grant

Application Submission

All application must be received no later than 4:30 PM Central Time, on October 15, 2018. If applications are mailed, they must be postmarked by October 15, 2018. Late applications will not be considered. MDA is not responsible for any emailed or mailed applications that are not received by the agency prior to the deadline. The applicant will incur all costs incurred in applying to this RFP.

Applications should be submitted via email, but can also be sent by U.S. mail to:

Emilie Justen

MDA Noxious Weed Law Coordinator
Plant Protection Division
625 Robert Street North
St. Paul, MN 55155-2538
emilie.justen@state.mn.us
651-201-6360

Review Process and Timeline

The review committee will evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline. MDA, in cooperation with NWAC, will review all committee recommendations and is responsible for final award decisions. Reviewers may recommend the partial funding of a project. The review committee's recommendations are forwarded to the Commissioner of Agriculture. The award decisions of MDA are final and not subject to appeal. If your application is not funded, it will not be carried forward for consideration in the next round if available. You may revise and submit a new application for consideration during a subsequent round of funding.

| PROCESS | DEADLINE |
|---|-------------------|
| Application posted on the Noxious Weed Program Website: www.mda.state.mn.us/plants-insects/noxious-weed-and-invasive-plant-grant | August 30, 2018 |
| Questions due no later than 4:30 PM CDT | October 1, 2018 |
| Applications due no later than 4:30 PM CDT | October 15, 2018 |
| Committee begins review of application | October 22, 2018 |
| Committee recommendations submitted to commissioner for approval | November 22, 2018 |
| Selected grantees announced; grant agreements completed | January 15, 2019 |
| Work plans approved and grant begins | March 1, 2019 |

Conflicts of Interest

We will take steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per Minn.Stat.§16B.98 and Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making. Organizational conflict of interests 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.
- 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 applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

Public Data

Per Minn. Stat.§13.599

- Names and addresses of grant applicants will be public data once proposal responses are opened.
- All remaining data in proposal responses (except trade secret data as defined and classified in §13.37) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).
- All data created or maintained by MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret data as defined and classified in §13.37) will be public data after evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).

Grant Provisions

Any applicant participating with this RFP must consider the specific provisions in the appropriation language and the Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Species Assistance Account below.

2017 Laws of Minnesota; Article 1, Section 2; Subdivision 2(j)

\$300,000 the first year and \$300,000 the second year are for transfer to the noxious weed and invasive plant species assistance account in the agricultural fund to award grants to local units of government under Minnesota Statutes, section 18.90, with preference given to local units of government responding to Palmer amaranth or other weeds on the eradicate list. These are onetime transfers.

Minnesota Statute 18.90

- (a) From funds available in the noxious weed and invasive plant species assistance account established in section 18.89, the commissioner shall administer a grant program to assist counties and municipalities and other weed management entities in the cost of implementing and maintaining noxious weed control programs and in addressing special weed control problems. The commissioner shall receive applications by counties, municipalities, weed management areas, and weed management entities for assistance under this section and, in consultation with the Noxious Weed Advisory Committee, award grants for any of the following eligible purposes:
- (1) to conduct applied research to solve locally significant weed management problems;
 - (2) to demonstrate innovative control methods or land management practices which have the potential to reduce landowner costs to control noxious weeds or improve the effectiveness of noxious weed control;
 - (3) to encourage the ongoing support of weed management areas;
 - (4) to respond to introductions or infestations of invasive plants that threaten or potentially threaten the productivity of cropland and rangeland over a wide area;
 - (5) to respond to introductions or infestations of invasive plant species that threaten or potentially threaten the productivity of biodiversity of wildlife and fishery habitats on public and private lands;
 - (6) to respond to special weed control problems involving weeds not included in the list of noxious weeds published and distributed by the commissioner;
 - (7) to conduct monitoring or surveillance activities to detect, map, or determine the distribution of invasive plant species and to determine susceptible locations for the introduction or spread of invasive plant species; and

(8) to conduct educational activities.

(b) The commissioner shall select and prioritize applications for assistance under this section based on the following considerations:

- (1) the seriousness of the noxious weed or invasive plant problem or potential problem addressed by the project;
- (2) the ability of the project to provide timely intervention to save current and future costs of control and eradication;
- (3) the likelihood that the project will prevent or resolve the problem or increase knowledge about resolving similar problems in the future;
- (4) the extent to which the project will leverage federal funds and other non-state funds;
- (5) the extent to which the applicant has made progress in addressing noxious weed or invasive plant problems;
- (6) the extent to which the project will provide a comprehensive approach to the control or eradication of noxious weeds;
- (7) the extent to which the project will reduce the total population or area of infestation of a noxious weed;
- (8) the extent to which the project uses the principles of integrated vegetation management and sound science; and
- (9) other factors that the commissioner determines to be relevant.

(c) Nothing in this section may be construed to relieve a person of the duty or responsibility to control the spread of noxious weeds on lands owned and controlled by the person.

Eligible expenses include expenses encumbered by the applicant to address the eight purposes outlined in Minnesota Statute 18.90(a).

- Wages and associated fringe for time spent directly on the grant project. Provide justification for the hourly rate
- Equipment purchases of up to \$5000
- Training and workshop fees for technical assistance recipients.
- Project-related travel
- Postage and printing related to the project

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Applicant or partner agency overhead or administrative costs not related to the grant.
- Fundraising including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions regardless of the purpose for which the funds will be used
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking or traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses (Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state)
- Capital expenses above \$5,000

Definitions

Cash match: monetary contributions made by the grantee for eligible costs under this grant.

In-kind match: non-cash donated good(s) or service(s) with an associated monetary value that are eligible costs under this program and support grant outcomes. Grantees should keep careful documentation to support amounts of claimed as match and how the value of the service was determined.

Grant Payments

Upon approval of an application and prior to beginning work on the Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Grant and receiving reimbursements, the applicant is required to do the following:

- Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system.
- Complete a Revenue 185 form that allows the MDA to check for state tax status.
- If the award is \$25,000 or more, submit a financial statement such as an internal balance sheet and income statement, a recent certified financial audit, or an IRS Form 990.
- Sign a Grant Award Agreement indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreement also authorizes the MDA to monitor the progress of the project.

Grant Award Agreements must be signed by the applicant's Authorized Representative and returned to the MDA within 30 days of receipt. Failure to submit the signed agreement may result in loss of the grant award.

Per State Policy on Grant Payments, reimbursement is the preferred method for making grant payments. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. The State shall review each request for reimbursement against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to-date and the latest grant progress report before approving payment. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

Grant agreements will be sent via DocuSign for signatures.

Grant funds are disbursed on a reimbursable basis. To receive grant payments, grantees must provide a progress report, proof that grant project work has been done by submitting details of each purchase on receipts or invoices, and proof that the vendors have been paid. Upon completion of the grant project, submission and approval of a final progress report will be required to receive the final payment. The MDA will also perform monitoring visits of all grantee with awards of at least \$25,000 before a final payment is approved; other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

Reporting Requirements

All successful applicants must complete a grant agreement with MDA prior to establishing the grant period and beginning work on the project. The grant agreement will specify the grant period, work plan, duties, time line of activities, and consideration of payment among other contractual details.

All projects must submit a final report to MDA no later than December 15, 2019 in order to receive the final grant disbursement. The final report should include:

- Plants targeted
- Activities completed
- Itemized list of how, what, and where funds were spent
- Impacts that work provided to lessen the threat of noxious weeds and invasive plants in Minnesota
- Accomplishments
- Any challenges encountered and how they were overcome
- Any interesting observations that were made
- Any techniques that proved to be uniquely effective and why
- Submit records of infestations to EDDMapS and to use ISMTrack for treatment records

Bidding Requirements

Grantees are expected to abide by bidding requirements set by the State of Minnesota, available at www.mda.state.mn.us/business-dev-loans-grants/bidding-requirements. Applicants are not expected to undergo a bidding process for the purposes of submitting the RFP, but it will be expected if the project is funded.

Audits

Per Minn.Stat.§16B.98 Subdivision 8, the grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

Contact Information

Emilie Justen
MDA Noxious Weed Law Coordinator
Plant Protection Division
625 Robert Street North
St. Paul, MN 55155-2538
emilie.justen@state.mn.us
651-201-6360

Plant Protection Division Phone: 651-201-6020

Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Grant Program Application

A. CONTACT INFORMATION

County or Local Government Name:

Project Leader First Name:

Job Title:

Project Leader Last Name:

Mailing Address:

City:

State:

Zip

County:

Email:

Office Number:

Cell Number:

B. ELIGIBILITY

Please answer each of the following questions by checking the appropriate box.

| | | | |
|---|--|-----|----|
| 1 | Are you a County Agricultural Inspector or County Designated Employee? | YES | NO |
| | a. If not, have you reviewed the application with your CAI/CDE? | YES | NO |
| 2 | Have you obtained approval from your county board to receive grant funds? | YES | NO |
| 3 | I agree to submit records of infestations to EDDMapS and to use ISMTrack for treatment records. | YES | NO |
| 4 | I agree that no work has started on the proposed project nor will start until notified of award. | YES | NO |

C. PROJECT FOCUS *(Check all that apply and then list the species by name)*

| Target Plant(s) Listed Noxious Weeds | Non-Regulated Terrestrial Invasive Plants |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Palmer amaranth | |
| Prohibited-Eradicate | |
| Prohibited-Control | |
| Restricted | |
| Specially Regulated | |

List the names of the species present in your project area that this project will address.

Purpose – Must address one of the eight eligible purposes outlined in MS 18.90(a) listed below

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Applied Research to Solve Local Management Issues | 2 | Innovative Control or Land Management Practices |
| 3 | Support of Weed Management Areas | 4 | Cropland or Rangeland Protection |
| 5 | Protection of Wildlife and Fisheries Biodiversity | 6 | Special Weed Control Problems – Not listed by MDA |
| 7 | Monitoring and Surveillance | 8 | Educational Activities |

D. Requested Grant Amount

\$300,000 is available for this grant opportunity. Individual applicants can request funding up to \$20,000. MDA, in consultation with the Noxious Weed Advisory Committee (NWAC) will make the final decisions regarding all grant applications, including but not limited to which applications are awarded, potential collaborations and funding amounts.

| | |
|---|----|
| Indicate the amount requested | \$ |
| Indicate the amount of in-kind provided | \$ |
| Indicate the number of acres targeted for treatment | \$ |

E. Project Title

F. Executive Summary "Abstract"

Please describe the project and goals to be accomplished. The executive summary of this proposed project must be suitable for dissemination to the public (Maximum 1,200 characters, including spaces)

G. Project Justification, Objectives and Strategy

Please give concise explanations for each section. Project timeline should start no earlier than March 15, 2019

What is the problem this application seeks to address?

For example: "Hennepin County has documented 20 acres infested with cutleaf teasel on private land." If the project includes a non-regulated terrestrial invasive plant(s), please provide evidence why it should be prioritized for this grant appropriation.

What are the project objectives that will directly address the problem stated above? Clearly state objectives; use statements that specifically describe the target plants you expect to address.

Example: Objective 1 – By December 30, 2019, treat 20 acres of cutleaf teasel in Hennepin County.

What actions will you take to address the problem stated above? Describe the specific activities that will achieve each of the objectives, deadlines for accomplishing each activity, and responsible parties.

Example: Activities – In partnership with townships and private landowners, identify infestations of cutleaf teasel in Hennepin County that need to be treated.

Who: John Johnson, Hennepin County Ag Inspector (By July 2019)

Set up meetings with landowners adjacent to known cutleaf teasel infestations to discuss identifying, mapping, and management options

Who: John Johnson, Hennepin County Ag Inspector (By October 2019)

Ensure completion of cutleaf teasel treatments

Who: John Johnson, Hennepin County Ag Inspector (By December 15, 2019)

Submit invoices for reimbursement and final report to MDA, submit treatment records to ISMTrack

What are the county-wide or statewide benefits of this project?

H. Budget Categories, Itemized Expenditures, and Total Budget

Complete the following table to outline the expected costs of your project.

Budget category definitions:

Personnel: list the names and titles of participants who will receive a salary from this project.

Supplies: provide a general list of types of supplies. Provide information on how equipment will be used after completing this project.

Contracted services: list any entities outside your organization that will be retained on a temporary basis to work on the project or provide a specific service. Include contractor's name (if known) and a short description of services to be provided. Provide the flat rate fee or total hourly rate for each contract.

Travel: list anticipated destination, number of trips, purpose of the trips, mode of travel and anticipated cost per trip. Base cost on the current federal rate.

Other: list expenses that don't fit any of the budget categories. Identify each item and justify the expense.

| Category | Grant Request | In-Kind | Total |
|---|---------------|---------|-------|
| Personnel (<i>number of hours @ wage rate</i>) | | | |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Equipment, Tools, Supplies, Herbicides (<i>Maximum \$5,000 for Equipment Purchases</i>) | | | |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Education and Outreach Materials (<i>Purchases or Printing</i>) | | | |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Contracted Services (<i>number of hours @ wage rate</i>) | | | |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| In-state Travel (<i>mileage rate, per diem</i>) | | | |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| Other (<i>please specify what the expense is for</i>) | | | |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ | \$ |
| TOTAL | \$ | \$ | \$ |

I. Budget Narrative

The budget narrative should: *(6,000 character limit, including spaces)*

- Provide detail and justify expenditures in each budget category.
- Explain how the budget items connect to the project's results.
- Explain how you arrived at the budget estimates.
- Detail the funding source(s).

J. Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

Budget category definitions:

- Applicant or partner agency overhead or administrative costs not related to the grant.
- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking or traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses (Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state)
- Capital expenses above \$5,000

K. In-Kind

Per MS 18.90(b)(4) — List any federal or other non-state funds that will be used to complete this work.

| Category | In-Kind | Total |
|-------------------------|---------|-------|
| In-kind contributions | | |
| | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ |
| Cash match | | |
| | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ |
| State match | | |
| | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ |
| Federal match | | |
| | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ |
| Other (please describe) | | |
| | \$ | \$ |
| | \$ | \$ |
| TOTAL | \$ | \$ |

L. Collaboration

If this is a collaborative project, provide a list of all collaborators.

M. The Applicant Certifies That:

1. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the data in this application is true and correct and supporting documentation for the claims and assertions made within this application is available to the Minnesota Department of Agriculture for its review.
2. I understand that submitting false or misleading information in connection with this application may result in the applicant being found ineligible for financial assistance under the Noxious Weed and Invasive Plant Grant Program. I further understand that receiving public funds as a consequence of false representations constitutes an act of fraud.
3. I understand that MDA may conduct audits, check references, and conduct site inspections after grants are awarded and prior to dollars being disbursed.
4. I understand application data is private or nonpublic data until grant applications are awarded. Names, addresses and requested amounts then become public information. An entire application becomes public when an agency has completed negotiating the grant agreement with a grantee. Individual grant applications do not have to provide the information requested on the application form. However, if you do not, we will not be able to consider your grant request. The only persons who will have access to your data during the time that it is protected are those permitted access by law, by your written consent, by a court order, or by those department employees whose job duties require access.
5. I verify all information supplied in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.

Applicant's Signature *(Required)*

Date

Email Completed Application and Budget to

emilie.justen@state.mn.us

Or

Mail Completed Application and Budget to

Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Noxious and Invasive Weed Program
Attn: Noxious Weed Grants
625 Robert Street North
St. Paul, MN 55155-2538