

AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant Program FY2018 Request for Proposals

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 - a. Part 1 (narrative questions)
 - b. Part 2 (budget spreadsheet, separate file)

[MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE](http://WWW.MDA.STATE.MN.US) (WWW.MDA.STATE.MN.US)
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Agricultural Marketing and Development Division, 651-201-6012

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Form #AG-03155 (9.25.2017)
9 Pages

Background and Guidelines

Purpose:

The Minnesota Legislature created the Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant (SADG) program to demonstrate and publicize the energy efficiency, environmental benefit, and profitability of sustainable agriculture techniques or systems from production through marketing. Per [MN Statute 17.116](#), SAD grants must fund research or demonstrations on Minnesota farms. Funding is from the Agricultural Growth, Research, and Innovation Program (AGRI) ([2017 MN Session Laws Chapter 88, Article 1, Sec. 2, Subd. 4 b](#)). If you have an idea of how to make farming more profitable, resource efficient, and personally satisfying, this program is for you.

Award Amount:

Maximum of \$25,000 per grant. This fiscal year, a total of \$250,000 is available.

Project Duration:

2 or 3 years (single year projects are no longer considered.)

NOTE: All successful applicants MUST attend a New Grantee Meeting during the first half of March 2018.

Who is eligible?

Minnesota farmers, educational institutions, individuals at educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply. Government entities are not eligible. Applicants must be Minnesota residents. Projects must take place on Minnesota farms. Projects led by a farmer or group of farmers receive additional points in scoring.

What is a “Farmer”? A farmer is someone who cultivates, operates, or manages a farm for profit, and who grows or raises at least \$1,000 of agricultural products for sale annually.

Eligible types of projects include (but are not limited to):

- Enterprise diversification and organic production using traditional and non-traditional crops and livestock;
- Cover crops and crop rotations;
- Conservation tillage and weed management;
- Seed breeding and/or conservation;
- Integrated pest management systems for insects, weeds, and diseases;
- Livestock production systems or management strategies;
- Nutrient and pesticide management, including runoff protection;
- Farm-based energy production such as wind, methane, or biomass;

- Conservation (energy, soil, water);
- Developing/refining/improving marketing opportunities, including season extension and post-harvest storage and handling;
- Other creative ideas that address farm conservation, energy, and/or profitability.

Reviewers are looking for interesting ideas that may or may not work. Ideas do not have to be brand new, but should be new to Minnesota or the part of the state where they're being proposed. For more ideas, see previously funded projects summarized in the [Greenbook](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/greenbook) (www.mda.state.mn.us/greenbook.)

Review and award process

An external review panel reads, scores, and discusses all proposals. The panel changes each year and may include farmers, soil scientists, agronomists, horticulturists, educators, marketers, economists, and other agricultural experts. The panel recommends a set of proposals to the Commissioner of Agriculture, who makes final award decisions.

How do reviewers score the applications?

See the attached Reviewer Scoring Criteria sheet.

Cooperators & Cooperator Letters

If you are a farmer:

You must involve at least one **Technical Cooperator**. She or he should have technical expertise that will strengthen the project. It might be assistance in soil science, biology, agronomy, horticulture, entomology, Extension, engineering, marketing, finance, data collection, statistics, etc. Use the Technical Cooperator to help design the project, carry it out, and/or review and interpret the results. This person is expected to serve as an advisor – not someone you pay to do the project for you. A technical advisor cannot be a family member.

Applications must include a letter of commitment from at least one Technical Cooperator. In the letter, the cooperator must explain how he or she will contribute to the project. If the budget contains funds for the Cooperator, the letter must include the hourly rate that he or she will charge.

If you are not a farmer:

You must have at least one **Farmer Cooperator** who is meaningfully involved in designing and carrying out the project. The budget should include funds to compensate the farmer for his or her involvement. The farmer is expected to be involved in project -- not simply provide land where it can be conducted.

Applications must include a letter of commitment from the farmer(s). In the letter, the farmer must explain how he or she will be involved in the project.

Other important information and requirements

- Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) employees are not eligible to receive grants from this program.
- Any applicant may receive only one Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant (SADG) at a time.
- Every project must publicize and hold an outreach event (preferably a field day) in the final season/year of the project.

Eligible costs include:

- Wages for time spent directly on the grant project (beyond normal farming operations). Provide justification for the hourly rate;
- Consultant fees. Provide justification for the hourly rate;
- Costs to lease or use farm equipment needed for the project;
- Durable equipment or other items necessary for the project valued at less than \$1,000 each;
- Project-related services such as soil testing or other analyses;
- Project-related travel;
- Postage, printing, and telephone expenses related to the project;
- Outreach expenses (advertising, handouts, refreshments, etc.) for one outreach event in the final year.

Ineligible costs include:

- Equipment or other items that cost more than \$1,000. Examples include: tractors, motorized vehicles, buildings (including greenhouses and high tunnels), windmills or wind turbines, building construction, and computers;
- Compensation for a grant writing consultant or grant manager;
- Business start-up costs (i.e., starting a farm);
- Pre-award costs (expenses incurred before a contract is signed).

Tips for applicants – the most common reasons proposals score poorly:

- Application doesn't clearly explain the importance or potential impact of project. How are the findings going to benefit more than just the applicant? Or, put another way: why should taxpayer dollars support this effort?
- Project is more about personal gain than about demonstrating a new or different technique or approach that others could benefit from.
- Budget unrealistically high and/or includes purchase of ineligible items, or excessive purchased services/consultant costs.
- Poor budget detail – unclear how the money will be spent.
- Inappropriate (or absent) technical or farmer cooperators.

- Weak plan to share information/lessons learned and/or no outreach event included.
- Project is trying to accomplish too much. Simple projects with one or two clear goals tend to score better.
- Application doesn't explain how the project will be evaluated or measured.

How to apply:

We strongly prefer that you use our [on-line application process](#); the link can also be found on the [AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Grant Demonstration Grant webpage](#).

If you cannot apply using this process, you may submit an application by mail, email, or by delivery to the MDA. Answer all questions completely within specified character limits. The MDA will enter the application information into the on-line grants system up to the character limits stated for each question. Direct to:

Minnesota Department of Agriculture
Attn: Ann Kuzj
625 Robert St. North
Saint Paul, MN 55155
Email: Ann.Kuzj@state.mn.us
Phone: 651-201-6028

All completed applications must be received by 4:00 PM CST on Wednesday, December 13, 2017. Faxed or late proposals will not be accepted. All successfully submitted proposals will receive confirmation of receipt.

Getting help:

The MDA is happy to answer questions about the application process and ideas you might want to try. Contact Ann Kuzj at 651-201-6028 or Ann.Kuzj@state.mn.us.

Responses to all questions regarding the application process will be posted on the [Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant website](#) within two weeks of submission.

Applicants may request and receive copies of previously funded applications. All personal and business sensitive information in the application will be blackened out.

AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant Program Reviewer Scoring Criteria

CATEGORY	MAXIMUM SCORE
Project Leader is a Farmer or Group of Farmers	5
Potential for Environmental Benefits	5
Potential for Economic Benefits (cost savings and/or increased income)	5
Potential for Energy Saving	5
Project Rationale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a compelling reason to do this project? 	10
Project Design and Methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the design and methods match the rationale? • Are the objectives clear? • Is the plan of work reasonable? 	15
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a plan for measuring and evaluating what happens (preferably for each objective)? • Does the project include a basis of comparison (for example, a control plot or treatment)? 	15
Outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How effective is the plan to share information about the project with farmers and the broader agricultural community? 	10
Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the budget appropriate for the project as described? (Just right, too much, too little?) • Are the itemized costs realistic? Is budget detail sufficient to justify the request? • Do consulting/purchased service charges and wages exceed 40% of the total cost? 	10
Transferability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likelihood that Minnesota farmers will adopt the demonstrated technologies or techniques – if they work. 	10
Applicant Qualifications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does applicant appear to have the necessary qualifications to do this project? 	5
Technical or Farmer Cooperator(s) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do Cooperators provide the expertise this project needs? Are they meaningfully involved? 	5
Commitment Letter(s) from Farmer or Technical Cooperator(s) included with description of expertise, role in project, and hourly rate charged (if any)?	Yes/No
Outreach Event Planned for Final Year?	Yes/No
Total Points Possible	100

AGRI Sustainable Agriculture Demonstration Grant Program Application

Application Due: Wednesday, December 13, 2017 @ 4:00PM CST

Answer all of the following questions on a separate document; do not exceed character limits or your answers will be cut off when we enter them into the electronic system. *Note: All character limits include spaces.*

A. Profile Information

1. Applicant Name.
2. Mailing Address.
3. Phone.
4. Email.

B. Project Outline

1. Project Name. *Limit 100 characters.*
2. County(ies) where project will take place. *Limit 250 characters.*
3. Project Duration (in years).
 - a) Start Date.
 - b) End Date.

Note: An annual project report is due in December of each year. If awarded funding, a State of MN contract must be completely signed by Grantee and State of MN before any grant funds can be spent.

4. Total Budget Request (in dollars; cannot exceed \$25,000)

Note: If you (or your organization) are awarded a grant, we will request your Social Security or Federal Tax I.D. number in order to process the grant. Do not provide that information now.

5. Abstract (one paragraph that summarizes your project.) *Limit 1,000 characters.*
6. List the Enterprise(s) Involved in this Project (field crops, fruit, vegetables, livestock, energy, etc.) *Limit 250 characters.*
7. Project Objectives (what are you trying/testing/demonstrating?) List up to three. *Limit 500 characters each.*

C. Farmer Applicants Only

1. Did you grow or raise at least \$1,000 worth of agricultural products for sale last year?
 - a) If **yes**:
 - 1) How do you market your farm products? *Limit 250 characters.*
 - 2) How many years have you been farming? *Limit 250 characters.*

- 3) List any farm or agriculture organization you belong to. *Limit 250 characters.*
 - 4) What % of labor do you contribute to your farm? *Limit 250 characters.*
- b) If **no**:
- 1) You do not qualify to apply as a farmer to this program.
2. Technical Cooperator(s) involved in your Project (include Name(s), Type of Expertise, and how each Cooperator will be involved in the project.) *Limit 2,500 characters.*

Note: You must include a Cooperator commitment letters with your application.

D. Non-Farmer Applicants Only

1. Type of Applicant
 - a) Minnesota non-profit organization
 - b) Minnesota educational institution
 - c) Individual at a Minnesota educational institution
2. Farmer Cooperator(s) involved in your Project (include Name(s), Type of Farming Experience, and how this farmer will be meaningfully involved in the project.) *Limit 2,500 characters.*

Note: You must include a Cooperator commitment letter with your application

E. Project Details

1. Short Description of the Farming Operation(s) Involved. *Limit 1,000 characters.*
 - a) Project Rationale. *Limit 2,500 characters.*
 - b) What is the purpose of this project?
2. Why is it important?
3. Project Design and Methods. *Limit 5,000 characters.*
 - a) What are you going to do? Describe in detail how you will do your project from beginning to end. Be as specific as you can. Use a timeline and drawings or diagrams (for example: field map, crop rotation plan, building or paddock design, layout of test/demonstration plots, etc.)
4. Evaluation. *Limit 3,000 characters.*
 - a) How will you document what happens? For each of the objectives you listed in the Project Outline, what information will you collect to be able determine whether your grant project “works” and whether you’d recommend it to other farmers? Be specific.

Note: Projects do not have to work out the way you think or want them to in order to be successful. Often, it’s equally important to know what doesn’t work or what not to do so don’t be afraid to try something others might consider risky.

5. Outreach Plan. *Limit 2,500 characters.*

- a) How will you share what you learn so Minnesota farmers can benefit from your work? For example: will there be newspaper or newsletter articles? Will you speak at meetings or conferences? Will you post information on your (or your cooperator/advisor's) web site?) All projects are must have an outreach event in the final year of the project. We encourage you to hold a field day, if possible. In your budget, you can request funds for one outreach event.

F. Budget Details

1. Complete budget using the **attached spreadsheet**.

- a) Analysis
- b) Consultants and Other Purchased Services (Contractors, bookkeepers, paid consultants, technical assistance, etc.)
- c) Personnel (Labor – family or hired. Only include labor directly related to grant activities over and above time spent on normal farm operations.)
- d) Supplies and Materials (Seed, fuel, purchased inputs, plot markers, office supplies, etc. Purchase of farm equipment and other depreciable assets will not be funded.)
- e) Use or Rental of Farm Equipment
- f) Outreach Costs (Field day and other costs associated with outreach/publicity.)
- g) Communication (Telephone, postage, internet.)
- h) Travel

Remember:

- Use realistic estimates. Only include amounts you are requesting. Total budget must not exceed \$25,000. Do not include in-kind amounts.
- Grant may be used for project-related costs only, not day-to-day farming expenses.
- Provide justification for each item – why needed, how many, etc.
- For travel, use a rate of \$0.54/mile.

G. Other Sources of Funding

1. Other sources of funding. Include with narrative questions A-E on separate document.
 - a) Have you received, applied for, or do you plan to apply for other sources of funding to support this project?
 - b) If yes, explain. *Limit 500 characters.*

Remember: Attach copies of Technical or Farmer Cooperator commitment letter(s) to the application before you submit it. These letters should describe the Cooperator's expertise and his/her role in the project. If the cooperator will be paid, the letter must include the hourly rate.