

# Grant Request for Proposals

Enterprise Support for Emerging/Historically Underserved Farmers

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# Grant Overview

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## Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications from individuals or organizations to develop innovative and culturally appropriate ways of providing financial counseling, problem solving, and other forms of enterprise support to emerging and historically underserved farmers currently engaged in agricultural production and located in the seven-county Metro area. We define a “farmer” to be a person who, in a typical year, raises and sells at least \$1,000 worth of agricultural products. We anticipate this work could be similar, although not necessarily identical to the work performed by [Minnesota Farm Advocates](#).

## Funding, Eligibility, and Application Instructions

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### Funding availability

The MDA anticipates making a single award for a contract term that begins in May 2022 and ends no later than June 29, 2023. This opportunity is supported, in part, by Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Program award no. 2021-70035-35461 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The maximum award is \$50,000. Matching funds are not required.

### Eligibility

Individuals and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply for this grant award. Applicants must be in good standing with the State of Minnesota or they will be disqualified. Good standing means:

- No back taxes owed.
- No defaults on Minnesota state-backed financing for the last seven years.
- Acceptable performance on past MDA grants.
- Compliant with current state regulations.

Applicants may collaborate with stakeholders as they develop a proposal.

### Priorities and outcomes

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

[Policy 08-02: Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities.

This grant program prioritizes enterprise support for women, veterans, persons with disabilities, American Indian or Alaskan Natives, members of a community of color, young farmers, and/or urban farmers **who are currently operating farming operations and who need help navigating financial, regulatory, and government assistance challenges and opportunities.**

The intended outcomes of this grant are:

- 1:1 support provided to farmers in the group(s) the grantee is targeting.
- Information about the nature and frequency of enterprise help and support that emerging and historically underserved farmers need.
- Insights into the most effective and culturally appropriate methods of delivering this assistance.
- Recommendations about effective ways to promote assistance and services to emerging and historically underserved farmers.

## How to submit questions

Submit questions about or related to this Request for Proposals (RFP) to Meg Moynihan at [meg.moynihan@state.mn.us](mailto:meg.moynihan@state.mn.us). No other MDA employees are authorized to consult or answer questions about this opportunity. You must submit questions no later than 4:00 p.m. Central Time on April 8, 2022.

Answers will be posted within five business days in the Q&A section on the [Enterprise Support for Emerging/Historically Underserved Farmers](#) grant opportunity page.

## How to apply

We strongly encourage applicants submit proposals through our [online application system](#). If this is not possible, contact [meg.moynihan@state.mn.us](mailto:meg.moynihan@state.mn.us) at least 10 calendar days before the deadline to make another arrangement. **All applications must be received by 4:00 p.m. Central Time on April 15, 2022.** Late applications will not be considered. The MDA is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems causing an application to be received late. It is your responsibility to ensure that submission is received by the MDA before the deadline.

## Selection criteria and weight

The review committee will review each applicant on a 100-point scale. Below are the scoring factors that reviewers will consider. See [Appendix B](#) for a copy of the scoring template reviewers will use.

- Ability to administer the grant (15 points)
- Ability to articulate the need and potential impact of this project (20 points)
- Familiarity and experience with the groups the applicant intends to serve (25 points)
- Workplan (20 points)
- Budget (10 points)
- Evaluation plan (10 points)

## Proposal review process and timeline

This is a competitive opportunity. A committee that includes subject matter experts will review all proposals received by the deadline and may recommend whole or partial funding. The Commissioner of Agriculture will consider the committee’s recommendations before making an award decision. The review committee and commissioner may use the applicant’s history as a state grantee and capacity to perform the work when making their decisions. If selected, recipients may only incur eligible expenditures after the grant contract agreement is fully executed and the grant has reached its start date. The award decisions of the MDA are final and not subject to appeal.

Questions due no later than 4:00 pm (Central Time)	April 8, 2022
Applications due no later than 4:00 pm (Central Time)	April 15, 2022
Review process	approximately one week
Selected grantee announced; grant agreement negotiations begin	late April 2022
Contract executed (approved) and grant begins	May 2022

## Financial review process

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to make grants to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are financially stable enough to carry out the purpose of the grant. All NGOs applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to a grant award made of \$25,000 and higher. Individuals and for-profit businesses are not subject to this requirement.

In order to comply with [Policy 08-06: Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations \(PDF\)](#), please review the following criteria and submit whichever document applies to your situation:

- Grant applicants with annual income of under \$50,000, or who have not been in existence long enough to have a completed IRS Form 990 or audit, should submit their most recent board-reviewed financial statements.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of \$50,000 or more and less than \$750,000 should submit their most recent IRS Form 990.
- Grant applicants with total annual revenue of over \$750,000 should submit their most recent certified financial audit.

## Requirements for Grant Recipients

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### Contracting

Prior to beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving reimbursements, the grantee must:

- Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state’s accounting system, and submit other required documentation within three weeks of award notification; and
- Sign a grant contract agreement indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreement also authorizes the MDA to monitor the progress of the project.

State of Minnesota grant contract agreement templates are available for your review on the [Office of Grants Management Forms and FAQs](#) webpage.

## Grant payments

Per [Policy 08-08 \(Grant Payments\)](#), reimbursement is the preferred method for making grant payments. However, grantees may request an initial payment of up to 25% of the award upon execution of the grant agreement, detailing the specific need for an advance. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. The State of Minnesota 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 the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

## Financial management

Payments under this grant contract will be made from federal funds obtained by the State of Minnesota through 7 U.S.C. 5936, Section 7522 of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008, CFDA number 10.525 and/or from State of Minnesota appropriations. The grantee is responsible for compliance with federal cost principles and accepts full financial responsibility for any requirements imposed by the grantee's failure to comply with federal requirements.

Allowable costs include but are not limited to:

- Personnel (salary and fringe)
- Travel (in-state)
- Consultants
- Subcontracts
- Materials and supplies
- Registration fees
- Training costs
- Printing
- Software
- Postage
- Shipping
- Indirect costs (limited to 10% of direct costs, unless your organization has a negotiated rate with an agency of the federal government)

Unallowable costs include but are not limited to:

- 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.

- Promotional giveaway items
- Incentives to entice participation (e.g., gift cards, coupons, etc.)
- Construction (building, facility)
- Meals while not in travel status
- Alcoholic beverages and/or entertainment
- Any costs expended before start date or after expiration date

Grantees must:

- follow the general procurement standards in [2 CFR 200.318](#) and use their own documented procurement procedures that reflect applicable state and local laws and regulations, provided that the requirements conform to applicable federal law and the standards found in [2 CFR 200.302-326](#).
- have adequate internal controls to assure that federal grant funds are kept separate from other grant funds and general organization expenses and income and has a process for approving expenditures as described in [2 CFR 200.303](#).
- maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.
- not make subawards or contract with vendors who are included in [Minnesota's Suspended/Debarred Vendor Report](#). Grantees must also verify that sub-awardees have registered in [SAM.gov](#) and have maintained an active account.

## Accountability and reporting

The grantee must submit a mid-award progress report and a final report. The final report must include:

- The number of farmers served and their demographics (gender, region, type of farming operation, ethnicity, veteran status).
- A description of the services or types of support requested and/or needed by the farmers that were served.
- Project evaluation data and recommendations for the MDA about the most effective ways to serve emerging and ethnically diverse farmers, including outreach and delivery of services.

## Grant monitoring

State grant policy ([MINN. STAT. 16B.97](#) and [Policy 08-10: Grant Monitoring \(PDF\)](#)) require the following:

- One monitoring visit during the grant period on all state grants of \$50,000 and higher
- Annual monitoring visits during the grant period on all grants of \$250,000 and higher
- Conducting a financial reconciliation of grantee's expenditures at least once during the grant period on grants of \$50,000 and higher. For this purpose, the grantee must make expense receipts, employee timesheets, invoices, and any other supporting documents available upon request by the State of Minnesota.

## 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](#) and [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making, 2022 \(Word\)](#)).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- a grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the MDA due to competing duties or loyalties.
- a grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.

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

## Public data

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



## 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 ([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.

## Grantee bidding requirements

The grantee must follow these rules for any grant-funded services and/or materials that are expected to cost:

- \$100,000 or more – must undergo a formal notice and bidding process.
- Between \$25,000 and \$99,999 – must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three verbal quotes or bids.
- Between \$10,000 and \$24,999 – must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.

The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:

- [Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List](#) (Minnesota Office of State Procurement)
- [Minnesota Unified Certification Program](#) (Metropolitan Council)
- [Central Certification Program](#) (Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of Saint Paul)

The grantee must maintain:

- Written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.
- Support documentation of the purchasing and/or bidding process utilized to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation justifying a single/sole source bid, if applicable.

The grantee must not contract with vendors who are [suspended or debarred in Minnesota](#).

## Audits

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

## Affirmative action and non-discrimination requirements for all grantees

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified ([MINN. STAT. 363A.02](#)). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship ([Minnesota Rules, part 5000.3500](#)).

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the [Minnesota Human Rights Act](#).

## Voter registration requirement

The grantee will provide voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the grantee ([MINN. STAT. 201.162](#)).

# Appendix A. Application Questions

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## 1. Project overview and description of need

- Describe your understanding of the need for this project and its potential impact. Describe the emerging or historically underserved group(s) you will target. Summarize the approach you will take.

## 2. Experience and qualifications

- Describe your experience serving or working with emerging or historically underserved diverse farmers.
- Describe your familiarity with agricultural lending and other farm financial issues.
- Describe your experience with State of Minnesota and Federal funding programs designed to assist farmers.
- Describe any other qualifications or experience relevant to the project.

## 3. Workplan

- Describe the activities you will undertake and provide the corresponding timeline.

## 4. Itemized budget

- Use the following categories and itemize costs: Personnel, Travel, Materials/Supplies, Consultants, Facility/Equipment Rental, Other, Indirect costs. Please review the [financial management](#) section of this RFP for information about allowable and unallowable costs.
- If awarded this grant, will you require an advance payment (Yes/No)? If yes, what percent of the total will you need to receive as an advance?

## 5. Evaluation

- Describe your plan to monitor progress, evaluate, and report on this project. How will you use this information to craft recommendations to the MDA?

## 6. Applicant information

- Legal name of applicant (business entity or individual)
- Assumed name(s), if any, of business entity
- Physical address
- Name, title, mailing address, telephone number, and email address of contact person for application

## 7. Authorized representative

- If awarded a grant, is the person authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the legal entity the same as the contact person listed above? (Yes/No)
- If no, provide name, title, mailing address, telephone number, and email address for the applicant's Authorized Representative who will sign any resulting grant contract agreement.

## 8. Eligibility

- Confirm that the following statements apply to your business:
  - The business is in good standing with the State of Minnesota. (No back taxes owed, no defaults on Minnesota state-backed financing for the past seven years, in compliance with current state regulations, acceptable performance on past MDA grants.) (Yes/No)
  - The business is in Minnesota or authorized to conduct business in Minnesota. (Yes/No)
  - No one involved in the project or the application for the grant is an employee or spouse of an employee of the MDA. (Yes/No)

- No work has started on proposed project or will work start before the grant contract agreement is signed by all parties. The MDA is unable to reimburse for any work that is performed prior to the effective date of the grant contract agreement. You may begin planning your project before the grant contract agreement is signed, but you may not contract for or purchase any goods or services included in your grant budget, including those expenses covered by matching funds. (Yes/No)

Please do not submit any other materials (binders, photos, etc.). Unrequested materials will not be reviewed.

Note: If your proposal is selected for funding, you will also be required to provide the financial review documentation information described in the [financial management](#) section of the RFP.

## Appendix B. Proposal Review Template

Item	Maximum Score
<p><b>Ability to administer the grant</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant demonstrates sound business management, financial aptitude, and stability.</li> </ul>	15
<p><b>Project overview and description of need</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant articulates the need and potential impact of this project.</li> <li>• Applicant identifies the emerging/historically underserved group(s) they will target. How many do they intend to serve?</li> <li>• Proposed outcomes of project are realistic and appropriate for the size of budget request.</li> </ul>	20
<p><b>Familiarity and experience with the groups the applicant intends to serve</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant describes familiarity and experience(s) collaborating with or delivering services to one or more the grant’s target groups.</li> </ul>	25
<p><b>Workplan and timeline</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workplan is thorough and realistic.</li> <li>• Timeline provides dates for each step of the applicant’s workplan.</li> </ul>	20
<p><b>Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget clearly details all project costs.</li> <li>• Budget does not contain unallowable costs.</li> <li>• Budget is cost effective.</li> </ul>	10
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant describes a plan to evaluate and report on this project.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How will they measure and assess progress toward goals?</li> <li>○ How will they use evaluation information to create recommendations for the MDA?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	10
<p><b>Total</b></p>	<p><b>100</b></p>