



Cooperative Development Grant Program

Fiscal Year 2025 Request for Proposals

Applications due by 4 p.m. on February 20, 2025

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651-201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711. The MDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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Grant Summary

Overview and funding availability

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is offering grants to help farmers finance new cooperatives that organize for the purpose of operating an agricultural product processing facility or marketing an agricultural product or agricultural service.

The smallest award will be \$2,500 and the largest will be \$50,000. Cooperatives may submit applications for more than one project but will not receive more than \$50,000 in total and may be asked to prioritize their projects. We will award approximately \$160,000 using a competitive review process. We expect that we will award five to 10 grants, but the final number depends on the size of the awards.

Program highlights

Items to consider regarding this year’s grant program:

- Applications are due by 4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Thursday, February 20, 2025.
- We will notify applicants in late April of the status of their application.
- Projects may not begin until contracts are fully signed by all parties.
- Projects must be completed by June 30, 2026.

Timeline

February 13, 2025, 4 p.m. CT.....Deadline to ask grant program questions.

February 20, 2025, 4 p.m. CT.....Applications due.

Mid-April 2025.....Applicants notified of decisions; grant agreement negotiations begin.

June 2025.....Anticipated start date for projects awarded funding.

How to apply

Applications are due by **4 p.m. CT on Thursday, February 20, 2025**. We will not consider late applications.

- Apply using our [online application system](#).
 - If you are a new user, you’ll need to create an account first.
 - Once you’re logged in, select “Cooperative Development Grant FY25”.
- Apply early so there is enough time to get technical assistance if needed.
 - It’s best practice to submit your application at least 24 hours in advance.
 - We are not responsible for any technical or logistical problems that result in a late submission. It is your responsibility to ensure that we receive your application before the deadline.

Questions

For questions on the grant program or application:

- Email your question to MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us before **4 p.m. CT on February 13, 2025**.
 - Include “Cooperative Development Grant” in the subject line.
- We will post responses to all questions on the Questions and Answers section of the [Cooperative Development Grant webpage](#).

Note: MDA employees are not authorized to give advice on any applications. Applicants who solicit or receive advice from unauthorized MDA employees may be disqualified from eligibility for a grant award.

For help with the online application system:

- Call 651-201-6500 or email MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us with “Cooperative Development Grant” in the subject line. We encourage asking questions early as we may not be able to assist all the last-minute callers.

Eligible applicants

To be eligible for this program, a grantee must:

- Be a new cooperative organized under chapter [308A](#) or [308B](#) (incorporated on or after January 1, 2020).
- Certify that all control of the cooperative is from farmers, family farm partnerships, family farm limited liability companies, or family farm corporations (as defined in section [500.24, subdivision 2](#)) who are actively engaged in agricultural commodity production.
- Be operated primarily to process agricultural commodities or market agricultural products or services produced in Minnesota.
- Receive or intend to receive agricultural commodities produced primarily by shareholders or members of the cooperative.
- Not allow nonpatron voting rights.
- Disclose if any board members or persons in leadership positions involved in this project are an MDA employee or spouse of an employee of the MDA. If so, you will be expected to explain how any conflicts of interest will be mitigated.

Applicants must also be in good standing with the State of Minnesota:

- 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 and federal regulations.
- No principals of the applicant organization, anybody with access to grant funds, or others involved in this project have been convicted of a financial crime such as theft, embezzlement, and forgery related to a state or federal grant contract agreement in the last 10 years.

Cooperatives that have principals who are MDA employees or spouses of employees are not eligible to apply.

Priorities

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

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

This grant program will prioritize beginning farmers (someone who has farmed for 10 years or less) and farmers who produce agricultural products with limited marketing resources or channels. Limited market resources or channels are barriers that prevent farmers from meaningfully or profitably marketing their products independently. These barriers may include, but are not limited to:

- Financial challenges, such as limited access to credit, capital, or land
- Physical distance from markets
- Suboptimal transportation/distribution infrastructure
- Logistical constraints (e.g., lack of storage capacity, processing infrastructure, on-farm/post-harvest labor, or technology)
- Limited access to market and demand data and information
- Lack of connections or relationships to buyers and other supply chain actors
- Limitations due to size (e.g., low bargaining power or prohibitive input costs)
- Lack of education
- Language barriers

Eligible projects and expenses

Projects must support the development of new cooperatives in the production, processing, or marketing of agricultural commodities, products, or services produced in Minnesota. Examples of eligible projects include:

- Feasibility studies
- Market analysis
- Assistance with organizational development
- Financing and managing new cooperatives (such as developing a capital plan for new cooperatives)
- Product development
- Development of business and marketing plans
- Predesign of facilities including site analysis, the development of bid specifications, preliminary blueprints and schematics, and the completion of purchase agreements and other necessary legal documents
- Co-op education (education to potential members around the business model and cooperative values and principles)
- Updating articles and bylaws

Projects involving the completion of feasibility studies, market research, development of legal documents, etc. must be conducted by reputable, third-party contractors.

Ineligible expenses

Ineligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services and payroll taxes
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking violations and traffic violations
- Projects with non-agricultural cooperatives
- Infrastructure and equipment
- Amusement, diversion, or social activity costs (such as tickets to shows or sports events, or meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, or gratuities connected with attending entertainment events)
- Contributions to a contingency reserve or any similar provision
- Costs of goods or services for personal use of the employees – regardless of whether the cost is reported as taxable income to the employees
- Out-of-state transportation and travel expenses. Minnesota will be considered the home state for deciding whether travel is out of state.

Matching funds

You must provide matching funds to receive the Cooperative Development Grant. At least 50% of the total project cost must be paid for by the applicant, a partner, or a third party. The match can be in the form of cash, in-kind contributions, or both.

In the budget section of your application, you must identify how you plan to provide matching funds. The match cannot be committed to any other grant and must be an eligible and approved project expense during the project period. Ineligible expenses cannot be used as a matching contribution.

Cash match

Sources of cash matching funds for the project may include cash, loans, federal funds, and liquid capital assets dedicated to the project. Other state funds may not be used for cash match.

In-kind match

In-kind contributions are defined as the value of goods or services that support the grant project, where no funds transferred hands. Typically, in-kind contributions are in the form of the value of direct personnel, goods, and services and may be contributed by the grantee, partners, or other third parties. Examples may include the donation of meeting space, printing, or a partner's time dedicated to working on the project (not paid for by the grant).

The cost for personnel/fringe may be used as a match if it is paid for with non-state funds, but only for the percentage of time the person is working on the project. For example, if one of your employees is only spending 10% of their time working on the project, then only 10% of that person's salary, wages, and fringe may be counted as cash match to the project. If the person is not actually paid for their time working on the project, but instead is donating/volunteering their time, the value of their time must be counted as an in-kind contribution. Also, you must ensure that what you propose to pay that individual, or the value of their volunteered time, is reasonable according to standard personnel rates for similar positions in your area. A single individual may both request grant funds and match time to your grant project. For example, your project manager's salary could be 50% grant funds and 50% matching funds if they are spending 100% of their time on your project.

Application Review Policies

Review process

A review committee, made up of MDA staff and external reviewers, will evaluate all eligible applications based on the criteria in the Project Evaluation Profile. Reviewers may recommend whole or partial funding of a project. The commissioner of agriculture reviews the committee recommendations and makes the award decisions. Both the review committee and commissioner may consider geographic distribution, services to prioritized populations, applicant's history as a state grantee, and capacity to perform the work.

The MDA will notify applicants, both successful and unsuccessful, in writing. Applicants may request a summary of reviewer comments.

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 potential 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 or grantee will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

Privacy notice and data classification

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant's eligibility to receive a grant under this program. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete this application without any legal consequence; however, only completed applications will be considered for a grant. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Data provided in this application is initially classified by the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act as private or nonpublic, although some or all of the data will generally become public at various points of the application process unless the data are otherwise classified by state or federal law. Access to private or nonpublic data is limited to those authorized by law, including but not necessarily limited to MDA staff and contractors with a valid work assignment to access the data, parties authorized by the applicant, parties identified in a valid court order or federal subpoena, Minnesota Management and Budget, Minnesota Department of Administration, the state auditor, and the legislative auditor. If necessary, the MDA may also share the data with law enforcement or the Office of the Attorney General.

Per Minnesota's statute on grants ([MINN. STAT. 13.599](#)):

- Names and addresses of grant applicants, and the grant amount requested, will be public data once application responses are opened.
- All remaining data in application responses (except for data otherwise classified by law, including trade secret information, see below) becomes public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).
- All data created or maintained by the MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret information, see below) will generally be public data after the evaluation process is completed.

Procedure for claiming protection of trade secrets:

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

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

Pre-award risk assessment

Under [Policy 08-06: Policy on Pre-Award Risk Assessment for Potential Grantees \(PDF\)](#), the MDA is required to complete a pre-award risk assessment of grantees selected to receive a grant award of \$50,000 or greater. Applicants will be asked to submit documents relevant to their entity.

If the MDA determines that the awardee 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.

For-profit businesses

- A copy of the business' most recent federal and state tax returns. If the business has not been in operation long enough to have a tax return, then they must submit documentation of internal controls.
- Current financial statements including a balance sheet, income statement, and statement of cashflows.
- Confirmation that the business entity is not under bankruptcy proceedings and has disclosed any liens on assets.
- Confirmation that the business is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Confirmation that none of its current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

Nonprofit organizations

- A copy of the nonprofit's most recent Form 990 or Form 990-EZ with the Internal Revenue Service. If the nonprofit has not been in existence long enough or is not required to file Form 990 or Form 990-EZ, then they must submit the following information:
 - Proof of its tax-exempt status
 - Most recent board-reviewed financial statements
 - Documentation of its internal controls
- Most recent certified financial audit if required to complete one under Section 309.53, Subd. 3.
- Confirmation that it is in good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.
- Confirmation that none of its current board members or staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years.

Grant award agreement and payments

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

Upon approval of an application and before beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving reimbursements, the applicant must:

- Complete an IRS W-9 form, register as a vendor in SWIFT (the state’s accounting system), or confirm that the information we have in SWIFT is still correct;
- Submit documentation to meet pre-award financial review requirements or any other documentation as applicable within 30 days of the request for such documentation being sent to the grantee; and
- Sign a grant contract agreement showing their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreements also authorize the MDA to monitor the progress of the projects. Grant contract agreements must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the contract has been signed by all parties. The MDA will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any firm for work performed in the preparation and production of a proposal, nor for any work performed prior to the formal execution of the contract.

Reimbursement procedures

Grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. To receive payments, grantees must submit requests for reimbursements. Grantees may be asked to submit itemized invoices, along with verification of the costs you are requesting reimbursement for and proof of your matching contributions to the grant. Verification documentation may include financial reports from your financial accounting system (including payroll), supporting documentation such as invoices or receipts, verification of any in-kind contributions, and a progress report. Generalized information on requesting reimbursement can be found in our [expense reimbursement guide \(PDF\)](#), although there may be additional requirements for this program.

Grantees must have the financial capacity to be able to document the receipt of revenue and expenditures on staff time, contractors, and other grant-approved costs. Grantees must also know what is and is not an “allowable” cost to be charged to the grant. Grant payments will not be made on any grants with overdue reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

The MDA will perform a financial reconciliation of at least one invoice on grants greater than or equal to \$50,000; financial reconciliation may be performed on additional payment requests at the discretion of the MDA. For this purpose, the grantee must provide expense receipts, employee timesheets, invoices, and any other supporting documents requested by the state.

Accountability and reporting

The grantee must submit an annual report each year of the grant. A final report must be submitted prior to receiving final payment. Annual and final reports must include a summary of project results to-date, impact of the grant program, and three to five photos of the project. The MDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the project. Information submitted in any report or survey will be a public record.

The MDA periodically requests follow-up surveys from former grantees to help determine the long-term impacts of the grant. Grantees must respond to these requests for three years beyond the term of the grant agreement. Failure to respond to these promptly may affect a grantee’s ability to secure future funding from the MDA.

Site visits

The grant agreement allows the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. The MDA will perform a monitoring visit for all grantees with awards of \$25,000 or more before a final payment is approved. Other grantees may receive monitoring visits at the discretion of the MDA.

Bidding requirements

All funded applicants must follow the State's [bidding requirements](#) for larger purchases.

Publicity

All projects funded must publicly credit the MDA, including on the grantee's website when practical. An example would be, "Funds provided in part by the Minnesota Department of Agriculture."

Affirmative action and non-discrimination policy

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](#).

Record retention and audits of project

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, the commissioner of administration, the legislative auditor, and the state auditor, as appropriate ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 8](#)). The grantee is responsible for the retention of documents and records relevant to the grant. 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.

Voter registration requirement

The grantee will provide voter registration services for its employees ([MINN. STAT. 201.162](#)).

Project Evaluation Profile

| Cooperative Development Grant evaluation criteria | Maximum score |
|--|---------------|
| <p>Cooperative history and capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant clearly describes the cooperative and the process of their cooperative’s development. • Applicant is a new cooperative (incorporated on or after January 1, 2020). • Applicant demonstrates capacity to implement the proposed project. | 15 |
| <p>Grant request</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project description is clear and thorough. • Applicant clearly describes any third parties they plan to contract with and their qualifications to complete the work. • Start and completion dates are provided. | 20 |
| <p>Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget table and narrative are consistent and clearly details all project costs. • Budget is cost effective and appropriate amounts are backed by quotes or other sources. | 20 |
| <p>Workplan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant demonstrates the capacity to successfully implement the project and thoroughly considers the steps necessary to complete the project. • Workplan is thorough. • All timeframes for deliverables are realistic. • A detailed description of each step of the grant project, including estimated dates, is provided. • Applicant has sufficient partners committed to assisting with the project. | 15 |
| <p>Project outcomes and evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant demonstrates the ability to measure project success with clear outcomes. | 5 |
| <p>Minnesota agriculture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant demonstrates commitment to operating an agricultural product processing facility or marketing an agricultural product or agricultural service in Minnesota. | 10 |
| <p>Stakeholder support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant demonstrates stakeholder engagement in and support for the project. • Applicant includes strong letter(s) of support. | 10 |
| <p>Priority Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative prioritizes beginning farmers. • Cooperative prioritizes farmers who produce an agricultural product/s with limited marketing resources or channels. | 5 |
| <p>Total</p> | 100 |

Application Questions

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

Contact information

Applicant information

- Project name (name of cooperative)
- Cooperative mailing address
- Cooperative physical address (if applicable)
- Contact person (first and last name)
- Contact person's telephone
- Contact person's email

Authorized representative

- If awarded a grant, is the person authorized to sign contracts on behalf of the business or organization the same as the contact person listed above? (Yes or No)
- If no, please provide the following Authorized Representative information for signing any resulting grant contract agreement:
 - Name
 - Title
 - Telephone
 - Email
 - Address

Eligibility certifications

- Confirm that the following statements apply to your organization.
 - The applicant is a new cooperative organized under chapter 308A or 308B (incorporated on or after January 1, 2020). (True)
 - All control of the cooperative is from farmers, family farm partnerships, family farm limited liability companies, or family farm corporations as defined in section 500.24, subdivision 2, who are actively engaged in agricultural commodity production. (True)
 - The cooperative is operated, or will be operated, primarily to process agricultural commodities or market agricultural products or services produced in Minnesota. (True)
 - The cooperative receives, or will receive, agricultural commodities produced primarily by shareholders or members of the cooperative. (True)
 - The cooperative does not allow nonpatron voting rights. (True)

- The cooperative is in good standing with the State of Minnesota and does not owe the State of Minnesota any back taxes and has not defaulted on any Minnesota state-backed financing in the last seven years. (True)
- The cooperative is compliant with current state and federal regulations. (True)
- No principals of the applicant organization or others involved in this project have been convicted of a financial crime such as theft, embezzlement, and forgery related to a state or federal grant contract agreement in the last 10 years. (True)
- Are any principals with the cooperative an employee of the MDA or spouse of an MDA employee? (Yes or No)
 - If yes, briefly describe the individual's role with the MDA and their relationship with the applicant and organization. (500 characters, including spaces)
- Has the cooperative received previous grant funding from the state, federal agencies, or other organizations? (Yes or No)
 - If yes, briefly describe your previous grant project(s), including date(s) and amount(s) awarded. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

Cooperative history and capacity

- Date the cooperative was incorporated (must be on or after January 1, 2020).
- Describe the cooperative, including history of the cooperative from conception to its current state (steps taken to establish the cooperative, current stage of development, etc.); why the cooperative was originally formed and its purpose; its current or future membership; and its governance and management structure. (3,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe the agricultural commodities or marketing of agricultural products or services the cooperative focuses on or plans to focus on. (1,500 characters, including spaces)
- Describe the cooperative's capacity to complete the proposed project and the people involved. (1,500 characters, including spaces)

Grant request

- Provide a detailed description of the project. (3,000 characters, including spaces)
- Total grant request. Minimum of \$2,500, maximum of \$50,000.
 - Grant amount requested.
 - Total project cost.
- Date you plan to start your project.
 - Must be after both you and the State of Minnesota sign the contract (anticipated June 2025).
- Anticipated completion date of project.
 - All projects must be completed by June 30, 2026.
 - You will have up to 90 days after your contract end date to submit for a reimbursement.
 - All items and services must be paid for by the end date of the contract.

Budget

Budget table

Complete the following table. The budget table is an overview of how grant funds will be spent and how your cooperative plans to meet the match requirement.

Requested funds: Purchases made prior to a fully executed contract are not eligible for this grant, including any down payments or deposits on approved projects.

Match: Applicants must commit at least 50% of the total project cost through matching funds paid for by the applicant, partner, or third party. Match may include cash match or in-kind contributions toward eligible project expenses during the project period. Purchases/payments/donations made prior to a fully executed contract are not eligible for use as match, including any down payments or deposits on approved projects. Ensure that the total match is equivalent, or more, than the total funds being requested.

| Item | Total estimate | Source of estimate | Total funds requested | Total match contributed |
|--|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Example: Contract with ABC Company to complete Feasibility Study | \$30,000 | ABC Company | \$15,000 | \$15,000 |
| Example: Staff time for John Smith | \$17,808 | XYZ Cooperative | \$8,904 | \$8,904 |
| Example: Mileage for John Smith meeting with ABC Company | \$500 | XYZ Cooperative | \$500 | - |
| Example: Printing paid for by member | \$500 | QRS Printing Company | - | \$500 |

Budget narrative

- Describe anything about the budget that may be unclear or need more explanation. For example, if you request funding for staff time, indicate the staff person and their role/responsibilities with the project. Describe the type of match contributed (cash or in-kind) and who is the match contributor (the cooperative, partner, third party, etc.) (3,000 characters, including spaces)
 - Example: Half of the contract with ABC Company to complete the feasibility study will be paid for with grant funds and the remaining will be paid for by XYZ Cooperative with a cash contribution raised by potential members. John Smith will be the project manager working 20 hours per week at \$31.80/hour for seven months on this project. His responsibilities will include managing the overall project, acting as point person for contract with ABC Company, communicating back to the project team and leadership, as well as completing the reporting and reimbursement requests with the MDA. We are requesting that half of his time be paid for with grant funding and the remainder will be paid for by XYZ Cooperative. Mileage requested will include travel to and from the meeting locations with ABC Company. Bid provided by ABC Company is attached.
- Describe any third parties you plan to contract with or use to facilitate any of the work and their qualifications to do so. (2,000 characters, including spaces)
- Optional: You may upload estimates provided by third parties. If you have multiple estimates to upload, merge them into a single file before uploading.

Workplan

Workplan table

Complete the following table. You should include the steps and the time frame you will take to successfully complete your project. For example, you might want to include target dates for requesting quotes, hiring contractors, decision deadlines, etc.

| Time frame | Description of task or action item |
|--|--|
| Example: August 2025 | Sign contract with third party to complete feasibility study. |
| Example: September 2025 | Kick-off meeting for feasibility study. |
| Example: September 2025- January 2026 | Assigned staff work with contractor to complete the study (interviews with potential members, market research, financial analysis, etc.) |
| Example: February 2026- March 2026 | Presentation of feasibility study to cooperative leaders. "Go/no-go" decision made by board of directors. |

Optional: You may upload a workplan in the format above if there is not enough space provided.

Additional workplan notes

- Describe anything about the workplan that may need more explanation. (1,500 characters, including spaces)

Project outcomes and evaluation

- Describe how your project will advance the development of the cooperative. (1,500 characters, including spaces)
- Explain how you will evaluate or measure your project's success. (1,500 characters, including spaces)

Minnesota agriculture

- Describe how your project will impact Minnesota agriculture and increase economic viability for Minnesota producers through the operation of an agricultural product processing facility or by marketing an agricultural product or agricultural service. (2,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe how more Minnesota agricultural products will be used/processed because of your project. (1,500 characters, including spaces)

Stakeholder support

- Describe any project partners or collaborators and the specific role and responsibilities of each in the project. (1,500 characters, including spaces)
- You may further your project's community impact by submitting letters of support and commitment from:
 - Member-owners of your cooperative who will be participating in or benefitting from your project, particularly those that are emerging farmers.
 - Partners, collaborators, or contractors who will be participating in or contributing to your project.
 - Agricultural producers, producer groups, or other sources of Minnesota-grown products.
 - Other businesses or organizations, particularly those that are part of your cooperative's supply chain.
 - Community organizations citing the potential impacts of your project.
- If you have multiple letters to upload, merge them into a single file before uploading.

Priority Areas

- Describe how your cooperative prioritizes beginning farmers. (2,000 characters, including spaces)
- Describe how your cooperative prioritizes farmers producing an agricultural product/s with limited marketing resources or channels. (2,000 characters, including spaces) Limited market resources or channels are barriers that prevent farmers from meaningfully or profitably marketing their products independently. These barriers may include, but are not limited to:
 - Financial challenges, such as limited access to credit, capital, or land
 - Physical distance from markets
 - Suboptimal transportation/distribution infrastructure
 - Logistical constraints (e.g., lack of storage capacity, processing infrastructure, on-farm/post-harvest labor, or technology)
 - Limited access to market and demand data and information
 - Lack of connections or relationships to buyers and other supply chain actors
 - Limitations due to size (e.g., low bargaining power or prohibitive input costs)
 - Lack of education
 - Language barriers

Summary of proposed project

- Briefly summarize your cooperative's purpose and project in two to three sentences in a way that helps the public easily understand the project scope, goals, and outcomes. (500 characters, including spaces)

Additional notes

- Describe anything about the proposed project that may be unclear or needs more explanation. (1,500 characters, including spaces)

Definitions

Agricultural commodity: A material produced for use in or as food, feed, seed, or fiber. This includes crops for fiber, food, oilseeds, seeds, livestock, livestock products, dairy, dairy products, poultry, poultry products, and other products or by-products of the farm produced for the same or similar use, except ethanol.

Agricultural product processing facility: Land, buildings, structures, fixtures, and improvements used or operated primarily for the processing or production of marketable products from agricultural commodities. For the purposes of this grant, the facility must be in Minnesota.

Agricultural service: An action made under the direction of a farmer that provides value to another entity. Agricultural service includes grazing to manage vegetation.