



# **Farmers' Market Nutrition Assistance Grant 2025 Request for Proposals**

**Proposals 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.

# Contents

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- Grant Summary.....1
- Overview.....1
- Funding availability.....1
- Priorities .....1
- How to apply .....2
- How to ask questions .....2
- Application guidelines .....3
- Timeline and deadlines .....3
- Eligibility .....4
- Eligible applicants.....4
- Eligible projects .....4
- Ineligible expenses .....5
- Matching funds.....5
- Collaboration .....5
- Application Review Policies .....6
- Review process .....6
- Conflicts of interest .....6
- Requirements for Grant Recipients.....7
- Grant award agreement .....7
- Payments .....7
- Bidding requirements.....7
- Project audits.....8
- Affirmative action and non-discrimination policy.....8
- Voter registration requirement.....8
- Data Privacy .....8
- Privacy notice and data classification.....8
- Project Evaluation Profile ..... 10
- Application Questions ..... 11
- Contact information ..... 11
- Eligibility ..... 11
- Project summary ..... 12
- Project budget ..... 13
- Priorities ..... 14

# Grant Summary

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## Overview

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is now accepting applications for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Assistance Grant program.

Grant funds are available to help Minnesota farmers' markets support food assistance programs such as: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), Market Bucks, and Power of Produce (POP) Club.

## Funding availability

We expect to award approximately \$150,000 using a competitive review process. Applicants may request between \$1,500 to \$10,000 per farmers' market association. We expect to award 15 to 30 grants, but the final number depends on the size of the awards. There is no match requirement for this grant.

If the project proposal is approved the farmers' market association may request an advance of up to 50% of the project funding. Advance funds must be requested as a part of the application process.

## 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 will prioritize farmers' market projects that are located in or serve distressed or disadvantaged communities and those implementing a new nutrition assistance program option. A description of each priority area is below. This [USDA Rural Development map tool](#) is used to determine if the project is located in or serves a distressed or disadvantaged community.

## Distressed community

A distressed community is a zip code-based geographic designation which identifies communities where their economic wellbeing is significantly lower than other communities. This designation is determined using the Distressed Communities Index (DCI), developed by the Economic Innovation Group. The DCI combines seven publicly-available metrics to assess the economic wellbeing of communities, including percent of the population 25 years and older without a high school degree and percent of the population living under the poverty line.

## Disadvantaged community

A disadvantaged community is a census tract-based geographic designation developed by the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) from the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Census tracts are considered disadvantaged if they meet the threshold for at least one of the CEJST's eight categories of burden: Climate, Energy, Health, Housing, Legacy Pollution, Transportation, Water and Wastewater, or Workforce Development.

## Nutrition assistance program

Nutrition assistance programs include programs that help individuals and families who are experiencing food insecurity purchase foods directly from farmers at farmers' markets. Examples include SNAP, FMNP, SFMNP, and Market Bucks.

## How to apply

Apply for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Assistance Grant using our [online application system](#):

- If you're a new user, first create an account.
- Once you're logged in to your account, select "Farmers' Market Nutrition Assistance Grant."
- If you can't use the online application system, contact [mda.agrigrants@state.mn.us](mailto:mda.agrigrants@state.mn.us) or 651-201-6500 to request other arrangements.

The application period is open until **4 p.m. Central Time (CT) on Wednesday February 20, 2025.**

- Only one application will be accepted per farmers' market association.
- We will not accept late applications.
- Apply early so there is enough time to get help with the application process if you need it.
- We are not responsible for any technical or logistical problems that result in a late submission. It is your responsibility to ensure we receive your application before the deadline.

## How to ask questions

For questions about the grant program or application:

- Submit your question in writing before **4 p.m. CT on February 13, 2025.**
- Email [MDA.agrigrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.agrigrants@state.mn.us) with "Farmers' Market Nutrition Assistance Grant" in the subject line.

For help using the online application system:

- Call 651-201-6500 or
- Email [MDA.agrigrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.agrigrants@state.mn.us) and include "Farmers' Market Nutrition Assistance Grant" in the subject line.

## Application guidelines

- Answer all questions completely within the character limits specified in the grant application.
- Review the [Project Evaluation Profile](#) included in this document to help you score as many points as possible.

## Timeline and deadlines

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

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

**April 8, 2025** .....All applicants notified of grant status.

**May 15, 2025** .....Anticipated contract start date.

# Eligibility

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## Eligible applicants

### Applicants must:

- Be a Minnesota farmers' market.
  - Farmers' markets are defined as an association of three or more persons who assemble at a defined location that is open to the public for the purpose of selling directly to the consumer the products of a farm or garden occupied and cultivated by the persons selling the product ([MINN. STAT. 28A.151](#)).
- Intend to participate in at least one nutrition assistance program that provides food directly to program participants at the farmers' market in 2025.
- 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 regulations.

Farmers' markets managed by an MDA employee or their spouse are not eligible to apply.

## Eligible projects

All project expenses must directly support food assistance programs at farmers' market.

Expenses must be incurred after the grant contract agreement has been signed by all parties (contract effective date) and before June 30, 2026.

### Eligible expenses and projects include, but are not limited to:

- Salary or stipends for staff or volunteers needed to support food assistance program(s)
- Implementing a new nutrition assistance program at the market
- Program-specific signage
- Storage
- Printing of program tokens or other program materials
- Technology upgrades
- Transportation for bringing participants to the farmers' market
- SNAP/EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer) card processing fees
- Program advertising

## Ineligible expenses

The following items are examples of expenses that are **not** eligible for reimbursement:

- Expenditures incurred before the contract effective date or after its expiration date
- Expenses that are reimbursed by another state or federal program
- General business expenses such as rent, utilities, licensing, insurance, or registration fees
- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services and payroll taxes
- Lobbyists or political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking violations and traffic violations
- Donated or volunteer (in-kind) services. While these may be given to an applicant by professional and technical personnel, consultants, and other skilled and unskilled labor, the value of these services is not an eligible cost.

## Matching funds

Applicants are not required to provide matching funds to the grant award. Up to 100% of the total project cost may be covered by the grant, with a minimum grant award of \$1,500 and a maximum grant award of \$10,000.

## Collaboration

Eligible applicants may collaborate with other farmers' market associations, but this is not required. If you are submitting a joint application, you must determine which association will have the grant contract agreement with the MDA and will work directly with the MDA to meet grant reporting requirements. Note that this organization will receive a 1099 from the State of Minnesota for income tax purposes.

# Application Review Policies

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## Review process

A review committee, composed of MDA staff and external reviewers, evaluates 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 considers the committee's recommendations and makes award decisions. Both the review committee and commissioner may consider geographic distribution, applicant's history as a previous grantee, and capacity to perform the work in their decisions.

We expect to notify all applicants in writing on or before April 8, 2025.

## 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 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.



# Requirements for Grant Recipients

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## Grant award agreement

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

All grant recipients must:

- Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system.
- Submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.
- Sign a grant contract agreement showing their intention to complete the proposed tasks. The agreement also authorizes the MDA to monitor the progress of the project. This agreement must be signed within 30 days.

Eligible expenses may only be incurred after the contract has been signed by all parties. Grant contracts will have an expected end date of June 30, 2026.

## Payments

In the budget section of the application, grantees can request an advanced payment of up to 50% of their total award amount. These requests will be reviewed as a part of the grant contract agreement negotiation process. The MDA reserves the right to not honor requests for initial advanced payments or subsequent advances. Advance funds must be reconciled within one year of the start of the grant contract. Advance funds will not be awarded to organizations with other open MDA grant agreements. Any cash advance that violates the terms of the grant agreement or does not adequately support the approved project will need to be repaid.

All other grant funds are dispersed on a reimbursement basis. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. To receive grant payments, grantees must provide 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.

Grantees must submit progress reports in Fall 2025 and at the end of their project. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless the MDA has given the grantee a written extension.

Grant payments may be used to fulfill federal and state tax liabilities or may be withheld until the grantee has paid any tax liabilities ([MINN. STAT. 270C.65, Subd. 3](#) and other applicable laws).

## Bidding requirements

All grantees must abide by the state's [bidding requirements](#) for items costing over \$10,000.

## Project 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 MDA, the legislative auditor or the state auditor, and the commissioner of administration, as appropriate ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98, subd. 8](#)).

The grantee is responsible for the retention of documents and records relevant to this 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.

## 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](#).

## Voter registration requirement

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

# Data Privacy

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## 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 the Farmers' Market Nutrition Assistance Grant 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 who have 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 other data in application responses (except trade secret information, see below) becomes public data after the evaluation process is complete (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.

# Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation criterion	Maximum score
<p><b>Project need</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant clearly and compellingly describes how the project will support nutrition assistance programs at the farmers’ market.</li> <li>• Application shows the likelihood that the project will increase nutrition assistance program participation.</li> </ul>	40
<p><b>Work plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work plan is thorough and realistic.</li> <li>• Work plan includes a detailed description of each step of the grant project including estimated dates.</li> </ul>	25
<p><b>Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget narrative clearly details all project costs.</li> <li>• Budget is cost effective and planned purchases are backed by quotes or other sources.</li> </ul>	25
<p><b>Distressed or disadvantaged communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project is located in or meaningfully serves a distressed or disadvantaged community.</li> <li>• Proposal describes how grant-funded activities will benefit distressed or disadvantaged communities.</li> </ul>	5
<p><b>Farmers’ market is implementing a new food assistance program</b></p>	5
<p><b>Total</b></p>	100

# Application Questions

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## Contact information

### Applicant information

- Farmers' market association
- Farmers' market location
- Contact name
- Contact mailing address
- Contact telephone
- Contact email
- County

### Authorized representative

If awarded a grant, the person who will sign the Farmers' Market Nutrition Assistance Grant contract agreement for this organization. This is likely the market manager or market representative.

- Name
- Telephone
- Email

## Eligibility

Confirm that the following statements apply to your organization.

- I have the authority to apply for this grant on behalf of the farmers' market association. (True)
- I attest that this farmers' market has at least three vendors who sell directly to consumers the products of a farm or garden occupied and cultivated by the persons selling the product. (True)
- The farmers' market association does not owe the State of Minnesota any back taxes and has not defaulted on any State of Minnesota-backed financing in the last seven years. (True)
- The farmers' market association is compliant with current state regulations, or this project will help the association become compliant. (True)
- The funds will be used to support farmers' markets in Minnesota. (True)
- I understand that if my application is successful, the MDA cannot reimburse for any project expenses incurred outside the contract period. (Yes)

## Additional eligibility questions

- This is the only application being submitted on behalf of this farmers' market association. (Yes)
- I attest that none of the farmers' market association staff with authority to access grant funds have been convicted of a felony financial crime in the last 10 years. (True)
- Is the farmers' market managed by an employee of the MDA or the spouse of an MDA employee? (Yes/No)
  - If yes, briefly describe the individual's role with the MDA and their relationship to the applicant/organization.

## Project summary

### Grant request

- Project name (name of farmers' market association).
- Total grant request (minimum \$1,500, maximum of \$10,000).
- Select all food assistance programs that your market currently manages. (500 characters, including spaces)
  - SNAP
  - FMNP
  - SFMNP
  - Market Bucks
  - Power of Produce (POP) Club
  - Other
- Expected project end date (no later than June 30, 2026). Note:
  - Projects must begin within one year of the contract start date.
  - You will have up to 30 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.

### Project description

Describe your project in three to five sentences — what are you going to do? Include the need for the project, how/why it will support nutrition assistance programs, and how the project will benefit your farmers' market. (1,000 characters, including spaces)

### Evaluation plan

Describe your organization's plan to evaluate the impact of the grant project. Examples of measurable outcomes could include the number of nutrition assistance participants served, the number of programs offered, and any increase to farmers' sales. (2,500 characters, including spaces)

## Work plan

Complete the following table to outline the milestones that you will meet to successfully complete your Farmers' Market Nutrition Assistance Grant project. For example, you might include target dates for finalizing the items you would like to procure, requesting bids, determining a schedule, or training staff. If requesting equipment, you might include target dates for buying, installing, and using your new equipment. Not all areas will apply to all projects. You may add additional lines or pages as necessary.

Timeframe	Description of task or action item	Who is responsible?
Ex: June 2025	Hire staff to assist at SNAP table	Market Manager
Ex: June 2025	Purchase POP tokens	Market Manager

## Project budget

### Budget

Complete a budget table using the example format below. This is an overview of how grant funds will be spent and should reflect the total amount of grant funds you're requesting. You may add additional lines as necessary.

Do **not** attach bid sheets or quotes from vendors in place of a budget table.

Item	Quantity	Cost per unit	Total estimate	Source of estimate
Program signage	10	\$150	\$1500	ABC Printing
Transportation vouchers	100	\$5	\$500	123 Busing

### Budget narrative

Justify your budget and explain ongoing support needs for your project. (1,500 characters, including spaces)

- Explain how each expense outlined in the budget table will be used to support nutrition assistance programs at the farmers' market.
- Explain how the market will sustain the program after this grant program has ended.

### (Optional) Quotes and other sources

Submit quotes or estimates for equipment or services.

### Advance funds

You may request an advanced payment of up to 50% of your total award amount at the start of the grant contract agreement. You must reconcile advance funds within one year of the start of the grant contract.

Note: We will not make additional payments until advanced payments have been accounted for. We reserve the right to not honor requests for initial advanced payments. Any advance that violates the terms of the grant agreement or does not adequately support the approved project will need to be repaid.

- Are you requesting advance funds? (Yes/No)
  - If yes, how much?
- Explain why your farmers' market needs advanced funding. (500 characters, including spaces)

## Priorities

This grant will prioritize grant-making to farmers' market projects that are located in or serve distressed or disadvantaged communities and those implementing a new nutrition assistance program option.

### Distressed or disadvantaged communities

Using this [USDA Rural Development map tool](#), check if your project is in a shaded area and answer the following questions:

- Is your proposed project located in or meaningfully serve a distressed or disadvantaged community as defined on the USDA Rural Development map? (Yes/No)
  - If yes, summarize how your farmers' market plans to work with or has worked with distressed or disadvantaged communities. (1,200 characters, including spaces)

### Implementing a new nutrition assistance program

- Will your farmers' market be implementing a new nutrition assistance program in 2025? (Yes/No)
  - If yes, explain which program you will be starting and how these funds will help your program succeed. (1,000 characters, including spaces)