

HENNEPIN COUNTY
MINNESOTA



Waste prevention grants for businesses

2024 guidelines

Introduction

Hennepin County is required by state law to recycle 75% of its waste and reduce total waste by 6% by 2030. Businesses and organizations produce more than half of the county's waste. Reducing waste conserves natural resources and reduces greenhouse gas emissions. It can also help a business' bottom line and demonstrates commitment to the community.

This Hennepin County grant program was created to fund projects that start or improve solid waste prevention in the business and nonprofit sectors. Areas of focus can include preventing food from going to waste, reuse and recovery of goods and materials, and replacing disposables with reusables. Solid waste is defined as non-hazardous, municipal solid waste, which includes trash, mixed recyclables (including paper, glass, plastics, metals, cartons) and organics. Any project that prevents, reduces, or reuses waste (trash, recycling, and organics) may be eligible. Projects to start or improve recycling or organics programs do not qualify for this funding. In 2024, \$300,000 is available to fund these grants.

New for 2024: projects that focus on food recovery for redistribution are no longer funded through this grant program. Hennepin County will be launching a food recovery grant program that will provide funding for projects like these in spring 2024.

Eligible applicants

For-profit businesses and nonprofit organizations located in Hennepin County that are registered with the Minnesota Secretary of State are eligible to apply. Out-of-state businesses can apply but must register with the Minnesota Secretary of State to be considered, and all projects must occur in Hennepin County.

Hennepin County requires an applicant be in compliance with county solid waste Ordinance 13 requirements for commercial generators regarding [mixed recyclables \(PDF\)](#) and, if applicable, [food or organic material \(PDF\)](#) in order to receive grant funding. Contact us for help with compliance.

Eligible projects and expenses

Include questions you have about eligible projects or expenses when you fill out the inquiry form to begin the application process or in follow-up conversations with business recycling staff. Note that some expenses, such as dishwashers and staffing, are eligible only in certain categories. See the Guidelines section for match information and other restrictions. Examples of projects and eligible expenses for consideration include but are not limited to:

- Replacing disposables with reusable food packaging, dishes, utensils, and cups
- Reusable shipping and packaging containers, such as food crates and shipping boxes
- Reusable wrap, such as pallet wrap and boat storage
- Dishwashing equipment, including installation
 - \$10,000 maximum
 - If used by a licensed food business, must meet Minnesota Food Code requirements, and have approval of regulating health department. Must be Energy Star-certified.
 - No replacement dishwashers

Food waste prevention

- Equipment (other than refrigerators and freezers) or other methods to put food byproducts to greater use
- Food-waste tracking technology
 - Staff training on how to use technology
 - Software contract costs for up to one year
 - Examples of software: Leanpath, Phood, Winnow

Reuse and repair retailers

Items outlined in this section are only eligible expenses for retailers that offer reused items and/or repair services.

- Staffing for new activities such as:
 - Marketing
 - Training
 - Website and social media development
 - Search-engine optimization
- Technology or software systems for inventory management
- Capital improvements
 - Improvements to existing space
 - Fitting rooms, lighting, awnings, painting
 - Projects involving removal or installation of building materials must consult with Hennepin County construction and demolition staff during the application process to discuss plans for reuse and recycling.
- Specialized vehicles strictly for collection and transport of goods for reuse.
 - Purchase, rental or one-time service fees may be considered

Innovation in waste prevention

- Design or manufacturing changes to packaging or products that reduce material use
- Projects that use solid waste products as raw material
- Software intended to track, identify or otherwise lead to preventing waste

Guidelines

1. Grant requests must be between \$2,500 and \$50,000.
 - All grants must include matching funds of 25% of the total grant fund request. To further promote waste prevention, 25% match requirements may be waived during application if funds requested are for items or equipment in used condition and the total grant is \$10,000 or less.
 - *Used* is defined as the continued use, repair, or repurposing of items or materials, which extends the life of resources and decreases demand for new production. When *repurposed*, it is in the current form of the product without drastic modifications. Pre-owned, refurbished, and open-box are common terms used to describe items that fit this criteria. Items made from recycled content or on clearance do not qualify as used.

- Applicants must provide documentation of used condition for each item(s) to be waived. Documentation can include screenshots of used item listings, links to used item listings, or other proof showing the availability and cost of the used item(s). When possible, include the cost of new rather than used to help bolster your waiver request.
 - Funding requests categorized as staffing cannot exceed \$10,000 and cannot exceed 50% of the budgeted salary or pay for that position (full or part time). The position can be an existing or new employee, but funds will only cover new activities above and beyond normal activities.
 - No in-kind matching funds are allowed; the match must be cash for expenses listed in the table of eligible expenses and must be a direct result of this project. Receipts to prove matching funds are required in final grant reporting. Additional funding restrictions may apply (see *Eligible projects and expenses* above).
2. Grant awards will be distributed in two payments:
 - 50% of funds will be released upon execution of a grant agreement.
 - The remaining 50% of funds will be released after approval of the final grant report, including documentation of actual expenses and required match contributions.
 3. Grant recipients must submit a final project report at least 30 days before the expiration of the grant agreement. The report must detail efforts made to achieve project goals and the results of those efforts, including quantitative data, referencing the baseline data and project expenditures. A reporting template will be provided.
 4. Applications for a group of businesses and organizations as a collaborative effort can be submitted, but one organization must act as the primary applicant and submit the application on behalf of the others.
 5. All grant recipients will be required to enter into a grant agreement with the county for 18 months. Expenses may not be incurred prior to an authorized grant agreement with Hennepin County. Projects may be completed early. The grant agreement process requires additional documentation after the application is submitted, including proof of authority for the person signing the contract and minimum insurance coverage outlined in the grant agreement. The certificate must list Hennepin County as an additional insured.
 - Hennepin County reserves the right to revoke any funding award for which an agreement is not executed, due to delays on the part of the applicant, within two (2) months of having received the grant agreement to sign.

Applying and evaluation criteria

Applying for grant funding

Applications will be accepted on an ongoing basis until Monday, November 11, 2024, or until the annual program budget is exhausted, whichever occurs first. The grant application will be provided by county staff after a consultation about the project idea. Begin the consultation process by submitting the [business recycling request form](#).

Evaluation criteria

Grant proposals will be awarded to ensure funds are used to support Hennepin County's goals to reduce waste. The following criteria will be considered:

- **Project description:** Project demonstrates significant potential for reuse or waste prevention and is realistic. The project has strong support from the organization's staff and leadership. Key personnel are listed in the application, along with their roles as they relate to the project. Specific issues that the project seeks to address are identified.
- **Outcomes:** Estimate the quantity of materials that will be reused, recovered, or otherwise diverted. Expected results are stated, specific, realistic and measurable. Baseline data is included and accurate.
- **Timeline:** Project is prepared to start after grant agreement is authorized and must be completed within 18 months.
- **Budget:** Expenses are laid out in detail. If applicable, a match is described and eligible.
- **Sustainable:** Most or all components of the project will continue after grant funding is no longer available. Equipment purchased should be sustainable when possible, such as used, durable, energy-efficient, made from recycled content, recyclable, etc. Justification may be requested for proposed purchases that do not meet this criterion.

The county reserves the right to refuse funding or to partially fund an application. After your application is reviewed, county staff will contact you to discuss next steps.

These guidelines may be modified at any time during the program year and may, where necessary, allow applicants adequate time to submit additional requested information.

Contact information

Hennepin County

Environment and Energy

Business recycling grants

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hennepin.us/businesswasteprevention