

# HENNEPIN COUNTY MINNESOTA



*2023 grant recipient Nikkolette's Macarons with reusable food storage boxes.*

## Solicitation for Grant Applications

### Waste Prevention Grants for Businesses

Virtual information meeting: Thursday, March 20, 2025 from 2 to 3 p.m. [Access the meeting.](#)

Questions Due Date: Tuesday March 25, 2025 by 3 p.m.

Response Due Date: Tuesday April 8, 2025 by 3 p.m.



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Project Overview

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 grant program from Hennepin County 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, 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. Recycling or organics programs do not qualify for this funding. In 2025, \$400,000 is available to fund these grants.

### 1.2 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 applicants to 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.

### 1.3 Eligible projects and expenses

Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact County staff to discuss their project idea and eligibility requirements. Note: some expenses, such as dishwashers and staffing, are eligible only in certain categories or require match contributions. See Guidelines section (Section 1.4) 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 or other methods to put food byproducts to greater use
- Food-waste tracking technology or software
  - Equipment to support the software
  - 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

- 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, awning, painting
  - Capital improvement projects involving removal or installation of building materials must consult with Hennepin County construction and demolition staff 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
- Projects that use other businesses' waste products as raw material
- Software intended to track, identify or otherwise lead to preventing waste

## 1.4 Guidelines

1. Grant requests must be between \$2,500 and \$50,000.
  - Any grant amount over \$10,000 must include matching funds of 25% of the total grant fund request.
  - All capital and equipment expenses require a 25% match, regardless of grant total. During the application process, Hennepin County reserves the right to determine if a requested item is considered capital or equipment and apply the 25% required match to any item regardless of grant fund total.
    - Used equipment may qualify for a waiver if approved. To further promote waste prevention, 25% match requirements for equipment and capital may be waived during application if funds requested are for equipment in used condition. *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 for conditions that fit within 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. When possible, also include the cost if new rather than used to help bolster your waiver request.
  - All 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. 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. Grant recipients must establish a baseline of waste being discarded or recycled/composted prior to the start of the grant project and include it in their grant application. Baseline should be generated by the size of current trash, recycling and organics containers (from hauling services) and the frequency with which they are emptied, or actual weight data if that information is available. Additional data other than waste hauling, such as weight or count of materials avoided, may be included to track project success.
  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. The County will not reimburse grantees for any expenses incurred prior to an executed contract.
  6. 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.

### 1.5 Grant Application

When submitting an Application, Applicants must follow the specific format and content requirements below and in Attachment A, and the budget worksheet in Attachment B. Failure to do so will prolong the evaluation process and/or may be grounds for rejection of the Application.

Applicant shall describe, in detail, the proposed uses of the Grant funds for the Project. Any other use of Grant funds is prohibited. Applicant shall be solely responsible for securing all additional funds necessary for completion of the Project.

Applicant agrees to only use the Grant funds for the uses indicated above. Use of Grant funds for any other purpose is prohibited. If Applicant uses Grant funds for any other purpose, Applicant shall, upon County's written demand, repay all Grant funds awarded.

## 2. Evaluation and Selection

### 2.1 Applicant evaluation and recommendation for selection

County will consider the Application to determine whether it meets County's requirements and is otherwise eligible for a Grant award. Submission of an Application shall neither obligate nor entitle an Applicant to enter into a contract with the County or to receive a Grant.

### 2.2 Evaluation of responsiveness

The County will consider all the material submitted by the Applicant to determine whether the Applicant's offer is in compliance with the terms and conditions set forth in this Solicitation. Applications that do not comply with the provisions in this Solicitation may be considered nonresponsive and may be rejected. Notwithstanding the foregoing, County expressly reserves the right to reject any or all Applications with or without cause.

Evaluation criteria shall include the following in order of importance:

- **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 for a project or partially fund a project.

The County reserves the right to determine whether any aspect of the Application satisfactorily meets the criteria, the right to seek clarification or additional information from any Applicant(s), and the right to waive any irregularities or informalities that the County deems is in its best interest.

### 2.3 Execution of Grant agreement

County may condition the Grant award upon Applicant's execution of a Grant agreement provided by County. As applicable, the Grant agreement shall define the legal relationship between County and Applicant.

## 3. General Rules

### 3.1 Solicitation for Grant Applications and Grant overview

This Solicitation for Grant Applications is an invitation for Applicants to submit a Grant Application to the County. It is a means by which the County may facilitate the acquisition of information related to awarding the Grant and is **NOT A COMMITMENT OR OBLIGATION TO AWARD ANY AMOUNT**.

Nothing in this Application shall obligate County to (i) award any amount; (ii) award any subsequent grants; or (iii) pay or otherwise make any additional distributions.

### 3.3 Application submission

Applications will be due Tuesday, April 8th, 2025, by 3:00 PM (CST). Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with County program staff about project ideas prior to applying. Begin the consultation process by submitting the [business recycling request form](#).

Applications will be received in the [Hennepin County Supplier Portal](#). In order to submit an Application, you must first register with the Supplier Portal. For more information on how to register, please go to the [Supplier Portal help page](#). Applicants are strongly encouraged to make their submissions well in advance of the Application due date as the process may take some time to complete.

Failure to submit an Application on time may be grounds for rejection of the Application; however, the County reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to accept Applications after the Application due date.

### 3.4 Questions and Pre-application Assistance

**Applicants are invited to contact the county for feedback on project ideas before applying.** For more information visit [hennepin.us/businesswasteprevention](https://hennepin.us/businesswasteprevention) or contact [businessrecycling@hennepin.us](mailto:businessrecycling@hennepin.us) or 612-543-1316.

### 3.5 Addenda

The County reserves the right to modify this Solicitation at any time prior to the Application due date. An addendum will be posted in the Supplier Portal if the Solicitation is modified. Addenda may be viewed by clicking on the 'View Documents' on the Event Details page. It is the responsibility of each prospective Applicant to assure receipt of all addenda.

The County will modify the Solicitation only by formal written addenda. Applications should be based on this Solicitation document and any formal written addenda. Applicants should not rely on oral statements, or site visits.

### **3.6 County's right to withdraw, cancel, suspend and/or modify the Solicitation**

The County reserves the right to withdraw, cancel, suspend, and/or modify this Solicitation for any reason and at any time with no liability to any prospective Applicant for any costs or expenses incurred in connection with the Solicitation or otherwise.

### **3.7 Applicant's right to edit or cancel an Application**

An Application may be edited or cancelled in the Supplier Portal prior to the Application due date. For instructions, view the Edit or Cancel a Response section of the [How to Respond to an Event Guide](#).

### **3.8 Applications will not be returned**

Upon submission, Applications will not be returned.

### **3.9 Public disclosure of Application documents**

Under Minnesota law, applications are private or nonpublic until the proposals are opened on the proposal due date. Once the applications are opened, the name of the Applicant becomes public. All other data in the application is private/nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process. The evaluation process is completed when the County enters into a contract with an Applicant. At that time, all remaining data submitted by all Applicants is public with the exception of data classified as private/non-public trade secret data under Minn. Stat. § 13.37 of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

Applicants must not submit trade secret material, as defined by Minn. Stat. § 13.37, as part of their application. The County does NOT consider cost or prices to be trade secret material, as defined by the statute. Applicants may present and discuss trade secret information during an interview or demonstration, if applicable.

The Applicant agrees, as a condition of submitting its Application, that the County will not, as between the parties, be liable or accountable for any loss or damage which may result from a breach of confidentiality related to the Application. The Applicant agrees to indemnify and hold the County, its officials, agents, and employees harmless from all claims arising out of, resulting from, or in any manner attributable to any violation of any provision of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, including legal fees and disbursements paid or incurred to enforce this provision. This indemnification survives the County's award of a contract. In submitting an application in response to this Solicitation, the Applicant agrees that this indemnification survives as long as the Application is in the County's possession. The County is required to keep all the basic documents related to its contracts, including applications, for a minimum of seven years.

### **3.10 Applicant's costs**

The County shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by Applicant in relation to this Solicitation. Applicant shall bear all costs of Application preparation, submission, and attendance at interviews, or any other activity associated with this Solicitation or otherwise.

### 3.11 Conflict of interest

The Applicant affirms that to the best of its knowledge the submission of its Application, or any resulting Grant award, does not present an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Strictly for illustration purposes, a personal relationship with a County employee directly or indirectly involved in the Grant process may be a conflict of interest.

The Applicant agrees that should any actual or perceived conflict of interest become known, it will immediately notify the County and will advise whether it will or will not avoid, mitigate, or neutralize the conflict of interest.

The County may make reasonable efforts to avoid, mitigate, or neutralize a conflict of interest by an Applicant. To avoid a conflict of interest by an Applicant, the County may utilize methods including disqualifying an Applicant from eligibility for the Grant or cancelling the Grant if the conflict is discovered after the Grant has been issued. The County may, at its sole and absolute discretion, waive any conflict of interest.

## 4. Attachments

- 4.1 **Attachment A – Application Format and Content**
- 4.2 **Attachment B – Budget Worksheet**
- 4.3 **Attachment C – Sample Grant Agreement**
- 4.3 **Attachment D – Supplier Portal Instructional Video Links**