

HENNEPIN COUNTY

MINNESOTA

Solicitation for Grant Applications

Natural Resources Good Steward Grants

Solicitation due date: November 15, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.

Closing date for all questions: November 1, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.

Send questions to Ellen Sones (ellen.sones@hennepin.us) and Christine Longwell (christine.longwell@hennepin.us).



1 Introduction

1.1 Project overview

The County of Hennepin, State of Minnesota (“County”) is soliciting applications for the Good Steward Grant (the “Grant”). As used herein, the entity/individual responsible for any awarded Grant may be referred to as the “Applicant” and the Applicant’s response to this solicitation (the “Solicitation”) may be referred to as the “Application”.

Hennepin County Environment and Energy works to protect water, land, and air to conserve our natural resources for future generations. Through Good Steward Grants, Hennepin County supports landowners, businesses, government agencies, and organizations with matching grants to implement conservation practices to preserve and restore critical habitats, reduce erosion, protect groundwater, and improve water quality.

1.2 The Grant

Good Steward Grants support the planning and installation of conservation practices with one or more of the following primary purposes:

- Reduce erosion and sedimentation;
- Improve water quality;
- Protect groundwater quality or reduce groundwater use; or
- Preserve, restore, or establish critical habitat

These include, but are not limited to, new installations of:

- Stormwater management projects such as rain gardens, stormwater ponds and benches, stormwater reuse systems, infiltration or filtration basins, permeable pavement, grass swales, or water and sediment control basins.
- Habitat restoration projects such as woodland and prairie restorations or riverbank or lake shoreline restorations
- Water quality improvement projects like lake alum treatments

This list is provided for example purposes. Please contact Hennepin County staff if your project is not on this list but meets any of the primary purposes listed above.

In addition, the grant may only fund conservation practices which meet the following criteria:

- All practices must be designed and maintained for a specified time period. The minimum effective life will vary with practice type but will be no less than 10 years from the final payment.
- Grant funds cannot be used for practices designed only to increase land productivity.
- All practices must be installed within the county's geographic boundary and must be consistent with industry design standards (e.g. Natural Resource Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guide or the MN Stormwater Manual). Novel and emerging conservation practices are welcomed, but the application should clearly explain why that practice choice is most appropriate for the project.

If a project meets each of these criteria, funding is available to share the costs of project implementation with eligible participants.

- The grant amount provided shall not exceed 75% of the total eligible project cost.
- The landowner/participant is responsible for contributing the remaining 25% of the cost of the project installation.
- Landowner/participant costs must be in cash and/or in-kind contributions.

Grant amount will be based on the work plan and budget submitted by the applicant. **The total grant request may not exceed \$25,000.** Typical grant awards range from \$10,000-\$20,000.

1.2 Applicant and Project Eligibility

To be eligible for the Grant, the applicant must be one of the following:

- Local, state, or regional government agencies
- Non-profit organizations
- Landowners: citizens or business owners

The applicant must also meet the following reporting requirements to receive reimbursement for project expenses during design, installation, and project closeout phases.

- Prior to project installation, the following must be provided to and approved by the County
 - Work plan and budget, including any in-kind contributions from the applicant
 - Project design and specifications prior to work
- During and/or following project installation
 - All invoices for consultant and/or contractor work
 - Certification that the project was installed according to the approved plans and specifications
 - Operation and maintenance plans covering the life of the practice

Grant funds are eligible for the following uses:

- Project development costs such as environmental/engineering consulting fees;
- Project installation costs such as for materials, labor, and pre- and post-construction inspection of the conservation practices; and
- Costs related to the development of an operations and maintenance plan, education and outreach, or community engagement.

Any of these costs may also be used as cash or in-kind match to meet the cost-share requirements of this grant.

A list of previously awarded grants can be found on the new [environmental grants Storymap](#).

1.3 Grant Application

When submitting an Application, Applicants must follow the specific format and content requirements below and in **Attachment 1**. Failure to do so will likely 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 strictly 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 strictly 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.

Application questions are listed in **Attachment 1** and include the percentage weights that will be applied to applicant responses to each question. Applicants should expect that responses will be evaluated based on the quality of the responses as well as:

- Ability of the practice to directly address a severe erosion, water quality, and/or habitat loss concern
- The number of partners and local commitment to the project, either financial or in-kind
- Educational components associated with the project
- Funds leveraged for the project
- Direct relationship to a TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) impairment reduction
- Identification of the project as a priority by a local, state, or federal unit of government that manages natural and/or water resources
- Capacity and commitment of the organization to implement project and meet program obligations
- Ability of project to address climate and disparity reduction impacts

Hennepin County is interested in supporting projects throughout the county. Geographic location of projects may be considered to maximize the reach of the natural resources Good Steward Grant program.

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.

3.2 Estimated timeline and extension of time

November 28 – December 7: Application review and scoring by Good Steward Grant review panel

December 8 - 9: Review panel meets to discuss applications. Any questions for applicants will be gathered and provided back to applicants December 12 – 16.

December 12 – 16: Applicants provided opportunity to answer any questions on their application.

December 19 – 23: Review panel meets again to produce project funding recommendation.

February or March 2023: County Board of Commissioners reviews funding recommendations and approves or modifies recommendations.

These dates are subject to revision or cancellation by the County in its sole and absolute discretion. No project work, for which the applicant is requesting to use Grant Funds, may be incurred prior to Board of Commissioners approval, anticipated in February or March 2023.

3.3 Application submission

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 the [Good Steward Grant webpage](#) or contact Ellen Sones (612-596-1173; ellen.sones@hennepin.us). You can also see examples of recently funded projects on the Hennepin County [Environmental Grants Storymap](#).

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 1 – Application Format and Content

4.2 Attachment 2 – Sample contract agreement