

Cover Crop Demonstration

Request for Proposals

September 16, 2019

Request for Proposals (RFP) General Information

In 2019, the Minnesota Legislature, in the first Special Session, passed Chapter 2, article 2, Sec. 7(b) (Clean Water Fund Appropriations) which provided funding for grants to local government units to protect and restore surface water and drinking water; to keep water on the land; to protect, enhance, and restore water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams and to protect groundwater and drinking water. Based on this legislation, BWSR authorized staff to develop a **demonstration program** to provide opportunity to increase the establishment of cover crops and related tillage practices in targeted areas on the landscape where there will be water quality benefits to surface and/or ground water.

Priority for this demonstration program will be given to new adoption and understanding of cover crops and related tillage practices through identification of and addressing local hurdles to implementation the following key efforts:

- Building local knowledge;
- Facilitating partnerships;
- Demonstrating clean water benefits;
- Identifying methods to increase long term implementation and sustainability; and
- Scope and scale of adoption in targeted areas.

Up to \$1,000,000 is available. BWSR anticipates funding between 4 and 8 proposal with a cumulative goal of an estimated 5,000 acres of new cover crop establishment. At least one of these proposals shall include a drinking water supply management area.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants include counties, watershed districts, watershed management organizations, soil and water conservation districts, or local government joint power boards working under a current State approved and locally adopted local water management plan, comprehensive watershed management plan or soil and water conservation district (SWCD) comprehensive plan.

Proposal Requirements

1. Proposals must be submitted electronically in eLINK and must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. on October 24, 2019. Late responses will not be considered. The burden of proving timely receipt is on the respondent.
2. Minimum state fund request is \$125,000. Maximum state fund request is \$250,000.

3. Proposals, including the budget, will be submitted in eLINK. Budgets must include the grant funds requested specifically for each activity that is applicable to the proposal. Activities may include:
 - a. Agricultural Practice Costs (including proposed payment rates in the activity description)
 - b. Technical and Engineering Assistance
 - c. Administration and coordination
 - d. Supplies and equipment
 - e. Project Development
 - f. Planning and assessment
4. If participants are unable to establish a work plan within six months of successful grant notification, the grant may be rescinded and funds redistributed.
5. Applicants who were previously awarded Clean Water Funds and have expended less than 50% of previous award(s) at the time of this proposal may need to demonstrate organizational capacity to finalize current projects and complete new project concurrently.
6. A ten percent (10%) non-state match will be required of grant recipients. Match can be provided by a landowner, land occupier, local government or other non-State source and can be in the form of cash or the cash value of services or materials contributed to the accomplishment of grant objectives.
7. This proposal is subject to the 2020 BWSR Clean Water Fund Policy.

Proposal Questions

1. Describe how this proposal addresses implementation of cover crops and related tillage practices identified in your local water management plan or other studies and assessments.
 - a. What resource issue(s) will this proposal specifically address? If applicable, include if your program will target a drinking water supply management area.
 - b. Describe local policies or requirements needed to address implementation of cover crops and related tillage practices as provided in this proposal, such as:
 - i. Nonstructural Land Management Practice Implementation Plan;
 - ii. Termination timing;
 - iii. Other local policies or requirements.
2. Describe how and where your program will target new adopters of cover crops and related tillage practices.
3. Describe the primary hurdles to new adoption of cover crops and related tillage practices in the targeted area and how you intend to address these hurdles.
4. Describe how you intend to encourage or address long term adoption of cover crops and related tillage practice, including how long term adoption may be encouraged after contracts expire and how it will be tracked;
5. Describe how your proposal will increase local knowledge of cover crops through:
 - a. Incorporation and development of partnerships within your program;
 - b. Implementer education efforts.
6. How many acres of cover crops are you proposing to implement each year, and for what duration?

Evaluation Criteria

All proposals submitted will be reviewed and selected by Agency staff according to the evaluation criteria below. The maximum score per nomination is 100 points.

Evaluation Criteria	Maximum Points Possible
1. How does the proposal demonstrate and effort to build local knowledge of cover crops?	30
2. How will your program target new adopters of cover crops and methods to increase long term implementation; including identification and addressing hurdles?	30
3. How are you proposing the facilitation of partnerships	15
4. Demonstration of clean water benefits	15
5. Proposed budget	5
6. How many acres are you proposing to implement and how many years will each acre be treated?	5
Total Points Available:	100

As a demonstration program, BWSR reserves the right to select nominations that provide geographic diversity and have the potential to represent a variety of hurdles identified and methods to address them. BWSR also reserves the right to partially fund any and all nominations based on the number of eligible nominations submitted and the amount of funding available.

Incomplete Proposals

Proposals that do not comply with all requirements, including incomplete or missing proposal components, will not be considered for funding.

GRANT TERMS

Grant Execution

BWSR Clean Water Funds will be administered via a standard grant agreement. BWSR will use grant agreements as contracts for assurance of deliverables and compliance with appropriate statutes, rules and established policies. Willful or negligent disregard of relevant statutes, rules and policies may lead to imposition of financial penalties on the grant recipient. Successful respondents will be required to complete a detailed budget and work plan in eLINK prior to execution of the grant agreement.

Project Period

The project period starts when the grant agreement is executed, meaning all required signatures have been obtained. Work that occurs before this date is not eligible for reimbursement with grant funds. All grants must be completed by December 31, 2022.

Payment Schedule

Grant payments will be distributed in three installments: the first payment of 50% of the grant amount will be paid after work plan approval and execution of the grant agreement, provided the grant respondents are in compliance with all BWSR website and eLINK reporting requirements for previously awarded BWSR grants. The second payment of 40% of the grant amount will be paid once the grantee has provided BWSR with notification and BWSR has reconciled expenditures of the initial payment. The last 10% will be paid after all final reporting requirements are met, the grantee has provided BWSR with a final financial report, and BWSR has reconciled these expenditures.

Clean Water Fund Project Reporting Requirements

1. All grantees are required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments of Clean Water Fund grants. All BWSR funded projects will be required to develop a work plan, including detail relating to the outcome(s) of the proposed project. All activities will be reported via the eLINK reporting system. Grant funds may be used for local grant management and reporting that are directly related to and necessary for implementing this activity. For more information go to www.bwsr.state.mn.us/outreach/eLINK/index.html.
2. When practicable, grantees shall prominently display on their website the legacy logo. Grant recipients must display on their website either a link to their project from the Legislative Coordinating Commission Legacy Site (<http://legacy.leg.mn>) or a clean water project summary that includes a description of the grant activities, including expenditure of grant funds and measurable outcomes (www.bwsr.state.mn.us/cleanwaterfund/stories/)
3. When practicable, grantees must display the legacy logo on printed and other materials funded with money from the Clean Water Fund. The logo and specifications can be found at <http://www.legacy.leg.mn/legacy-logo>

Grants and Public Information

Under Minnesota Statute 13.599, responses to an RFP are nonpublic until the proposal deadline is reached. At that time, the name and address of the grantee, and the amount requested becomes public. All other data is nonpublic until the negotiation of the grant agreement with the selected grantee is completed. After the evaluation process is completed, all data (except trade secret data) becomes public. Data created during the evaluation process is nonpublic until the negotiation of the grant agreement with the selected grantee(s) is completed.

Conflict of Interest

State Grant Policy 08-01, (see <https://mn.gov/admin/government/grants/policies-statutes-forms/>) Conflict of Interest for State Grant-Making also applies to BWSR grantees. Grantees' conflicts of interest are generally considered organizational conflicts of interest. Organizational conflicts of interest occur with any of the following scenarios:

1. A grantee is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice due to competing duties or loyalties.
2. A grantee's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties.

3. A grantee or potential grantee has an unfair competitive advantage through being furnished unauthorized proprietary information or source selection information that is not available to all competitors.

Timeline

- September 16, 2019 – Proposal period begins
- October 24, 2019 – Proposal deadline at 4:30 PM
- November 2019 - Review of requests
- December 2019 - BWSR approval (tentative)
- January 31, 2020 – Work plan submittal deadline
- February 28, 2020 – Grant execution deadline

*Grant agreements will be developed and executed based on available funding.

Questions

Question concerning submittal of a nomination maybe directed to Marcey Westrick, Marcey.westrick@state.mn.us or 651-284-4153.