

Climate Resiliency: Lawns to Legumes

2023 Proposed Funding

BWSR is requesting **\$4 million** from the general fund to support the Lawns to Legumes program. This award-winning program offers a combination of workshops, coaching, planting guides and cost-share funding (individual support grants) for installing pollinator-friendly native plantings in residential lawns. Since the program launched as a pilot in 2019, it has supported more than 2,252 residential pollinator projects in 87 Minnesota counties. Funding for the pilot phase was provided by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust fund.

Program Background

Minnesota is home to more than 450 native bee species. Pollinators also include butterflies, moths, beetles and native flies. All play a key role in pollinating many food crops and native plants, but populations have significantly declined worldwide in recent years. Population decline can be attributed to habitat loss and lack of related nutrition for pollinators, as well as pesticide use and pathogens.

Lawns to Legumes provides options for Minnesotans to put conservation on the ground in a way that works for them. Even relatively small plantings of native flowers can help create conditions that are highly valuable to pollinators and can help build important habitat corridors.

Lawns to Legumes offers two types of grants:

- **Individual Support Grants:** Minnesota residents can apply during active signup periods to be reimbursed for up to \$350 in costs associated with establishing pollinator habitat in their yards. Individual Support grant recipients must provide at least a 25% match for their total reimbursement request. Grant recipients are required to map their projects to provide valuable data about the location and type of pollinator habitat found throughout the state.
- **Demonstration Neighborhood Grants:** Demonstration neighborhoods are community projects intended to enhance pollinator habitat in key corridors, raise awareness about residential pollinator protection and showcase best practices. Organizations



A pollinator garden design consultant from Metro Blooms speaks with demonstration neighborhood participants in Minneapolis.
Photo credit: Metro Blooms

overseeing a demonstration neighborhood work with local residents to install beneficial planting practices. Local governments, nonprofit organizations, and tribal governments are eligible to oversee demonstration neighborhood grants. Since the program launched, 27 demonstration neighborhoods have been established.

Program Outcomes (August 2019-December 2022)

- **3.5 million** total square feet of pollinator habitat created
- **2,252** plantings completed by Minnesota residents (923 in environmental justice areas)
- **27** Demonstration Neighborhoods established
- **\$897,198** in matching funds provided by Lawns to Legumes gardeners
- **17,707** applications received for individual support grants
- **148** volunteer coaches recruited
- **128** pollinator habitat workshops held attended by **5,745** people
- **31** public presentations attended by 2,427 people
- **336,852** program website visits (BWSR and Blue Thumb webpages combined)

Building a Movement

In addition to offering grant opportunities, Lawns to Legumes seeks to bring public and private partners together to build a movement to support Minnesota pollinators. BWSR partners with Blue Thumb — Planting for Clean Water and Metro Blooms to administer the program, and receives support from the University of Minnesota, Monarch Joint Venture, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Xerces Society, and others.



A Lawns to Legumes pollinator habitat project in Winona County. Photo Credit: BWSR

Lawns to Legumes staff worked with Minneapolis College of Art and Design students in 2020 to launch a social media campaign featuring original artwork; the campaign won a 2021 Northern Lights Award from the Minnesota Association of Government Communicators. The program also received the 2021 Environmental Initiative Award for large-scale sustainable impacts.

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