

Cooperative Weed Management Area Program

Request for Proposals

October 2023

1. General Information

Cooperative Weed Management Areas are partnerships that may include federal, state and local government agencies, tribal governments, conservation organizations and individual residents that have knowledge about the management of noxious weeds or invasive plants in a defined area. The [Board of Water and Soil Resources \(BWSR\) Cooperative Weed Management Area \(CWMA\) Program](#) was developed in 2008 to promote the collaborative and efficient control of invasive species and protection of conservation lands and natural areas across geographic boundaries. \$200,000 is available for FY2024 and FY2025 (combined) for newly developing and existing CWMAs or Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMAs) partnerships in Minnesota through this Request for Proposal.

This grant program funding is made possible through an appropriation [Laws of Minnesota 2023, Chapter 60, Article 1, Section 4(c)(2)] and is focused on establishing strong and sustainable CWMAs and CISMAs across Minnesota for the collaborative and efficient control of invasive species and protection of conservation lands and natural areas.

The BWSR Grants Administration Manual is the primary framework for grantee management of BWSR grant funds.

2. Who May Apply?

Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Counties and Tribal Governments are eligible applicants. Other organizations may partner with an eligible applicant to apply for funding to help develop and run a CWMA/CISMA project.

3. How to Apply

1. Set up your eLINK user account

Proposals need to be submitted via [eLINK](#). Eligible applicants without a current eLINK user account must submit a request to establish an eLINK account no later than seven days prior to the proposal deadline. As part of the application, eLINK will require applicants to map the location of the proposed project. For account setup information details, see the “Account Setup and Contact Management Guidance” tab on the eLINK webpage. All eLINK related questions can be directed to elinksupport@state.mn.us.

2. Complete your funding request (proposal)

See the “Completing a Funding Request in eLINK” under the “eLINK Training Videos” tab on the eLINK webpage to view a 12-minute online module describing how to complete a Funding Request (or Application) within eLINK

4. Eligibility Criteria

Newly developing and existing CWMAs and CISMAs are eligible for this RFP.

- Newly developing CWMAs/CISMAs or existing CWMAs/CISMAs groups that add an additional geographic area to an existing CWMAs/CISMAs may request up to \$20,000. A group is defined as new if they are establishing a group that has not existed in the past, or they were established and have been inactive for ten or more years.
- Grant requests for existing groups will be up to \$15,000.

Proposals from applicants that were previously awarded CWMA funds will be considered during the review process for applications submitted in response to this RFP. However, applicants that have expended less than 50% of previous award(s) at the time of this application will need to demonstrate organizational capacity to finalize current projects and complete new projects concurrently.

A non-state match equal to at least 10% of the amount of CWMA funds received is required. Local share can be provided by a landowner, private organization, local or tribal government or other non-state source (including federal funds) and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services or materials contributed to the accomplishment of grant objectives.

Applicants are required to fill out a project budget summarizing proposed activities and expenditures as part of the application. **Proposals must include one image file** (.jpg, .tiff, .png) that shows the geographic area/target areas for the CWMA/CISMA as an application Image in eLINK.

5. Evaluation and Selection

- Proposals should demonstrate measurable project outputs and outcomes¹. As appropriate, outputs should include scientifically credible estimates of both short-term and long-term benefits, as well as other measures such as: acres of invasive species treated, increases in native plant diversity levels, etc.
- Proposals must have plans for maintenance and inspection monitoring for the duration of the

- project's effective life.
- Proposals should demonstrate that a sufficient partnership exists to implement and maintain the project.

Application Questions:

- Describe if the funding will be used to assist the development of a newly establishing Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) or Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) or if the funding will be used for an existing group.
- Describe the anticipated measurable outcomes of the project including how they relate to goals and how they will be attained.
- Describe how the proposal and target species of focus are based on local collaboration and knowledge, as well as local, state, tribal or federal invasive species plans.
- List target non-native invasive species of focus and why they have been identified as priorities.
- Describe partners involved in the project and how the partnership will lead to effective management and operation including the anticipated role of each partner.
- Describe the approach to planning and managing invasive species through partner coordination and with a focus on using local ecological knowledge to restore native vegetation and/or native plant communities where practicable.
- Describe plans for the management of information about weed locations (using [EDDMapS](#) or other methods) if weed mapping will be conducted, as well as documenting management approaches used.

Table 1: Cooperative Weed Management Area Program Ranking Criteria	
Ranking Criteria	Maximum Points
<u>Newly Establishing Organizations:</u> The funding will be used to assist the development of a newly establishing or expanding Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) or Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA).	10
<u>Anticipated Outcomes:</u> The outcomes expected upon completion of the project initiatives are identified, consistent with project goals, and it is clear how these outcomes will be obtained.	25
<u>Relationship to CWMA and Conservation Plans:</u> The proposal and species of focus are based on local collaboration and knowledge, as well as local, state, tribal or federal invasive species plans.	10
<u>Weed Prioritization:</u> Weed threats are prioritized due to the threat they pose to conservation lands and natural areas and are consistent with Minnesota's Noxious Weed Law, as well as local needs.	15
<u>Strength of Partnerships:</u> Partnerships are clearly defined, with each partner's role identified, and leading to effective management, operation, and maintenance.	15
<u>Management Approach:</u> An approach is defined to plan and manage invasive species through partner coordination and with a focus on using local ecological knowledge to restore native vegetation and/or native plant communities where practicable.	15

Information Management: An approach is defined for the management of information about weed locations (using EDDMapS or other methods) if weed mapping will be conducted, as well as documenting management approaches used.	10
Total Points Available	100

¹ The term “outcome” means the result or effect that will occur from carrying out the environmental program or activity associated with the application. Outcomes may be environmental, behavioral, health related or programmatic in nature but must be quantitative. They may not necessarily be achievable within the grant agreement timeline.

The term “output” or “intermediate outcome” means an environmental activity, effort and/or associated work product related to an environmental goal and objective that will be produced or provided over a period of time or by a specified date. Outputs may be quantitative or qualitative but must be measurable during the grant agreement timeline.

6. Eligible & Key Activities

Grant funding can be used for a wide variety of activities related to establishing and sustaining existing CWMAs, including:

- Technical Assistance
- Conducting outreach and education
- Weed mapping
- Managing invasive species and monitoring
- Reporting invasive species locations in EDDMapS
- Equipment purchases (spray equipment, weed wrenches, tablet, etc.) must not exceed \$2,500. All equipment purchased shall be used as a shared resource for residents and remain with grantee.

Key activities of CWMAs/CISMAs can include:

<u>Building Strong Partnerships</u> -Public landowners, and agencies -Residents -Local units of government -Tribal Governments, Inter-tribal Consortia -Non-governmental organizations -Universities -For-profit partners	<u>Sharing Resources between Partners</u> -Staff/labor -Equipment -Leveraged funds -Access to lands, roads, and gravel pits	<u>Effective Outreach/Communication</u> -Communication back and forth between agencies, residents, local units of government, and private organizations -Training – ID, prevention, management – also grant writing and plan writing -Technical transfer – news, tips
<u>Identifying and prioritizing emerging weed threats</u> -New and/or recently introduced species -Those changing status -High priority landscapes	<u>Facilitating management/control of priority species</u> -Promote sound weed management that promotes multiple landscape benefits (pollinators, re-establishing native vegetation) etc.	<u>Effective data management/sharing</u> -Weed mapping -Project mapping -Documenting management strategies used -Project outcomes

7. Grant Responsibilities

Grantees have the following responsibilities to ensure long-term public benefit of projects:

- **Technical Assistance Providers.** Ensure that identified technical assistance provider(s) have the appropriate technical expertise, skills, and training for their assigned role(s).
- **Contracts.** A contract is required when funds are used to provide financial assistance to install projects. Grantees have the responsibility to ensure that the installed conservation project(s) meet the requirements identified in the *Project and Practice Assurances* section of the BWSR Grants Administration Manual.
- **Standards.** Ensure the use of appropriate standards for design and installation.
- **Native Vegetation.** The planting of native vegetation following invasive species removal efforts is recommended whenever feasible for a project to provide competition for invasive species and provide other landscape benefits. If reseeding is planned after invasives removal the seed/plant source sequence in [Section 2](#) of BWSR’s [Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines](#) must be followed.
- **Certification.** Certify that the project was installed according to applicable plans and specifications.
- **Operation and Maintenance.** Ensure an appropriate operation and maintenance plan is developed by qualified staff that identifies necessary activities and timing. Projects are strongly encouraged to be maintained for a minimum of 3 years.
- **Periodic Project Inspection.** Conduct periodic project inspections to confirm the operation and maintenance plan is being followed and the project has not been altered or removed.

For further information on assessing technical quality assurance for state funded projects see the *Technical Quality Assurance* section of the [BWSR Grants Administration Manual](#)

Grantees are encouraged to adopt a financial assistance policy before entering any financial assistance contracts. See the [Reporting Requirements for BWSR Grants](#) sections of the [BWSR Grants Administration Manual](#)

8. Timeline

November 1, 2023	Application period begins
February 21, 2024	Application deadline at 4:30 PM
April 24, 2024	BWSR Board authorizes grant awards
May, 2024	BWSR grant agreements sent to recipients (proposed)
June 6 th , 2024	Work plan submittal deadline
June 14, 2024	Grant execution deadline
December 31, 2025	Grant expiration date

9. Project Period

The project period starts when the grant agreement is executed, meaning all required signatures (from BWSR and grant recipient) have been obtained. Work that occurs before this date is not eligible for reimbursement with grant funds or to be used as local match. All grant funded activities must be completed by the expiration date of December 31, 2025 as referenced in the grant agreement.

10. Payment Schedule

All BWSR funded projects will be required to develop a work plan, including detail of each eligible activity, a description of the anticipated activity accomplishments, and grant and match funding amounts to accomplish each of the activities before any payment will be made.

Grant payments will be made as one advance payment after the work plan approval and execution of the grant agreement, provided the grant recipient is in compliance with all BWSR website and eLINK reporting requirements for previously awarded BWSR grants.

11. Submittal

Applications must be submitted via eLINK. Eligible applicants without a current eLINK user account must submit a request to establish an eLINK account no later than 7 days prior to the application deadline. As part of the application, eLINK will require applicants to map the location of the proposed project. Applications submitted after 4:30pm on February 21, 2024 will not be scored and will be deemed ineligible for grant funding.

Successful respondents will be required to develop and submit a work plan in eLINK prior to execution of the grant agreement.

12. Grant Awards

BWSR reserves the right to partially fund any and all proposals based on the amount of funding available. Proposals that are deemed complete may be considered for future available funds.

13. Incomplete Proposals

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

14. Work Plans and Agreements

All BWSR funded projects will be required to develop a work plan, including detail of each eligible activity, a description of the anticipated activity accomplishments, and grant and match funding amounts to accomplish each of the activities.

BWSR Cooperative Weed Management Area funds will be administered via a grant agreement. BWSR will use grant agreements as contracts for assurance of deliverables and compliance with appropriate statutes, rules

and established policies.

15. Grants and Public Information

Under Minnesota Statute 13.599, responses to a Request for Proposals are nonpublic until the application deadline is reached. At that time, the name and address of the applicant, and the amount requested becomes public.

16. Conflict of Interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers ([MINN. STAT. 16B.98](#), <https://mn.gov/admin/government/grants/policies-statutes-forms/> and [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making, 2022](#) (Word)).

Grantees' conflicts of interest are generally considered organizational conflicts of interest. Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

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, or
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.

17. Grant Reporting

Requirements and procedures for grant reporting are found in the [Reporting Requirements for BWSR Grants](#) and [Closing out a BWSR Grant](#) sections of the BWSR Grants Administration Manual.

18. Questions

For more information concerning the request for proposal, contact BWSR's Cooperative Weed Management Area Program Coordinator: [Dan Shaw, dan.shaw@state.mn.us](mailto:dan.shaw@state.mn.us).