



**FY 2024-2025**  
**SOIL HEALTH DELIVERY GRANT**  
**REQUEST FOR INTEREST (RFI)**  
**MAY 2024**

**Funding Requests due by 4:30 pm, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024**

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## PROGRAM PURPOSE AND TIMELINE

The Soil Health Delivery Program is established via Minnesota Statutes (M.S.) §103F.06 to provide a financial and technical support program to produce soil health practices that achieve water quality, soil productivity, climate change resiliency, or carbon sequestration benefits or reduce pesticide and fertilizer use. This is to enhance the adoption of cover crops and other soil health practices.

The purpose of this funding request is to:

- 1) Provide expectations for soil health activities implemented through the Soil Health Delivery Program,
- 2) Identify those Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) which intend to participate in the program, and
- 3) Identify the funding requested by participating SWCDs

Funding Requests must be received by 4:30 PM CT Tuesday July 2, 2024. Late requests or requests exceeding the eligible amount (Attachment A) will not be considered.

## ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

All soil and water conservation districts (SWCDs) in Minnesota are eligible to apply for this funding opportunity.

## FUNDING ALLOCATION AND MATCH

This is a formula-based grant opportunity. The total funding appropriation for this request for interest is \$6,440,000. The allocation of funding was determined upon a comparative review of agricultural land acreage within each SWCD boundary relative to the total agricultural land within the state (USDA National Land Cover Database). Subsequently, counties with a greater proportion of agricultural land were allocated a proportionally larger amount.

The maximum per district funding request for this program is the allocated amount specified in Attachment A. Acceptance of a funding amount less than the allocated maximum will not have any bearing on, or serve to limit, eligibility for future program allocations.

No match is required.

The appropriation language governing the use of these funds is in Laws of Minnesota 2023, Regular Session, Chapter 40, Article 2, Section 6(o).

The Clean Water Fund was established in Minnesota Statute 114D.50 to implement part of Article XI, Section 15, of the Minnesota Constitution, with the purpose of protecting, enhancing, and restoring water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams in addition to protecting ground water and drinking water sources from degradation. These funds must supplement traditional sources of funding and may not be used as to substitute for other funds, existing activities, or programs.

## ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Funding may be used broadly for financial assistance and technical support activities needed to promote and facilitate the enhanced adoption of soil health practices and systems to achieve water quality, drinking water, climate, or associated benefits consistent with [Minnesota Statutes, section 103F.06](#).

Funding for the following core soil health practices are eligible statewide:

- Alley Cropping
- Conservation Cover
- Contour Buffer Strips
- Cover Crop
- Critical Area Planting
- Field Border
- Filter Strip
- Forest Farming
- Forest Stand Improvement
- Pasture and Hay Planting
- Prescribed Grazing
- Residue and Tillage Management (No Till)
- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Silvopasture
- Tree/Shrub Establishment
- Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment and Renovation

Eligible practices are NOT limited to those above. In addition, local priority, or other supporting soil health practices may be eligible but grantees need identify those activities in the work plan process.

*For Example: Nutrient Management practice(s) would be eligible in the following scenario. The Stormy SWCD is struggling with nitrate concentration increases in several public water supplies. They are proposing Nutrient Management practices emphasizing improvement of organic matter as a BMP, and since the area has a high incidence of confined animal facilities, they specifically want to implement Manure Management plans in addition to cover crops for operators who apply manure or other nitrogen fertilizer within the Stormy public water supply. Additional local priority or supporting soil health practices may be eligible if approved through the grant work plan.*

Useful Soil Health Links and Reference Materials:

- [Minnesota Office for Soil Health](#)
- [MN Field Office Technical Guide](#)
- [Information on Soil – Minnesota Stormwater Manual](#)

## INELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Funds may not be used for the purchase of equipment that will be used to establish, improve, or accelerate soil health. Examples of equipment include, but are not limited to, no till drills, air seeders, high boys, variable rate equipment, and retrofit projects to convert corn detasslers to high boys.

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Soil Health Financial Assistance Grant provides cost-share for the purchase and retrofit of soil health equipment. Additional information can be found at [Soil Health Financial Assistance Program Grants | Minnesota Department of Agriculture](#).

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s AgBMP Loan program is a water quality program that provides low-interest loans to farmers, rural landowners, and agriculture supply businesses. Soil Health equipment purchases

that address water quality concerns are eligible. Additional information can be found at [Agriculture Best Management Practices \(BMP\) Loan Program | Minnesota Department of Agriculture \(state.mn.us\)](#)

## SUBMITTING FUNDING REQUESTS

### HOW TO SUBMIT A QUESTION

Questions regarding funding requests should be directed to your Board Conservationist; a map of work areas and contact information is available at [BWSR Work Area Maps](#). Questions may also be submitted by email to [Jared.House@state.mn.us](mailto:Jared.House@state.mn.us).

### HOW TO SUBMIT A FUNDING REQUEST USING SURVEY MONKEY

Funding requests should be submitted through the following link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/7QJ7NCN>. Only one request from each Soil and Water Conservation District will be accepted. Responses to the funding request form will be used to generate grant agreements for the program funding.

## GRANT RECIPIENT INFORMATION

### GRANT AGREEMENT

BWSR will use grant agreements for assurance of deliverables and compliance with appropriate statutes, rules, established policies and administrative procedures. Willful or negligent disregard of relevant statutes, rules, and policies may lead to imposition of financial penalties or future sanctions on the grantee.

In the event there is a violation of the terms of the grant agreement, BWSR will enforce the grant agreement and evaluate appropriate actions, up to and including repayment of grant funds at a rate up to 100% of the grant agreement.

The grant agreement will further define grant program requirements.

- The BWSR Grants Administration Manual is the primary resource for grant management information. Further guidance regarding BWSR grant administration can be found in the Grants Administration Manual (<https://bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/manual/>)

### GRANT WORK PLAN

Work plans are required for Soil Health Delivery Grants and must be developed following the requirements outlined in this Request for Interest. Work plans must be developed in eLINK and be approved before execution of the grant agreement. Work plans must reflect each eligible activity that will be implemented, a description of the anticipated activity outcomes or accomplishments, and grant funding amounts to accomplish each of the activities.

### 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.

Grant contract agreement templates can be reviewed on the [Office of Grants Management Forms and FAQs website](#).

All grants must be completed by December 31, 2027.

Grant payments will be distributed in three installments to the grantee. 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 applicant is in compliance with 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 that 50% of the grant funds have been expended and BWSR has authorized the payment through approval of the eLINK reporting. If the grant award is \$50,000 or greater, the grant may need to be reconciled before the payment can be released; grantees should check with their Board Conservationist or Grants Compliance Specialist for applicability of this requirement. The last 10% of reimbursement grants will be paid after the grant project is finished, all final reporting requirements are met, and the grantee has provided BWSR with a documentation of final expenditures.

#### DISTRICT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

If contracts will be awarded to landowners for project implementation a local SWCD financial assistance policy must be described in the work plan, or the policy referenced and attached within eLINK. Financial Assistance Polices should describe local program information such as payment rates, contract terms, and inspection schedules.

#### FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Grantees may provide financial assistance based on a percentage of installation cost, flat-rate, or incentive payments.

Additional details on Financial Assistance are under the Payment Procedures heading in the [Implementing Contracts with Landowners](#) chapter of the BWSR Grants Administration Manual.

#### PROJECT AND PRACTICE ASSURANCES

BWSR requires assurances from grantees that installed conservation practices and projects meet the purposes of the grant program, will remain in place for the lifespan expected, and will provide the water quality and soil health benefits for which they were designed. Factors such as grant program requirements, partners, landownership, type of practices, and cost influence what type of and when certain assurances are required or used.

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 to their assigned role(s).
- **Standards.** Ensure the use of appropriate standards for design and installation.
- **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.
- **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 (M.S. §103C.501, Subd. 7).

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## CONTRACTS

Conservation practice or financial assistance contracts between grant recipients and landowners are required when funds are used to provide financial assistance to install practices. When used, these contracts must, at a minimum: provide financial assistance information and expectations; identify the responsibility for operation and maintenance, including maintenance or control of the contributing watershed; include a technical and financial plan for failures; allow for inspections by the grantee of the practice; be in effect for a period corresponding to the expected life of the project; and may be required to include replacement provisions and pro-rated pollution effectiveness replacement. For practices installed on public land, operation and maintenance plans may be identified as part of capital infrastructure maintenance. All contracts are recommended to be reviewed by the grantee’s legal counsel.

Additional details on Project and Practice Assurances are in the [Project and Practice Assurances](#), [Operation, Maintenance, and Inspection of Practices](#) and [Implementing Contracts with Landowners](#) chapters of the BWSR Grants Administration Manual.

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## TENNESSEN WARNING NOTICE

Local governments must give individuals notice when collecting private or confidential information from them. This is referred to as a “Tennessee warning notice”. The purpose of the notice is to enable people to make informed decisions about whether to give information about themselves to the government (see Minnesota Statutes, section 13.04, subdivision 2). If Private Data is collected and disseminated as part of a BWSR Grant, BWSR will take the position that a Tennessee warning notice was provided by the LGU to all necessary individuals.

- Local Governments and grant recipients should ask the individual(s) to sign and date a Tennessee warning notice and give the individual(s) a copy as a best practice. However, notices do not need to be in writing.
- Local Governments and grant recipients should limit the private data collected or disseminated to only the data that is necessary to administer a program.
- Local Governments may also want to request assistance from their legal counsel.

## TIME AND EFFORT DOCUMENTATION

Grant recipients are required to account for the staff time charged to BWSR grants in order to track the expenditure of grant funds to ensure the use of the funds is consistent with applicable State and BWSR requirements. Accounting for staff time is important for budgeting, planning, and reporting.

Recipients of BWSR grants may use one of two options for tracking staff time charged to grants:

1. Direct time tracking.
2. Personnel activity reports (PARs) or the equivalent that constitute after-the-fact determinations of grant activities. Activity reports must be prepared and signed at least semiannually by the employee.

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## BILLING RATE

A billable rate is an hourly rate used to charge staff time to BWSR grants. It consists of the employee's base hourly rate plus the costs of benefits, leave, and facilities; and administrative costs necessary to keep a person employed and an office running.

Additional details on Time and Effort Documentation are in the [Time and Effort Documentation](#) and [Determining a Billing Rate](#) chapters of the BWSR Grants Administration Manual.

## GRANT REPORTING AND ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Grant reporting is a means to illustrate achievements and progress made towards program goals and to ensure accountability and transparency in the use of State funds. In general, reports are to contain updates on activities and expenditures that occurred since the previous report and are to be completed by February 1 of each year and within 30 days of the completion of a grant.

Minnesota Statute §103B.3369, Subdivision 9 allows BWSR to consider additional performance-based criteria for grant programs and the Office of Grants Management's Policy on Grant Closeout Evaluation (08-13) requires BWSR to consider a grant applicant's past performance when awarding grants. BWSR may consider withholding grant payments if the grantee is not in compliance with all Board reporting requirements.

Additional details on Grant Reporting and Administrative Requirements are in the [Grant Reporting Requirements for BWSR Grants](#) and [Closing out a BWSR Grant](#) chapters of the BWSR Grants Administration Manual.

- All grant recipients are required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments of Clean Water Fund grants. Outputs will serve as surrogates for outcomes and will be reported as estimated pollutant reductions and progress towards goals based on the best available information.
- When practicable, grant recipients 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.
- When practicable, grant recipients must display a sign with the Legacy Logo at the project site or other public location identifying the project was built with assistance from Clean Water, Land and Legacy Amendment. When practicable, grant recipients must display the Legacy Logo on printed and other media funded with money from the Clean Water Fund. The logo and specifications can be found at <http://www.legacy.leg.mn/legacy-logo>.



**ATTACHMENT A: SOIL HEALTH DELIVERY GRANT PROGRAM – SWCD ALLOCATION LIST**

Ramsey	\$15,000	Dakota	\$60,000	Sibley	\$80,000
Cook	\$15,000	Winona	\$60,000	Brown	\$80,000
South St. Louis	\$15,000	Red Lake	\$60,000	Traverse	\$80,000
Lake	\$15,000	Le Sueur	\$60,000	Goodhue	\$80,000
Koochiching	\$15,000	Wabasha	\$60,000	Cottonwood	\$100,000
North St. Louis	\$15,000	Nicollet	\$60,000	Blue Earth	\$100,000
Itasca	\$20,000	Rice	\$60,000	Kandiyohi	\$100,000
Anoka	\$20,000	Waseca	\$60,000	Swift	\$100,000
Carlton	\$20,000	Steele	\$60,000	Lac Qui Parle	\$100,000
Lake of the Woods	\$20,000	Big Stone	\$60,000	Freeborn	\$100,000
Hennepin	\$20,000	Watonwan	\$60,000	Jackson	\$100,000
Crow Wing	\$20,000	Wright	\$60,000	Lyon	\$100,000
Aitkin	\$20,000	Dodge	\$60,000	West Otter Tail	\$100,000
Hubbard	\$20,000	Douglas	\$60,000	Roseau	\$100,000
Washington	\$20,000	McLeod	\$80,000	Murray	\$120,000
Kanabec	\$20,000	East Polk	\$80,000	Martin	\$120,000
Mille Lacs	\$40,000	Pipestone	\$80,000	Fillmore	\$120,000
Cass	\$40,000	Grant	\$80,000	Mower	\$120,000
Wadena	\$40,000	East Otter Tail	\$80,000	Faribault	\$120,000
Chisago	\$40,000	Rock	\$80,000	Nobles	\$120,000
Sherburne	\$40,000	Todd	\$80,000	Yellow Medicine	\$120,000
Isanti	\$40,000	Pennington	\$80,000	Wilkin	\$120,000
Scott	\$40,000	Meeker	\$80,000	Kittson	\$120,000
Clearwater	\$40,000	Olmsted	\$80,000	Norman	\$150,000
Carver	\$40,000	Stevens	\$80,000	Redwood	\$150,000
Beltrami	\$40,000	Lincoln	\$80,000	Clay	\$150,000
Pine	\$40,000	Morrison	\$80,000	Renville	\$150,000
Benton	\$40,000	Becker	\$80,000	Stearns	\$150,000
Root River	\$40,000	Chippewa	\$80,000	Marshall	\$150,000
Mahnomen	\$60,000	Pope	\$80,000	West Polk	\$150,000