



FY 2024/25

**Pollinator Pathways Request for
Proposal (RFP)**

March 2024

Applications due by 4:30 pm, June 20th, 2024

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PURPOSE

The Minnesota Pollinator Pathways program is led by local conservation partners who work with Minnesota Residents to promote and establish pollinator plantings and key corridors for at-risk pollinators such as (but not limited to) the Monarch Butterfly and Rusty Patched Bumble Bee, Minnesota’s State Bee. This can be done by establishing/connecting pollinator pathways across communities with an emphasis on residences and/or community spaces. Pathways can range from a local neighborhood scale to across watersheds. Creating these pathways, by establishing deep rooted native vegetation will have climate resiliency benefits, increase biodiversity and provide other important ecosystem services.

TIMELINE

There may be multiple proposal rounds as funding is available. Each round will approximately 90 calendar days. A proposal must be submitted by 4:30 PM on the date the proposal period ends. The applicant is responsible for proving timely submittal. No late submissions or incomplete proposals will be considered for funding.

Grant cycle timeline	Round 1
Proposal period opens	March 28 th , 2024
Proposal period ends	June 20, 2024
BWSR grant agreements sent	August, 2024
Work plan submittal deadline	September 30, 2024
Grant execution deadline	October 31, 2024
Grant expiration date	December 31, 2026

GRANT ELIGIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS

APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY, FUNDING AVAILABLE AND MATCH

The Lawns to Legumes program was established to provide financial and technical assistance to plant residential landscapes and community spaces with native vegetation and pollinator-friendly forbs and legumes to protect a diversity of pollinators as authorized by Laws of Minnesota 2023, Regular Session, Chapter 60, Article 1, Section 4(i).

Program requirements from this RFP will remain as specified in the grant agreement for successful applicants that receive a grant from BWSR.

Cities, Counties, Watershed Districts, Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Tribal Governments, Non-profit Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO) including but not limited to PreK through grade 12 schools, and PreK through grade 12 public schools.

A total of \$1,100,000 is available for funding for the FY24/25 biennium . Only grant requests greater than \$50,000 will be considered.

A non-state match equal to at least 10% of the amount of the grant received is required. Match can be provided by landowners, land occupiers, private organizations, local governments, or other non-state sources and can be in the form of

cash or in-kind for services or materials contributed to the accomplishment of grant objectives. Funds used for match for this program cannot be used as match for any other state grant program.

PRIORITIES

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to ensure fairness, precision, equity, and consistency in competitive grant awards. This includes implementing diversity and inclusion in grant-making.

[Policy 08-02 Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review \(PDF\)](#) sets up the expectation that grant programs intentionally show how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequity or disparities.

This grant will prioritize projects that demonstrate a commitment to positive environmental impacts, promote economic justice, and serve underserved communities.

ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES AND EXPENSES

The primary purpose of activities funded through this program is to promote native plantings that establish key corridors for at-risk* pollinators and establishing habitat for benefitting pollinators at scales from local neighborhoods to across watersheds. This will be achieved through efforts to establish habitat and educating Minnesotans about pollinators within pollinator corridors/pathways and building overall interest in ecological landscaping. This program is intended to fund pollinator plantings and to inspire and guide DIY projects.

Eligible activities can consist of:

- **Project development and public outreach** activities which will directly support or supplement the goals and outcomes of the work plan such as civic engagement: public outreach; initial contacts, action, and activities with landowners/residents and/or partners; preliminary information gathering, conservation marketing or other activities.
- **Establishment of pollinator habitat projects** such as planting beneficial trees and shrubs, pollinator lawns, pollinator meadows, native pocket planting, container planting on impervious surfaces (pavement, rooftops, apartment decks etc) that are no greater than 5 ac. in size.

Eligible project expense include:

1. **MN Native Plants and Seeds** includes insecticide/neonicotinoid free flowers/forbs, bare root plants, grasses and sedges, trees and shrubs, and seeds. Projects should have at least three blooming plants species during spring, summer and fall with higher diversity strongly encouraged. Source native plants and seeds within 175 miles of the project location to the extent possible.
 2. **Project expenses** including biodegradable weed suppression mulch (non-dyed preferred), compost, fencing or other herbivores portion materials, signage, equipment rental fees, and delivery fees), contractor installation and/or maintenance of project.
- **Program and project support-** education, outreach, marketing, staff time;
 - **Education** development and implementation of conservation education activities and programs such as workshops, clinics, publications, websites, presentations, fairs, etc.
 - **Supplies/Equipment** acquisition of equipment (hand sod kicker, hand shovels, hand rakes and trowels, watering tree gator) or supplies.
 - **Administration/Coordination** staff time for grant administration

- **Technical and engineering assistance** necessary to implement grant activities associated with technical site assessment, surveys, preliminary analysis and design, final design construction supervision, installation, inspection, and completion of projects.
- **Eligible Lands:** Projects should have a focus on residential and/or community and/or educational space garden with a maximum project size of 5 acres

Eligible expenses are those expenses solely incurred through project activities that are directly related to and necessary for producing the project outcomes described in the proposal. Grant recipients are required to account for the staff time charged to BWSR grants in order to track the expenditure of grant funds and match to ensure the use of the funds is consistent with applicable State and BWSR requirements. Costs that are unallowable to be charged to BWSR grants include but are not limited to:

- Bad debts, late payment fees, and investment management fees
- Giving donations and fundraising
- Entertainment, gifts, prizes, and decorations
- Alcohol
- Interest on loans not authorized under state statute.
- Loans of BWSR grant funds
- Lobbying, lobbyists, and political contributions

Questions on eligibility can be directed to: Erin.Loeffler@state.mn.us .

* A plant or animal is considered “at-risk” when; It is proposed for listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act, It is a candidate species for listing; or It has been petitioned by a third party for listing; or It’s populations are rare, declining, or may be vulnerable to decline Find a list of [At-Risk Pollinator Species](#) on the Lawns to Legumes Partners webpage.

REQUIREMENTS FOR IMPLEMENTING CONSERVATION PROJECTS

1. **Effective Life.** The effective lifespan of projects must be defined by current and acceptable design standards or criteria for no less than 5 years. The beginning date for a practice’s effective life is the same date final payment is approved and the project is considered complete.
2. **Project Assurances.** The applicant must provide assurances that installed conservation practices and projects meet the purposes of the grant program, will remain in place for the lifespan expected based on the standard or professionally accepted practice, and will provide quality benefits for which they were designed. Such assurances may include easements, deed recordings, enforceable contracts, performance bonds, letters of credit, and termination or performance penalties. BWSR may allow replacement of a practice or project that does not comply with expected lifespan requirements with a practice or project that provides equivalent benefits.
3. **Operation, Maintenance, and Inspections.** All practice designs must include identification of operation and maintenance activities specific to the installed practices. An [operation and maintenance](#) plan is critical to ongoing performance of installed practices as well as to planning and scheduling those activities and must be prepared by designated technical staff for the life of the practice. An inspection schedule, procedure, and assured access to the practice site shall be included in the project file as a component of maintaining the effectiveness of the practice.

4. **Permitting.** The applicant is responsible for obtaining and complying with all permits necessary to execute the project. If applicable, successful applicants will be required to provide sufficient documentation prior to work plan approval that the project expects to receive or has received all necessary federal, state, and local permits and meets all water quality rules, including those that apply to the utilization of an existing water body as a water quality treatment device. Applicants are strongly encouraged to contact the appropriate regulatory agencies early in the grant proposal development process to ensure potential projects can meet all applicable regulatory requirements.

PROGRAM AND PROJECT SUPPORT

Eligible activities include public education and engagement, equipment, and other activities necessary for the implementation of pollinator conservation practices and programs consistent with the purposes of these funds. Project support expenditures must be appropriately documented.

TECHNICAL AND ENGINEERING ASSISTANCE

Eligible activities include but are not limited to development of project plans and specifications necessary to implement activities. Eligible activities include actual technical and engineering expenses to advance plan implementation, site investigations and assessments, design and cost estimates, construction or installation supervision, and inspections.

GRANT MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

Eligible activities include local grant administration, management, and reporting that are directly related to and necessary for implementing the project or activity associated with the grant. All grant recipients are required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments.

PREVAILING WAGE

It is the responsibility of the grant recipient or contractor to pay prevailing wages on construction projects to which state prevailing wage laws apply (Minn. Stat. 177.42 – 177.44). All laborers and mechanics employed by grant recipients and subcontractors funded in whole or in part with state funds included in this RFP shall be paid wages at rates not less than those prevailing on projects of a character similar in the locality. Additional information on prevailing wage requirements is available on the Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI) website <https://www.dli.mn.gov/business/employment-practices/prevailing-wage-information>. Questions about the proposal of prevailing wage rates should be directed to DOLI at 651-284-5091.

APPLYING FOR THE GRANT

HOW TO SUBMIT A QUESTION

For questions regarding the grant program, email Erin.Loeffler@state.mn.us

For questions regarding the eLINK grants management system, email elinksupport@state.mn.us. Please review the eLINK-related topics on [BWSR's eLINK webpage](#) before contacting eLINK support.

HOW TO APPLY

1. Set up your eLINK user account.

Applications need to be submitted via [eLINK](#). Eligible applicants without a current eLINK user account must [Register for a new eLINK](#) no later than seven days prior to the proposal deadline. For eLINK related questions, first visit the eLINK section

of the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) page. If your question is not addressed here, please contact elinksupport@state.mn.us.

2. Complete your funding request (proposal)

See the [Completing a Funding Request](#) under the “eLINK Training Videos” tab on the eLINK webpage to view a 11-minute online module describing how to complete a Funding Request (or Application) within eLINK.

- As part of the proposal, eLINK will require applicants to map the location of the proposed project area.
- Answers to each question is limited to 2,000 characters. The character limit in eLINK is not the same as Microsoft Word.
- Proposals may include only one image to be submitted within their eLINK application. Only .jpg, .tiff, or .png file types are allowed. All other file types of images are not accessible to reviewers.
Applicants must provide answers to the following questions as part of their proposal submitted in eLINK. The questions are related to the ranking criteria categories, which determine how proposals are scored by reviewers. The ranking criteria can be found in the “Application Review” section of this RFP.
- Proposals submitted must request state funds no less than \$50,000. Proposals submitted that fall below \$50,000 will not be accepted.
- Proposals may receive partial funding based on eligibility or availability of funds. Prior to final selection, the Board may engage applicants to resolve questions or to discuss modifications to the project or funding request. Actual awards may be less than this minimum if proposals receive partial funding.
- Proposals that do not comply with all proposal requirements will not be considered for funding, as provided below:
 - Components of the proposal are incomplete or missing;
 - The match amount does not meet grant requirements; or
 - The minimum grant dollar amount is not met, or the maximum amount is exceeded.

APPLICATION QUESTION TO BE COMPLETED IN ELINK	
1.	Discuss your project’s residential and/or education emphasis and its connection to statewide and local habitat corridors/pathways or areas mapped as important for pollinator habitat.
2.	How will collaboration with individuals and/or residents be established or strengthened as part of the Pollinator Pathway’s and how is equity considered for the project?
3.	Discuss the technical expertise of applicants and partners that will be involved with assisting landowners.
4.	What are your long-term plans for project maintenance and sustainability, and related topics such as nesting and overwintering habitat for pollinators, and protection from pesticide exposure?
5.	Discuss the potential to incorporate several project types into the pollinator pathways such as pollinator beneficial trees and shrubs, pollinator lawns, pollinator meadows and native pocket plants that are encouraged for the program.
6.	Explain the anticipated outcomes upon completion of the project and how these outcomes will be obtained. If you are a past grant recipient, please summarize your past outcomes.

APPLICATION REVIEW

BWSR staff will initially review all proposals for eligibility. Eligible proposals will be reviewed by a review team made up of BWSR staff in conjunction with external parties (e.g. other state agencies, tribal liaisons, etc.). These recommendations may be for complete or partial funding of a proposal. The BWSR Board considers the review teams' recommendations and makes the award decisions.

Table 1: Pollinator Pathways Grant Program Ranking Criteria	
Ranking Criteria	
Potential benefits for at-risk pollinator such as but not limited to the Rusty Patch Bumble Bee, Monarch butterfly in residentially, educational and/or community spaces.	25
Connection to habitat corridors/pathways or areas mapped as important for pollinator plantings and benefiting at-risk species	15
Community collaboration established or strengthened as part of the pollinator pathways and how equity is considered.	10
Sufficient technical capacity of applicant and partners	10
Long-term plans for project maintenance and sustainability, and related topics such as nesting and overwintering habitat for pollinators, and protection from pesticide exposure	10
Potential to incorporate several project types (i.e. native pocket plantings, pollinator meadows, flowering trees and shrubs, pollinator lawns, etc.) into the residential, community and/or educational spaces.	10
Anticipated Outcomes and Project Value: 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.	20
Total Points Available	100

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

[08-01 Conflict of Interest in State Grant-Making Policy](#), also applies to BWSR grantees. Grantees' conflicts of interest are generally considered organizational conflicts of interest. Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- A grantee is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice due to competing duties or loyalties,
- A grantee's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties, or
- 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. 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](#), [Grants Management Policies, Statutes and Forms](#)

and [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making, 2022](#) (Word).

In cases where a conflict of interest is suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

PRIVACY NOTICE

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 proposal 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.

PRE-AWARD REVIEW

1. **Pre-award Review** Applicants will be required to comply with [OGM Policy 08-06](#), and will be asked to submit documents relevant to their entity type.
2. **Nonprofit organizations** All nonprofit organizations applying for grants in the state of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to receiving a grant award of \$50,000 and higher.
3. Sign a grant contract agreement indicating their intention to complete the project(s) contained in the application. The agreement also authorizes BWSR to monitor progress of the grant. The grant contract agreement must be signed within 30 days of being sent to the grantee.

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 and cannot be used as match.

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

To comply with Policy 08-06, applicants must submit the following:

- A completed "Pre-Award Nonprofit Form" available on the [Apply For BWSR Grants webpage](#), posted with this RFP.

- Related documentation requested within the form may include but is not limited to: A copy of the nonprofit's most recent Form 990 or Form 990-EZ, most recent certified financial audit, confirmation of good standing with the Office of the Secretary of State.

Completed forms and related documentation should be submitted to BWSR.grants@state.mn.us at the time of application.

If the completed form and related documents are not submitted by the application deadline, the application will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed.

GRANT RECIPIENT INFORMATION

GRANT AGREEMENT AND PROJECT PERIOD

Notification of grant award will be in the form of an automated notification from the BWSR eLINK system or an email from BWSR Grants staff to the grantee. Notifications are sent to the Day-to-Day Contact(s) identified by the organization within the eLINK system. This notification includes instructions for further processing of the grant agreement and may also contain grant-specific information such as requirements for completing work plans, disbursement terms, or additional required documentation for processing the grant. Read these instructions carefully as requirements can vary by grant and fiscal year.

BWSR will use grant agreements, and an associated work plan, as contracts for assurance of deliverables and compliance with appropriate statutes, rules, and established policies. BWSR reserves the right to require a work plan revision or grant agreement amendment for changes in scope. Willful or negligent disregard of relevant statutes, rules and policies may lead to imposition of financial penalties on the grant recipient. Upon receiving the notification of grant award, which indicates approval of an application, and prior to beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving grant funds, the applicant is required to do the following:

1. Complete an IRS W-9 form or register as a vendor in SWIFT, the state's accounting system, and submit other required documentation within 30 days of award notification.

PAYMENT SCHEDULE

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 and BWSR has reconciled expenditures of the initial payment. 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.

All grants must be completed by December 31, 2026

REPORTING AND ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

- All grant recipients are subject to BWSR's [Grant Monitoring and Financial Reconciliation Policy](#)
- All grant recipients are subject to BWSR's [Grant Noncompliance Policy](#)

- All grant recipients are subject to the BWSR's [Implementing Contracts with Landowners](#)
- All BWSR funded grants are managed through eLINK. Successful applicants will be required to complete a work plan in eLINK. All required reporting will be completed through eLINK. For more information go to <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/elink>.
- All grant recipients are required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments of the grants.
- BWSR will use grant agreements as contracts for assurance of deliverables and compliance with appropriate statutes, rules and established policies.
- 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.
- Grant reporting, fiscal management, and administration requirements are the responsibility of the grant recipient.
- BWSR recommends all contracts be reviewed by the grant recipient's legal counsel.