



FY 2026

Soil Health Delivery Grant  
Request for Interest (RFI)

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## WHAT IS NEW FOR FY2026

This program is exclusively funded through the Clean Water Fund. All expenses must demonstrate a clear and direct connection to clean water benefits.

The Board of Water and Soil Resources does not intend on utilizing these state funds as direct match for the federal Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). To align with this change, this program will be requiring a 10% non-state match.

## GRANT OVERVIEW

### PURPOSE

The Soil Health Delivery Program is established via Laws of Minnesota 2025, Regular Session, Chapter 40, Article 2, Section 6, paragraph (o) to provide financial assistance, educational, and technical support activities needed to promote and facilitate the enhanced adoption of soil health practices and systems to achieve water quality and drinking water benefits.

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 (SWCDs) which intend to participate in the program, and
- 3) Identify the funding amounts requested by participating SWCDs

### TIMELINE

Late or incomplete responses to this RFI will not be considered for funding. The RFI response must be submitted by 4:30 PM CT/CST on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026. The grant recipient is responsible for proving timely submittal.

Grant Cycle	Grant Cycle Dates
RFI period open	December 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 2025
RFI period close	January 5 <sup>th</sup> , 2026
Anticipated awards	February, 2026
Anticipated grant agreements sent to recipients	February/March, 2026
Work plan submittal deadline	May 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2026
Grant execution deadline	June 30 <sup>th</sup> , 2026
Grant agreement end date	December 31, 2028

## GRANT ELIGIBILITY AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### ELIGIBLE RECIPIENTS, FUNDING AVAILABLE AND MATCH

Eligible recipients for these grants are Soil & Water Conservation Districts.

Recipients must operate in Minnesota and conduct agreement activities that benefit the resources of Minnesota. Recipients must have state or federal recognition as a formal organization or entity, such as a Minnesota Tax ID or Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. Organizations or groups that do not have state or federal recognition must respond using a fiscal agent. Recipients that are debarred or suspended by the State of Minnesota or the Federal Government are not eligible. Recipients must be in compliance with all applicable federal, Tribal, State, and local laws, policies, ordinances, rules, and regulations.

This is a formula-based grant opportunity. The total funding appropriation for this request for interest is \$3,220,000.

The maximum per district funding request for this program is the allocated amount specified in Table 1. 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.

All grants require a non-state match equal to at least 10% of the amount of Soil Health Delivery funds requested and/or received. Match can be provided by a landowner, land occupier, private organization, 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.

*Table 1 lists allocation maximum amounts for each Soil & Water Conservation District.*

Recipient	Funding	Isanti	Up to \$20,000	Watonwan	Up to \$30,000
Ramsey	Up to \$7,500	Scott	Up to \$20,000	Wright	Up to \$30,000
Lake	Up to \$7,500	Carver	Up to \$20,000	Dodge	Up to \$30,000
Koochiching	Up to \$7,500	Benton	Up to \$20,000	Douglas	Up to \$30,000
South St. Louis	Up to \$7,500	Root River	Up to \$20,000	McLeod	Up to \$40,000
North St. Louis	Up to \$7,500	Beltrami	Up to \$20,000	East Polk	Up to \$40,000
Cook	Up to \$7,500	Cass	Up to \$20,000	Pipestone	Up to \$40,000
Washington	Up to \$10,000	Mille Lacs	Up to \$20,000	Grant	Up to \$40,000
Lake of the Woods	Up to \$10,000	Clearwater	Up to \$20,000	East Otter Tail	Up to \$40,000
Itasca	Up to \$10,000	Pine	Up to \$20,000	Rock	Up to \$40,000
Crow Wing	Up to \$10,000	Mahnomen	Up to \$30,000	Todd	Up to \$40,000
Carlton	Up to \$10,000	Dakota	Up to \$30,000	Pennington	Up to \$40,000
Aitkin	Up to \$10,000	Winona	Up to \$30,000	Meeker	Up to \$40,000
Kanabec	Up to \$10,000	Red Lake	Up to \$30,000	Olmsted	Up to \$40,000
Anoka	Up to \$10,000	Le Sueur	Up to \$30,000	Stevens	Up to \$40,000
Hennepin	Up to \$10,000	Wabasha	Up to \$30,000	Lincoln	Up to \$40,000
Hubbard	Up to \$10,000	Nicollet	Up to \$30,000	Morrison	Up to \$40,000
Wadena	Up to \$20,000	Rice	Up to \$30,000	Becker	Up to \$40,000
Chisago	Up to \$20,000	Waseca	Up to \$30,000	Chippewa	Up to \$40,000
Sherburne	Up to \$20,000	Steele	Up to \$30,000	Pope	Up to \$40,000
		Big Stone	Up to \$30,000	Sibley	Up to \$40,000

Brown	Up to \$40,000	Lyon	Up to \$50,000	Wilkin	Up to \$60,000
Traverse	Up to \$40,000	West Otter Tail	Up to \$50,000	Kittson	Up to \$60,000
Goodhue	Up to \$40,000	Roseau	Up to \$50,000	Norman	Up to \$75,000
Cottonwood	Up to \$50,000	Murray	Up to \$60,000	Redwood	Up to \$75,000
Blue Earth	Up to \$50,000	Martin	Up to \$60,000	Clay	Up to \$75,000
Kandiyohi	Up to \$50,000	Fillmore	Up to \$60,000	Renville	Up to \$75,000
Swift	Up to \$50,000	Mower	Up to \$60,000	Stearns	Up to \$75,000
Lac Qui Parle	Up to \$50,000	Faribault	Up to \$60,000	Marshall	Up to \$75,000
Freeborn	Up to \$50,000	Nobles	Up to \$60,000	West Polk	Up to \$75,000
Jackson	Up to \$50,000	Yellow Medicine	Up to \$60,000	<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,220,000</b>

## ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Funding may be used broadly for financial assistance, educational efforts, and technical support activities needed to promote and facilitate the enhanced adoption of soil health practices and systems to achieve water quality and drinking water benefits. 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.*

## STRUCTURAL ACTIVITIES

The BWSR website provides a list of the practices available for users to select within eLINK, see <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/elink-guidance-practices>. It is not an inclusive list.

## NON-STRUCTURAL ACTIVITIES

Non-structural activities that supplement or exceed current minimum state requirements or procedures for protection, enhancement, and restoration of water quality in lakes, rivers, and streams and to protect groundwater and drinking water sources from degradation are eligible. Any projects proposing to provide financial assistance for installing or adopting non-structural land management practices for a duration longer than three years must be reviewed by BWSR staff and approved by the Assistant Director of Regional Operations prior to workplan approval.

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## TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANCE

Soil Health Delivery Funds may be used for actual technical and administrative expenses to advance project implementation. Eligible expenses include the following activities: grant administration, site investigations and assessments, design and cost estimates, construction supervision, and construction inspections. Technical and administrative expenditures must be appropriately documented according to the Grants Administration Manual.

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## PROJECT SUPPORT

Eligible activities include public participation and engagement, equipment, and other activities necessary for the implementation of soil health practices consistent with the purposes of these funds. Refer to procedure within the Grants Administration Manual for Capital Equipment Purchases.

## 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 \(state.mn.us\)](#)

## DISTRICT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE POLICY

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

## SUBMITTING FUNDING REQUESTS

### ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS

Allowable costs are costs 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, monetary settlements and judgements, late payment fees, and investment management fees
- Donations, fundraising, sponsorships, and acknowledgements
- Entertainment, gifts, prizes, and decorations
- Alcohol
- Interest on loans not authorized under state statute
- Loans of BWSR grant funds

- Lobbying, lobbyists, and political contributions
- Merit awards and bonuses

## 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. Grantee is required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments. Applicants who have previously received a grant from BWSR must be in compliance with BWSR requirements for grantee website and eLINK reporting before grant execution and payment.

## 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). When prevailing wage requirements apply, all laborers and mechanics employed by grant recipients and subcontractors funded in whole or in part with state funds included in this RFI 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 application of prevailing wage rates should be directed to DOLI at 651-284-5091.

## RESPONDING TO THE RFI

### HOW TO SUBMIT A QUESTION

Questions regarding RFI responses 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).

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

### HOW TO RESPOND USING ELINK

RFI responses should be submitted through the [eLINK](#) grants management system. Only one response from each Soil and Water Conservation District will be accepted. Responses to the RFI will be used to award grants and generate grant agreements for the program funding.

#### 1. Set up your eLINK user account

RFI responses need to be submitted via <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/elink>. Eligible Recipients without a current eLINK user account must register for an account at <https://elink.bwsr.state.mn.us> no later than seven days prior to the RFI 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](mailto:elinksupport@state.mn.us).

#### 2. Complete your RFI response

To complete an RFI response in eLINK, refer to the [RFI Response Process](#) in eLINK.

*Answers to each question is limited to 2,000 characters. Due to differences in how programs are encoded, be aware that the character limit in eLINK is not the same as Microsoft Word or other text editors.*

*Recipients may include only one image to be submitted within their RFI response. Only .jpg, .tiff, or .png file types are allowed.*

## FUNDING REQUEST QUESTIONS

1. How much funding is being requested? Maximum allocations can be found in Table 1.
2. Do you intend on providing financial assistance to landowners/land occupiers with these funds?
3. (Required if answered yes to #2) Do you have a locally adopted financial assistance policy? If not, please describe your anticipated timeline for adopting such a policy.

## 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 has 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 RFI response, and prior to beginning work on the grant project(s) and receiving grant funds, the recipient 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.
2. Sign a grant contract agreement indicating their intention to complete activities in a BWSR approved work plan, following the program requirements of the grant agreement. 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](#).

The grant agreement will expire on December 31, 2028.

## PAYMENT SCHEDULE

**50/40/10 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 recipient is 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 reviewed and approved the eLINK reporting, and possibly completes a grant reconciliation of the initial payment. The last 10% will be paid after all final reporting requirements are met, and BWSR has reconciled these expenditures.



## REPORTING AND ADMINISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

- All grant recipients are required to report on the outcomes, activities, and accomplishments of the grant.
- 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 the legacy logo on their website. 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>.
- All grant recipients are subject to BWSR's [Providing Financial Assistance to Land Occupiers](#).
- BWSR recommends all contracts be reviewed by the grant recipient's legal counsel.
- All grant recipients are subject to BWSR's [Grant Monitoring and Financial Reconciliation Procedure](#).
- All grant recipients are subject to BWSR's [Grant Noncompliance Policy](#).
- 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.
- Additional information regarding BWSR grant reporting and administration can be found in the Grants Administration Manual ( <https://bwsr.state.mn.us/grants/manual/> )

## NATIVE VEGETATION

Projects that involve vegetation restoration or establishment must use native vegetation and seed and plant sources consistent with BWSR's Native Vegetation Establishment and Enhancement Guidelines, with the exceptions listed below. Use of plant species on the Minnesota [Noxious Weed List](#) is prohibited for all projects. Non-native species used for projects must not pose a risk to native plant communities. The maximum distance for sources of herbaceous species seed and plants is 200 miles; and for tree and shrubs seed and plants the distance is 300 miles.

### Exceptions

- Non-native, non-invasive perennial crops, hay crops or forage crops may be used:
  - As part of a drinking water protection strategy in a vulnerable or highly vulnerable DWSMA as designated by the Department of Health or in a Township Well Testing high-priority area as determined by the Department of Agriculture;
  - In buffers, borders, grass waterways or other areas likely to be exposed to pesticides or part of agricultural production;
  - For soil stabilization, erosion prevention and carbon sequestration in an agricultural production setting;
  - On fields that will be hayed, grazed or harvested.
- For the exceptions above, if the project area is under 20 acres in size, the exception may be approved by local conservation staff. If the project area is 20 acres or larger, or for any exceptions not listed here, grantees must request approval from the BWSR Grant Manager.
- Cover crops used to improve soil health and/or water quality are allowed without a maximum acreage limit.
- Temporary cover is allowed without a maximum acreage limit when needed to stabilize project sites prior to the construction of structural conservation practices.

Cultivars of native species may be used in urban stormwater plantings if they accomplish similar or greater ecological functions, help achieve aesthetic goals and do not pose an invasive or other environmental risk

## PERMITTING

The recipient is responsible for obtaining and complying with all permits necessary to execute the project. Recipients are strongly encouraged to contact the appropriate regulatory agencies as early as possible to ensure potential projects can meet all applicable regulatory requirements.

## 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 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.

## TECHNICAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

Practices and projects must meet the following requirements to ensure long-term public benefit:

- **Technical Assistance Provider.** The recipient must designate technical assistance provider(s) that have appropriate credentials for investigation, design, and construction.
- **Practice Standards.** Practices and projects must use appropriate standards for design, construction, effective life, operation, and maintenance.
- **Practice Certification.** Technical assistance provider(s) must certify that the practice or project was installed or constructed in accordance with the applicable plans and specifications, including approved modifications, prior to authorization for payment.
- **Operation and Maintenance.** Technical Assistance Provider(s) must prepare an operation and maintenance (O&M) plan specific to the site and practice(s) implemented.
- **Periodic Practice/Project Inspection.** Inspections shall confirm that the operation and maintenance plan is being followed and the project has not been altered or removed.

BWSR reserves the right to review the qualifications of all persons providing technical assistance and review the technical project design if a recognized standard is not available.

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## PROJECT AND PRACTICE ASSURANCES

A written agreement is required to ensure program requirements are met when installing projects and practices or providing financial assistance to a land occupier. Project and Practice Assurances must include technical and financial obligations and requirements for the installation, operation, and maintenance of the practice or project, including a plan for failures or noncompliance.

## PROVIDING FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO LAND OCCUPIERS

All BWSR funds used by a recipient to provide financial assistance to a landowner or land occupier requires adequate project assurances.

### **Project Application and Agreements**

Work completed prior to the signing of the agreement is not eligible.

### **Conservation Practice Contract Noncompliance**

Failure to complete, maintain, or repair a conservation practice or unauthorized alteration is considered non-compliance with an executed conservation practice agreement. If the organization discovers noncompliance, they must take action to resolve and notify BWSR.