



## Groundwater Protection Initiative (2026)

### GRANT REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

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Drinking Water Protection  
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*To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-4695.*

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# RFP Part 1: Overview

## 1.1 General Information

- **Announcement Title:** Groundwater Protection Initiative (2026) Accelerated Implementation Grant
- **Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Program Website:**  
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/groundwater/accimpgrant.html>
- **Application Deadline:** Application Deadline: April 3, 2026, by 2:00 p.m. Central Time
- **Application Walkthrough and Open Call for Questions – Teams Webinar:** 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Central Standard Time, Thursday, March 5, 2026, to attend the webinar, click the following link.
  - [Attend the 2026 Call for Questions.](#)

To view the application, go to the Minnesota Department of Health program page:

[Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies \(GRAPS\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/cwf/localimplem.html)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/cwf/localimplem.html>)

or

[Drinking Water Grants and Loans](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/grants.html)  
(<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/grants.html>)

## 1.2 Program Description

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) received funding from the Clean Water Fund to advance Groundwater Restoration and Protection Strategies (GRAPS). A portion of this funding is being offered as grants to build capacity to accelerate implementation of groundwater projects across the state. Each applicant will have the opportunity to apply for up to \$50,000 to conduct pre- project identification, planning and design work that is required before on-the-ground projects can be implemented. Whether it is conducting inventories of potential pollutant sites, utilizing existing targeting tools and datasets, supplying private well testing kits, providing technical assistance, or increasing citizen interactions, these grants equip local governments with the capacity to increase the installation and/or management of groundwater projects and practices that protect groundwater. This grant cannot be used for project implementation or mitigation purposes.

## 1.3 Funding and Project Dates

### Funding

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process. If selected, you may only incur eligible expenditures when the grant agreement is fully executed.

Funding	Estimate
Estimated Amount to Grant	\$400,000 available for RFP
Maximum Award	\$50,000
Minimum Award	\$10,000

## Match Requirement

There are no match requirements.

## Project Dates

The estimated grant start date is July 1, 2026, with kick-off meeting in July 2026 and the grant project period end date is January 31, 2028.

### 1.4 Eligible Applicants

Applicants must be a local or regional unit of government or tribal nation working to implement a state approved plan, such as a wellhead protection plan, metro county groundwater management plan or comprehensive watershed management plan. All applicants are advised that if they accept state dollars, they will be required to comply with all state laws, executive orders, regulations, and policies governing these funds. Run the accessibility check by going to File, Check for Issues, Check Accessibility.

### 1.5 Questions

#### Open Call for Questions

Thursday, March 5, 2026, at 10:00 to 11:00am Central Standard Time.

[Attend the 2026 Call for Questions.](#)

Interested organizations can also email [carrie.raber@state.mn.us](mailto:carrie.raber@state.mn.us) or [erin.harris@state.mn.us](mailto:erin.harris@state.mn.us) to receive an invitation.

#### Questions and Answers

Additional questions regarding this request for proposals (RFP) must be submitted to Carrie Raber and Erin Harris at [carrie.raber@state.mn.us](mailto:carrie.raber@state.mn.us) and [erin.harris@state.mn.us](mailto:erin.harris@state.mn.us).

Please submit questions no later than 2:00 p.m. Central Time on **March 13, 2026**.

Questions and Answers will be posted at [Accelerated Implementation Grant \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/groundwater/accimpgrant.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/groundwater/accimpgrant.html).

To ensure the proper and fair evaluation of all applications, other communications regarding this RFP, including verbal, telephone, written, or internet initiated by or on behalf of any applicant to any employee of the Department, other than questions submitted to as outlined above, are prohibited. **Any violation of this prohibition may result in the disqualification of the applicant.**

# RFP Part 2: Program Details

## 2.1 Priorities

To build capacity we are seeking grant applicants that consider the priorities identified below. We understand flexibility is needed to respond to local needs, however applications will be favored that support the priorities listed.

### Health Equity 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. [The Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities.

This grant will serve:

- all residents of the Soil and Water Conservation District, watershed district, tribal nation, or municipality.

Grant outcomes will include:

- Minnesotans will be aware of crucial issues impacting groundwater quality and availability, and will understand the need for protecting, restoring, and conserving water.
- Drinking water sources will be protected and safe for all Minnesotans.

## 2.2 Eligible Projects

### Collaboration

This grant prioritizes collaborative efforts that result in relationship building. This may entail coordinating with local units of government (LGU), public water systems, landowners, and other organizations to advance groundwater protection. When effectively implemented partners have a shared understanding of resource protection needs, conservation delivery opportunities and regulatory oversight that can be achieved.

### Regional or Multijurisdictional Scale

This grant prioritizes proposals that target work at a regional or multijurisdictional scale. Examples may include, but not limited to:

- Sharing services with adjoining counties or soil and water conservation districts.
- Targeted action in multiple Drinking Water Supply Management Areas (DWSMA).
- Targeted action in the Minnesota Department of Agriculture's Groundwater Protection Rule priority areas.
- Department of Natural Resources Groundwater Management Areas that span over multiple jurisdictions.
- Targeted action in a watershed Landscape Stewardship Plan.
- Metro County Groundwater Management Plans.
- Targeting at a watershed scale.

## Capacity Building

This grant prioritizes efforts that build groundwater expertise to achieve an economy of scale of resource protection. Examples may include, but not limited to:

- Dedicated staff to work on groundwater issues.
- Connecting public water systems to resource protection.
- Evaluate opportunities to successfully apply for implementation grants for protection and/or restoration actions.
- Bringing regional resources to the local level to gain efficiencies of scale.

## Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds

## 2.3 Grant Management Responsibilities

### Grant Agreement

Each grantee must formally enter into a grant agreement. The grant agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation for the project. Once the grant agreement is signed, the grantee is expected to read and comply with all conditions of the grant agreement.

A sample grant agreement can be reviewed at [Accelerated Implementation Grant: Groundwater Protection Initiative](https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/groundwater/accimpgrant.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/groundwater/accimpgrant.html>).

Applicants should be aware of the terms and conditions of the standard grant agreement in preparing their applications. Much of the language reflected in the sample agreement is required by statute. If an applicant takes exception to any of the terms, conditions or language in the sample grant agreement, the applicant must indicate those exceptions, in writing, in their application in response to this RFP. Certain exceptions may result in an application being disqualified from further review and evaluation. Only those exceptions indicated in an application will be available for discussion or negotiation.

No work on grant activities can begin until a fully executed grant agreement is in place.

The funded applicant will be legally responsible for assuring implementation of the work plan and compliance with all applicable state requirements including worker's compensation insurance, nondiscrimination, data privacy, budget compliance, and reporting.

### Accountability and Reporting Requirements

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to monitor progress on state grants by requiring grantees to submit written progress reports at least annually until all grant funds have been expended and all the terms in the grant agreement have been met.

The reporting schedule will be:

- Annual progress report.
- A final report is due by February 2028.

## Grant Monitoring

Minn. Stat. § 16B.97 and Policy on Grant Monitoring require the following:

- One monitoring visit during the grant period on all state grants over \$50,000.
- Annual monitoring visits during the grant period on all grants over \$250,000.
- Conducting a financial reconciliation of grantee's expenditures at least once during the grant period on grants over \$50,000.

## Technical Assistance

MDH will provide technical assistance to grantees to support them in fulfilling their grant objectives.

## Grant Payments

Per State Policy on Grant Payments (PDF) ([https://mn.gov/bms-stat/assets/grants\\_policy\\_08-08.pdf](https://mn.gov/bms-stat/assets/grants_policy_08-08.pdf)), reimbursement is the method for making grant payments. All grantee requests for reimbursement must correspond to the approved grant budget. The State shall review each request for reimbursement against the approved grant budget, grant expenditures to-date and the latest grant progress report before approving payment. Grant payments shall not be made on grants with past due progress reports unless MDH has given the grantee a written extension.

The invoicing and payment schedule will be **quarterly**. Grantees will complete and submit Attachment D "**Groundwater Protection Initiative – Accelerated Implementation Grant Invoice**" for the quarter's expenses by the end of the following month (i.e., December's invoice is due by January 31st).

## 2.4 Grant Provisions

### Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination Requirements for all Grantees

The grantee agrees to comply with applicable state and federal laws prohibiting discrimination.

Minnesota's nondiscrimination law is the Minnesota Human Rights Act (MHRA) (Minn. Stat. § 363A; See e.g. Minn. Stat. § 363A.02 (<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/363A.02>). The MHRA is enforced by the Minnesota Department of Human Rights (<https://mn.gov/mdhr/>). Some, but not all, MHRA requirements are reflected below. All grantees are responsible for knowing and complying with nondiscrimination and other applicable laws.

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified.

The grantee agrees not to discriminate in public accommodations because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability.

The grantee agrees not to discriminate in public services because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, and status with regard to public assistance.

The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. Minn. Rules, part [5000.3550](#).

## Audits

Per [Minn. Stat. § 16B.98](#), subd. 8, the grantee's books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the granting agency and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

## Conflicts of Interest

MDH will take steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per Minn. Stat. § 16B.98 and the Office of Grants Management's Policy 08-01, "Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making."

**Applicants must complete the Applicant Conflict of Disclosure form (Attachment B) and submit it as part of the completed application.** Failure to complete and submit this form will result in disqualification from the review process.

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- a grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice
- a grantees or applicant's objectivity in performing the grant work is or might be otherwise impaired
- a grantee or applicant has an unfair competitive advantage

Individual conflicts of interest occur when:

- an applicant, or any of its employees, uses their position to obtain special advantage, benefit, or access to MDH's time, services, facilities, equipment, supplies, prestige, or influence
- An applicant, or any of its employees, receives or accepts money, or anything else of value, from another state grantee or grant applicant with respect to the specific project covered by this RFP/project.
- An applicant, or any of its employees, has equity or a financial interest in, or partial or whole ownership of, a competing grant applicant organization.

- An applicant, or any of its employees, is an employee of MDH or is a relative of an employee of MDH.

In cases where a conflict of interest is perceived, 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.

### **Non-Transferability**

Grant funds are not transferrable to any other entity. Applicants that are aware of any upcoming mergers, acquisitions, or any other changes in their organization or legal standing, must disclose this information to MDH in their application, or as soon as they are aware of it.

### **Public Data and Trade Secret Materials**

All applications submitted in response to this RFP will become property of the State. In accordance with [Minn. Stat. § 13.599](#), all applications and their contents are private or nonpublic until the applications are opened.

Once the applications are opened, the name and address of each applicant and the amount requested is public. All other data in an application is private or nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process, which is defined by statute as when MDH has completed negotiating the grant agreement with the selected applicant.

After MDH has completed the evaluation process, all remaining data in the applications is public with the exception of trade secret data as defined and classified in [Minn. Stat. § 13.37](#), subd. 1(b). A statement by an applicant that the application is copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the application or its contents. ([Minn. Stat. § 13.599](#), subd. 3(a)).

If an applicant submits any information in an application that it believes to be trade secret information, as defined by [Minn. Stat. § 13.37](#), the applicant must:

- Clearly mark all trade secret materials in its application at the time it is submitted,
- Include a statement attached to its application justifying the trade secret designation for each item, and
- Defend any action seeking release of the materials it believes to be trade secret and indemnify and hold harmless MDH and the State of Minnesota, its agents, and employees, from any judgments or damages awarded against the State in favor of the party requesting the materials, and all costs connected with that defense.
- This indemnification survives MDH's award of a grant agreement. In submitting an application in response to this RFP, the applicant agrees that this indemnification survives if the trade secret materials are in possession of MDH. The State will not consider the prices submitted by the responder to be proprietary or trade secret materials.

MDH reserves the right to reject a claim that any information in an application is trade secret information if it determines the applicant has not met the burden of establishing that the information constitutes a trade secret. MDH will not consider the budgets submitted by applicants to be proprietary or trade secret materials. Use of generic trade secret language encompassing substantial portions of the application or simple assertions of trade secret without substantial explanation of the basis for that designation will be insufficient to warrant a trade secret designation.

If a grant is awarded to an applicant, MDH may use or disclose the trade secret data to the extent provided by law. Any decision by the State to disclose information determined to be trade secret information will be made consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act ([Ch. 13 MN Statutes](#)) and other relevant laws and regulations.

If certain information is found to constitute trade secret information, the remainder of the application will become public; in the event a data request is received for application information, only the trade secret data will be removed and remain nonpublic.

## 2.5 Review and Selection Process

### Review Process

Funding will be allocated through a competitive process with review by a committee representing state agencies with knowledge on groundwater science in Minnesota. The review committee will evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline.

MDH will review all committee recommendations and is responsible for award decisions. **The award decisions of MDH are final and not subject to appeal.** Additionally:

- MDH reserves the right to withhold the distribution of funds in cases where proposals submitted do not meet the necessary criteria.
- The RFP does not obligate MDH to award a grant agreement or complete the project, and MDH reserves the right to cancel this RFP if it is in its best interest.
- MDH reserves the right to waive minor irregularities or request additional information to further clarify or validate information submitted in the application, provided the application, as submitted, substantially complies with the requirements of this RFP. There is, however, no guarantee MDH will look for information or clarification outside of the submitted written application. Therefore, it is important that all applicants ensure that all sections of their application are complete to avoid the possibility of failing an evaluation phase or having their score reduced for lack of information.

### Selection Criteria and Weight

The review committee will be reviewing each application on an 100-point scale. A standardized scoring system will be used to determine the extent to which the applicant meets the selection criteria.

The scoring factors and weight that applications will be judged are based on:

1. **Organizational Capacity** (Up to 25 total points for this section.)
  - a. Experience working with other local entities.
  - b. Demonstrated ability and willingness to collaborate with other entities on this project.
  - c. Capacity to meet the project objectives and priorities.
2. **Project Narrative and Work Plan** (Up to 50 total points for this section.)
  - a. Clearly defines project goals and objectives.
  - b. Clearly defines project outcomes.
  - c. Defines the way the project will prepare for future protection and/or implementation.

- d. Demonstrates how actions benefit already established priorities in state and local plans.
  - e. Clear timeline with key milestones.
3. **Budget and Budget Justification** (Up to 20 total points for this section.)
- a. Itemized budget.
  - b. Budget reflects grant goals.
  - c. Budget includes in-kind or matching funds.
4. **Priority Organization** (Up to 5 total points for this section.)
- a. Preference points are given to organizations who have not received a prior GRAPS AIG grant within the prior two funding cycles.

## Grantee Past Performance and Due Diligence Review Process

It is the policy of the State of Minnesota to consider a grant applicant's past performance before awarding subsequent grants to them. State policy requires states to conduct a pre-award risk assessment prior to a grant award. Additional information may be required for proposed budgets of \$50,000 and higher to a potential applicant in order to comply with Policy on Pre-Award Risk Assessment for Potential Grantees.

### Notification

MDH anticipates notifying all applicants via email of funding decisions by May 8, 2026.

## RFP Part 3: Application and Submission Instructions

### 3.1 Application Deadline

**All applications must be received by MDH no later than 2:00 p.m. Central Time, on Friday, April 3, 2026.**

**Late applications will not be accepted.** It is the applicant's sole responsibility to allow sufficient time to address all potential delays caused by any reason whatsoever. MDH will not be responsible for delays caused by mail, delivery, computer, or technology problems.

**Acknowledgement of application receipt.** MDH will "reply all" to the email address that submitted the application to acknowledge receipt of your application within **two** business days of the receipt of an application. If you do not receive an acknowledgment email within that time frame from when you submitted the application, it means MDH did not receive your application/documents. Please contact [erin.harris@state.mn.us](mailto:erin.harris@state.mn.us) that time frame for further instructions.

### 3.2 Application Submission Instructions

Applications must be submitted via email to:

Attention: GRAPS Grant Coordinator  
[health.drinkingwater@state.mn.us](mailto:health.drinkingwater@state.mn.us)

### 3.3 Application Instructions

Each Application must contain the following items to be considered complete:

- Signed Grant Application that includes the Project Narrative, Work Plan, and Budget – key points outlined in Attachment A.
- Any narrative or supplemental portions of the application.
- Grantee Conflict of Interest Attachment B.
- Due Diligence Form Attachment C

Incomplete applications will be rejected and not evaluated.

Applications must include all required application materials, including attachments. Do not provide any materials that are not requested in this RFP, as such materials will not be considered nor evaluated. **MDH reserves the right to reject any application that does not meet these requirements.**

By submitting an application, each applicant warrants that the information provided is true, correct, and reliable for purposes of evaluation for potential grant award. The submission of inaccurate or misleading information may be grounds for disqualification from the award, as well as subject the applicant to suspension or debarment proceedings and other remedies available by law.

**All costs incurred in responding to this RFP will be borne by the applicant.**

## RFP Part 4: Attachments

Attachment A: Application

Attachment B: Granted Conflict of Interest

Attachment C: Due Diligence

Attachment D: Grantee Invoice Template