

HENNEPIN COUNTY

MINNESOTA

Solicitation for Grant Applications

2024 Green Partners guidelines for environmental action grants

Virtual information meetings:

Tuesday, April 2, 2024, from 11 a.m. to noon.

[Register here](#) to join the meeting

- **Environmental action grants**

Thursday, April 4, 2024, from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m.

[Register here](#) to join the meeting

- Youth environmental education grants
- Youth green jobs grants

Meetings will be recorded and posted at hennepin.us/greenpartners under Green Partners grants.

Applications due: Thursday, April 25, 2024 at 3:00 p.m.



1 Introduction

1.1 Project overview

The County of Hennepin, State of Minnesota (“County”) is soliciting applications for the Green Partners Environmental Action Grant (the “Grant”). As used herein, the entity/individual responsible for any awarded Grant may be referred to as the “Applicant” and the Applicant’s response to this solicitation (the “Solicitation”) may be referred to as the “Application”.

Through the Green Partners grant program, Hennepin County supports organizations to actively educate, engage, and motivate residents to become environmental stewards and make positive behavior changes, such as taking action to prevent waste, separate organic waste and recycle, reduce household hazardous waste, combat climate change, care for trees, protect birds, bats, and pollinators, and improve air and water quality.

Which application should I use?

The Green Partners grants program has three options to apply for funding based on the primary audience and the focus of the project.

Application	Audience	Project focus
Youth green jobs grant application	Individuals between the ages of 14 and 24	Supporting green jobs exploration and training for young people in Hennepin County, especially those who face disparities in accessing green jobs and associated training opportunities.
Youth environmental education grant application	Youth of all ages	Developing awareness of environmental issues and interest in environmental stewardship with young adults, high school, middle school, elementary, or preschool age youth.
Environmental action grant application	Adults (18+)	Motivating individuals to make specific environmental behavior changes at home, at work, as a parent, or on-the-go.

What grant amount am I eligible to receive?

- If you **have never received a Hennepin County Green Partners grant before**, you can apply for up to \$12,000 for a one-year Environmental Action or Youth Environmental Education grant.
- If you **have received a Hennepin County Green Partners grant before**, you can apply for up to \$25,000 for a one-year Environmental Action or Youth Environmental Education grant. If you are a returning Green Partners grantee, you can apply for a two-year, \$50,000 grant.
- **If you apply for a Youth Green Jobs grant**, you can request up to \$30,000 for a one-year project, whether you have received a Green Partners grant before or not.

Applicants are encouraged to contact the County for feedback on project ideas before applying. For more information visit hennepin.us/greenpartners or contact Green Partners staff at 612-596-6856 or GreenPartners@hennepin.us. Assistance is available via phone with an appointment. Requests for appointments must be made by 5 p.m., April 23, 2024 to allow for accommodating all requests.

Contact the [Supplier Portal Help Desk](#) for assistance with viewing the application materials, registering, and uploading your Application at 612-543-5412 (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) or supplierportal@hennepin.us.

1.2 The Grant

To be eligible for the Grant, the applicant must be one of the following:

- A non-profit entity, such as a community, youth, or faith group;
- A public school district or private school, including community education and early childhood family education programs; or
- A park district.

Environmental action grants

Environmental action projects must primarily engage adults. Applicants must be willing to incorporate research-based behavior change strategies into project plans to motivate people to take one or two environmentally friendly actions. Support will be provided by County staff during the project period. Learn more about behavior change strategies at [Fostering Sustainable Behavior](#).

Applicants that are awarded grants will enter into a grant agreement with Hennepin County. Grant projects will begin no earlier than September 1, 2024. One-year grant projects will end by September 1, 2025. Two-year grant projects will end by September 1, 2026.

1.3 Grant Application

When submitting an Application, Applicants must follow the specific format and content requirements below and in **Attachment 1 – Green Partners environmental action application**. Failure to do so could prolong the evaluation process and may be grounds for rejection of the Application.

Applicant shall describe, in detail, the proposed uses of the Grant funds for the Project. Any other use of Grant funds is strictly prohibited. Applicant shall be solely responsible for securing all additional funds necessary for completion of the Project.

Applicant agrees to only use the Grant funds for the uses indicated above. Use of Grant funds for any other purpose is strictly prohibited. If Applicant uses Grant funds for any other purpose, Applicant shall, upon County's written demand, repay all Grant funds awarded.

Application format requirements

- Follow the Application format and answer all questions.

- Submit the application in Word and budget in Excel or similar.
- Do not exceed 6 pages. Keep the font size readable. Do not include a cover sheet. You may delete the question text and instructions to fit the page limit.
- Supplemental materials are not required. Up to 4 pages of supplemental materials may be submitted with your application. Supplemental materials may include letters of support, past project results, photos, newsletters, etc. Please reference supplemental materials in the Application narrative.

2 Evaluation and selection

2.1 Applicant evaluation and recommendation for selection

County will consider the Application to determine whether it meets County's requirements and is otherwise eligible for a Grant award. Submission of an Application shall neither obligate nor entitle an Applicant to enter into a contract with the County or to receive a Grant.

2.2 Evaluation of responsiveness

The County will consider all the material submitted by the Applicant to determine whether the Applicant's offer is in compliance with the terms and conditions set forth in this Solicitation. Applications that do not comply with the provisions in this Solicitation may be considered nonresponsive and may be rejected. Notwithstanding the foregoing, County expressly reserves the right to reject any or all Applications with or without cause.

Applications will be evaluated during the review process using an adjectival rating for each section, as well as a summary rating for the overall proposal. Evaluation criteria includes the following:

Project focuses on one or more of the following topics:

Preventing waste and recycling

- Recycling
- Preventing waste
- Organics recycling
- Backyard composting
- Reducing household hazardous waste

Protecting natural resources

- Caring for trees
- Protecting water
- Sustainable landscaping
- Protecting habitat for birds, bats, and pollinators
- Exploring nature
- Environmental science

Taking action on climate change

- Conserving energy
- Improving air quality
- Using renewable energy
- Choosing sustainable transportation
- Increasing resiliency

Section 1: Applicant and project team

- A project manager and back-up project manager are identified in the application.
- Applicant and project partners have the experience and capacity to implement the project and meet grant obligations. Experience and capacity may be indicated by:
 - Enough staffing to implement the project,
 - The project team are in roles and have experience that is suitable and important to the project.
- Letters of support are submitted by significant project partners, indicating they are a partner in the project.
- The project team is able to engage participants throughout the project.
- Applicant and partners have demonstrated efforts to increase cultural competency of project staff. For examples, see the list below. The list is not comprehensive, and Applicant does not need to achieve all of the possibilities listed to be considered.
 - The project team reflects the demographics of the audience to be engaged.
 - The project team has experience implementing culturally competent programming.
 - The project team has participated in trainings on diversity topics such as unconscious bias, equity and inclusion, cultural and identity awareness, and more.
 - The Applicant has updated hiring and/or operational practices to be more inclusive.
 - The Applicant and project partners have made public commitments to be more inclusive, understand and dismantle racism, etc.
- Applicant has policies and practices in place to prevent volunteers from working unsupervised with youth, unless background checks are completed.
- Applicant would benefit from Hennepin County resources and the support requested is appropriate for the project.
- Applicant has a track record of successfully completing projects and reports for previous Hennepin County contracts or grants, if applicable.

Section 2: Participant information

- Participants must live, work, go to school, or recreate in Hennepin County.
- Applicant will engage at least 150 participants, primarily adults, during the project period.
- Disparities
 - Special consideration will be given to projects that engage participants who face one or more [disparities identified by Hennepin County](#). Disparities in employment, income, education, health, housing, transportation, and justice are indicated in various ways:
 - [Hennepin County Disparity Reduction Vision and Priorities](#)
 - [Hennepin County climate vulnerability assessment](#)
- Applicant has a well-defined audience that they plan to engage and an understanding of how engaged and aware their participants are already.

- Applicant has an interest in understanding of their audiences' motivations and barriers to taking action, and they have a plan to learn more.
- Participants involved in the project are interested and likely to try or adopt new environmental behaviors after participating in this project.

Section 3: Project goals and activities

- Applicant has a demonstrated understanding of the scope of services and the organization's mission make this project a good fit for the grant program.
- Project focuses on topics allowed in the grant guidelines. See the list of *Green Partners environmental action potential projects* posted with this solicitation for project ideas.
- Project focuses on one or two specific environmental behaviors/actions.
- Project activities and outreach methods address the topic in a way that is relevant to the audience and incorporates activities that align with participants current state of action and potential journey from awareness to action, see the Green Partners [Journey map and planning worksheet](#). The project incorporates appropriate [behavior change strategies](#) to motivate action on the topic and will use hands-on activities and/or existing resources, when appropriate.
- Timeline of activities is logical and realistic in regard to organizational capacity and programming.
- Applicant will describe and provide information on the curriculum and lesson plans they will use.
- Applicant will collect and report outcomes from the project. The project plan includes feasible methods to collect or track evidence of action and participant behavior changes, see the Green Partners [Behavior change outcomes report](#).
- Applicant will provide safety training to participants if applicable to the project.

Section 4: Budget

- Budget includes eligible expenses.
- Staff time listed includes estimated hours, hourly rates, or relevant pay details.
- Details about items to be purchased and cost per item are provided, estimates are acceptable.
- Budget includes adequate personnel time and/or project supplies that are appropriate for the project.
- Budget includes applicable educational supplies and/or staff time.
- Budget matches project activities and it is clear how the items will be used for the project.
- If you are seeking funding for two years, submit a separate spreadsheet for each year's budget – a sheet for year one activities and a separate spreadsheet for year two project activities.

Eligible expenses:

Funds may be used for project supplies, printing, communications, staff time, youth stipends, volunteer appreciation, food, transportation, and outreach.

- Staff time: Only include staff time that would be covered by this grant. We recommend planning for a minimum of 10 staff hours for grant related meetings and reporting. Stipends for interns and apprentices are allowed.
- Project supplies: We encourage groups to purchase supplies that will enable participants to engage in hands-on learning and take action. Education materials and supplies that contribute to environmental learning and action are allowed.

- Transportation: Bikes, bike and scooter share programs, transit, mileage, buses.
- Communications: Printing, mailing, promotions, educational and informational materials
- Green events: Grantees must take steps to make events low waste. Use Hennepin County's [green events checklist](#), [recycling at events resources](#), and [lead by example resources](#).
- Food and beverage: Grantees must follow the County's healthy eating guidelines and minimize waste when purchasing food and beverage items. See Hennepin County's [event recycling and waste reduction guide](#) and offer healthy food options at meetings.

Ineligible expenses:

- General operating expenses such as attorney fees, rent, insurance, phone, electricity, and internet are not eligible.
- Disposable items: Styrofoam™, bottled water and other disposable, single-use food service items, and disposable event decorations are not eligible expenses.
- Equipment valued more than \$500: Funds may not be used for computers, dishwashers, or other durable equipment valued over \$500.
- Recycling and organics bins and funding for additional recycling and organics infrastructure are available through the Hennepin County [business recycling](#), [multifamily buildings](#), and [school recycling](#) programs.
- Funding for larger natural resource projects, such as rain gardens, habitat restoration, and cisterns is available through [Hennepin County natural resources grants](#) or your watershed. A small proportion of Green Partners funds may be used to purchase plants.
- Field trips and overnight trips outside of Hennepin County, unless the site is on our [pre-approved list](#).
- Projects to engage businesses or schools in changing their green practices are not a good fit for this grant program. Examples of ineligible projects include projects to get businesses to recycle, recycle better, or provide low-waste alternatives and projects to get a school's administration and janitorial staff to implement better recycling.

New Applicants and returning grantees reviewed separately

Returning Green Partners grantees will be evaluated against other returning grantees and Applicants that are new to the program will be evaluated against other Applicants that are new to the program.

For returning grantees, Green Partners grant advisor(s) will be consulted to provide some insight about their previous grant project(s).

Two-year grant criteria for returning grantees

Returning Green Partners grantees are eligible for a two-year grant after receiving at least one previous award for a Green Partners grant. Additional criteria are considered for two-year environmental action projects. The additional criteria are listed below.

- Section 1: Applicant and project team
 - Applicant has been awarded a grant for at least one successful project through the Green Partners grant program.
 - Special consideration will be given to efforts led by people who experience disparities similar to the audience they are engaging.

- Section 2: Participant information
 - Special consideration will be given to projects that engage participants who face [disparities](#).
- Section 3: Project activities
 - Project activities in year two are a logical next step.
- Section 4: Budget
 - A detailed budget for year 2 was provided.

The County reserves the right to determine whether any aspect of the Application satisfactorily meets the criteria, the right to seek clarification or additional information from any Applicant(s), and the right to waive any irregularities or informalities that the County deems is in its best interest.

2.3 Execution of Grant agreement

County may condition the Grant award upon Applicant’s execution of a Grant agreement provided by County. As applicable, the Grant agreement shall define the legal relationship between County and Applicant.

Insurance requirements: Hennepin County requires insurance coverage for most Green Partners grantees in the following amounts: general liability insurance coverage of \$1 million in General Aggregate, \$1 million in products – Completed Operations Aggregate, \$1 million in Personal and Advertising Injury, \$1 million in Combined Bodily Injury and Property Damage – Each Occurrence, Employer’s Liability insurance coverage of at least \$500,000 for Bodily injury by disease – Policy Limit, \$100,000 for Bodily injury by Disease – Each Employee, and \$100,000 for Bodily injury by accident – Each Accident. Workers’ compensation coverage is required by state law unless a certification of exclusion from workers’ compensation requirements can be provided. Automobile Liability is required when projects require driving between project sites or transporting participants. Such insurance shall cover liability for bodily injury and property damage arising from the use or operation of any auto, including those owned, hired or otherwise operated or used by or on behalf of the grantee.

Auto liability of \$500,000 is required if the grantee is driving between project sites, and \$2 million is required for projects that involve transporting people and staff. Some examples of driving include, driving between project sites, driving to an outreach event from your place of business (this does not include your home if you work from home), driving from one event/meeting to another, or driving clients or county residents to a project location. Your agent can advise you on what policy is best for your organization’s situation.

If the grant owns automobiles, they must have “owned coverage”. If the grantee leases automobiles, they must have “scheduled coverage”. If the grantee does not own automobiles, but employees or volunteers are renting or using their own vehicles to drive, they must have “hired and non-owned coverage”. An umbrella or excess policy is an acceptable method to provide the required auto insurance coverage

If applicants do not have the insurance coverage listed above, contact the program manager to discuss waiver options.

Payment schedule for one-year projects: Once a contract is executed, 60% of the award amount will be provided to the applicant. The remaining 40% will be provided after successful completion of the project and approval of the final report.

Payment schedule for two-year projects: Once a contract is executed, 50% of the award amount will be provided to the applicant. A second payment of 20% of the grant will be released once the project is approved to continue for the second year. The remaining 30% will be provided after successful completion of the project and approval of the final report, which requires documentation of expenditures, project activities, and behavior change outcomes.

3 General rules

3.1 Solicitation for Grant Applications and Grant overview

This Solicitation for Grant Applications is an invitation for Applicants to submit a Grant Application to the County. It is a means by which the County may facilitate the acquisition of information related to awarding the Grant and is **NOT A COMMITMENT OR OBLIGATION TO AWARD ANY AMOUNT.**

Nothing in this Application shall obligate County to (i) award any amount; (ii) award any subsequent grants; or (iii) pay or otherwise make any additional distributions.

3.2 Estimated timeline and extension of time

- Suggested date to request appointments: Tuesday, April 23, 2024 by 5 p.m.
- **Applications due: Thursday, April 25, 2024 by 3 p.m.**
- Application review: May-June 2024
- Hennepin County approvals: July-August 2024
- Contracting: August 2024
- Projects begin & orientation meeting: September 2024
- One-year projects end: August 31, 2025
- Two-year projects end: August 31, 2026

These dates are subject to revision or cancellation by the County in its sole and absolute discretion.

3.3 Application submission

Applications will be received in the [Hennepin County Supplier Portal](#). In order to submit an Application, you must first register with the Supplier Portal. For more information on how to register, please go to the [Supplier Portal help page](#). Applicants are strongly encouraged to make their submissions well in advance of the Application due date as the process may take some time to complete.

Failure to submit an Application on time may be grounds for rejection of the Application; however, the County reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to accept Applications after the Application due date.

Applications are due by **3 p.m. on Thursday, April 25, 2024.**

3.4 Questions and Pre-application Assistance

Applicants are encouraged to contact the County **for feedback on project ideas** before applying. For more information visit hennepin.us/greenpartners or contact Green Partners staff at 612-596-6856 or GreenPartners@hennepin.us. Assistance is available via phone with an appointment. Requests for appointments should be made by 5 p.m., April 23, 2024 to allow for accommodating all requests.

Contact the Supplier Portal Help Desk **for assistance with viewing the application materials, registering, and uploading your Application** at 612-543-5412 (Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) or supplierportal@hennepin.us.

3.5 Addenda

The County reserves the right to modify this Solicitation at any time prior to the Application due date. An addendum will be posted in the Supplier Portal if the Solicitation is modified. Addenda may be viewed by clicking on the 'View Documents' on the Event Details page. It is the responsibility of each prospective Applicant to assure receipt of all addenda.

The County will modify the Solicitation only by formal written addenda. Applications should be based on this Solicitation document and any formal written addenda. Applicants should not rely on oral statements, or site visits.

3.6 County's right to withdraw, cancel, suspend and/or modify the Solicitation

The County reserves the right to withdraw, cancel, suspend, and/or modify this Solicitation for any reason and at any time with no liability to any prospective Applicant for any costs or expenses incurred in connection with the Solicitation or otherwise.

3.7 Applicant's right to edit or cancel an Application

An Application may be edited or cancelled in the Supplier Portal prior to the Application due date. For instructions, view the [Supplier Portal help website](#).

3.8 Applications will not be returned

Upon submission, Applications will not be returned.

3.9 Public disclosure of Application documents

Under Minnesota law, applications are private or nonpublic until the proposals are opened on the proposal due date. Once the applications are opened, the name of the Applicant becomes public. All other data in the application is private/nonpublic data until completion of the evaluation process. The

evaluation process is completed when the County enters into a contract with an Applicant. At that time, all remaining data submitted by all Applicants is public with the exception of data classified as private/non-public trade secret data under Minn. Stat. § 13.37 of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act.

Applicants must not submit trade secret material, as defined by Minn. Stat. § 13.37, as part of their application. The County does NOT consider cost or prices to be trade secret material, as defined by the statute. Applicants may present and discuss trade secret information during an interview or demonstration, if applicable.

The Applicant agrees, as a condition of submitting its Application, that the County will not, as between the parties, be liable or accountable for any loss or damage which may result from a breach of confidentiality related to the Application. The Applicant agrees to indemnify and hold the County, its officials, agents, and employees harmless from all claims arising out of, resulting from, or in any manner attributable to any violation of any provision of the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, including legal fees and disbursements paid or incurred to enforce this provision. This indemnification survives the County's award of a contract. In submitting an application in response to this Solicitation, the Applicant agrees that this indemnification survives as long as the Application is in the County's possession. The County is required to keep all the basic documents related to its contracts, including applications, for a minimum of seven years.

3.10 Applicant's costs

The County shall not be responsible for any costs incurred by Applicant in relation to this Solicitation. Applicant shall bear all costs of Application preparation, submission, and attendance at interviews, or any other activity associated with this Solicitation or otherwise.

3.11 Conflict of interest

The Applicant affirms that to the best of its knowledge the submission of its Application, or any resulting Grant award, does not present an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Strictly for illustration purposes, a personal relationship with a County employee directly or indirectly involved in the Grant process may be a conflict of interest.

The Applicant agrees that should any actual or perceived conflict of interest become known, it will immediately notify the County and will advise whether it will or will not avoid, mitigate, or neutralize the conflict of interest.

The County may make reasonable efforts to avoid, mitigate, or neutralize a conflict of interest by an Applicant. To avoid a conflict of interest by an Applicant, the County may utilize methods including disqualifying an Applicant from eligibility for the Grant or cancelling the Grant if the conflict is discovered after the Grant has been issued. The County may, at its sole and absolute discretion, waive any conflict of interest.

4 Attachments

4.1 Attachment 1 – Green Partners environmental action application

4.2 Attachment 2 – Green Partners budget form

4.3 Attachment 3 – Green Partners environmental action potential projects