



Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund

2026 Request for Proposal

General Information

Proposal ID: 2026-056

Proposal Title: Minnesota 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program

Project Manager Information

Name: Emma Haydock

Organization: Minnesota Crop Production Retailers

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Project Basic Information

Project Summary: This approach to agriculture provides a science-based framework for plant nutrition, sustained crop production, and reduced risk to the environment, while considering specific individual farms' needs.

ENRTF Funds Requested: \$433,000

Proposed Project Completion: July 31, 2029

LCCMR Funding Category: Land (F)

Project Location

What is the best scale for describing where your work will take place?

Statewide

What is the best scale to describe the area impacted by your work?

Statewide

When will the work impact occur?

In the Future

Narrative

Describe the opportunity or problem your proposal seeks to address. Include any relevant background information.

The agricultural community plays an important role in reducing nutrient losses and increasing nutrient use efficiency. For a long time, Minnesota has had goals to reduce excess nutrients escaping into our waterways and those downstream of Minnesota, some of which come from farmland. In 2014, Minnesota established a statewide Nutrient Reduction Strategy to guide the state in meeting water quality goals. This strategy used the latest science, research, and data to reveal that at a state-level, we must reduce phosphorus and nitrogen levels by 10 to 20% over much of the state between 2014 and 2025, with 45 to 50% reductions by 2040 compared to the 1980-1996 baseline loads. This strategy is undergoing some updates that are projected to be released in late 2025. Not only will the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program help improve agricultural productivity, but it will also minimize impacts to the environment. The adoption of 4R science-based best practices will increase grower profitability by optimizing fertilizer efficiency, strengthen the relationships between nutrient service providers and grower customers, achieve higher crop yields, preserve natural ecosystems by growing more on less land, support state and nation-wide efforts to reduce nutrient runoff, and help safeguard drinking water supplies.

What is your proposed solution to the problem or opportunity discussed above? Introduce us to the work you are seeking funding to do. You will be asked to expand on this proposed solution in Activities & Milestones.

Agriculture must respond to the pressures of increasing population and regulations. The 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program was developed by the International Plant Nutrition Institute, Fertilizer Canada, and The Fertilizer Institute. The 4R approach is a proven framework of plant nutrition, tailored to local conditions and resources, that leads to increased crop yields, increased profits, enhanced environmental protection, and improved sustainability. The 4Rs include the right source of fertilizer at the right rate, at the right time, in the right place. It is most effective when combined with other agronomic and conservation practices, such as no-till farming and cover crops. Since 2016, the Minnesota Agricultural Community has been developing a proactive and responsible commitment to reducing nutrient losses in Minnesota. In 2020, the Minnesota Crop Production Retailers Association (MCPR) launched their own 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program for agricultural retailers. This voluntary, industry-led certification program consists of 19 science-based best management practices and nutrient standards that will be audited by trained third-party auditors. The certification program will provide transparency with the public of how agriculture is playing a role in improving water quality and protecting water resources.

What are the specific project outcomes as they relate to the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's natural resources?

4R Nutrient Stewardship will play a role in reducing nutrient losses and increasing nutrient use efficiency, contributing to Minnesota's Nutrient Reduction Strategy. This program will contribute to the preservation of natural ecosystems by growing more on less land. Also, by retaining nutrients within a field's boundaries and in the crop rooting zone we will greatly reduce the amount that is not utilized by plants and thereby escapes into the environment and our waterways as pollution. Our goals: contact at least 15 facilities a year to discuss participation in the program and renew or commit 10 new facilities annually.

Activities and Milestones

Activity 1: Nutrient Service Provider Certification

Activity Budget: \$433,000

Activity Description:

An interested facility or nutrient service provider can submit an interest form on the MCPR website. Then they will be prompted to read the manual and standards document, submit an application, and pay the annual program registration fee. The 4R Coordinator will set up a pre-audit meeting with the nutrient service provider to discuss the certification process. They will be directed to set a date for an on-site audit with the third-party auditor that they are matched with based on a conflict of interest review, their availability, and proximity. The on-site audit will consist of a visit to the office of the nutrient service provider to review the documentation necessary to evaluate their performance, as well as interviews with the staff responsible for nutrient recommendations and application. If any nonconformities are identified during the audit, a Corrective Action Plan (CAP) will be required. Once the final audit checklist and CAP are submitted, a recommendation on certification will be made by the 4R Coordinator. The final decision on certification will come down to a vote by our Nutrient Stewardship Council. In order to maintain certification, biennial on-site audits will be required, as well as an annual program registration fee.

Activity Milestones:

Description	Approximate Completion Date
Contact at least 15 retail facilities annually to discuss participation in the program	July 31, 2029
Commit or renew 10 new retail facilities to participate in the program annually	July 31, 2029
Prepare written summaries of 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program outreach and engagement activities	July 31, 2029

Project Partners and Collaborators

Name	Organization	Role	Receiving Funds
Lee Helgen	Minnesota Crop Production Retailers	Executive Director	Yes

Long-Term Implementation and Funding

Describe how the results will be implemented and how any ongoing effort will be funded. If not already addressed as part of the project, how will findings, results, and products developed be implemented after project completion? If additional work is needed, how will this work be funded?

This will be an ongoing program, and we are receiving funding from other sources. Three years of funding from the ENRTF would provide beneficial support, specifically relating to the ongoing time put in by the staff, auditors, and agricultural retailers throughout the 4R certification process. We will be reporting the number of acres from each certified facility to track scope. We are completing a separately funded project, the Minnesota Ag Retail Survey, to track updated best management practices for nutrient application on farmland. We will be gathering statewide data from agricultural retailers on farm field conservation and nutrient management practices.

Project Manager and Organization Qualifications

Project Manager Name: Emma Haydock

Job Title: 4R Coordinator

Provide description of the project manager's qualifications to manage the proposed project.

As a 4R Coordinator with Minnesota Crop Production Retailers, I am in charge of managing projects including the Minnesota 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program (4R NSCP), the Certified Crop Adviser program (CCA), and the Minnesota Ag Retail Survey. Specifically relating to the 4R NSCP, I am working to identify and recruit nutrient service providers for the program, provide expertise and assistance to program participants, coordinate with similar programs to magnify the impact of nutrient stewardship practices to reduce nutrient losses, contact at least 15 new retail facilities annually to discuss participation in the program, and commit or renew at least 10 new retail facilities to participate in the program annually. The 4R approach provides a framework to achieve cropping system goals by applying the right source of fertilizer at the right rate, at the right time, in the right place. Agriculture must respond to the pressures of increasing population and regulation and this program will help to improve agricultural productivity and can help minimize impacts on the environment. It is a voluntary, industry-led certification program that consists of 19 science-based best management practices and nutrient standards, audited by third-party auditors. We hope to engage more agricultural retail facilities throughout the state to enhance our commitment to reducing nutrient losses in Minnesota, keeping our land and waters clean. Another important aspect of my position is working towards organizing the materials that I currently have available to me and improving the certification process for nutrient service providers as I get more experience with the program.

Organization: Minnesota Crop Production Retailers

Organization Description:

Minnesota Crop Production Retailers (MCPR) exists to promote the proper use, storage and application of crop production inputs in an environmentally safe and agronomically sound manner; and to support regulatory and legislative initiatives which benefit retailers, manufacturers, distributors and custom applicators of crop production inputs. MCPR is a nonprofit organization that enables its members to enhance their local and national representation, receive the latest agricultural news in Minnesota, obtain help in solving problems, and participate in programs and events that connect

industry professionals. In 2020, MCPR launched the Minnesota 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program for agricultural retailers. The program and adoption of 4R science-based practices will increase grower profitability by optimizing fertilizer efficiency, strengthen the relationships between nutrient service providers and grower customers, achieve higher crop yields, preserve natural ecosystems by growing more on less land, support state and nation-wide efforts to reduce nutrient runoff, and help safeguard drinking water supplies.

Budget Summary

Category / Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Purpose	Gen. Ineligible	% Benefits	# FTE	Classified Staff?	\$ Amount
Personnel								
4R Coordinator		Coordinate the 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification Program and audits.			25%	1.5		\$180,000
Executive Director		Project management and oversight.			25%	0.75		\$130,000
							Sub Total	\$310,000
Contracts and Services								
TBD - Independent Contractors	Service Contract	Program audit review work, average 10 audits per year.				0.3		\$30,000
Ag Retail Facilities	Service Contract	Completing 4R audits and gathering related documentation, average \$2,500 per facility at an average of 10 per year.				3		\$75,000
							Sub Total	\$105,000
Equipment, Tools, and Supplies								
							Sub Total	-
Capital Expenditures								
							Sub Total	-
Acquisitions and Stewardship								
							Sub Total	-
Travel In Minnesota								
	Miles/ Meals/ Lodging	15 site visits per year	Site visits for 4R audit prep work and coordination.					\$8,000
							Sub Total	\$8,000

Travel Outside Minnesota								
							Sub Total	-
Printing and Publication								
	Printing	Audit checklists, program guides, grower notifications, background information and flyers.	To inform and assist ag retail facilities, and completing the 4R audits.					\$10,000
							Sub Total	\$10,000
Other Expenses								
							Sub Total	-
							Grand Total	\$433,000

Classified Staff or Generally Ineligible Expenses

Category/Name	Subcategory or Type	Description	Justification Ineligible Expense or Classified Staff Request
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Non ENRTF Funds

Category	Specific Source	Use	Status	Amount
State				
			State Sub Total	-
Non-State				
			Non State Sub Total	-
			Funds Total	-

Total Project Cost: \$433,000

This amount accurately reflects total project cost?

Yes

Attachments

Required Attachments

Visual Component

File: [a0171454-d5e.pdf](#)

Alternate Text for Visual Component

It is an informational sheet about the 4R program. It is titled: Why 4R Nutrient Stewardship Certification?...

Financial Capacity

Title	File
Review Report	2f675442-cce.pdf
Secretary of State 2025	58a1cfbc-6c1.pdf
990 Form	4910ff0b-e73.pdf

Board Resolution or Letter

Title	File
Letter	c4bad99f-c92.pdf
Resolution	3d69d454-6ce.pdf

Administrative Use

Does your project include restoration or acquisition of land rights?

No

Do you understand that travel expenses are only approved if they follow the "Commissioner's Plan" promulgated by the Commissioner of Management of Budget or, for University of Minnesota projects, the University of Minnesota plan?

Yes, I understand the Commissioner's Plan applies.

Does your project have potential for royalties, copyrights, patents, sale of products and assets, or revenue generation?

No

Do you understand and acknowledge IP and revenue-return and sharing requirements in 116P.10?

N/A

Do you wish to request reinvestment of any revenues into your project instead of returning revenue to the ENRTF?

N/A

Does your project include original, hypothesis-driven research?

No

Does the organization have a fiscal agent for this project?

No

Does your project include the pre-design, design, construction, or renovation of a building, trail, campground, or other fixed capital asset costing \$10,000 or more or large-scale stream or wetland restoration?

No

Do you propose using an appropriation from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund to conduct a project that provides children's services (as defined in Minnesota Statutes section 299C.61 Subd.7 as "the provision of care,

treatment, education, training, instruction, or recreation to children")?

No

Provide the name(s) and organization(s) of additional individuals assisting in the completion of this proposal:

Emma Haydock and Lee Helgen with Minnesota Crop Production Retailers.

Do you understand that a named service contract does not constitute a funder-designated subrecipient or approval of a sole-source contract? In other words, a service contract entity is only approved if it has been selected according to the contracting rules identified in state law and policy for organizations that receive ENRTF funds through direct appropriations, or in the DNR's reimbursement manual for non-state organizations. These rules may include competitive bidding and prevailing wage requirements

Yes, I understand

