

COOPERATIVES FOR CLIMATE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Submission Deadline: March 15, 2024

Scope of Work:

Family farmers are on the front lines of the climate crisis, experiencing some of its early effects in the form of extreme weather, unpredictable growing seasons, and increased risk of plant and animal diseases. In the face of this, farmers are coming up with ways to remain resilient and contribute meaningfully to climate action.

Minnesota Farmers Union Foundation seeks to distribute grants that will support Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) members who have, or are currently in the process of, organizing themselves into cooperatives that respond to climate-related challenges and opportunities.

Farmer-owned cooperatives reduce costs of production, maintain a reliable source of inputs, effectively market and process farm products, improve livelihoods, and help recreate rural communities. MFU members provide leadership in the patronage, direction, operation, and development of cooperative enterprises, and in the education of members and the public as to cooperative philosophy and principles.

Co-ops for Climate will empower farmer-led cooperatives to build capacity for organizing business that leads climate action through:

- developing and building support for farmer-informed solutions that will position agriculture to play a greater role in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change;
- supporting scalable, community-driven solutions that promote economic vitality in agricultural communities;
- championing inclusivity of rural communities and farmers, and facilitating the opportunity for participation in climate resiliency through practical and grounded action.

Co-ops for Climate grant recipients will fulfill the following commitments:

- Be an existing or developing cooperative with membership that supports family farmers.
- Applicants will prioritize opportunities for shared learning and engagement with Minnesota Farmers Union.

- Applicants are required to be Minnesota farmers, cooperatives, or support Minnesota farmers and cooperatives.
- Projects must develop or build support for farmer-informed solutions that will position agriculture to play a greater role in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change.
- Projects should be designed to be completed within one year of the award. Extensions may be granted in consultation with MFU.

What can these funds be used for?

The goal of this grant program is to empower farmer-led cooperatives in building capacity for leading climate action. This pilot program is intended to identify and respond to the needs of farmers in creating cooperative climate change solutions.

Grants will support technical assistance and business development through partners such as the [Agricultural Utilization Research Institute](#) (AURI) and [Cooperative Development Services](#) (CDS). Other service providers will be considered with justification. For 2023, we anticipate grants of up to \$30,000.

Up to 20% of the total budget may be used for staff capacity of the cooperative in support of the project deliverables.

Grantees can direct funds in one of two ways:

- a) Non-profit as fiscal host: Funds are distributed to a 501(c)3 charitable organization. The fiscal host is then responsible for the award contract, reporting and financial management. The fiscal host may charge for indirect costs up to 10% of the total award. In some cases, the fiscal host may be the technical service provider for the project.
- b) MFU Foundation as fiscal host: The cooperative point of contact submits invoices for reimbursements directly to MFU Foundation.

Selection Criteria:

Proposals will demonstrate the cooperative's ability to meet the objective of building capacity for climate action in agriculture.

When evaluating proposals, consideration will be given to:

- Climate impact – mission to implement climate action through agriculture
- Results – outcome and benefit of technical assistance project
- Beginning and emerging farmers – engagement and support
- Workplan – organized outline including project coordination and communication plan
- Budget – clear plan for use of funds

Responses will be reviewed by representatives of Minnesota Farmers Union Foundation, and a review committee consisting of MFU members.

Possible projects include:

- Feasibility study
- Business plan
- Market assessment
- Governance documents
- Carbon and greenhouse gas inventory or assessment
- Research on climate resilience in support of cooperative business development
- Other business development technical services

Commitment to Shared Learning

This grant program is intended to support cooperative business development for climate solutions and to build knowledge and capacity for Minnesota farmers about the potential for cooperative development and climate resilience. Projects will be expected to report on findings, results, and recommendations of their initiatives. MFU will request progress reports from awardees throughout the project term. Awardees of these funds will be featured in Minnesota Farmers Union reports, presentations, and communications.

Timeline:

- RFP Released: **February 1, 2024**
- Applications Due: **March 15, 2024**
- Decision Communicated: **May 1, 2024**
- Proposed Contract Start: Negotiated, no later than July 1, 2024
- Contract End Date: Negotiated, no later than August 1, 2024

Any extension is subject to approval by MFU Foundation.

Application Deadline

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis, with a preferential deadline of March 15, 2024. Questions on this program can be directed to MFU Director of Climate and Working Lands, Ariel Kagan – ariel@mfu.org | 651-470-2768

Submission Format: Please **email responses as a single attachment to Lisa Holm, Local Foods and Climate Coordinator, at lisa@mfu.org** subject line “[Cooperative name] RFP Submission – Co-ops for Climate.”

Project Information:

Cooperative development grants will enable Minnesota Farmers Union members to transform ideas into action and lead through example. Grants will support farmers who are on the forefront of responding to climate impacts. This project is made possible through the support of the McKnight Foundation, Morgan Family Foundation, and Minnesota Farmers Union Foundation.

Minnesota Farmers Union Foundation is a 501(c)3 that helps advance the educational mission of Minnesota Farmers Union, a grassroots organization that has represented family farmers, ranchers, and rural communities since 1918. Farmers Union works to protect and enhance the economic interests and quality of life of family farmers, promote competitive markets, and make our food system more fair for farmers, workers, and consumers.

Additional Information:

For additional information regarding Farmers Union's programs and work, please contact MFU via the information below or visit our website at www.mfu.org.

Contact:

Ariel Kagan
Climate and Working Lands Program Director, Minnesota Farmers Union
305 Roselawn Ave. E. #200
St. Paul, MN 55117

ariel@mfu.org
651-470-2768

Application

To be considered, responders must submit the following completed application for review.

Application

Cooperative Information

Name of Cooperative:

Co-op mailing address:

Please designate one person as a point of contact for this grant application:

Primary Contact:

Primary contact telephone:

Primary contact e-mail:

List of active members/board of directors:

Authorized representative (if different from primary contact)

If awarded the grant, the person that will sign the Cooperative Development Grant contract agreement for this organization. This is often yourself or other leadership in your operation.

Name:

Telephone:

Email:

Fiscal Host Designation:

- The cooperative elects to use a non-profit 501(c)3 fiscal host to execute the grant contract, meaning the fiscal host will be responsible for the grant award contract, reporting and management.
 - Name of 501(c)3 organization:
 - Point of Contact:
 - Email/Phone number:
 - Mailing Address:

-OR-

- The cooperative would like MFU Foundation to serve as the fiscal host, meaning expenses will be reimbursed on a rolling basis.
 - The authorized representative for this organization that will sign the grant agreement contract is:
 - Name:
 - Email/Phone number:
 - Mailing address
 - The point of contact(s) for invoices and expenses is:
 - Name:
 - Email/Phone number:
 - Mailing address

Provide a description of the cooperative business you represent and what will be accomplished through your proposed project.

How will this cooperative business address climate change? The [Minnesota Climate Action Framework](#) is a good resource for the connections between climate and working lands.

Describe how this project supports development that will help your cooperative to engage [emerging farmers](#)?

Although match is not required for this award, please share any additional resources you will dedicate to this project, whether in-kind, other grants, etc. How will this project help to leverage and secure future funding?

Please provide a budget and budget narrative for your project. What will the grant funds be used for? Which technical service provider/business development specialist are you intending to work with? A formal quote is not required for this application, but may help in budget planning.

What will be created as a result of this technical assistance project and how will it impact future development for the cooperative business?

How will work be coordinated over the grant period? Will you host regular meetings with your board? Do you have any time-boundaries like planting or harvest when specific tasks need to be completed?

Describe your plan for outreach, engagement, and shared learning. For example, does your co-op have public meetings, a website, or a newsletter?

