

Opportunity for Iowa's Watershed Management Authorities: Underserved Farmer to Farmer Grant

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is currently accepting applications for the Underserved Farmer to Farmer Grant program. A number of entities are eligible to apply, including Iowa's Watershed Management Authorities (WMA). The deadline is April 28.

The announcement presents an opportunity for the state's 27 WMAs to receive funding for project implementation and staffing. This resource provides guidance for WMA leaders who are considering applying.



Program overview

Over the next five years, \$3 million in funding will be distributed to eligible entities to work with historically underserved farmers and farm communities to address nutrient pollution, frequent flooding, and drinking water challenges. This includes producers who are:

- Beginning
- Socially disadvantaged (American Indians or Alaska Natives, Asians, Black or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, and/or Hispanics)
- Veterans
- Limited-resource

The funding originates from the Environmental Protection Agency's Gulf of Mexico division, and sub-awards will be distributed by the Iowa DNR. Individual projects may be awarded between \$75,000 and \$250,000. There is no requirement for matching funds.

Successful applicants shall receive notice no later than May 26 and projects must be completed by June 30, 2027.

Requirements and Eligibility

To be eligible, projects should have a water quality or quantity component. According to Iowa DNR:

- Areas of emphasis include flood reduction, source water protection, and nutrient reduction.
- Implementation of new and innovative conservation practices is a core component of grant goals.
- DNR will support with success tracking for said practices.
- An education and outreach focus is allowed.
- A communications plan is strongly encouraged.

In addition to WMAs, eligible sub-awardees include conservation districts, institutions of higher learning, local or state government entities (including 28-E entities), non-governmental organizations and nonprofits, tribal nations, beginning farmer groups, and U.S. military veteran farmer groups.

Application details

The deadline to apply for this opportunity is April 28 at 4:30 p.m. CDT. Additional applications may be accepted at a later date depending on funding.

The process will include two steps:

- A pre-application, including a brief narrative, institutional background, and a simple budget for competitive selection.
- A full application developed with DNR staff.

Proposals will be reviewed using a point system evaluating technical approach, past performance, communications strategy, and organizational capacity—weighted in that order.

Before putting together an application, WMA leaders should consider the following:

1. Who will be the WMA's fiscal agent for the project?
2. Who will be the responsible entity for the project?
3. Is the project, or components of it, outlined in the WMA's watershed management plan? If so, be sure to include this information.
4. Does the project involve partnerships with local individuals, organizations, or entities?
5. If the project involves hiring a coordinator:
 - A. What is the total amount of money required to hire a coordinator?
 - B. Where will the coordinator be stationed or based?
 - C. Is there a job description and plan for supervision in place for this person?

Full application materials can be found at www.iowadnr.gov/watershed.

Additional resources

To learn more about this opportunity, contact Steve Konrady, Western Iowa Basin Coordinator, Iowa DNR, 515-204-1456 or steven.konrady@dnr.iowa.gov.

DNR Underserved Farmer to Farmer subawards: iowadnr.gov/About-DNR/DNR-News-Releases/ArticleID/4414

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service definition of historically underserved farmers or ranchers: nracs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers

If you are considering applying and would like support in the process, reach out to Kate Hansen, senior policy associate, Center for Rural Affairs—515-215-1294, kateh@cfra.org.

