

Request for Proposal: State of Minnesota’s Buy Clean EPD Grant Program

GRANT OVERVIEW

Description

The University of Minnesota’s Center for Sustainable Building Research (CSBR), in collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Administration and Minnesota Department of Transportation, seeks proposals from Minnesota-based manufacturers of eligible construction materials/products to create Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) under the “Buy Clean” legislative funding.

Funding Availability

Maximum grant per grantee will be \$49,999.00.
Grants awarded will either be assigned from the Department of Administration (\$255,000 total available) or from the Department of Transportation (\$310,000 total available).

Eligibility

Manufacturers of eligible materials/products (see Table 1 below) located in the state of Minnesota or manufacturers of eligible products sourced from raw materials within Minnesota.

Table 1: Eligible Materials/Products

Material Category	Specific Materials/Products
Steel	Hot-Rolled Structural Sections (W-, M-, S-, HP-, C-, MC- shapes, and angles)
	HSS (Hollow Structural Sections)
	Plate
	Open Web Steel Joists
	Steel Decking
	Cold-Formed Metal Framing
	Carbon Steel Reinforcing Bar (A615/A706)
Concrete	Concrete Paving
	Ready-Mixed Concrete
	Precast/Prestressed Concrete
	Post-Tensioned Concrete
	Concrete Masonry Units
Asphalt	Asphalt Paving Mixtures
Glass	Flat Glass, Processed Glass, Insulating Glass Units (IGUs), and Fenestration Assemblies comprised of at least 80% glass by weight or volume

Key Dates

December 16, 2024	Webinar Informational Session
December 23, 2024	Notice of Intent to Apply due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time
January 8, 2025	Questions due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time
January 31, 2025	Applications due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time
March 2025	Anticipated Notification of Funding Selection, Grant Award

Application Deadline

Application packages must be submitted electronically via email to Natalie Georgieff at ngeorgie@umn.edu no later than January 31, 2025 at 4:30 pm Central Time in order to be considered for funding.

Notice of Intent (NOI) to Apply

To allow for efficient management of the grant competition process, an optional Notice of Intent (NOI) to Apply is requested to be submitted no later than December 23, 2024 at 4:30 pm Central Time via email to Natalie Georgieff at ngeorgie@umn.edu.

Please include your approximate funding request amount and a few sentences about the scope of your project, including which materials/product categories (from those shown in Table 1 above) will be included in the proposed work.

The submission of a Notice of Intent to Apply is optional, confidential, and not binding (applicants may choose to take a different approach/scope in the final proposal). The NOI is a process management tool that will allow for better anticipation of the total staff time required for efficient review, evaluation, and selection of submitted applications.

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Background Information

In 2023, the State of Minnesota enacted into law the Buy Clean Buy Fair Minnesota Act, which is a procurement policy to promote the purchase of certain clean and sustainable construction materials and products on state projects. The Minnesota Department of Administration and the Department of Transportation are mandated to oversee the Environmental Standards Procurement Task Force (also known as the 'Buy Clean' Task Force) which was established under Minnesota Laws 2023, [Chapter 60](#) and [Chapter 62](#) "to examine the implementation of a program requiring vendors of certain construction materials purchased by the state to:

1. Submit environmental product declarations that assess the material production life cycle environmental impacts of the materials to state officials as part of the procurement process; and
2. Meet standards established by the commissioner of administration that limit greenhouse gas emissions impacts of the materials."

The Buy Clean policy established a grant program to assist Minnesota-based manufacturers of eligible materials to offset the cost of obtaining Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs). The Minnesota Department of Administration and the Minnesota Department of Transportation shall act as the fiscal agents for awarding grant funds to awardees. In collaboration with the commissioners of the Departments of Administration and Transportation, the University of Minnesota's Center for Sustainable Building Research (CSBR) is assisting in the grant management process.

Program Goals

1. Promote sustainability of construction materials and material transparency in the State of Minnesota
2. Assist manufacturers in disclosing greenhouse gas emissions data associated with the production, use, and disposal of construction materials and products to create robust EPDs
3. Spur market demand for construction materials and products that have lower embodied greenhouse gas emissions

Key Terminology

Environmental Product Declaration (EPD): Environmental Product Declaration refers to a report providing quantified environmental data using predetermined parameters and, where relevant, additional environmental information. An EPD also includes additional product, facility, and company information. This is consistent with the definition found in ISO 14025.

Greenhouse gasses (GHG): Gasses that trap heat in the atmosphere, including carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), and perfluorocarbons (PFCs).

Global Warming Potential (GWP): a term used to describe how much impact a gas will have on atmospheric warming over a period of time compared to carbon dioxide, expressed as CO₂ e (CO₂ equivalent).

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. [Policy 08-02](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities.

The grant program will ensure fairness, equity, diversity, and inclusion by:

- Promoting wide-spread distribution of the RFP and application materials across industry networks and geographic regions in Greater Minnesota, including smaller, more remote businesses outside of the Twin Cities Metro area
- Providing resources and education to assist smaller and/or more remote businesses
- Ensuring a widespread geographical distribution of funds in both physical geography and locality attributes of material production facilities
- Prioritizing businesses that support and advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workforce including training and recruitment of workers from disadvantaged communities

Grant outcomes include:

- Creation and publication of supply chain specific Type III EPD(s) that
 - (a) contains a material production life cycle assessment of the environmental impacts of manufacturing a specific product by a specific firm, including the impacts of extracting and producing the raw materials and components that compose the product;
 - (b) is verified by a third party; and
 - (c) meets the ISO 14025 standard developed and maintained by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).
- Documentation of a process by which organizations will create and update EPDs in the future
- Geographic disbursement of EPDs developed, including EPD availability in regions of Minnesota that previously had few or no existing EPDs in a material / product category / supply chain

Deliverables/Work Scope

Grantees will be required to:

- Create and submit EPD(s) or submit detailed documentation that demonstrates the capability to generate EPDs on-demand including sample EPDs and comprehensive description of the process, timeline, and anticipated costs for EPD generation, within the following grant window: within one calendar year of the grant start date and commencing no later than April 3, 2026.
- Submit detailed itemized invoices for grant funding reimbursement and reconciliation including any supporting documentation, such as purchase orders, receipts, and payroll records.
- Submit interim progress report(s) every 6 months until program completion and submit a Final Technical Report on the outcome of the grant and completion of deliverables, as outlined in the Accountability and Reporting section of this document.

Collaboration

Multi-organization collaboration is welcome, but not required for this grant program.

Selection Criteria and Weight

All applicants must meet the eligibility requirements listed on page 1 of this RFP in order to be considered. The review committee will be reviewing each applicant on a 100-point scale. All eligible applications will be reviewed and scored against the weighted criteria, shown in Table 2 below. Grants will be distributed based on the highest score.

Table 2: Selection Criteria and Weight

Criteria & Description	Weight
<p>1. Qualifications - Organizational and Staff Expertise and Experience. Capacity for and commitment to administering the project successfully, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Summary of qualifications and resumes of key personnel and staff ● Success in past performance areas such as goals, objectives, outcomes, and outputs demonstrating your organization’s capacity to drive change ● Past accomplishments, awards, success stories, or case studies ● Current and/or future planned involvement in initiatives/efforts to promote sustainability in operations and fair labor practices 	15
<p>2. Work Plan - Scope of Work, Key Strategies, and Technical Approach. Quality and extent to which the narrative provides a clear description of the proposed work, including details regarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How the work will advance the program goals ● Any collaboration plans / external partners / multi-organization partnership agreements ● Responsibilities, activities, tasks, subtasks, and estimated timeline to complete the work ● Development and documentation of a process by which EPDs will be created and updated/maintained in the future ● How the work will address gaps in EPD reported data associated with additional environmental or health impacts (beyond global warming potential) 	35
<p>3. Budget - Evaluation will be based on the extent to which the proposed estimated costs are eligible, appropriate, reasonable, and realistic to implement the project and clearly correlate with the proposed tasks and activities; and the applicant’s approach, procedures, and controls for ensuring that awarded grant funds will be expended in a timely and efficient manner.</p>	10
<p>4. Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion The quality and extent to which the project(s) will serve diverse populations and support advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workforce including training and recruitment of workers from disadvantaged communities.</p>	15
<p>5. Geographic Disbursement of EPD Development - Prioritizing project(s) which address the following geographical concerns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EPD availability in regions of the Minnesota that have few or no existing EPDs in a material / product category ● Improving background data to incorporate better regional representation in EPDs ● Ensuring a widespread geographical distribution of funds in both physical geography and locality attributes of material production facilities. Considerations of this include, but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proximity to source materials ○ Proximity to supply chain processes / transportation 	15
<p>6. Potential Impact - Prioritizing Material Categories / Types that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Represent a significant share of the construction sectors’ embodied carbon contributions or have the ability to significantly reduce the embodied carbon from construction ● Potential for use in large quantities in Minnesota State construction projects ● Do not have significant representation in the existing EPD market ● Have the potential to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ promote a circular economy ○ act as a low embodied carbon substitute for higher-impact materials ○ be modular, easily removed intact, and/or easily reusable ○ utilize carbon from either natural or anthropogenic sources 	10

Financial and Grantee Capacity Review

As applicable, grant applicants may be required to submit financial, capacity, and internal control documents based on state or federal requirements.

- Nonprofits may be required to submit their most recent board reviewed financial statements, an IRS Form 990, or their most recent certified financial audit if selected for a grant award
- All applicants may be required to submit additional documents, including descriptions of internal controls over business expenditures and outcomes of grant funds, if selected for a grant award.

Questions

- Questions may be submitted by email to Natalie Georgieff at ngeorgie@umn.edu.
- All questions and answers will be shared with all applicants.
- Please submit questions no later than 4:30 p.m. Central Time on January 8, 2025.

Application Content

Applicants must submit the following in order for the application to be considered complete:

- Exhibit A - Grant Application & Narrative [single Portable Document Format (.pdf)]
- Exhibit B - Grant Work Plan and Budget [Excel spreadsheet (.xlsx or .xls)]

Letter(s) of Support are optional.

Please do not submit any other materials (binders, photos, etc.). Unrequested materials will not be reviewed.

Application Submission

All applications must be received no later than 4:30 p.m. Central Time, on January 31, 2025. Late applications will not be considered. The applicant will incur all costs incurred in applying to this RFP.

Applications shall be submitted via email to Natalie Georgieff at ngeorgie@umn.edu.

Review Process and Timeline

The review committee will evaluate all eligible and complete applications received by the deadline. The University of Minnesota's Center for Sustainable Building Research, along with the Department of Administration or the Department of Transportation will review all committee recommendations and is responsible for award decisions. The award decisions of the Department of Administration or the Department of Transportation are final and not subject to appeal.

December 4, 2024	RFP Posted
December 16, 2024	Webinar Informational Session - Virtual 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm Central Time (link will be posted at mn.gov/admin/government/purchasing-contracting/buy-clean/).
December 23, 2024	Notice of Intent to Apply due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time
January 8, 2025	Questions due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time
January 31, 2025	Application packages due no later than 4:30 pm Central Time
February 3, 2025	Committee begins review of application packages
March 3, 2025	Committee recommendations submitted to Dept. of Admin or DOT for review
March 2025	Selected grantees announced; grant agreement negotiations begin
Spring 2025	Work plans approved and grant begins
April 3, 2026	Grant program ends - final submission of invoices for reconciliation and deliverables

Conflicts of Interest

State grant policy requires that steps and procedures are in place to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per [Minn. Stat. §16B.98 Subd. 2-3](#) and [08-01 Conflict of Interest in State Grant-Making Policy](#).

Organizational conflicts of interest occur when:

- a grantee or applicant is unable or potentially unable to render impartial assistance or advice to the Department due to competing duties or loyalties
- a grantee's or applicant's objectivity in carrying out the grant is or might be otherwise impaired due to competing duties or loyalties

In cases where a conflict of interest is in question or disclosed, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to, revising the grant work plan or grantee duties to mitigate the risk, requesting the grant applicant to submit an organizational conflict of interest mitigation plan, disqualification from eligibility for the grant award, amending the grant, or termination of the grant contract agreement.

Public Data

Per [Minn. Stat. § 13.599](#)

- Names and addresses of grant applicants and amount requested will be public data once proposal responses are opened.

- All remaining data in proposal responses (except trade secret data as defined and classified in [§13.37](#)) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant, data will be considered public when all the grant contract agreements have been fully executed.
- All data created or maintained by the University of Minnesota, the Department of Administration, or the Department of Transportation as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret data as defined and classified in [§13.37](#)) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed. For the purposes of this grant, data will be considered public when all the grant contract agreements have been fully executed

Grant Provisions

Grant contract agreement templates are available for review at: [Office of Grants Management Policies, Statutes, and Forms/Forms and FAQs tab](#)

Ineligible expenses include but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Taxes, except sales tax on goods and services and payroll taxes
- Lobbyists, political contributions
- Bad debts, late payment fees, finance charges, or contingency funds
- Parking or traffic violations
- Out of state transportation and travel expenses. Minnesota will be considered the home state for determining whether travel is out of state.

Accountability and Reporting

Grant recipients will be expected to provide performance reporting on activities, efforts, and/or associated work products (i.e., outputs) and the results, effect or consequences that occur from carrying out the project (i.e., outcomes).

The following documents shall be submitted via email to Natalie Georgieff at ngeorgie@umn.edu for initial review, and then will undergo review and approval processes by the Department of Administration or the Department of Transportation:

- **Progress Reports**

Progress report updates shall be provided in the form of narratives and shall be submitted with each Invoice for Reimbursement and at least once every 6 months from the grant award date until program completion.

- **Invoice for Reimbursement**

There will be (2) installments for distribution of grant awards in the form of reimbursements: an initial reimbursement award and a final reimbursement award with reconciliation. When

submitting an Invoice for Reimbursement, provide an itemized list of budget items that correlate to the approved budget and workplan and submit all supporting documentation, such as purchase orders, receipts, and payroll records to validate eligible expenses.

- **Final Technical Report**

Grantees will be required to submit a Final Technical Report and final deliverables within 30 days after the grant activities have concluded.

Progress Report(s) & Final Technical Report Guidance

The following general information is required on all grant reports:

- (1) Recipient name
- (2) Grant project number
- (3) Grant award date
- (4) Recipient contact name
- (5) Recipient contact phone number
- (6) Recipient contact email address
- (7) For projects involving partners (optional):
 - (a) Name of organization, entity or group
 - (b) Point of contact name and email
 - (c) Partnership description/role

Progress Report Guidance

Submission: Recipients are expected to submit progress reports with each Invoice for Reimbursement and at least once every 6 months from the grant award date until program completion.

Content: Provide a narrative update including any available performance metrics and progress towards delivering work products relative to your project(s). Report any changes to the project timeline, the reason for the changes, and the updated timeline. Discuss any barriers to progress, plans to address them, and any additional resources that might be helpful to support successful program completion and/or future work.

Final Technical Report Guidance

Submission: Grantees will be required to submit a Final Technical Report and final deliverables within 30 days after the grant activities have concluded.

Content: Provide a final report summarizing the program activities, challenges, outputs, outcomes, and plans for future work. Grantees will be expected to report the following, as applicable.

- How program goals were prioritized and accomplished
- A description of the approach / process undertaken to collect and verify facility specific background source data and inputs for quantifying and reporting environmental impacts

- The estimated production capacity of manufacturers/facilities
- The number of EPDs generated that align with the requirements outlined in this RFP, the number generated by small manufacturers, the type of EPDs generated, and the estimated volume of material sales covered.
- Report how the project leveraged the expertise of partners and stakeholders.
- Report on any barriers encountered as well as efforts to overcome them.
- Describe how your project resulted in the following:
 - Support for a diverse workforce including training and recruitment of workers from underserved communities.
 - Disclosure on EPDs of environmental impacts that disproportionately impact disadvantaged communities.
 - Support for the involvement of disadvantaged communities, persons with disabilities, and related community groups in decision-making processes.
- Plan for maintenance/creation of EPDs in the future.
- Next steps or future work, including potential plans to advance sustainability in operations and/or promote fair labor in the manufacturing process.

EPD Reporting

All EPDs generated with support from this grant must be submitted to and accessible on an open, public, free-to-use EPD data platform that is reliable, secure, 508 compliant in terms of accessibility (see <http://www.section508.gov/>) with data discoverability via APIs, and with robust search and filtering capabilities. Grantees must ensure EPDs were submitted to an open, public, and cost-free EPD data platform within ten business days of submitting them as a part of the grant deliverables and send notifications via email to Natalie Georgieff at ngeorgie@umn.edu with links to these EPDs, along with copies of the EPDs to ensure that all fields are properly captured and provided.

Grant Payments

Per [Policy 08-08](#) reimbursement is the preferred 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 the Department of Administration or the Department of Transportation has given the grantee a written extension.

The Department of Administration or the Department of Transportation may consider requests for issuing advance grant payments on a case-by-case basis.

Grantee Bidding Requirements

Any grant-funded services and/or materials that are expected to cost:

- Between \$25,000 and \$99,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of three (3) verbal quotes or bids.
- Between \$10,000 and \$24,999 must be competitively awarded based on a minimum of two (2) verbal quotes or bids or awarded to a targeted vendor.

The grantee must take all necessary affirmative steps to assure that targeted vendors from businesses with active certifications through these entities are used when possible:

- [State Department of Administration's Certified Targeted Group, Economically Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Vendor List](#)
- Metropolitan Council's Targeted Vendor list: [Minnesota Unified Certification Program](#)
- Small Business Certification Program through Hennepin County, Ramsey County, and City of St. Paul: [Central Certification Program](#)

The grantee must maintain:

- Written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award and administration of contracts.
- Support documentation of the purchasing and/or bidding process utilized to contract services in their financial records, including support documentation of verbal quotes or bids and justifying a single/sole source bid, if applicable.

The grantee must not contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred in MN:

[Suspended/Debarred Vendor Information](#)

For grant-funded projects that include construction work of \$25,000 or more, prevailing wage rules apply per; [Minn. Stat. §§177.41](#) through [177.44](#). These rules require that the wages of laborers and workers should be comparable to wages paid for similar work in the community as a whole.

Audits

Per [Minn. Stat. §16B.98](#) Subdivision 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 Commissioner of Administration, the state 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 contract 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.

Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination requirements for all Grantees:

- A. 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. [Minn. Stat. §363A.02](#). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

- B. 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. Minnesota Rules, part [5000.3500](#)

- C. The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the Minnesota Human Rights Act.

Voter Registration Requirement

The grantee will comply with [Minn. Stat. §201.162](#) by providing voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the grantee.

Contact Information

For more information about this RFP, contact: Natalie Georgieff at ngeorgie@umn.edu.

Attachments

- [Exhibit A-Grant Application and Narrative.docx](#) (click link to automatically download)
- [Exhibit B-Grant WorkPlan and Budget-Sample.xlsx](#) (click link to automatically download)
- Letter(s) of Support (optional)

Additional Resources

Embodied Carbon & EPDs

- [EPA's EPD Basics: A Manufacturer's Guide to How and Why to Develop an Environmental Product Declaration](#)
- [EPA's EPD Advisory Services, Tools, Resources](#)
- Carbon Leadership Forum: carbonleadershipforum.org/embodied-carbon-101-v2
- Carbon Leadership Forum: carbonleadershipforum.org/environmental-product-declarations-epd-101

Material / Industry Websites

- National Ready Mixed Concrete Association: nrmca.org/association-resources/sustainability/environmental-product-declarations
- Aggregate and Ready Mix Association of Minnesota: armofmn.com
- National Asphalt Pavement Association: asphaltpavement.org/programs/napa-programs/emerald-eco-label
- Minnesota Asphalt Pavement Association: asphaltisbest.com/page/environmental-training
- American Institute of Steel Construction: aisc.org/epd
- Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute: crsi.org/sustainability/environmental-product-declaration
- Steel Joist Institute: steeljoist.org/about-us/environmental-product-declarations
- Steel Framing Industry Association: steel framing.org/declaration--epd--for-cold-formed-steel-framing
- National Glass Association: glass.org/advocacy/initiatives/sustainability
- American Iron and Steel Institute: steel.org/sustainability

MN Buy Clean Task Force

- [Environmental Standards Procurement 'Buy Clean' Task Force website](#)
- [2023 Buy Clean Task Force Legislation, Article 12 \(PDF\)](#)
- [2022 Construction Materials: Environmental Impact Study \(PDF\)](#)