

Frequently asked questions about Green Partners grants

Table of Contents (with clickable hyperlinks)

Most frequently asked questions	4
How do I get help with the Supplier Portal?	4
Do you have any advice about planning our project or feedback on our project ideas?.....	4
Do you have sample applications that we can view?.....	4
Grant program questions	4
How often are the Green Partners grant opportunities offered?	4
How many grants or dollars will be issued this year?	4
Can organizations submit more than one application?	4
How competitive has it been the past few years?.....	4
When will applicants be notified if they are approved?.....	5
When do grant funds become available if we are awarded a grant?	5
Does applying for a two-year grant make sense for us?	5
Is it possible to extend the Green Partners grant deadline?	5
Application form questions	5
When I click on the gray box in the application it doesn't allow me to insert anything. Is it ok to delete the gray boxes?	5
Do I need to answer the questions about activities in year two if I'm not applying for a two-year grant project?	5
The guidelines say there is a six-page limit and that we can eliminate all the headers and descriptions provided. Is that correct?	5
Do letters of support count against the page limit for supplemental documents?	6



I have not yet received letters of support from our project partners and I missed the deadline to submit these on the Supplier Portal, will you still accept them? 6

Applicant and project team questions 6

Is the Green Partner grant open to organizations that do not have 501(c)3 designation? 6

We are an early child family education program in a public school. Do we qualify for the grant? 6

Are local governments eligible for the grant? 6

Do we qualify for a two-year grant? Is it determined by department or staff person, or by organizational entity? 6

Can we apply without a specific partner in place and work over the next several months to reach out to schools to establish that partnership? 7

Is it a conflict of interest for us to supply a letter of support for a partner who is also applying for a grant, given that we are submitting our own application for the grant? 7

Is it best to have a full criminal background check done by a third party or is checking references and conducting a background check ourselves sufficient? 7

Project participant questions 7

Does working with students of color align with the county’s disparity reduction goals, and are there other ways we can align with those goals? 7

Some of our participants live outside of Hennepin County, is that ok? 7

Project questions 7

Do you have particular work areas that are of greater interest to the county to put forward? 7

Our project idea isn't listed as a Green Partners potential project, will you fund those projects? 8

Can you give me an idea of what you want us to submit as youth environmental education curriculum? Are lesson plans and workshop agendas sufficient? 8

Can we visit the Zoo or the Arboretum with our participants if our program focus is on recycling, waste reduction and less toxicity? 8

Does the grant cover items such as recycling signs, staff stipends to run educational events, reusable bags and children’s books about recycling, and food and compostable supplies for a kickoff event to get the community involved and excited about the initiative? 8

We are wondering if we can apply this year with an updated version of the same project we have done before with Green Partners, or if Green Partners is looking for new and innovative projects to fund? 8

Can you fund starter programs like establishing a community garden through the leasing program with the City of Minneapolis? 8

Are grants available to contractors to build commercial EV (electric vehicle) charging stations? 9

What type of commercial energy projects are eligible for this? 9

Can we focus on water education and give away rain barrels and native plants? 9

We want to focus on a variety of low waste living actions during our project, like food waste, packaging, home energy audits, and sustainable landscaping. The grant description says Environmental Action projects should focus on one or two environmentally friendly actions. Does our project fit the criteria?..... 9

Budget questions..... 9

We need materials and gear for children's outdoor learning experiences. Do these expenses qualify for the grant?..... 9

We would like to bring in a speaker for an event we are planning, are speaker fees considered an eligible expense?..... 9

We want to install a greenhouse to support our garden projects. Would the \$500 per item limit apply to this? 10

We would like to recycle and reduce waste across our school and in our school cafeteria, and we want to educate staff and students. Are these activities eligible for a Green Partners grant? 10

Are indirect cost recovery or administrative overhead allowed expenses on the proposal?..... 10

Supplier Portal questions 10

The Supplier Portal won't open, an error message keeps showing up..... 10

I am unable to register for the Supplier Portal on the Hennepin County website. I've tried to reset the password, as well as to register using a different email address..... 11

When I click on the Supplier Portal bid button it gives me an error message telling me that I must be registered in order to bid. I know that I am registered. I also tried accessing the portal through another browser and that still didn't work..... 11

We have been using the Supplier Portal for a few years, but it is not letting me in today. This is the error message I received: An account could not be found for the provided user ID. 11

I can't figure out how to procure a "Bidder ID". I am in the Supplier Portal, but I need to complete my registration and I won't let me do that unless I have a Bidder ID. 12

(My colleague) was able to easily download the application on (their) Mac but when I try to download it on my PC it shows the download circle but abruptly stops after a few seconds (unlike theirs that took nearly a minute). I've left a message for the Help Desk..... 12

Most frequently asked questions

How do I get help with the Supplier Portal?

Contact the Supplier Portal Help Desk if you need help with registration or submitting your application. Plan ahead so the Supplier Portal help desk staff will have time to respond to your request before the deadline.

[Supplier Portal help desk](#)

(612) 543-5412

supplierportal@hennepin.us

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time

Do you have any advice about planning our project or feedback on our project ideas?

Read the [best practices advice from project managers \(PDF\)](#) document we created from feedback and advice from past project leaders. Contact the Green Partners staff for assistance at GreenPartners@hennepin.us or 612-596-6856.

Do you have sample applications that we can view?

Yes, we have sample applications and budgets for the Youth Environmental Education and the Environmental Action grant programs. You can find them at hennepin.us/greenpartners.

Grant program questions

How often are the Green Partners grant opportunities offered?

Hennepin County releases the Request for Proposals each spring for the Green Partners grant programs. We accept applications every year in the spring, usually from March through May. Funds become available the following September.

[Subscribe to the monthly email Environmental education news](#) to be notified of future grant opportunities and updates.

How many grants or dollars will be issued this year?

Around \$600,000 has been allocated for Green Partners grants in 2024, which could provide funding for up to 25 grants.

Can organizations submit more than one application?

You may submit one application to each grant program, but we will only award one Green Partners grant per organization per grant round.

How competitive has it been the past few years?

Very competitive. In recent years, we have funded approximately 50% of applicants.

When will applicants be notified if they are approved?

The grant review takes several weeks. Applicants will be notified of the decision by the end of July.

When do grant funds become available if we are awarded a grant?

The grant funds become available after September 1, as long as the grant agreement is fully executed.

Does applying for a two-year grant make sense for us?

You may request a two-year grant if you believe your project fits the criteria. The grant review team may decide to only fund one year of the project.

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.

Is it possible to extend the Green Partners grant deadline?

We cannot extend the deadline.

Application form questions

When I click on the gray box in the application it doesn't allow me to insert anything. Is it ok to delete the gray boxes?

The gray boxes indicate where responses are required. You may delete the gray boxes and insert your text directly into the document.

Do I need to answer the questions about activities in year two if I'm not applying for a two-year grant project?

No.

The guidelines say there is a six-page limit and that we can eliminate all the headers and descriptions provided. Is that correct?

Yes, keep the headings and numbered questions for each section, but you may eliminate the extraneous text descriptions in the application to fit the page limit.

Do letters of support count against the page limit for supplemental documents?

We prefer that you limit supplemental documents to four, but we do not penalize for multiple letters of support.

I have not yet received letters of support from our project partners and I missed the deadline to submit these on the Supplier Portal, will you still accept them?

If you are unable to submit the letters with your application in the Supplier Portal, you may email us at GreenPartners@hennepin.us. They will be considered if they are received before your proposal is reviewed.

Applicant and project team questions

Is the Green Partner grant open to organizations that do not have 501(c)3 designation?

Applicants do not need to be registered as a federal 501(c)3 nonprofit but they do need to be registered with the State of Minnesota as a nonprofit. If they are not already ready registered, Applicants need to register as a nonprofit through the [MN Secretary of State](#).

Organizations may partner on a grant project and have the registered nonprofit apply for the grant.

Or you may find an organization to serve as a "fiscal agent," which means they - the "fiscal agent" - would be the grant Applicant. If awarded a grant, the fiscal agent would sign and be responsible for the grant agreement with Hennepin County.

We are an early child family education program in a public school. Do we qualify for the grant?

Yes, public schools are eligible, including Early Childhood Family Education and Community Education programs.

Are local governments eligible for the grant?

Cities and municipalities are not eligible, but they can be an in-kind partner on an application. We have funded the West Metro Watershed Alliance in the past and will consider similar associations on a case-by-case basis. Contact the Green Partners program manager for more information.

Do we qualify for a two-year grant? Is it determined by department or staff person, or by organizational entity?

For most applicants, if the organization has received a grant in the past, they are eligible for a two-year grant.

For large school districts, grant reviewers consider each school as an individual entity.

If you received a grant from any of the following programs, you are eligible for a two-year grant:

- Green Partners Branch
- Green Partners Root
- Youth Green Jobs
- Green Partners Youth Environmental Education
- Green Partners Environmental Action
- Green Partners GROW (grants for residential organic waste)

Can we apply without a specific partner in place and work over the next several months to reach out to schools to establish that partnership?

This is a very competitive grant program. Having partners in place makes for a stronger application, especially since schools can take a lot of time to get programming integrated. It is best to have at least some of your partners in place before you apply. If you do not yet have partners, tell us who your likely partners are and your plan to engage them.

Is it a conflict of interest for us to supply a letter of support for a partner who is also applying for a grant, given that we are submitting our own application for the grant?

Partnering with other applicants is allowed. You may submit a letter of support for another applicant and it will not harm either of your chances for a grant. You must provide context about whether or not your applications are related if they are. And if they are related, what changes will happen if both projects are not funded.

Is it best to have a full criminal background check done by a third party or is checking references and conducting a background check ourselves sufficient?

We do not have specific requirements for background checks. Every organization has a different policy so you can decide what makes sense for your organization and situation. If you don't do background checks, it is important for us to know what your policies are. If you don't do background checks, we want to know that the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) are in attendance or that teacher(s) who have had background checks are supervising during each class/event. Explain how you ensure that youth aren't alone with staff or volunteers if they have not had a background check, and how you ensure that staff and volunteers know the rules.

Project participant questions

Does working with students of color align with the county's disparity reduction goals, and are there other ways we can align with those goals?

Yes, many people of color face education, employment, income, health, housing, transportation, and justice disparities. Tell us why you are the right organization to engage this audience and how your approach is effective with an audience that experiences disparities. [Learn more about the county's efforts to address disparities.](#)

Some of our participants live outside of Hennepin County, is that ok?

Yes, as long as a majority of your project participants are from, go to school, or recreate in Hennepin County, your project will qualify.

Project questions

Do you have particular work areas that are of greater interest to the county to put forward?

Review the Green Partners potential projects list posted with the RFP. This document was created with Hennepin County subject matter experts and community engagement staff.

Thoroughly review the RFP guidelines to be sure your project ideas are a good fit for the grant criteria.

Our project idea isn't listed as a Green Partners potential project, will you fund those projects?

As long as the project fits the grant criteria, it will be considered. Green Partners potential projects are simply suggestions for projects the county is interested in funding, it is not a comprehensive list of all possible projects we would fund.

Can you give me an idea of what you want us to submit as youth environmental education curriculum? Are lesson plans and workshop agendas sufficient?

Lesson plans and detailed workshop agendas are appropriate. You may also submit links to sources you plan to draw your curriculum from or an explanation of curriculum that you plan to develop and how it fills a gap in existing curriculum.

Can we visit the Zoo or the Arboretum with our participants if our program focus is on recycling, waste reduction and less toxicity?

Field trips to the zoo and arboretum would potentially qualify if there is an environmental education component. You must explain how the trips will add to the environmental educational experience of participants and how it relates to your waste curriculum.

Does the grant cover items such as recycling signs, staff stipends to run educational events, reusable bags and children's books about recycling, and food and compostable supplies for a kickoff event to get the community involved and excited about the initiative?

The Green Partners program may fund the educational components of your project, but you should contact Hennepin County's recycling staff to get recycling service or infrastructure in place first.

Hennepin County offers free [educational literature and recycling signage](#), [environmental education resources](#), and grants through the [school recycling](#), [multifamily recycling](#), and [business recycling](#) programs. Through these programs your needs might be met. If not, you can apply for a Green Partners grant to do more environmental education.

We are wondering if we can apply this year with an updated version of the same project we have done before with Green Partners, or if Green Partners is looking for new and innovative projects to fund?

Yes, you may submit the same project if it was successful in the past and you are reaching a new audience. Be sure to mention the successes of the previous project and how you will overcome any challenges that were identified last time, if applicable.

Can you fund starter programs like establishing a community garden through the leasing program with the City of Minneapolis?

We don't fund garden start-ups. We have funded projects in established gardens and projects related to trees, composting, pollinators, and environmental sustainability practices. We have also funded projects related to reducing food and food packaging waste through local food initiatives.

For Environmental Action projects, you will have to be very specific about what the lifestyle and behavior change (action) that you want people to take. Growing and eating food is a series of actions so break it down to one or two specific actions to focus on related to environmental education and stewardship.

For youth projects, you will have to share the environmental lessons they will be learning and engaging in at the garden and related to the garden.

Are grants available to contractors to build commercial EV (electric vehicle) charging stations?

Not likely, but nonprofits, schools, and park districts may apply to cover a portion of the expense if the project is supported by environmental education programming. The project must meet the grant program criteria in the RFP guidelines. There is a limit of \$500 for any equipment on any one item even for cost-share items, pending review and approval by county staff.

What type of commercial energy projects are eligible for this?

Commercial energy projects are not eligible for a Green Partners grant. The focus of this grant program is to educate and engage residents to take environmentally sustainable actions, like utilizing renewable energy.

Can we focus on water education and give away rain barrels and native plants?

For the native plant giveaway, we support projects that include deep engagement on the topic to ensure plants are planted and maintained properly.

Rain barrels and native plants must be installed, planted, and maintained properly. Thoughtful training and follow-up with participants should be part of the project plan. Identify what barriers are keeping people from taking action. Is this giveaway item the best way to encourage that action, or do people simply need a chance to practice, guidance on where and how to plant, more social pressure, or something else? You must make the case that this particular incentive is needed by residents in order for them to take action.

We want to focus on a variety of low waste living actions during our project, like food waste, packaging, home energy audits, and sustainable landscaping. The grant description says Environmental Action projects should focus on one or two environmentally friendly actions. Does our project fit the criteria?

For the Environmental Action grant, we'd like you to focus on 1 or 2 actions but you can incorporate more actions into the overall project. We expect that you would be able to dig deeper to address the barriers and motivations of your participants for those 1 or 2 actions, whereas you might only present information on the other topics.

Budget questions

We need materials and gear for children's outdoor learning experiences. Do these expenses qualify for the grant?

Yes, but you must have educational curriculum and programming to support the use of the materials and gear that you purchase.

We would like to bring in a speaker for an event we are planning, are speaker fees considered an eligible expense?

Yes, the Green Partners grants cover speakers for events. The event would have to be part of an initiative to educate youth about environmental topics or engage adults in making specific changes in their lifestyle to benefit the environment.

We want to install a greenhouse to support our garden projects. Would the \$500 per item limit apply to this?

The \$500 limit applies to any individual budget item. In some cases, we have been able to do a cost-share where the school or another source funds the amount above \$500. We tend not to fund permanent infrastructure. It will be up to the grant review team to make a recommendation if they are interested in your project. Funding and cost-share decisions depend on the project and the need for the item to fulfill the project goals, and requests require approval by the Green Partners grant manager.

We would like to recycle and reduce waste across our school and in our school cafeteria, and we want to educate staff and students. Are these activities eligible for a Green Partners grant?

This sounds like a better fit for the [school recycling grant program](#). Contact the school recycling coordinator to advise you on eligible expenses and recycling best practices for your project.

Are indirect cost recovery or administrative overhead allowed expenses on the proposal?

If you are a University of Minnesota partner, we will honor the administrative and overhead expense rates set by the University. Please notify the Hennepin-University Partnership office about your project prior to applying: hup.umn.edu/about-hup/contact-us. We have previously funded projects via the HUP with the Institute on the Environment, Hennepin County Extension office, and currently the UMN 4-H program.

If you are not a University of Minnesota partner, we do not fund most overhead expenses and other items, such as:

- 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.

Supplier Portal questions

The Supplier Portal won't open, an error message keeps showing up.

Try a different browser like Chrome or Microsoft Edge. Some browsers, like Internet Explorer and some others aren't compatible with the county's systems. If that doesn't work, contact the Supplier Portal Help Desk for assistance.

More instructions at: hennepin.us/business/work-with-henn-co/supplier-portal

If you are still having trouble, contact the Supplier Portal Help Desk while you are on the site.

Contact the Supplier Portal Help Desk if you need help.

[Supplier Portal help desk](#)

(612) 543-5412

supplierportal@hennepin.us.

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time

I am unable to register for the Supplier Portal on the Hennepin County website. I've tried to reset the password, as well as to register using a different email address.

Here are directions and a couple of tips that may help. Try to log-in first to see if you already have an account registered.

If you need to register, be sure you register with YOUR email address.

The training materials on the Supplier Portal Help site may provide an answer, see Registration:

hennepin.us/business/work-with-henn-co/supplier-portal

Contact the Supplier Portal Help Desk if you still need help.

[Supplier Portal help desk](#)

(612) 543-5412

supplierportal@hennepin.us.

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time

When I click on the Supplier Portal bid button it gives me an error message telling me that I must be registered in order to bid. I know that I am registered. I also tried accessing the portal through another browser and that still didn't work.

Here are step by step instructions for the Supplier Portal: [All registration steps \(PDF\)](#). More instructions at: hennepin.us/business/work-with-henn-co/supplier-portal

If you are still having trouble, contact the Supplier Portal Help Desk while you are on the site.

[Supplier Portal help desk](#)

(612) 543-5412

supplierportal@hennepin.us.

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time

We have been using the Supplier Portal for a few years, but it is not letting me in today. This is the error message I received: An account could not be found for the provided user ID.

Contact the Supplier Portal Help Desk. Tell them if your organization has previously done business with the county and if you are already registered in the Supplier Portal (if you know).

[Supplier Portal help desk](#)

(612) 543-5412

supplierportal@hennepin.us.

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time

The training materials on the Supplier Portal Help site may provide an answer, see Registration: hennepin.us/business/work-with-henn-co/supplier-portal

I can't figure out how to procure a "Bidder ID". I am in the Supplier Portal, but I need to complete my registration and I won't let me do that unless I have a Bidder ID.

Review the instructions at: hennepin.us/business/work-with-henn-co/supplier-portal. If you do not find the answer, you will need to contact the Supplier Portal Help Desk.

[Supplier Portal help desk](#)

(612) 543-5412

supplierportal@hennepin.us.

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time

(My colleague) was able to easily download the application on (their) Mac but when I try to download it on my PC it shows the download circle but abruptly stops after a few seconds (unlike theirs that took nearly a minute). I've left a message for the Help Desk.

Try a different browser like Chrome or Microsoft Edge. Some browsers, like Internet Explorer and some others aren't compatible with the county's systems.

If you are still having trouble, contact the Supplier Portal Help Desk again while you are on the site.

[Supplier Portal help desk](#)

(612) 543-5412

supplierportal@hennepin.us.

Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Central Standard Time

More instructions at: hennepin.us/business/work-with-henn-co/supplier-portal