

Green Chemistry & Engineering Internship Grant State fiscal year 2021

Request for Proposal (RFP)

This RFP assists applicants in applying for and managing state grants. This document describes the **Green Chemistry & Engineering Internship Grant**, including information on who may apply for funding, match requirements, goals and objectives of the project, the criteria for selection, activities eligible for funding, and other information that will help applicants plan their project and submit a competitive application. **Applications are due no later than 2:00 PM Central Time on Monday, March 8, 2021.**

The applicant should check the **Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) Green and safer product chemistry grants** webpage (<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/green-and-safer-product-chemistry-grants>) for the most recent updates on this competitive grant, including questions and answers, and addendums.

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The following documents can all be found at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/green-and-safer-product-chemistry-grants>:

- Sample Grant Agreement
- Grant Application
- Project Workplan and Budget

1. Program overview

Through this RFP, MPCA seeks to support a Minnesota facility or organization with a grant to underwrite the cost of a summer 2021 Green Chemistry & Engineering Internship, to achieve a purpose or outcome which advances the process or practice of green chemistry and engineering within the host company or organization. The intern's time can be applied to improving one or more of a company's products or components, or to developing tools which support wider use or sales of products with green and safer chemistries. Drawing on their technical training in college, the intern will spend about 10-12 weeks with an approximate start date of May 1, 2021, working within the company or organization, learning various ways that green chemistry and engineering practices and purposes can be applied within a commercial or institutional setting.

Leaders in Minnesota business are pursuing reformulation of existing products and design of new products using the principles of green chemistry and green engineering. MPCA has supported this movement since 2009, through grants, policy, and assistance.

MPCA has hosted undergraduate interns and provided grants to Minnesota college faculty to integrate green chemistry and engineering principles into their chemistry and engineering curricula, in order to equip the product designers of the future, today's secondary and post-secondary students, with knowledge of the toxicological and life-cycle impacts of chemical component choices on humans and the environment.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to view past Green Chemistry & Engineering Internship Grants as examples of awarded projects. They can be found here: <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/green-and-safer-product-chemistry-grants>.

While the process to establish a host organization goes on, MPCA staff will also work with green chemistry and engineering partners across North America to recruit students or recent graduates from universities and colleges, creating a pool of candidates from which the company or organization awarded this grant will select for interviews and an eventual offer for their position. In general, intern candidates are required to be:

- A current graduate student OR recent recipient of a bachelor's degree (less than six months since graduation).
- Specialized in a scientific/technical discipline – chemistry, engineering or a related cross-disciplinary emphasis is preferred.
- Eligible to receive payment for work in the United States during the summer term (citizens, residents, non-residents with applicable visas).
- Paid by the host company/organization, at a rate which at a minimum fully expends the awarded grant funds in the project period agreed to by the student and company/organization (e.g., 12 weeks at 40 hours per week at \$20 per hour).
- Compensated at a rate which is fair and competitive given employment conditions local to the host facility and commensurate with the intern's education and experience.
- Available May through August 2021, at a minimum.

The grantee may also use their own intern recruitment and hiring programs and practices, as long as they result in candidates well-positioned to succeed in the purpose of the grant project.

Statutory authority

MPCA has authority to administer Green Chemistry & Engineering Internship Grants in Minnesota pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 116.03, subd. 2.

2. Funding

Grant(s) of approximately \$12,000 will be awarded to one or more entities.

Match requirements

Investment of matching resources is required; however, no specific amount or percentage is required. It is expected that the company/organization will expend in-kind resources to supervise and mentor the intern in reaching company and student goals and objectives, to provide work station(s) and the tools needed to succeed, and to provide fair and competitive compensation depending on needs, qualifications, work undertaken, and local market conditions. Applicants may also choose to support travel or relocation costs incurred by the intern. These or other costs incurred by the company/organization should be described as match in the application and budget.

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. [The Policy on Rating Criteria for Competitive Grant Review](#) establishes the expectation that grant programs intentionally identify how the grant serves diverse populations, especially populations experiencing inequities and/or disparities.

This grant prioritizes communities with higher concentrations of low-income residents and people of color, including tribal communities. Applicants will receive five (5) points if the project is located in an area of concern for Environmental Justice. Refer to the MPCA “understanding environmental justice in Minnesota” website at: <http://mpca.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=f5bf57c8dac24404b7f8ef1717f57d00>

Grant payments

Per [State Policy on Grant Payments](#), all payments will be paid on a reimbursement basis. 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 MPCA has given the grantee a written extension.

A final workplan must be approved by both the Grantee and the intern and then the MPCA. The Grantee may invoice the MPCA requesting reimbursement at intervals no more often than every two weeks throughout the course of the project. Invoices will not be approved by the MPCA and payments shall not be made unless coinciding updates, at least monthly, have been performed and information has been provided to the MPCA Authorized Representative. Payment of the final invoice will not be made until the MPCA reviews and approves the Final Report and Executive Project Summary.

3. Eligible and ineligible applicants

Eligible applicants

Eligible applicants include any such company or organization and must have a facility located in Minnesota, which will host the intern. Applicants may be headquartered outside of Minnesota, including outside the United States.

Ineligible applicants

Individuals, and federal, state, or local governmental agencies are ineligible to apply, as are nongovernmental organizations that do not meet the requirements under Eligible applicants.

Applicants debarred by State, its departments, commissions, agencies, or political subdivisions.

4. Eligible and ineligible projects

Eligible projects

Eligible projects will include components and learning opportunities related to the use of green chemistry and engineering practices applied to design or manufacture of a specific product or packaging. Project must be complete by December 31, 2021.

Eligible companies and organizations should develop, produce, purchase, supply, assist, or otherwise play a role in determining the chemical composition or engineering of a product, products, or packaging, or one or more components of a product, products, or packaging.

Ineligible projects

Projects which include no green chemistry and engineering component or relationship, and projects which do not include learning opportunities or educational goals for the intern will be considered ineligible.

5. Eligible and ineligible costs

Eligible costs

Eligible grant costs are limited to the costs of researching, developing, or implementing a green chemistry and engineering intern project in Minnesota. Through the Project Workplan form, applications should include a complete description of the costs that grant funding will be used for. Unless a proposed cost is clearly ineligible as specified below, MPCA will make a determination of whether proposed costs are eligible on a case-by-case basis.

Ineligible costs

Ineligible costs include costs that are not directly related to the project. In addition, the following costs, even if they are directly related to the project, are ineligible.

- The cost of preparing the grant application.
- Relocation costs (eligible to be used as match funding only).
- The cost of activities initiated and costs incurred prior to execution of a grant agreement.
- The cost of general operating support such as routine overhead expenses not related to the proposed project.
- The cost of environmental compliance remediation.
- The purchase of real property (land, real estate, and buildings), easements, and/or vehicles.
- The cost of equipment, unless unique to the project and specifically approved by the MPCA as a direct expense.
- Computer(s), tablets, and software, unless unique to the project and specifically approved by the MPCA as a direct expense.
- Purchase or rental of mobile communication devices such as pagers and cell phones, unless unique to the project and specifically approved by the MPCA as a direct expense.
- The cost of obtaining any required permits from the MPCA.
- The cost of any of the following: donations, fundraising; lobbying, lobbyists, and political contributions, entertainment, gifts; and bad debt, attorney fees, late payment fees, finance charges, contingency funds, interest, investment management fees, engineering/consultant fees.

6. Application review process

Applications received by the grant deadline will be reviewed by a team of MPCA staff and community-based grant reviewers using a two-stage process. **Late applications will not be considered for review.**

Stage 1: Eligibility review

The MPCA will determine if eligibility requirements are met. Any application found to be ineligible will be eliminated from further evaluation. Minimum requirements:

- Application is received on time
- Applicant is eligible
- Project is eligible

Stage 2: Application scoring

Only applications meeting the eligibility criteria under Stage 1 will be considered for scoring in Stage 2. Reviewers will evaluate applications using the weighted criteria listed in Exhibit A.

No activity or comments from applicants regarding this RFP shall be discussed with any of the reviewers during the evaluation of the applications. However, the MPCA may request clarification of submitted information from one or more applicants. The clarifications must be made in writing. The MPCA will only accept written responses for evaluation purposes. The response to the request for clarification may be considered along with the original application for application scoring.

In addition to its authority to offer reduced awards, the MPCA reserves the right to withdraw the award or to refrain from awarding any grants.

At its discretion, the MPCA may perform an appropriate cost and pricing check of an application. The applicant's past performance as a grantee of that state agency will be considered when evaluating a grant application.

Notification

All applicants will be notified by MPCA staff approximately 45 days after application due date. Applicants selected for funding will be contacted concerning the next steps in the award process, including execution of the appropriate agreements and workplan submissions.

7. Grantee responsibilities

Grant agreement

Awardees are required to be a registered vendor in SWIFT and will sign the grant agreement using DocuSign. To register, go to the Supplier Portal webpage [SWIFT](#) and click on "Register for an Account" and then "Register as a Supplier."

Each awardee must formally enter into a grant agreement. The agreement will address the conditions of the award, including implementation of the project. Once the agreement is signed, the recipient is expected to read and comply with all conditions of the agreement.

A sample State of Minnesota Grant Agreement is available via the link on page 1 for your reference. Much of the language reflected in the agreement is required by statute. If you would like to request modification of the agreement language, please indicate in your grant application which specific clauses and a brief reason. This request could be in the form of an electronic version of Attachment A showing revisions and comments, or in a cover letter accompanying the grant application.

Reporting requirements

Reporting requirements are outlined in the sample grant agreement and will be in accordance with applicant's approved workplan and budget.

Public data

Applications are private or nonpublic until opened. Once the applications are opened, the name and address of the applicant and the amount requested is public. All other data in an application is private or nonpublic data until all agreements are fully executed. After all agreements are fully executed, all remaining data in the application is public with the exception of trade secret data as defined and classified in Minn. Stat. § 13.37. A statement by a grantee that the application is copyrighted or otherwise protected does not prevent public access to the application (Minn. Stat. § 13.599, subd. 3).

Conflicts of interest

We will take steps to prevent individual and organizational conflicts of interest, both in reference to applicants and reviewers per [Minn. Stat. § 16B.98](#) and [Conflict of Interest Policy for State Grant-Making](#).

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 suspected, disclosed, or discovered, the applicants or grantees will be notified and actions may be pursued, including but not limited to disqualification from eligibility for the grant award or termination of the grant agreement.

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.

Audits

Per [Minn. Stat. § 16B.98](#), subd. 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 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 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. [Minn. R. 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.

8. Application instructions

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

- Grant Application form
- Project Workplan and Budget

If an applicant requests multiple projects, all projects must be included in one application using the application form provided.

9. Application submission instructions

Applications must be received electronically by the MPCA no later than **2:00 PM Central Time on Monday, March 8, 2021**. The email properties header will reflect the date and time submissions are received. Application submissions received after the deadline will not be considered eligible. Email applications to grants.pca@state.mn.us with the subject line: **"Green Chemistry & Engineering Internship 2021"**. The MPCA is not responsible for any errors or delays caused by technology-related issues, even if they are caused by the MPCA.

Applications submitted via any other method, including but not limited to fax, mail, in-person deliveries, will not be accepted.

10. Questions and answers

We are obligated to be transparent in all aspects of our grant work. To meet our obligation, all questions must be submitted in the same manner, and answers are only provided via the MPCA website, at <https://www.pca.state.mn.us/waste/green-and-safer-product-chemistry-grants>. It is the applicant's responsibility to check this website for the most recent updates on a competitive grant, including questions and answers, and addendums.

Applicants who have any questions regarding this RFP must email questions to grants.pca@state.mn.us, with subject line: **"Green Chemistry & Engineering Internship Q&A"**. Staff will gather questions and post answers on the website on an at-least weekly basis. The last day and time a question may be submitted is **12:00 PM Central Time on Wednesday, March 3, 2021**. The last Q&A will be posted by **12:00 PM Central Time on Thursday, March 4, 2021**.

MPCA personnel are **not** authorized to discuss this RFP with applicants. Contact regarding this RFP with any MPCA personnel may result in disqualification.

Exhibit A: Application evaluation score sheet

A 100-point scale will be used to evaluate eligible applications. Scores will be used to develop final recommendations. Applicants are encouraged to score their own application using the evaluation score-sheet before submitting their application. This step is not required, but may help ensure applications address the criteria evaluators will use to score applications.

Pass/fail criteria	Pass	Fail
Proposal submitted on time		
Response contains application and all required supporting documents.		

Evaluation score (0-5)	
Missing	0.0
Poor	1.0
Fair	2.0
Satisfactory	3.0
Good	4.0
Excellent	5.0

Weighted criteria	Applicant score (0-5)	Weight	Total points (score x weight)
1. Description - 40%	5	8.00	40
Description and workplan addresses all the questions listed in Part 2 of the grant application		2.00	0
Work is focused on green chemistry and/or engineering in an existing or new product or component, or supporting such work		2.00	0
Work can attain company/organization milestones and can help student achieve anticipated learning objectives		2.00	0
Addresses one or more Minnesota Priority Chemicals or Chemicals of High Concern: https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/childenvhealth/tfka/index.html		1.00	0
Project outcomes may lead to reduced risks to workers, consumers, or children from under-represented, under-served or economically disadvantaged populations		1.00	0
Subtotal		8.00	0
2. Experience and qualifications of applicant and team - 35%	5	7.00	35
Company's/facility's/partner's green chemistry and/or engineering experience		2.50	0
Mentor's/other individuals' green chemistry and/or engineering experience		2.50	0
Applicant is located within an EJ community (yes=5; no=0)		1.00	0
Described good, feasible ideas to try to attract a diverse pool of intern candidates		1.00	0
Subtotal		7.00	0
3. Workplan/budget/expense detail - 25%	5	5.00	25
Detailed workplan and budget by task including responsible party		2.00	0
Costs are explained sufficiently to assess eligibility		1.00	0
Proposed compensation for intern is fair and competitive		1.00	0
Matching resources are described		1.00	0
Subtotal		5.00	0
Sub-total Score 1-3			0
Total			100