

Precision Agriculture Grant (PRO-AG) Scoring and Weighting Sheet

Criteria	Points Available	Y/N	Points	Reference Sheet Lookup
Eligible Entity/Project - <i>Gating</i>	N/A		N/A	A
Application Completeness – <i>Gating</i>	N/A		N/A	B
Business Plan – <i>Gating</i>	N/A		N/A	C
Business Plan Points	0-25			
Legal Capability – <i>Gating</i>	N/A		N/A	D
Legal Capability Points	0-10			
Technical Capability - <i>Gating</i>	N/A		N/A	E
Technical Capability Points	0-10			
ETC Certification (<i>Connectivity only</i>)	0-5			F
Match Percentage	0-10			G
Demonstrated Substantial Economic Benefit	0-10			H
Continued or Increasing Economic and Technological Impacts	0-10			I
Water Conservation Focus	0-20			J
Connectivity Subprogram TOTAL	100			
Devices and Technology Subprogram TOTAL	95			

PRO-AG Scoring Criteria Reference Sheet

Introduction: The scoring rubric assesses grant applications for the Precision Agriculture Grant (PRO-AG), evaluating both gating criteria for eligibility and scoring criteria for project merit and impact.

A – Eligible Entity/Project

Gating Criteria (Yes/No):

- Connectivity Subprogram applicant is a wireless network provider; Devices and Technology Subprogram applicant is an agricultural cooperative, agronomist, or agricultural producer.
- The project proposed serves Nebraska farm sites.
- Application includes contiguous project area.
- Applicant adheres to all eligibility requirements outlined in the Precision Agriculture Connectivity Infrastructure Grant Act & Commission Order C-5529.

Scoring Criteria: N/A

B – Application Completeness

Gating Criteria (Yes/No):

- Application is submitted on prescribed forms provided by the Public Service Commission.
- All required sections, attachments, and documentation are completed and included.

Scoring Criteria: N/A

C – Business Plan

Gating Criteria (Yes/No): Submission of a comprehensive business plan is mandatory for evaluation, including all required elements (projection, long-term maintenance plans, and financial statements for non-ETC applicants). Submission of a comprehensive budget breakdown and a cost-benefit analysis is mandatory for evaluation. If the applicant is an ETC, has the applicant demonstrated overall financial viability based on financial statements recently submitted to the Commission?

Scoring Criteria (up to 25 points):

- Executive Summary (up to 2 points):
 - 2 Points: Comprehensive and well-articulated summary covering farm/business history, mission, goals, and specific precision agriculture connectivity or technology objectives.
 - 1 Point: Limited information provided in the executive summary or lacking depth or specificity.
- Project Proposal (up to 3 points):
 - 3 Points: Clear and detailed description of the project, with a comprehensive explanation of how connectivity or devices and technology will enhance productivity, efficiency, and sustainability.
 - 2 Points: Adequate project description and explanation with significant tangible outcomes identified as related to productivity, efficiency, and sustainability benefits. Some aspects may lack specifics.
 - 1 Point: Little to no consideration of the precision agriculture project or its potential impacts.
- Timeline (up to 4 points):
 - 4 Points: Well-structured timeline for deployment, including clear milestones and indications of readiness for immediate action upon grant award. Feasibility of project implementation within the proposed timeline. Clear and realistic milestones for project completion. Includes adequate measures to address potential challenges.

- 3 Points: Adequate timeline provided with milestones, but some details or indications of readiness may be lacking.
 - 1 Point: Limited detail in the timeline, with minimal clarity on milestones or readiness.
- d. Sustainability (up to 3 points):
- 3 Points: Strong evidence demonstrating project sustainability for a minimum of five years, including clear strategies and considerations for long-term success.
 - 2 Points: Adequate evidence of sustainability, though some areas may lack depth or specificity.
 - 1 Point: Limited evidence of project sustainability for a minimum of five years.
- e. Project Budget (up to 5 points)
- 5 Points: Clear and detailed funding breakdown for the project provided. The proposed budget reflects a comprehensive breakdown of cost elements with the total allowable costs transparently presented. The total costs, the grant amount requested, and matching funds from various sources are explicitly detailed. The proposed project is cost-effective, with a reasonable budget in relation to expected outcomes and reflects efficient allocation of funds to achieve program goals.
 - 3 Points: Adequate funding breakdown with most cost elements clearly outlined with total allowable costs presented. The total costs, the grant amount requested, and matching funds are provided with reasonable clarity. The proposed budget is moderately reasonable and cost-effective.
 - 0 Points: Funding breakdown with minimal detail on cost elements and the presentation of total allowable costs lacks clarity. The total costs, the grant amount requested, and matching funds are outlined with limited detail.
- f. Financial Projections (up to 3 points):
- 3 Points: Clear and detailed financial projections provided which includes comprehensive breakdowns of income and expenses; demonstrates accuracy and realism in estimating income and expenses; includes financial health indicators (e.g., net cash flow, profitability ratios) that provide insights into the overall financial viability of the proposed project
 - 2 Points: Adequate clarity and detail in the projections. Some sections may lack depth or coverage, but overall, the document offers a reasonable understanding of income and expenses.
 - 0 Points: Little to no clarity and detail in the projections. The document lacks transparency, making it challenging to understand the financial forecast. Lack of information on key financial metrics diminishes the ability to assess the project's financial viability.
- g. Cost-Benefit Analysis (up to 5 points):
- 5 Points: Comprehensive cost-benefit analysis quantifying expected financial returns, both short-term and long-term. The analysis provides a clear understanding of the financial impact of the investment.
 - 2 Points: Adequate cost-benefit analysis with clear projections of short-term and long-term financial returns. The analysis provides a reasonable understanding of the investment's financial impact.
 - 0 Points: Little to no cost-benefit analysis provided. Minimal information on short-term and long-term financial returns, lacking clarity on the investment's financial impact.

D – Legal Capability

1. Connectivity Subprogram

Gating Criteria (Yes/No): Applicant submitted contact information for their legal representation and includes a licensed attorney in good standing to practice law in Nebraska, or an attorney admitted to practice pro hac vice in Nebraska. Applicant submitted a letter of support or approval from the owner of each farm site included in the grant application that expresses the owner's consent for the connectivity project and their understanding of the proposed on-farm connectivity services.

Scoring Criteria (up to 10 points): If the required information is included, applicant will be awarded up to 10 points, Deductions to points will be made as follows:

- Applicant fails to provide a comprehensive description of risk factors and legal challenges that are anticipated, such as local zoning, permitting, access to rights-of-way, etc., along with a well-defined plan for mitigation. (-2 points).

2. Devices and Technology Subprogram

Gating Criteria (Yes/No): Applicant submitted information regarding pertinent qualifications and certifications essential for the proposed devices/technology, along with a statement specifying whether the applicant currently holds the necessary qualifications and certifications.

Scoring Criteria (up to 10 points):

- a. Qualifications and Certifications (up to 5 points):
 - 5 Points: Detailed information provided, covering all pertinent qualifications and certifications for the proposed devices/technology.
 - 3 Points: Adequate outline, but some qualifications or certifications are not fully detailed or explained.
 - 0 Points: Incomplete outline of qualifications and certifications.
- b. Current Status and Acquisition Plan (up to 3 points):
 - 3 Points: Includes a clear statement on the status of qualifications and certifications, with a well-defined plan and timelines for acquisition if not currently secured.
 - 1 Point: Some clarity on the status, but the plan for acquisition lacks detail or specific timelines.
 - 0 Points: Inadequate or missing information on the status and acquisition plan.
- c. Strategies for Sustaining Qualifications (up to 2 points):
 - 2 Points: Detailed strategies and commitments outlined for sustaining qualifications and certifications over the five-year post-deployment period.
 - 0 Points: Inadequate or missing information on strategies for sustaining qualifications.

E – Technical Capability

1. Connectivity Subprogram

Gating Criteria (Yes/No): Demonstration of the applicant’s technical capability and experience in providing precision agriculture on-farm connectivity solutions; evidence supporting their ability to provide 100/20 Mbps service (could include an attestation from a qualified engineer specific to the proposed project confirming the technical feasibility of meeting the speed requirements).

Scoring Criteria (up to 10 points):

- a. Innovation and technology (up to 4 points):
 - 4 points: Prevalent utilization of the latest technologies (ex. 5G, LoRa, LoRaWAN, Wi-Fi 6, Wi-Fi 6E, Wi-Fi 7, Bluetooth 5 or better, etc.) for optimal performance.
 - 3 points: Prevalent utilization of advanced communication protocols (ex. LTE, Sigfox, Wi-Fi 5, Zigbee 3.0, NB-IoT).
 - 2 points: Prevalent utilization of standard communication technologies (ex. 3G, Satellite, Wi-Fi 4, etc) for satisfactory performance.
 - 0 points: Reliance on outdated or limited communication technologies (ex. older Wi-Fi standards, older Bluetooth standards, older Zigbee standards, etc).
- b. Maintenance and Scalability Evaluation (up to 3 points):
 - 3 Points: The proposal presents a robust plan for network expansion, ensuring that adding more devices will not compromise overall network speed or performance.

- 2 Points: Mentions the need for network expansion and need for increased device density support but lacks specificity and a clear strategy on preserving performance.
 - 1 Points: Limited acknowledgment and vague plans for both expansion and increased device density.
 - 0 Point: Fails to address scalability adequately for both network and device density.
- c. Low-latency networks (up to 3 points):
- 3 points: Low-latency networks with minimal delays (less than 20 ms), ideal for real-time applications.
 - 2 points: Moderate-latency networks (20-50 ms), suitable for most precision agriculture needs.
 - 1 points: Noticeable latency (50-100 ms), may impact real-time data handoff.
 - 0 points: High latency (above 100 ms), potentially hindering timely data transfer.

2. Devices and Technology Applicants:

Gating Criteria (Yes/No): Demonstration of the applicant's ability and experience in precision agriculture devices and technology solutions, specifically relevant to the devices/technology included in the application. In cases where the applicant lacks direct experience, a clear explanation is required on how they plan to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge to operate the equipment effectively.

Scoring Criteria (up to 10 points):

- a. Applicant's Expertise (up to 3 points):
- 3 Points: Clear overview of the applicant's experience and expertise in precision agriculture devices and technology solutions. Detailed information on past successful projects or initiatives related to precision agriculture or similar technologies.
 - 2 Points: Adequate information on the applicant's expertise, with some details on past successful projects. Moderate evidence of experience in precision agriculture devices and technology.
 - 0 Points: Incomplete or missing information on the applicant's expertise. Lack of clarity on past successful projects or experience in precision agriculture devices and technology.
- b. Program Details (up to 2 points):
- 2 Points: Comprehensive details provided about the proposed program, including precision agriculture devices and technology specifications and technical requirements. Clear alignment with the goals of the project demonstrated.
 - 0 Points: Incomplete or missing information about the proposed program, specifications, and technical requirements. Lack of clarity on how chosen technologies align with project goals.
- c. Expected Useful Life (up to 2 points):
- 2 Points: Clear presentation of the expected useful life of devices/technology, along with a well-defined statement regarding components that may require more frequent repair or replacement.
 - 0 Points: Incomplete or missing information on the expected useful life of devices/technology. Lack of clarity on components that may require repair or replacement.
- b. Maintenance Plan (up to 3 points):
- 3 Points: Comprehensive explanation of how devices/technology funded with PRO-AG grant funds will be maintained throughout the useful life or for a minimum of five years following project completion.
 - 2 Points: Adequate information on the maintenance plan for a minimum of five years following project completion. Moderate clarity on how devices/technology will be sustained long term or over the useful life.
 - 0 Points: Incomplete information on how the project will be maintained for a minimum of five years following project completion. Lack of clarity on how devices/technology will be sustained long term or over the useful life.

F – ETC Certification (Connectivity Subprogram Only)

Scoring Criteria (Up to 5 points):

- 5 points: The applicant/carrier partner is an ETC at the time of application.
- 3 points: An ETC application is pending for the PRO-AG applicant.
- 1 point: The applicant/carrier partner commits to filing for ETC Certification within 30 days of the application deadline, 1 point will be awarded.
- 0 points: The applicant does not fall under an ETC certification category as listed above.

G – Match Percentage

Scoring Criteria (Up to 10 points): Points will be awarded for match commitments of at least 25%, with a maximum of 10 points achievable. Points will be assigned as follows:

Match Percent	Points
25% match:	2 points
30% match:	4 points
35% match:	6 points
40% match	8 points
45% or greater match	10 points

H - Demonstrated Substantial Economic Benefit

Scoring Criteria (Up to 10 points available):

- 10 Points: The proposal showcases an exceptional understanding of and commitment to generating a significant economic impact on rural Nebraska. It provides a thorough and well-supported analysis of tangible and quantifiable benefits, emphasizing job creation, income generation, and overall economic development. Project costs are not excessive, and the economic benefit to be gained exceeds the cost of the grant funding. The economic model presented is robust, demonstrating a clear strategy for sustained growth and progress. The proposal outlines innovative approaches that have the potential to significantly contribute to the economic vibrancy of the region. Additional consideration may be provided for applications which serve multiple farm sites, or that involve participation of small producers, family-owned farms, or cooperatives.
- 5 Points: The proposal exhibits a moderate understanding of the economic benefits it can bring, and tangible outcomes are identified. While some consideration is given to aspects such as job creation, income generation, and economic development, the depth and clarity of the proposal are limited.
- 0 Points: The proposal demonstrates little to no consideration of substantial economic benefits. The economic impact is not effectively addressed or is entirely absent from the proposal.

I – Continued or Increasing Economic and Technological Impacts

Scoring Criteria (Up to 10 points available):

- 10 Points: Project proposal reflects comprehensive and sustainable impacts. The proposal demonstrates a profound understanding of both immediate and sustained economic and

technological impacts. It clearly outlines robust strategies for continuous growth over time, ensuring a lasting contribution. The proposal showcases innovative approaches that contribute significantly to economic and technological advancement for sustainable impact. Additional consideration may be provided for applications which serve multiple farm sites, or that involve participation of small producers, family-owned farms, or cooperatives.

- 5 Points: The proposal demonstrates moderate understanding of continuing impacts and their importance; it identifies tangible outcomes and presents reasonable strategies for achieving economic and technological advancements over time. However, details are missing regarding specific long-term impacts.
- 0 Points: The proposal demonstrates little to no focus on sustaining economic and technological benefits. It lacks clear articulation of strategies for continued growth over time or fails to address the necessity of ongoing contributions to sustained progress.

J – Water Conservation Focus

Scoring Criteria (Up to 20 points available):

- 20 Points: Proposal places a significant emphasis on water conservation, with comprehensive strategies and technologies to address water management, especially crucial in light of continuing drought conditions. Examples include but are not limited to: well monitoring, crop water usage data collection, adoption of water and energy-efficient irrigation technologies and practices, research in the areas of water & energy efficiency, remote sensing, and irrigation water management.
- 10 Points: Moderate emphasis on water conservation, with identified measures for better water management.
- 5 Points: Limited focus on water conservation, with minimal strategies for addressing water-related challenges.
- 0 Points: Little to no emphasis on water conservation.

Scoring and Tiebreaker

Applications will be prioritized based on overall scores, with higher scores indicating a higher priority project.

If applications receive the same score requiring a tiebreaker, the application with the lower amount of PRO-AG grant dollars requested, would be given preference.