

AFNR ROCs

Paid Professional Development for MN High School Educators

The **AFNR ROCs** (pronounced "rocks") **Program** connects high school educators with current Agricultural, Food, and Natural Resource (AFNR) research through immersive professional development experiences at UMN [Research and Outreach Centers](#) (ROCs), part of the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences ([CFANS](#)).

You'll explore current research, meet the people behind it, and leave with classroom-ready activities that connect your students to AFNR careers and meet the needs of your curriculum.



Why AFNR?

Agriculture, food, and natural resources are Minnesota's second-largest economic sector, yet employers face growing workforce shortages. By introducing students to AFNR careers through authentic learning experiences, you can help them **discover rewarding pathways they may never have considered**. This project is partially funded by [MAELC](#), the Minnesota Agricultural Education Leadership Council.

Through the AFNR ROCs Program, You'll...

- Experience current AFNR research through tours, demonstrations, and hands-on learning.
- Take home classroom-ready lessons and activities inspired by real research.
- Build lasting relationships with nearby ROCs for future field trips, classroom visits, and other partnerships.
- Implement at least one resource from the program (or one created by you as a result of the program) with your students and collect brief, anonymous student feedback to help gauge the effectiveness of the materials in sparking their interest in related AFNR topics and careers.

How to Participate

1. Apply for a Session

Choose the professional development session that best fits your interests (See the next page for this year's offerings). [Applications](#) are accepted on a rolling basis.

2. Attend a One-Day Professional Development Session at a ROC

Come ready for an active day outdoors! Meals, instructional materials, and a \$100 stipend will be provided. Each session is limited to 10 participants.

3. Bring It Back to Your Classroom

Implement at least one activity with your students, collect student feedback, and complete a brief program evaluation by December 2026. You'll receive a \$200 implementation stipend upon completion.



2026 AFNR ROCs Sessions

From Field to Classroom: August 17, 2026 - Lamberton, MN

Experience agricultural research from professional field-scale to classroom-scale at the [Southwest Research and Outreach Center](#) (SWROC) in Lamberton. You'll learn about current projects in soil health, long-term field experiments, crop production systems, weather monitoring, perennial grains, and green manure crops through tours and demonstrations. Then, you'll try classroom-ready versions of the same research techniques, including soil, seed and plant tissue investigations and experimental design activities, that help students explore authentic agricultural science while building inquiry, data analysis, and career-ready skills.

Supports MN Standards:

- Science & Engineering Practices
- Earth Science: Properties of soils
- CTE: Plant Systems Frameworks; Agriscience Fair research projects



Ways of Knowing in the Forest: October 15, 2026 - Cloquet, MN

A forest can tell many stories depending on the questions we ask. Throughout this immersive experience at the [Cloquet Forestry Center](#) (CFC), you'll return to the same forest site multiple times, exploring it through various perspectives and ways of knowing. Along the way, you'll learn about ongoing research and land stewardship in forest ecology that blends Indigenous and western practices in fire regime restoration while experiencing classroom-ready activities that use outdoor learning to spark curiosity, encourage careful observation, and help students to investigate forests and the natural world through multiple perspectives.

Note: [Lodging](#) is available at the CFC for participants arriving the night before for \$50 (limited to participants only).

Supports MN Standards:

- Science & Engineering Practices
- Life Science: Ecosystems; Indigenous solutions to threats to biodiversity
- CTE: Natural Resource and Environmental Service Systems Frameworks; Agriscience Fair research projects



Apply to either or both sessions using the QR code or
<https://z.umn.edu/AFNRROCsapp>



Questions?

Contact Cathleen Drilling (cdrilling@umn.edu), CFANS Director of Strategic Outreach.