



Professional Development Grant Program 2022 Call for Preproposals

Important Dates

The online system will open to accept preproposals starting on: **May 18, 2021**

Preproposals are due no later than:

August 3, 2021, 5:00 p.m. ET

Preproposals are submitted online at: projects.sare.org.

Questions?

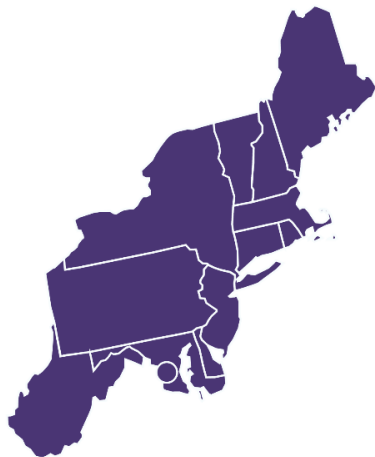
Visit the Northeast SARE website at: www.northeastsare.org/PDP. For questions about this call, contact Katie Campbell-Nelson at kc2233@cornell.edu or 413-834-1090.

About Northeast SARE

The Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program offers competitive grants to farmers, educators, agricultural service providers, researchers, graduate students and others to address key issues affecting the sustainability of agriculture throughout our region. Northeast SARE is one of four regional SARE programs funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

The program—including funding decisions—is driven by the Northeast SARE **outcome statement**:

Agriculture in the Northeast will be diversified and profitable, providing healthful products to customers. Farmers and the people they work with will steward resources to ensure sustainability and resilience, and foster conditions where farmers have high quality of life and communities can thrive.



The Northeast region includes:
Connecticut, Delaware, Maine,
Massachusetts, Maryland, New
Hampshire, New Jersey, New York,
Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont,
West Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

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Northeast SARE, one of four regional SARE programs, is hosted by the University of Vermont and is funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Northeast SARE programs are offered to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status.

About Northeast SARE Professional Development Grants

Overview

The Northeast SARE Professional Development Grant program funds projects that develop the knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes of agricultural and other service providers about sustainable agriculture practices to teach, advise or assist farmers. An agricultural service provider is a professional who assists farmers as part of their work. Projects that develop the ability of other service providers (for example, real estate agents, bankers, and attorneys) to work with farmers are also eligible. These service providers then use what they've learned through participation in project activities in their work with farmers.

The Professional Development Grant program uses an outcome funding approach with a “performance target” to describe the changes in practices, behaviors or conditions among service providers expected to result from the proposed project. To learn more about outcome funding and the use of performance targets, visit our “Guide to Outcome Funding” at: www.northeastsare.org/outcomefunding.

About Preproposals

Preproposals are required for the Professional Development Grant program, as well as for Northeast SARE's Research and Education, and Research for Novel Approaches Grant programs.

The preproposal is a preliminary concept document. Reviewers select those that best meet the review criteria (outlined on pages 7-9) to be invited to submit full proposals. A preproposal is only invited if it has strong justification, a clear and measurable performance target, and effective approaches to achieving the target. In general, about one-half of preproposals are invited to submit full proposals and about one-third of full proposals are approved for funding by the Northeast SARE Administrative Council.

Eligible Applicants

Professional Development Grants are open to agricultural service providers, including personnel at colleges and universities, Cooperative Extension, agricultural and community nonprofit organizations, municipalities, tribal governments, state departments of agriculture, federal agencies like NRCS, for-profit entities (such as private consultants, veterinary practices and other businesses that serve the farming community), and others who work with service providers.

Northeast SARE encourages projects submitted from or in collaboration with women, the LGBTQ+ community, and Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). Additionally, we encourage projects submitted from or in collaboration with Minority Serving Institutions (including 1890s and other historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and tribal colleges and universities) and other organizations in the Northeast that work with historically underrepresented communities.

Your organization must have the legal structure and financial capacity in place to receive and execute a Northeast SARE contract, including expending funds needed for the project prior to receiving reimbursements from Northeast SARE; advance payments are not possible.

Projects must take place within the Northeast region, described on page 1.

An individual project leader (Principal Investigator) may not submit more than two preproposals per grant program per year. If you submit multiple preproposals and more than one is invited to submit a full proposal, you may submit *only one* full proposal. Current SARE grant recipients who are behind in their reporting will not be invited to apply for full proposals.

Northeast SARE will not fund proposals that appear to duplicate work that has been approved for funding by another grant program (within or external to SARE).

Northeast SARE is committed to accessibility for all eligible applicants. We encourage you to reach out to us regarding any challenges you experience as you plan and submit your preproposal.

Funding Available

Northeast SARE's Administrative Council has allocated \$1 million to fund projects for this cycle of Professional Development Grants. There is no funding cap for this program but proposals funded typically range from \$30,000 to \$150,000 depending upon the project's complexity and duration. We estimate that 8 to 12 awards will be made for the 2022 cycle.

Project Duration

Typical project length is 2 to 3 years. All projects must be completed by November 30, 2025.

Conflict of Interest

Members of the Northeast SARE Administrative Council, SARE staff, and SARE State Coordinators are not permitted to be funded or named in proposals submitted to this grant program. Members of proposal review teams are not permitted to discuss or vote on proposals that are submitted by organizations they work for, organizations for which they serve as a board member or paid consultant, former graduate student advisees or advisors, family members, or close personal friends. Reviewers may not participate in review of a proposal in which collaborators on research projects or co-authors on peer reviewed publications (including pending publications and submissions) serve as project leaders; the timeline for this prohibition is for any projects or publications within the past three years. Northeast SARE's full Conflict of Interest policy can be found at: <https://go.uvm.edu/nesarecoi>.

Public Domain

Preproposals and reviews are kept confidential, shared only among Northeast SARE staff, Administrative Council members, and grant program reviewers. However, Northeast SARE, as a USDA NIFA program, is committed to public access of results of funded projects; therefore, information on funded projects, their reports, and related information will be in the public domain.

Acknowledging SARE

All funded projects are required to acknowledge Northeast SARE as the funding source in all project publications and outreach materials.

Use of Funds

SARE funding must comply with USDA NIFA and University of Vermont (Northeast SARE's host institution) guidelines. Therefore, there are certain allowable and ineligible expenses for this grant program, listed below. All grant expenses must be incurred during the contract period, which will be defined before the project begins.

Eligible Expenses

Funds may be used for the following expenses, as long as they are specific to the project:

- **Labor**, including wages, stipends, salary, and benefits for individuals working on the project;
- **Supplies**, including research and demonstration supplies, outreach materials, copies, postage, printing, program participation incentives (when clearly necessary for the success of the program) and software;

- Farm equipment **rental or operating charges**;
- **Equipment** that are necessary for, and unique to, the project. Equipment with general uses (like a computer or tractor) are not eligible.
- **Travel and per diem necessary for the project**;
- **Journal publication fees** if they are incurred during the contract period; and
- **Indirect costs** up to 10 percent of total direct costs.

Ineligible Expenses

Funds may NOT be used for:

- **Capital costs** including the purchase of land, buildings, livestock, general use machinery, greenhouses, and major improvements, fixtures or expansion expenses;
- **Normal operating expenses** such as utilities, general maintenance, general supplies, or any other expenses that would be present in the absence of the project;
- **Promotional items**, including items of clothing (hats, tee shirts, aprons, etc.), swag, giveaways, subsidies, raffles, and branded promotional material;
- **Travel to scholarly meetings** unless essential to the project, such as presentation of project results;
- **International travel** unless integral to the project’s success and described in the full proposal’s budget justification (Note: There are certain restrictions on costs and carriers);
- **Cell phone charges**, even if you use your cell phone in the course of the project;
- **Food expenses** unless necessary for the continuity of a training event or project meeting; and
- **Expenses outside of the grant period**. SARE cannot pay for expenses incurred before the award start date or after the end date on the grant contract.

It is expected that costs for copiers, cameras, computers, video equipment, and other items that have a wide range of uses beyond the boundaries of the project be provided by the applicant and covered as indirect costs. To be considered as a direct cost, the item must be clearly essential and used 100% for the project.

Grant Timeline

Preproposal submission deadline.....	5 p.m. ET, August 3, 2021
Applicants notified whether or not they are invited to submit a full proposal	August 30, 2021
Feedback sent to applicants	September 2021
Full proposal submission deadline	5 p.m. ET, October 26, 2021
Award decisions announced to applicants.....	Late February 2022
Contract start date for awarded projects	March 1, 2022
Pre-award conference calls with Northeast SARE staff.....	March 2022

Preparing Your Preproposal

You will submit your preproposal online at: projects.sare.org. Please prepare your preproposal well in advance of the deadline.

There are word limits for most entries. We suggest you use a word processing program to develop your preproposal content offline, ensuring it is accurate and complies with the word limits before pasting into the online system. To that end, a Word document of the preproposal questions is available at: www.northeastzare.org/PDPPrepDoc.

Keep your writing clear and simple. To the extent possible, avoid scientific jargon and specialized vocabulary -- write for a mixed audience that includes farmers, researchers, extension staff and other agricultural service providers. You can assume that grant reviewers have solid agricultural knowledge, but not necessarily deep expertise in your subject area.

Do not include links to external sites, as they will not be considered by reviewers.

SARE's Grant Management System

Preproposals are submitted online at: projects.sare.org.

The Grant Management System will be open for preproposals from May 18, 2021 until the deadline, **5 p.m. ET on Tuesday, August 3, 2021**. Staff are available to answer questions until 5 p.m. ET on the due date. We strongly suggest you submit your preproposal well in advance of the deadline in the unlikely event you experience technical issues that take time to resolve.

Getting a User Account

Enter the SARE Grant Management System at: projects.sare.org. All new users should select “**Create an account**” and complete the registration information. The system will send you an email with instructions to create your password.

If you have previously received SARE grants, submitted project reports or recently reviewed SARE grants, you are registered as a user in the system and should use your account to submit your preproposal. Once logged in, be sure to update your account profile. If your account profile is incomplete, you will not be able to submit your preproposal. Here, the Grant Management System will show the message, “Missing contact information. <Individual's Name> must log in and update their profile before application can be submitted.”

Logging In

From the SARE Grant Management System landing page at projects.sare.org, select “**Log in.**” Once logged in, select “**Start a new grant proposal.**” Grant opportunities for all four SARE regions will be listed; scroll down until you see “**Northeast**” and click the “+” button. Under “**2022 Northeast SARE Professional Development Program Preproposal,**” select “**Begin a New Proposal.**”

Entering your Preproposal

Start your preproposal by clicking “**Edit Title**” and enter a clear and succinct title, in title case, of under 150 characters (including spaces) that captures the essence of the project's intent. Avoid acronyms, jargon and unnecessary words.

Next, provide a brief **“Project Description”** of 300 characters or less by clicking **“Edit Description.”** This is a short description of what the project intends to accomplish and, should your project be funded, will show up as the search result in the SARE database.

Be sure to click **“Save”** after each entry.

In the majority of cases you, the grant applicant, are the project leader/principal investigator (PI). Here, you should ignore the button that says **“Change”** under the **“Principal Investigator”** heading. If it is necessary for the applicant and the PI to be different, use the **“Change”** button to add PI information here. If the PI does not currently have an account, they need to create one and complete their full profile information before the preproposal can be submitted. Note: The PI is responsible for oversight of the project and must be housed at the same organization as the project’s authorized official (the person authorized to sign for the organization hosting the grant, if funded).

Next, complete the preproposal sections. Click on each section and submit responses to the questions. To enter information, click **“Edit Answer”** for each question and be sure to click **“Save”** after each entry. See the step-by-step instructions that follow for more guidance on these sections. At any time during the writing of your preproposal, you may preview a draft from the Proposal Overview Page by clicking **“View Draft.”** Once there, you can also share the draft of your preproposal with collaborators by either sending the **“Link to Share”** found at the top of the draft page or by creating and sending a PDF of the preproposal.

When all preproposal questions are answered to your satisfaction, go to the Proposal Overview page and click the **“Submit Proposal”** button at the bottom of the page. The **“Submit”** button will not appear until you have answered all required questions. Select **“I understand”** to confirm your submission. You will receive an email confirmation of your submission. *Your submission is not complete until this final step, and it is important that you see the email confirmation to be sure your submission went through.*

Prior to the deadline, you may unsubmit to revise the proposal, but if you do so, don’t forget to submit it again when you are done, otherwise it will not go forward to review. Each time you submit or unsubmit the preproposal, you will receive an email confirmation.

Step-by-Step Instructions

The preproposal is divided into two sections, each containing multiple questions. Instructions for all questions are presented below. Review criteria appear next to their associated questions throughout the preproposal.

To navigate the preproposal online, each section appears on the menu in the left sidebar of the **Proposal Overview** page; clicking on the section heading will open the fields for entering responses to questions. To enter a response, click the **“Edit Answer”** button after each question. Answers should be written per the instructions below and should adequately address the associated review criteria when applicable.

Please note:

- No attachments are allowed in the preproposal application.
- Do not include links to external sites; they will not be considered by reviewers.
- A formal budget is not required but you will be asked to estimate your anticipated funding request.
- No authorized signatures are required for preproposal submission.

General Information

Note: This section has no review criteria and is not scored by reviewers.

Organization: Name of organization or institution hosting the project. An answer to this question is not required; only enter if different from the applicant's institution, because the applicant's institution is automatically populated from their profile. Note that the PI needs to share the same host institution as the organizational official in a full proposal, if one is invited.

Geographic Scope: List the State or States where this project will take place.

Project Length: Enter the anticipated project length, in years.

Resubmission: Was a full proposal of this work submitted previously to Northeast SARE? Answer yes or no.

Additional Context (Optional, 150-word limit):

If relevant, describe any challenges or opportunities that you and others conducting this type of work face in accessing resources, to provide additional context for reviewers.

Preproposal Questions

1. Performance Target (100-word limit)

The performance target defines the specific and verifiable actions that service providers take as a result of participating in the project (you may wish to finalize this section of the preproposal last). The performance target represents your best, informed estimate of what will happen if all goes according to plan.

The performance target is a project's measurable goal, not a guarantee. The target should be ambitious yet realistic. It is the logical outcome that service providers are expected to achieve as a result of participating in the project.

Write your performance target in one to two sentences, using the following three required components. For example, "X number of service providers will take X action to help X farmers who represent X units production".

- The **number of service providers** who will take action to educate/advise farmers. Please use a number here, not a percentage.
- The **actions that service providers will take** to use their new knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes to teach, advise and/or assist farmers. *Examples include the number of new classroom programs delivered, educational curricula or materials developed, number of farmers mentored, new networks developed, etc.*
- The **number of farmers** who will be educated, advised and/or assisted by the service providers.
 - (Optional): Estimated total size/scale of farms these farmers manage when appropriate. *Examples include: total acres or animal units managed, gross sales, and production volume.*

Review criteria:

The performance target is specific, meaningful, measurable, and ambitious yet realistic.

It describes: 1) the number of service providers; 2) the actions they will take to teach, advise and/or assist farmers; and 3) the total number of farmers they will engage.

If a farmer performance target is included, the number of farmers adopting new practices or behaviors is measurable within the project timeframe.

(Optional) Farmer Performance Target. Enter a farmer performance target if it is practical to verify behavior change at the farmer level as a result of their direct participation in project activities or as a result of their contact with the project's service provider participants. If this component is included, it must be measured within the timeline of the project.

- The **change or adoption farmers will make** as a result of working with the service providers in this project.
- The **number of farmers** who will make a change or adopt a new practices or behaviors.
 - (Optional): Estimated total size/scale of farms these farmers manage when appropriate. *Examples include: total acres or animal units managed, gross sales, and production volume.*

2. Statement of Need (200-word limit)

Describe:

- 1) The problem or opportunity farmers in the Northeast face that the project will address;
- 2) Why it is important to the sustainability of agriculture;
- 3) The number, type, size and location of farms affected in the Northeast; and
- 4) How the proposed project will benefit service providers in a way that improves their ability to serve farmers.

Note: Citations are not required in the preproposal.

3. Service Provider Interest (200-word limit)

Describe the service providers who will benefit from this project, and specific evidence that they have interest in helping farmers address the problem or opportunity through participation in the project. If you have data about service provider interest in the project, summarize this information. If not, describe how you will collect this data if you are invited to submit a full proposal.

Review criteria:

The problem or opportunity is clearly described, and it is clear that addressing it will enhance the sustainability of agriculture in the Northeast. The number, type, size and location of farms potentially affected are adequately described. The proposed project clearly benefits the ability of service providers to serve farmers.

Review criteria:

Service providers, as the project's beneficiaries, are described. Their educational needs and interests are clearly explained and supported with data if available. If not, the preproposal describes a plan to assess service provider interest with data to be presented in the full proposal. There is evidence that service providers need or want the service proposed by this project.

4. Education Plan (300-word limit)

Describe the activities that will provide service provider education.

The plan must be realistic, describe content and methods appropriate to engage service providers and will likely lead to achievement of the performance target. The description should include:

- 1) A realistic number of service providers who will participate;
- 2) How they will be recruited;
- 3) The types of project interactions and educational experiences in which service providers will participate;
- 4) The specific knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes that service providers will acquire from project activities that will lead to actions described in the performance target;
- 5) The support you will provide to them in their efforts to help farmers address the problem or opportunity (e.g., coaching, software, record keeping tools, fact sheets, videos or other instructive materials and support); and
- 6) The process that will be used to verify the extent to which the performance target is achieved.

Review criteria:

The education plan offers a realistic approach to meet service provider needs; appropriate and effective educational approaches are clearly described; the knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes to be gained by service providers are likely to lead to the performance target. It is clear how project verification will be conducted.

5. Key Individuals (150-word limit)

Use the following format to describe people with essential roles in this project:

Name, title, business or organization. Describe this person's skills, relevant experience and primary responsibilities on the project.

Start with yourself, then list other key individuals.

If some team members have not yet been identified, provide descriptions of their roles, as placeholders. For example, an acceptable entry might say, “a veterinarian with poultry expertise who works in the target states,” or “two health department personnel with experience in water quality programs.”

Review criteria:

The key individuals have the skills and experience to conduct the project. Their roles are well defined.

6. Funding request estimate (select category)

Select a range that estimates the total budget request you anticipate for this project (include the allowed indirect to your institution, limited to 10% of the total, in your estimate): “Under \$50,000;” “\$50,000 to \$99,999;” “\$100,000 to \$149,999;” or “Over \$150,000.”

Funding requests should align with project duration, scope of the work, and intensity of the education program for service providers. Budgets at the higher end of the range will be considered for projects that include multi-disciplinary or multi-organizational efforts.

Matching funds are not required for SARE grants.

Note: Should your preproposal be selected to submit a full proposal, it is expected that the final funding request fall within the range you select here.

Review criteria:

The estimate of funds needed appears realistic and reasonable for the performance target proposed and the work described.

Next Steps: Planning for Full Proposal Submission

Applicants will be notified if they are invited to submit a full proposal by August 30, 2021. Feedback that may be used to strengthen a full proposal will be provided to applicants with invited preproposals in September 2021.

Full proposal instructions will be sent directly to invited applicants; full proposals are due by 5 p.m. ET on October 26, 2021.

Full proposals require more detailed information for all sections of the preproposal, including data to substantiate service provider interest. The full proposal also requires: a project advisory committee, literature review and citation list, letters of commitment from key individuals, a complete project budget with justification, and a grant commitment form with the signature of the organizational official.

Full proposals include required and optional attachments in Microsoft Excel and Adobe Acrobat formats. If you are invited to submit a full proposal and do not have access to those programs, please contact Northeast SARE staff so we can assist you.