



# Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture Grant Program 2022 Call for Preproposals

## Important Dates

The online system will open to accept proposals 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](https://projects.sare.org).**

## Questions?

Visit the Northeast SARE website at: [www.northeastsare.org/NovelApproaches](http://www.northeastsare.org/NovelApproaches).

For questions about this call, contact Kali McPeters at: [kali.mcpeters@uvm.edu](mailto:kali.mcpeters@uvm.edu) or 802-651-8335 x555.

## About Northeast SARE

The Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program offers competitive grants to farmers, educators, 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 that includes: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Vermont, and Washington, D.C.

**Inside**

- [About the Grant Program](#) ..... 2
- [Use of Funds](#) ..... 3
- [Grant Timeline](#)..... 4
- [Preparing Your Preproposal](#) .. 5
- [SARE’s Grant Management System](#)..... 5
- [Step-by-Step Instructions](#)..... 6
- [Next Steps](#) ..... 9

**Northeast SARE**  
University of Vermont  
140 Kennedy Drive, Suite 202  
South Burlington, VT 05403  
802/651-8335  
[northeastsare@uvm.edu](mailto:northeastsare@uvm.edu)  
[www.northeastsare.org](http://www.northeastsare.org)



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 Research for Novel Approaches Grants

## Overview

The Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture Grant program funds “proof of concept” applied research projects intended to confirm the benefits and/or feasibility of new practices and approaches that have high potential for adoption by farmers in the near future. By “proof of concept,” we mean that evidence from prior experiments or pilot projects strongly suggests a practice or approach is beneficial and feasible, but additional testing, data or refinement is needed before recommending farmer adoption.

Projects may address production, marketing, business management, human resource management, farm family and other social issues, or other topics related to sustainable agriculture.

Research may be conducted through field and laboratory experiments, social science investigations or both.

Exploratory research with little likelihood of determining feasibility for farmer adoption in the near-term will not be funded. There must be documented interest among farmers and service providers in utilizing or promoting the “novel approach” should it be proven beneficial and feasible.

## About Preproposals

Preproposals are required for Research for Novel Approaches Grants, as well as for Northeast SARE’s Research and Education and Professional Development 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 project objective that meets our “proof of concept” definition above, and a strong farmer engagement plan. In general, about one-third 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

Research for Novel Approaches Grants are open to anyone who works with farmers, including personnel at nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities, Cooperative Extension, municipalities, tribal governments, state departments of agriculture, federal agencies, research farms and experiment stations, for-profit business entities (such as private consultants, farmers, and veterinary practices), etc.

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 \$1.5 million to fund projects for this cycle of Research for Novel Approaches Grants. There is no funding cap for this program but proposals funded typically range from \$30,000 to \$200,000 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 meetings .....	March 2022

## Preparing Your Preproposal

You will submit your preproposal online at: [projects.sare.org](https://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:

<https://www.northeast sare.org/NovelApproachesPrepDoc>.

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](https://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](https://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](https://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 Research for Novel Approaches 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 additional guidance. 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 preproposal, 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 preproposals.

## 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 authorized 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. Project Objective (100-word limit)**

Summarize the purpose of this project by describing:

1. The research to be conducted,
2. The knowledge expected to be generated by that research, and
3. The novel approach that is expected to be adopted by farms in the Northeast, based on the research results.

#### **Review criteria:**

A clear summary is provided of the proposed research, the new knowledge expected to be generated, and the novel approach that is expected to be adopted by farms in the Northeast.

### **2. Statement of Need (200-word limit)**

Describe:

1. How the project will address a problem or opportunity faced by farmers that affects the sustainability of agriculture in the Northeast;
2. The number, type, size and location of farms in the Northeast that could benefit from the research; and
3. Why these farmers are interested in the approach.

#### **Review criteria:**

The need for the project is justified by a significant problem or opportunity. The number, type, size and location of farms potentially affected are well described. The explanation of farmer interest in the research is compelling.

*Note: Citations are not required in the preproposal.*

### 3. Knowledge Gap to be Addressed (200-word limit)

Describe why this research is needed before the approach can be widely adopted by farmers. Your response should address the following.

1. What is the specific lack of data (knowledge gap) that the proposed research will address?
2. How could that data lead to adoption of the approach by farmers?
3. Summarize previous research findings that provide evidence that the novel approach has potential to be feasible on farms in the Northeast.

#### Review criteria:

A clear case is made that more research is needed before the approach can be widely adopted. A specific gap in the data to be addressed by the research is described. It is clear why that data could lead to adoption of the approach. Prior research findings strongly suggest the novel approach has potential to be feasible on farms in the Northeast.

### 4. Farmer Engagement Plan (200-word limit)

Describe the ways in which you will engage farmers in the project. Your response should explain:

1. How you have or will get farmer input on research questions and treatments,
2. How you will identify key obstacles to farmer adoption of the approach, and
3. How you will conduct outreach to share research findings with farmers most likely to benefit from new information generated.

#### Review criteria:

A clear plan for engaging farmers in the research project is presented, including getting input on the research itself, identifying obstacles to adoption of the approach, and sharing research findings with farmers most likely to benefit.

### 5. Research Description (200-word limit)

Your preproposal may include field research, laboratory experiments and/or social science research. Briefly describe:

1. The research objective and why it is relevant to farmer adoption.
2. The main treatments (field research) or study population (social science research).
3. Key data to be collected.

#### Review criteria:

The proposed research clearly addresses the knowledge gap related to the novel approach. The treatments or study population and key data to be collected are designed to gain the new information needed for potential adoption by farmers and are appropriate to achieve the research objective.

## 6. 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 state 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.

## 7. Funding Request Estimate (select category)

Select a range that estimates the total budget request you anticipate for this project (including the allowed indirect to your institution, limited to 10% of total direct costs): “Under \$50,000;” “\$50,000 to \$99,000;” “\$100,000 to \$149,000;” “\$150,000 to \$199,000;” or “Over \$200,000.”

### Review criteria:

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

Funding requests should align with project duration, scope of the work, and intensity of the research and farmer engagement. Budgets at the higher end of the range will be considered for projects that include substantial farmer involvement, and/or those with multi-disciplinary and/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.

## Next Steps

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 farmer 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 authorized official signature.

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.