



2026 Call for Proposals Farmer Rancher Grant Program

Grant Highlights	
Deadline	Thursday, December 4, 2025, at 4:00 P.M. Central Time
Who's eligible	Farmers and Ranchers in the North Central region
Funding amounts	Up to \$15,000 or \$30,000
Grant goals	This grant helps farmers and ranchers explore innovative ideas and share what they learn with others. Farmers and ranchers can explore regenerative solutions to problems through on-farm research or demonstration / education projects.
Allowable expenses	Expenses directly related to the research or demonstration / education project (examples: labor, supplies, travel, data collection, field days, or other costs needed to carry out the project). Details in the Budget section.
Unallowable expenses	This grant CANNOT fund day-to-day farming expenses, purchasing land, or business startup costs. Details in the Budget section.
Submit	Online at projects.sare.org

Questions?

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 1390 Eckles Ave, Suite 120
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Be in touch. You can also scan the QR code for more information, including:

- Frequently asked questions
- See recently funded projects
- Watch a webinar about how to apply
- And more



NCR-SARE's Farmer Rancher
Grants

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Background

About SARE and NCR-SARE

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program's Mission is to advance – to the whole of American agriculture – innovations that improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education.

The SARE program works primarily through competitive grant programs administered by four regions: North Central, Northeast, South, and West.

The 12 states of North Central Region (NCR)-SARE include: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

NCR-SARE's mission is to strengthen communities, increase farmer/rancher economic viability, and improve the environment by supporting research and education.

NCR-SARE is hosted by the University of Minnesota and funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Timeline

- October 2025- Call for Proposals Released (Grant application opens)
- December 4, 2025- Proposals Due
- Mid-February 2026- Funding Decisions
- April 1, 2026 – Earliest Project Start Dates
- April-May 2026- Grants are Awarded and Grant Recipients Receive First 50% of Funding

Program Goals

Farmer Rancher Grants help farmers and ranchers gain the knowledge they need to fundamentally improve their farm's economic, ecologic, and community viability, and then share that knowledge. More about the outreach requirements below.

Sustainable Agriculture is farming and ranching that is ecologically sound, economically viable, focused on community wellbeing. Since the start of the program in 1992, more than 1,400 grants have been awarded to explore topics including (but not limited to):

- | | |
|--|---|
| ● Agroecology | ● Holistic Farming & Ranching |
| ● Agroforestry | ● Integrated Pest Management (IPM) |
| ● Alternative Grains as Animal Feed | ● Labor Needs and Issues |
| ● Beneficial Insects, Pollinator Habitat | ● Organic Agriculture |
| ● Cover Crops | ● Permaculture |
| ● Crop/Landscape Diversity | ● Poultry, Small-Scale Livestock |
| ● Educating/Mentoring New Farmers/Ranchers | ● Proactive Weed Management |
| ● Farmland Access | ● Quality of Life Issues for Family/Community |
| ● Food Security | ● Regenerative Agriculture |

- Renewable Energy
- Managed Grazing
- Soil Health
- Value-Added & Direct Marketing
- Water Quality Improvement/Wetlands

Sharing What's Learned

These grants are meant to fuel innovation for the whole farming and ranching community, and so grantees report on what worked, what didn't, and what you would recommend for other farmers and ranchers pursuing similar solutions.

SARE Farmer-Rancher Grants require sharing what you learned. Note: the progress you make or things you learn or develop will be considered “open source.” This knowledge or data is not proprietary, and SARE grant recipients are required to share the progress they make via their outreach efforts. This might mean sharing the design plans for a piece of equipment, a floorplan for a wash/pack station, data from a side-by-side trial, etc. Alternatively, it might mean a field day or a video tour that shows how the project unfolded over time.

Eligibility

Any farmer or rancher or team of farmers or ranchers who farm or operate a ranch in the North Central region may apply.

A farmer/rancher is someone who raises crops or livestock, especially as a business. Applicants may be just beginning the transition to a more regenerative operation or may already be using regenerative practices and want to try more. Grants to applicants under 21 need to be signed by a parent or guardian.

Applicants can submit one grant application per year and can participate in one grant per year. Previous grant recipients are eligible to apply if reports from previous grants are up to date. Team projects must have at least two farmer/rancher participants from separate and distinct operations. If your situation is unique, contact NCR-SARE to discuss your options. Teams must designate a farmer/rancher project coordinator who will submit and sign the proposal, be responsible for reporting, and assume any tax liability associated with the grant.

Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that are actively farming can apply for Farmer Rancher Grants. NGOs working with farmers and ranchers should consider applying for Partnership Grants. See: <https://northcentral.sare.org/grants/apply-for-a-grant/partnership-grant/>.

Amount of Funding

“Individual” vs. “Team” projects (and maximum budget amounts)

The amount of funding a project can apply for depends on the number of unique farms involved. Please contact Liz Brownlee at 612-626-3658 or brow7263@umn.edu if you aren't certain which level of funding you are eligible for:

- Individual projects (\$15,000 maximum)

- For one farm/ranch operation, including multiple family members or individuals from that operation.
- Team projects (\$30,000 maximum).
 - For two or more separate and distinct farm/ranch operations who are working collaborating. (Note: Separate operations sell or distribute their products under separate names, keep separate financial records, and make land management decisions separately. These operations could run by multiple family members.)

A total of approximately \$720,000 is available for this program. Each year, we typically receive around 120-140 applications. We can typically fund approximately 40 proposals.

Proposal Sections (and where to find examples)

The proposal includes three sections. Examples are available in the Appendix, as part of the 2026 Full Proposal Form.

- Project Proposal – Describe your project.
 - Project Title** Use 25 words or less—about 150 characters including spaces.
 - Project Description** Provide a summary of your project (45 words)
 - 1) **People**
Who are the people carrying out the project, and what are their roles? (400 words)
 - 2) **Problem**
What problem are you trying to solve? Are others facing a similar challenge? (200 words)
 - 3) **Solution and Objectives**
How do you plan to solve the problem using regenerative agriculture practices? What are your objectives? Could this solution work for others in our region? (600 words)
 - 4) **Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture**
How will your project add to sustainable agriculture knowledge? (400 words)
 - 5) **Sustainable Agriculture Benefits**
How will your solution benefit other farmers or ranchers in your community and the North Central region in terms of economic, ecologic, and community wellbeing?
 - 6) **Measuring Results**
How will you measure the results of your project? (300 words)
 - 7) **Outreach**
How will you share the information you learned from your project with farmers and ranchers, educators, and others? (400 words)
 - 8) **Project Funding**
Will your project cost more than \$15,000 (Individual) or \$30,000 (Team)? *If so, describe how you will cover the remaining costs (business budget, government contract, etc.). (100 words)*
- Budget - What items do you need to carry out the project? Details in the Budget section.
- Attachments: Provide supporting documents. Details in the Attachments section.
 - Letter of Support

- Team Confirmation of Commitment
- Livestock Care Plan

Budget

Allowable Expenses

Grant funds are for research or demonstration/education project expenses, not day-to-day farming expenses or farm startup costs. For your budget, show the amount of grant funds you intend to spend on each item. Use accurate figures, rounded to the nearest dollar, and include a brief explanation of how each item listed in your budget relates to your project. For example:

Weighing produce for yield comparison: 6 hrs x \$25/hr = \$150.

Unallowable Expenses

Funds are NOT for everyday farming expenses, other than those directly related to the grant project. Grant funds cannot be used for planning, construction, repair, or remodeling of buildings, or to buy motorized vehicles. These items may be leased or rented with grant funds, if they are needed for the project. Grant funds cannot be used for permanent installations (e.g., wells or buried irrigation lines). Grant funds cannot be used for insurance, licenses, warranties.

Investigate “Cost-Share” Programs. Although this grant cannot fund everyday farming expenses, many of the practices used in regenerative agriculture may be eligible for cost-sharing from other federal or state government agencies or local soil and water conservation districts, non-profit groups, etc. The online resource for federal programs, [Grassroots Guide to Federal Farm and Food Programs](#), has information about a variety of these programs and grants.

Creating a Budget

Reviewers look for accurate budgets that match the Objectives, activities, and outreach in your proposal. [A video tutorial about creating a budget is available on SARE’s YouTube page.](#) For each line of your budget, you will need to provide the category, description, amount, and a budget justification:

1. Category:
Choose from the following categories: Personnel, Materials and Supplies, Travel, Other Direct Costs, or “Equipment.” Details about each category:

Category	Details
Personnel	Use for farmer/rancher labor and hired labor. List everyone who is participating in your project except consultants and service providers (who should be listed under Other Direct Costs). Include a realistic estimate of the amount of labor and the cost for each participant being paid with grant funds. NCR-SARE recognizes that farmers and ranchers are skilled workers who should be paid \$25 per hour or more for their labor in grant projects. If participants are not being paid with grant funds, include them but enter \$0 for the grant request.
Materials and Supplies	Use for items you plan to purchase to carry out the project. Explain how they will be used to support the project.

Travel	For travel costs, use a mileage rate of \$0.67, which covers ownership and operating costs.
Other Direct Costs	Use for consultants and service providers. Also use this category for communications, photocopying, conferences-meetings-workshops, speaker/trainer fees, fee for service/stipends, rental, land-use charges, fabrication of equipment, and food and drink expenses. Note: Refreshments at field days or group meals for events are allowable if they maintain the continuity of the meeting (meaning: there must be programming before and after the meal). Breakfast meals are generally not allowed because no continuity of the meeting exists.
“Equipment”	This grant is not designed to fund significant farm/ranch investments. If a major expenditure is required for the project – or if the project requires perennials or livestock – grant funds can only be used for up to 50% of the total cost of the “Equipment.” For this grant, “Equipment” includes any item that meets EITHER of the following criteria: - Costs \$5000 or more AND Has a useful life of more than one year OR - Perennial seeds or plants, or livestock. <i>How to follow the 50% Rule for “Equipment”:</i> In the budget, enter up to 50% of the total cost in the Amount column. Then, in the Details/Justification section, list both the total cost of the item and the Amount that you are requesting from SARE.

2. Description:

Provide a brief description of each item you want to purchase that explains why it is needed for the project. For Personnel, briefly list the role each person plays in the project.

3. Amount (\$):

Enter the dollar amount you are requesting for each item. Unallowable Expenses: Grant funds cannot be used for planning, construction, repair, or remodeling of buildings, or to buy motorized vehicles. These items may be leased or rented with grant funds, if they are needed for the project. Grant funds cannot be used for insurance or permanent installations (e.g., wells or buried irrigation lines).

4. Budget Justification:

The budget must include a “justification” for each section. This simply means that applicants must show their math: List the items you are purchasing, and what each item costs. For example: A grantee is comparing mushroom production options. They are purchasing two packages of wine cap mushroom spawn, and those cost \$30 each. The “Budget Justification” for the mushroom spawn would be:

Wine Cap Mushroom Spawn: 2 packages @ \$30 each = \$60 total

Round to the nearest dollar. For example: 23 hrs. @ \$25/hr. = \$575, or 87 miles @ \$.67/mile = \$58.29, rounded down to \$58.00.

Here is an example of a budget entry:

Category	Description	Amount	Details/Justification
Materials and supplies	Cover crop seed for test plots that will be used for grazing	\$1980	Custom mix at \$3.30/pound spread at 30 lbs/acre over 20 acres = \$1980

More Details for Drafting a Budget

Partial costs. If you are not asking for the full amount of an item, note in the justification that you are only asking for part of the cost.

Matching funds are not required. Do not show a match. If outside funds are necessary to carry out your project, note that you have outside resources in Question 9, so reviewers can evaluate your work plan, but do not list the amount in the Budget.

Calculating Costs. Labor, land, equipment, and supplies should be calculated on an annual cost-equivalent basis. (For example, operator labor per year at \$25 per hour; \$75/acre cash rent equivalent; \$10/acre rental of tillage equipment, etc.). Costs vary widely across the North Central region. Use costs that are accurate for your area. If costs are high in your area, provide an explanation.

Attachments

Letters of Support

One letter is required. A farmer or rancher participating in the project cannot write the Letter of Support. Instead, find someone who can help explain (1) why you're the right person to lead this project and/or (2) why this project is needed by the farming/ranching community. People who might write a support letter include an Extension educator, banker, co-op or grocery manager, implement dealer, or staff from: farm organizations, Farm Service Agency (FSA), local soil and water conservation district offices, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), or non-profit organizations.

Letters of support should include:

- Contact information of the supporter
- How the supporter knows you
- Description of your experience and ability to carry out the project
- Explanation of why the project is needed and how it will benefit the community
- Optional: Specifics about how the supporter will be involved in the project. For example, the supporter might collaborate to host a field day by handling registration and promotion, plus providing event supplies like signage, name tags, and surveys.

Note:

- Contact supporters early and make sure they are familiar with your project so they can write a detailed letter.
- You can submit an optional second letter. Do not submit more than two letters.

Team Confirmation of Commitment

For Team proposals, the team members will be sent an email asking them to confirm their participation and role. Team members must confirm their role within one week of when you

submit your application. If you must submit a hard copy application, include a brief statement from each Team member confirming their role in the project.

Livestock Care Plan

Complete this form if your project involves livestock (vertebrate animals such as cows, fish, pigs, sheep). Bees and other insects and shrimp are not considered livestock for the purpose of this form (since they are invertebrates).

Review and Selection Process

Reviewers

Proposals are reviewed by your peers. Each proposal is reviewed by a committee which includes farmer and rancher members on the NCR-SARE Administrative Council, as well as farmers and ranchers from throughout the North Central region. Peer reviewers use the following criteria and scoring system. The weight of each criterion is shown in parentheses. Funding recommendations are based on how well grant applicants explain the following information:

Selection Criteria

Funding recommendations are based on how well proposals meet the following criteria. For each criterion, we have listed the “weight” for scoring (how important that criteria is) as well as which question(s) reviewers will use to determine this score. [A video about selection is available.](#)

Criteria	Examples Questions Peer Reviewers Consider
Project Leader or Team (10%) Question #1	Do the people involved have the experience and skills to successfully carry out the project?
Project Design (30%) Questions #2 and #3	- Is the problem clearly explained so someone unfamiliar with the project can understand it? - Is there a detailed plan to solve a problem on the farm or ranch using regenerative agriculture practices? - For research projects, is there a control, variables, a plan for how the trial(s) will be laid out, etc.? - For demonstration / education projects, is there a detailed plan to provide potential solutions for other farmers or ranchers through field days, webinars, etc.?
Contribution to the growth of sustainable agriculture (15%) Questions #4 and #5	- Does the project have the potential to help farmers and ranchers in the North Central region produce positive environmental, economic, and community benefits? - Does the project build on and add to existing regenerative agriculture knowledge, perhaps including past SARE projects?
Results (15%) Question #6	- Is there an effective plan to measure the results of the project? - Will the metrics determine if there are environmental, economic, and/or community benefits from the project?

	• <i>Do the metrics align with the Objectives?</i> • <i>Do the metrics make sense for the type of project (research vs. demonstration / education)?</i>
Outreach (20%) Question #7	• <i>Are there specific plans to share project information and results with other farmers or ranchers?</i> • <i>Do the outreach plans match the target audience's preferred way(s) to learn?</i>
Appropriate budget (10%) Question #8 and Budget	• <i>Are grant funds used for project expenses only?</i> • <i>Do budget descriptions explain how items will be used in the project?</i> • <i>Does the Budget include costs for each Objective?</i> • <i>Does the Budget seem to match the workload?</i>

Reporting Expectations and Funds Distribution

As you plan your proposal, note these reporting requirements and when funds will be distributed. They may impact your plan. If your proposal is selected:

- March 2026: Grant project budgets are reviewed and approved. Contracts are prepared for grantees to sign and return to the NCR-SARE office.
- April 1, 2026: This is the earliest Project Start Date. Work on funded projects can begin. Any items purchased before this start date cannot be paid for with grant funds.
- April-May 2026: 1st payment checks (50% of the grant) are mailed after the signed contract and other paperwork is approved. Typically, this is between April 15 and May 15. A 1099 form is automatically filed with the IRS with each payment for tax purposes. You must keep receipts for project expenses for a period of three years.
- January 31, 2027: A Progress Report including accounting of funds spent are due. The 2nd payment (35% of the grant) is released after the Progress Report is approved.
- February 29, 2028: Contract end date and deadline for submitting a Final Report including final accounting of how grant funds were spent. The final payment (15% of the grant) is mailed after the Final Report and budget are approved. The final payment is a reimbursement. All funds should be spent, and the grant project completed by this date.
- Date to be decided: If funded, you may receive an on-site visit from NCR-SARE staff.

Grant Writing Help

Tips (with links to our video tutorials)

To increase your chance of success:

- Clearly define a problem and propose a solution that will work for other farmers and ranchers, and that fits the amount of funding and time frame available for the grant.
- Demonstrate [a good fit with SARE's mission](#) by explaining how your project will benefit you as well as other farmers and ranchers in terms of economic, ecologic, and community wellbeing.
- Search the SARE database for related topics, and [explain how your project builds on projects we have funded in the past](#).
- Look at [recently funded projects](#), to see how they structured their projects.
- Involve cooperators who assist with project planning and measuring and sharing project results. Cooperators may include other farmers or ranchers, Extension educators; staff of

- local, state, or regional non-profit groups, local conservation districts, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); or other “agriculture professionals” you trust.
- Have a plan to measure and document project results throughout the project. Align the types of data and metrics you will use with the type of project you are proposing. Be sure your data collection aligns with your Objectives.
- [Emphasize outreach such as field days, workshops, publications, social media, videos, websites.](#) Build these items into your budget and partner with others if these activities are outside your expertise or capacity.
- Look through the 2026 Full Proposal Form, at the end of this document, to see examples of Objectives, metrics, budget line items, and more.
- If you are resubmitting a proposal, address reviewer concerns and explain revisions.

Contacts Who Can Help

There are several options for seeking help as your ideas and prepare your proposal, including:

- **Farmer Rancher Grant Program Coordinator**
Liz Brownlee, Farmer Rancher Grant Coordinator at 612-626-3658 or brow7263@umn.edu.
- **State SARE Coordinators**
[Your NCR-SARE State Coordinator](#) may be able to offer grant writing support. Contact information available in the Appendix.
- **Others Who Might Be a Resource**
Consider talking with trusted “agricultural professionals” in your area, such as staff at your Natural Resources Conservation office, the local Soil and Water Conservation District, your Extension agent, or a food or farmer organization. They may be able to help you think through your idea or review a draft of your grant proposal.

Publications

If you are looking for resources to distribute or use as part of your outreach efforts, the following have many helpful print and online materials available and may have something you can use.

- **SARE** has many publications that are available, some at no cost. The full list can be found at <https://www.sare.org/resources/> or contact NCR-SARE for assistance.
- **Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA)** will provide information packets on various agricultural issues at no cost. Reach them by phone at 800-346-9140 (7 am to 7 pm, Central Time), or online at <http://www.attra.ncat.org>.

Submitting Your Proposal

Proposals are due by 4:00 p.m. Central Time on Thursday, December 4, 2025.

Applying Online

We use an online submission process. To get started, go to <https://projects.sare.org/> and make a free account. The online submission system opens in October 2025. If you need assistance, please ask. NCR-SARE staff are ready to walk you through how the system works and can share video tutorials about how to draft your online application. We also have [a video for using the online application system](#).

Applying By Mail

If you are unable to use the online system, email your proposal to ncrsare@umn.edu or mail proposals to: NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher Grant Program, 1390 Eckles Ave, Saint Paul MN 55108. Proposals that are typed should use a font no smaller than 12-point, similar to the text in this document. Handwritten proposals in dark ink are acceptable if they are legible. Mailed proposals should be printed single-sided. Faxed proposals will NOT be reviewed.

This call for proposals is available on the North Central SARE web site at <https://northcentral.sare.org/>. If you need a printed application, call 612-626-3113 or email ncrsare@umn.edu.

Checklist

STOP! Before you begin submitting your proposal, make sure you have:.

- Proposal text in a word processing document
- Budget including justification (showing how you calculated your total amounts)
- Letter(s) of support
- Team Confirmation of Commitment (if applicable)
- Livestock Care Plan (if applicable)

Deadline

**Thursday, December 4, 2025
4:00 p.m. Central Time**

Statement from USDA-NIFA

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to the extent permitted by law, will no longer make grants or otherwise fund programs or activities that improperly discriminate on the basis of race or sex, including discrimination in the name of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies. Instead, USDA will prioritize merit and efficiency. USDA recognizes programs and initiatives will have the greatest impact when these programs and initiatives put American farmers, ranchers, and foresters first by:

- solving the most pressing challenges they face;
- protecting America's food, fuel, and fiber supply to enhance national security;
- supporting production of healthy and safe food for consumers;
- expanding and developing domestic markets;
- training the next generation of agriculturalists; and
- fueling innovation to keep American farmers at the forefront of productivity.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is committed to advancing these principles and encourages applicants to actively engage farmers, ranchers, and foresters when applying for funding opportunities to ensure relevancy and adherence to them. NIFA also encourages agricultural leaders to engage in the peer review panel process to ensure American producers are better served through research, education, and extension activities.

Appendix

2026 NCR-SARE State Coordinator Contact Information

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SAMPLE FORM – PLEASE COMPLETE ONLINE

Visit projects.sare.org to apply

Full 2026 Proposal Form – with Example Answers

The following pages have the questions from the online application. Before applying, note:

- Read through this Call for Proposals first.
- To apply, go to the online system at: <https://projects.sare.org/>.
- If you are unable to use the online system, complete your proposal using a computer or typewriter, or print legibly in dark ink and mail to NCR-SARE. Do not exceed word limits. Extra words will be removed.
- For additional information about preparing a proposal, you can view a presentation at: <https://northcentral.sare.org/Grants/Apply-for-a-Grant/Farmer-Rancher-Grant/>.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographic information is not linked to your proposal and is compiled in a separate database. Individual demographic information will not be shared or made public. Providing this information is optional. Choose “Prefer not to answer” if you don’t want to answer any of the questions.

Ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino; Not Hispanic or Latino; Prefer not to answer

Sex: Male; Female; Other; Unidentified (prefer not to identify)

Race: American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Black or African American; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; White; Other; Unidentified (prefer not to identify)

Year of Birth (optional) _____

GENERAL INFORMATION

Farmer/Rancher Name: _____ This person serves as “Project Coordinator.” If funded, the grant contract will be in this person’s name.

Farm Business Name, Address, City, State Zip Code, County, Phone, and E-Mail: _____

Are you a Farmer or Rancher? Yes _____ No _____

You must be a farmer or rancher to apply. A farmer/rancher is someone who raises crops or livestock, especially as a business. Beginning farmers/ranchers are eligible to apply. Most Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) should apply for our [Partnership Grants](#) for projects working with farmers and ranchers. NGOs that are actively farming may apply for Farmer Rancher Grants. The NGO farmer must be the applicant, but payments can go to the NGO.

Which type of project is this?

_____ Individual Project. One farm operation, including multiple family members or individuals from that farm. Can apply for up to \$15,000 in grant funding.

_____ Team Project. Two or more separate and unique farm operations collaborating. Can apply for up to \$30,000 in grant funding.

Cooperators _____

For Team projects, list all members of your team and their contact information.

Start Date: _____ (April 1, 2026 or later)

End Date: _____ (no later than February 29, 2028)

If funded, you have up to 23 months to complete your project. The Start and End Dates help reviewers evaluate if you are allowing enough time to complete your project.

Have you submitted this, or a similar proposal, to NCR-SARE before? Yes _____ No _____

Have you previously received a SARE Farmer/Rancher Grant? Yes _____ No _____

If you received a SARE grant(s) in the past or have a current grant, list the project number(s) on a separate page along with a summary of your results or progress (for current projects).

Use 100 words or less for each grant summary.

If the project was not completed, explain why not in the summary.

Does this project involve livestock (vertebrate animals only)? Yes _____ No _____.

If yes, fill out the Livestock Care form at the end of the application.

Which best describes this project's focus? Choose ONE:

___ Research Project (example: side-by-side variety trial for winter lettuce production)

___ Demonstration / Education Project (example: host grazing cover crops demonstration and field day series or create monthly beekeeping planner, to improve production and forage)

CHOOSE YOUR TOPIC

Select ONE "Farming System" and ONE "Crops" that best represents your project. They should show the primary focus of your project, to help our staff sort proposals for review. It is for SARE use only and will not affect your scoring.

Farming System

- Animal Production (includes aquaculture, grazing)
- Crop Production (includes agroforestry, beekeeping, pollination)
- Education & Training
- Energy
- Farm Business Management (includes marketing)
- Natural Resources/Environment
- Pest Management
- Production Systems (includes agroecosystems, aquaponics, holistic management, hydroponics, integrated crop and livestock systems, organic agriculture, permaculture, etc.)
- Soil Management
- Sustainable Communities

Crops

- This project is not crop specific or doesn't apply to crops
- Agronomic
- Fruits
- Nuts

- Vegetables
- Additional Plants (herbs, native plants, ornamentals, trees)
- Animals (includes bees, fish)
- Animal Products (includes honey)
- Other (Fill in the blank. Use for mushrooms, syrup, etc.) _____

EXPLAIN YOUR PROJECT

Project Title: Use 25 words or less—about 150 characters including spaces. *This lets reviewers know what your project is about. Use words that are useful for finding your project in a website search.*

Project Description: For search results if funded: Provide a summary of your project in 45 words or less (about 300 characters including spaces). *This tells reviewers what your project is about and may be used for publicity if your project is funded.*

Questions:

1) People:

Describe the people carrying out the project and their roles. (400 words)

- **Individual Proposals:** “Individual” proposals are for one farm/ranch operation, including multiple family members or individuals from that operation. *Describe your background and experience so reviewers know what skills and knowledge you bring to the project. Explain your role. Describe your farm or ranch and include the size of your operation, crops grown, how you market your products, etc.*
- **Team Proposals:** “Team” proposals are for two or more separate and unique farm operations, that keep separate books or file taxes separately. *Describe your background and experience so reviewers know what skills and knowledge each team member brings to the project. Provide names and background of all Team members*, a description of their farms or ranches, and their roles in the project.*

**Note re: Team proposals: A Confirmation of Commitment is required for Team proposals. The team members will be sent an email asking them to confirm their participation. They must confirm within one week of when you submit your application.*

2) Problem:

Describe the problem you are trying to solve. Explain if other farmers/ranchers commonly face this problem, so reviewers can gauge if your project has the potential to help others in addition to you. (200 words)

3) Solution and Objectives

Describe in detail how you plan to solve the problem using regenerative agriculture practices and list your objectives:

Solution (500 words): What is your innovative solution to the problem you have identified? *If this is a research project, describe how the trial will be set up, the materials and methods you will use, and what regenerative agriculture practices you will try. If this is a demonstration / education project, explain the teaching methods and materials you will use and the regenerative practices involved.*

Objectives (100 words): Objectives are the major things you plan to accomplish during the project by carrying out research activities or demonstration / education activities. *Focus on what you can complete during the 23 months of the grant, even if major objectives will take longer than 23 months.*

The strongest proposals explain why the problem you are facing is one that other farmers and/or ranchers face, and if the solution they're exploring is one that others are likely to utilize. It's critical to share what you learn, so that SARE grants help advance innovative solutions to the farming and ranching community.

Example objectives:

- *Evaluate the usefulness of 5 cover crops through field testing*
- *Identify 3 cover crops for potential use in intensive vegetable production*
- *Plant 3 cover crop demonstration plots on 3 separate vegetable farms to use during summer field days.*
- *Share findings through 2 field days, and a conference presentation*

Optional drawing or image. You may include one drawing or image to help explain your project to reviewers. This could be a drawing or photo showing the plot layout for a crop trial, the design for a new piece of equipment you want to build, a sample page of a curriculum you are developing, or another aspect of your project. (Limited to one page, single sided.)

4) Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture

How will your project add to sustainable agriculture knowledge? What makes your project innovative and different from what has already been done? (400 words) *Explain how your project builds on past research or education efforts – including SARE and non-SARE research. Note which specific SARE grant projects you are building from or informed by. Include the project number (see example for how to reference specific projects).*

Example Contribution to Sustainable Agriculture:

Many farmers and researchers have documented the power of cover crops to build soil health, especially when grazed. One well known example is Gabe Brown and how his farm has rejuvenated soils quickly in part by grazing cover crops. However, most of the on-farm trials we are learning from graze with cattle, including FNC17-2318 and FNC2202578. We want to understand if grazing cover crops with poultry offers the same or even better soil health benefits. There are no SARE-funded projects on this topic in our region. Producers in Alabama have tried grazing cover crops with poultry but they were focused on meat yield (FS23-819). They had good luck, and we believe we can, too, based on our limited pilot with 100 meat chickens last year. However, the group in Alabama did not document soil health impacts. We are excited to try to replicate their excellent growth rates and start to document the soil health potential.

Resources for finding previous work done on your topic:

- Search SARE's [database of reports from previous projects](#). A [video tutorial provides a demonstration](#) of how to search for related projects.
- Contact ATTRA, the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service, to speak to an Ag Expert about work done on your topic. Call 1-800-346-9140 or <https://attra.ncat.org>
- Search the Internet for previous solutions to the problem you are trying to solve.

5) Sustainable Agriculture Benefits

How will your solution benefit other farmers or ranchers in your community and the North Central region in terms of economic, ecologic, and community wellbeing? These benefits should reflect BOTH the type of project you are proposing (Research vs. Demonstration / Education) AND what results you will measure. See Question 7 for more information about measuring results.

In the online application, you will choose from drop down list that opens when you click on "Edit Answer." Choose one or more of the benefits you expect your project will provide, and that you intend to measure. Be realistic and do not take on too much. These are small grants. You will be asked to report on these benefits in your project reports, so only choose things you can realistically measure in the 23-month project. To see suggestions of items that you can measure to show benefits, go to: <https://projects.sare.org/benefits-and-impacts>.

6) Measuring Results

How will you measure the results of your project? (300 words) For each Sustainable Agriculture Benefit (from Question 6), explain what and how you will measure results. Documenting the results of your project will vary based on what type of project you are proposing.

- If you have a Research project, you may want to measure things like yield changes, increased income, increased access for growers and eaters to traditional foods, increased crop or landscape diversity, improved farmer and farm worker labor conditions, improved farm management decision making, skill development, job creation, farmer networking, etc.
- If you have a Demonstration / Education project, your metrics will focus largely on what farmers and ranchers will gain from your grant activities. Did farmers or ranchers learn something? Will they do something different on their operations because of what they've learned? This may involve measuring learning through surveying participants at events, follow-up interviews, discussion groups, etc.

A table works well for answering this question. Create a table by clicking on "Edit Answer," then selecting the Table icon. Use your mouse to choose the number of rows and columns you want. Here are some examples:

Research projects typically include metrics about the innovative practice they are exploring.

Benefit	What will be measured	How you will measure results
Research project example: side-by-side variety trial for winter salad greens production and direct sales		
Economic Sustainability -- Improved Crop Production	Improved income or profitability	Positive cash flow during winter months
Production and Production Efficiency	Yield per unit of land	Lbs of lettuce harvested, by month

Demonstration / Education projects often include metrics related to the regenerative practice they are focused on as well as what their target audience learns or gains from the education effort.

Benefit	What will be measured	How you will measure results
Demonstration / Education project example 1: Demonstrate economic viability of grazing cover crops on rented row crop land, with field day series.		
Economic Sustainability – Opportunities for entry into farming/ranching	Skills development	Survey before and after field day workshop: do livestock producers know how to start or expand grazing utilizing cover crops on rented ground?
Production and Production Efficiency	Yield per unit of land	Mailed survey 6 and 12 months after field days, to gauge number of animals grazing cover crops, per acre.
Demonstration / Education project example 2: Develop monthly planner for beekeepers, where beekeeping tasks are tied to what native forages are in bloom.		
Improved Quality of Life	Networking with other farmers/ranchers	Discussion groups at field days
Improved Quality of Life	Increased understanding of what beekeeping tasks are needed, and when	Survey before and after field day workshops.

7) Outreach

How will you share the information you learned from your project with your fellow farmers or ranchers? (400 words)

All projects must include outreach, but we encourage you to match the format with your skills and your audience's preferred way(s) to learn. Outreach can include: articles, conferences, field days, social media, website, how-to guides, video tutorials, etc.

This section works well as a table. Be sure to cover:

- Each outreach activity, with details about when and where you will provide outreach
- Any educational materials you plan to produce
- The audience and numbers of people you hope to reach.
- Date, Outreach Activity, and Who Participates.

Example Outreach:

DATE	OUTREACH ACTIVITY	WHO PARTICIPATES
May – August 2026	Document progress of research trials by taking photos weekly. Develop and post 2 YouTube videos on growing cover crops for grazing, and ask Extension to highlight them. Farmers seek out learning via Youtube, and we will base success on the number of views.	Eliza Freeman and son, Terrance Freeman. Current number of Facebook followers is 389. Extension agent has agreed to highlight videos in monthly e-newsletter, so they reach a wider audience of ranchers.

Early August 2026	Present about fencing techniques for grazing cover crops. Conference reaches farmers statewide and is well attended, and so will let us reach a large group of farmers seeking new knowledge. Show of hands survey about who's attending and if they will implement what they learn.	Pauline Holtzburger, farmer presents at regional Grazing Conference for an audience of 50 to 100 participants.
Late August 2026	Hold field days at each of the 3 participating farms. Give participants pre- and post-test surveys about using cover crops to gauge knowledge gained.	Project coordinators: Jan Wiggins, Eliza Freeman, Edgar Holtzburger. Extension educator, Nadia Terrell. Expect 20 or more farmers at each field day, for a total of 60 or more.

8) Project Funding

Will your project cost more than the NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher Grant can cover? (100 words)
If not, put "Not applicable." If so, describe how you will cover the remaining costs (farm/ranch business savings, operating loan, government contract, etc.). Do not show these outside funds in your budget.

BUDGET

For each item needed for your project, choose the budget category, add an item description, and list the total amount you are requesting. Use the Details/Justification column to show how you came up with the total Amount for each item (include the cost per unit and the number of units you plan to purchase). Use rounded numbers.

For example: 87 miles @ \$.67/mile = \$58.29, rounded down to \$58.00. Reviewers look for accurate budgets that match the activities in your proposal.

If you are not asking for the full amount of an item, include a note in the justification explaining that you are only asking for part of the cost.

Example budget: Includes examples of line items from several different projects.

Category	Description	Amount (\$)	Details/Justification
Personnel	Estelle Koski, Farmer and project coordinator. Set up blueberry trials, keep records, organize field day workshops	\$1725	69 hrs @ \$25/hr = \$1725
Personnel	Ruby Farmer, college student. Conduct surveys to determine public interest in new direct marketing techniques. Compile results.	\$1168	73 hrs x \$16/hr = \$1168
Materials and Supplies	Flexible water pipe for portable solar-powered pasture watering system	\$196	200 feet of 1.25 inch flexible water pipe x .98 per foot = 196

Materials and Supplies	Cover crop soil builder seed mix (15 species) to prepare area for alternative grain crop planting	\$956	10 acres x 65 lbs/acre x 1.47/lb = \$955.50 rounded up to \$956
Travel	Abe Lee, cooperating farmer. Travel to 3 farms in different parts of the region to learn holistic planning techniques	\$492	734 miles x .67/mile = \$491.78 rounded up to \$492
Other Direct Costs	Lease 2 acres of land from neighbor to provide buffer for organic amaranth planting.	\$294	2 acres x \$147 per acre = \$294
Other Direct Costs	Lunch for day-long farmer training with financial expert speakers before and after lunch.	\$495	20 participants x \$15/ meal = \$495
Equipment, Permanent fencing, Perennial seeds and plants, or Livestock	Woven wire fence to contain orchard hogs; permanent boundary fence needed since orchard is by highway	\$746	(330-foot-rolls woven wire fences: 3 @ \$209.99 each = \$629.97) + (123 t-posts @ \$5.79 each = \$712.17) + (1 gate @ \$150) = \$1492.14 Total cost x 50% = \$746.07 rounded down to \$746
Equipment, Permanent fencing, Perennial seeds and plants, or Livestock	24 native shrubs and perennial wildflowers (8 each): American plum, Rose mallow, False wild indigo for border to attract beneficial insects	\$380	(24 shrubs x \$25 per gallon pot = \$600) + (\$159.48 shipping/handling) = \$759.48. Total Cost x 50% = \$379.74 rounded up to \$380
Equipment, Permanent fencing, Perennial seeds and plants, or Livestock	50 chicks, Buff Orphington breed, females	\$117	(50 chicks @ \$3.87 ea = \$193.50) + (\$40 shipping) = \$233.50 Total Cost x 50% = \$116.75 rounded up to \$117.
Total		\$6,662	

11) Attachments

- Letter of Support - Applicants must submit one letter of support. A participating farmer or rancher cannot write this letter. Do not submit more than two letters. The letter(s) must be PDF files to attach them to the application.
- Livestock Care Plan – Projects that include “livestock” must fill out this section. Details below.

LIVESTOCK CARE PLAN

All applicants must answer the first question. Complete the rest of the form only if your project involves livestock. For this program, only animals with a backbone or spinal column

(vertebrate animals) are considered livestock. These include cows, fish, goats, pigs, sheep, etc. Bees, other insects, and shrimp are not considered livestock for the purpose of this form (since they are invertebrates).

If you will use a less-common species (fish for example), answer the question relative to your species. For example, for #6, stocking density for fish would be the number of fish per tank, pond, etc. Some questions in this section might not apply to your project. If so, simply record “not applicable” or “NA” as your response. However, we expect to see specific responses to most, if not all, of the questions.

1. Does this project involve livestock (vertebrate animals only)? ____ Yes, ____ No
2. Please indicate what kind of animals will be involved in your project.
3. Please indicate how many of each animal will be involved in your project.
4. Please indicate the source (name and location) from which you plan to obtain animals for your project. If you already own the animals and they are already at the project site, where did you obtain them and how long have you had them?
5. Will you be using money from NCR-SARE to purchase animals?
6. What is stocking density (space per animal)? Please provide a response for all forms of housing (pens, feedlots, pastures, etc.) that will be used in this project.
7. Describe the housing or shelter available for the animals in normal and inclement weather.
8. How is the housing/shelter cleaned? How often?
9. Describe how feed and water is provided, how often it is provided, and how often the feed and water containers are checked and cleaned.
10. Describe how the nutritional needs of the animals in this project will be met.
11. Describe the vaccination program and the routine procedures used to minimize disease and manage parasites. Include what the animals are vaccinated against and provide common names of the products that are used. Include a description of routine worming or parasite management.
12. What procedures will the animals undergo during the course of this project? Will these procedures induce or potentially induce distress or pain in the animal and if so, how will you manage or minimize the potential for pain and distress?
13. Please indicate if other individuals will participate in handling and or caring for the animals in this project. If other individuals will be involved, please describe their expertise with animal care. If individuals need to be trained to perform the procedures described in this project, please indicate how they will be trained to do the procedures properly.
14. At the end of the project--what happens to animals? Please indicate if they will remain at the project site, be sold, or be slaughtered.
15. If animals are transported off-site, please describe how they will be transported.
16. If animals are slaughtered, please indicate if this will occur at a commercial licensed slaughter facility. If it is not done at a commercial licensed slaughter facility, describe where and how slaughter will be conducted.
17. Please indicate if the animals or products from these animals will be used as food for humans and if so, confirm that withdrawal times for medications will be followed before allowing the animals or products from the animals to enter the food chain.
18. Identify the veterinarian (name, address, and contact information) that will provide routine and emergency care of the animals used in this project.