Welcome to this webinar about 2026 NCR-SARE Partnership grant and how to apply for it.

I'm Betsy Wieland, Associate Director at NCR-SARE. I am taking over managing this program and the graduate student program.

Agenda items:
Overview of SARE and NCR-SARE
Details of Partnership grant
Tips on putting together an application
Walk through applying on our website – don't need to stay for that, if you don't want to

PARTNERSHIP GRANT

Fast Facts

Purpose
Foster cooperation between ag professionals, farmers and ranchers for on-farm research, demonstrations and education

Funding
Up to $50,000

Who's eligible
Agricultural professionals and 3 or more farmers/ranchers in the "North Central Region"

Let's make sure you're in the right place:

I'll give you some background and context to understand SARE's mission and goals, so you can make sure your project aligns with them. This can help increase your chances for receiving funds.

SARE is part of USDA and is funded through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture or NIFA program.

SARE's purpose is to provide grants and outreach to advance sustainable innovations to the whole of American agriculture.

The North Central Region of SARE consists of those sharing the geography of these 12 states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

A Different Kind of Grant Program

Started in 1988, SARE strives to be

- Decentralized
- Science-based
- Grassroots
- Problem solving
- Practical
- Inclusive

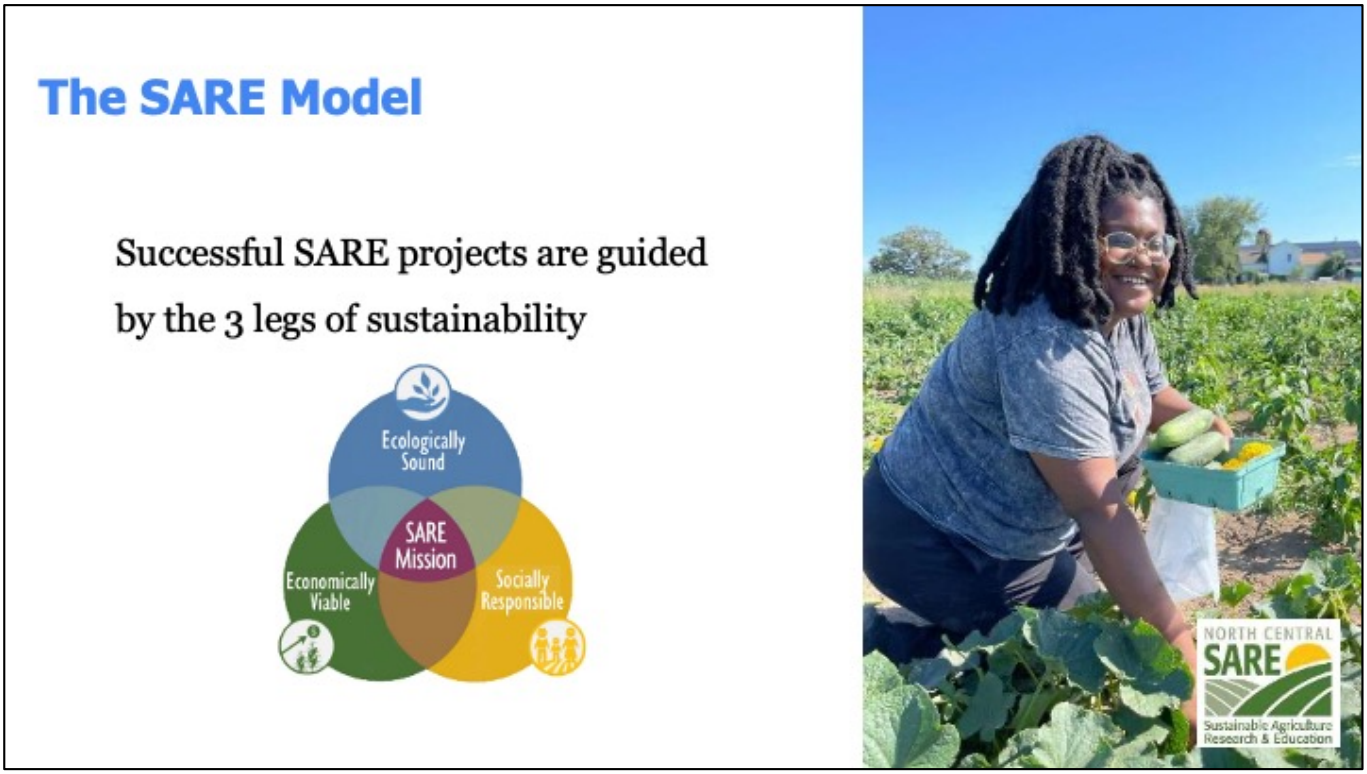


Photo credit Scarlet Salamone, SARE Project FNC22-1350

We look for projects that will help advance agriculture in these areas.

Stakeholder Involvement

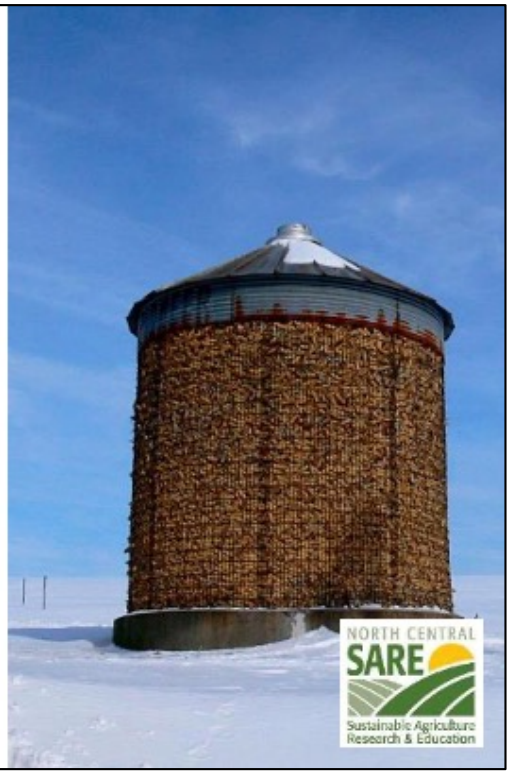
Exploring problems identified by farmers and ranchers

Farmers and ranchers are involved in research, education and outreach

SARE is Farmer/Rancher driven. As in all successful SARE projects, farmers and ranchers should be considered major stakeholders in the project's design and implementation.

The SARE portfolio

- Sustainable pest and weed management
- Marketing and local food systems
- Water quality and nutrient management
- Systems research
- High tunnels and season extension
- Crop diversification
- Cover crops and soil health
- Small ruminants/poultry/cattle
- Pastured livestock/grazing systems
- Pollinators and biodiversity
- Urban Agriculture
- Food security
- ... and much more



Here is a sampling of the aspects of agriculture that SARE works with.

I'm happy to talk to you if you are unsure if your project idea fits in the portfolio.

NCR- SARE Grant Programs

Programs	Funding Max
Youth Education	$6,000
Farmer Rancher	$15,000 or $30,000
Graduate Student	$20,000
Partnership	$50,000
Professional Development	$120,000
Research and Education	$250,000

Photo credit Scarlet Salamone, SARE Project FNC22-1350

About the NCR-SARE Partnership Grant Program

NORTH CENTRAL SARE
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

NCR-SARE Partnership Grant Program is intended to...

foster cooperation between ag professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers

to

catalyze on-farm research, demonstration and education activities

related to sustainable agriculture.

NORTH CENTRAL SARE
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

PARTNERSHIP GRANT

Details

- Due **Thursday, November 20th by 4:00 PM CT**
- Online application
- **Activity beginning April 1, 2026**
- Up to $50,000
- Up to 2 years
- Team of 3 or more farmers and ranchers
  - Majority of the work in the 12 states
- Led by an ag professional
- In 2025, 18 out of 60 proposals were funded

Ag professional examples

- Extension educator/agent/specialist
- Other university/college educators or researchers
- Non-profit organization staff
- Government agency staff
- Certified crop advisors
- Other ag and natural resource consultants
- Farmer/Rancher leaders

We define an ag professional fairly broadly—it could be an extension educator, or an educator from a university or college, or a nonprofit or federal agency or state agency, or a crop advisor directly working with farmers.

Impact on agriculture in North Central Region

What do you want to happen because of your project?

Will it help farmers and ranchers, their associated businesses, and their communities with...

- Improving economic viability?
- Sustaining and improving environmental quality?
- Enhancing quality of life?

Another common question is clarifying what we mean by outcomes and impacts.

As a public institution, we must be mindful of documenting the impact of our funds.

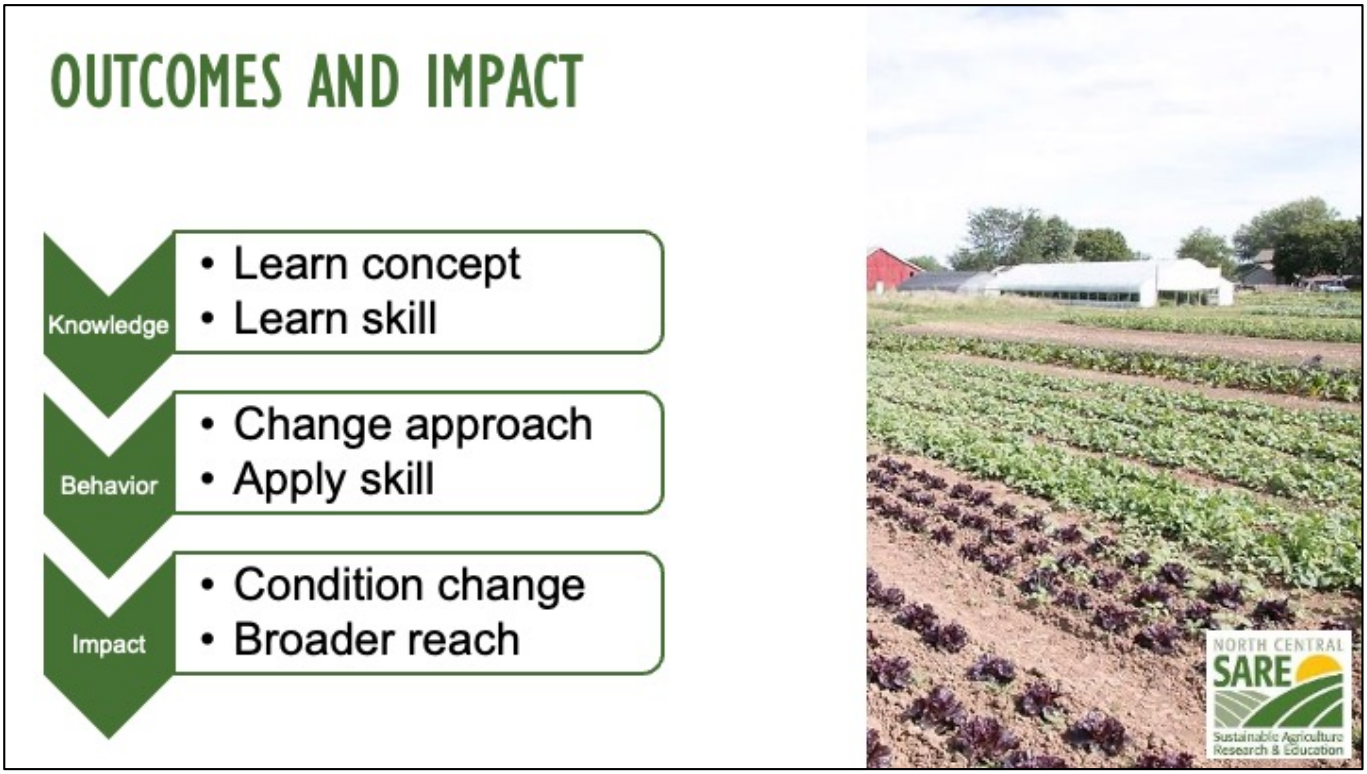
A critical aspect of the proposal is to indicate how your project outcomes align with NCR-SARE broad-based outcomes the 3 legs of sustainability.

- Improving the economic viability of farmers and associated agricultural businesses.
- Sustaining and improving the environmental quality and natural resource base on which agriculture depends.
- Enhancing the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, and communities.

What long term impact are you trying to achieve with your project?

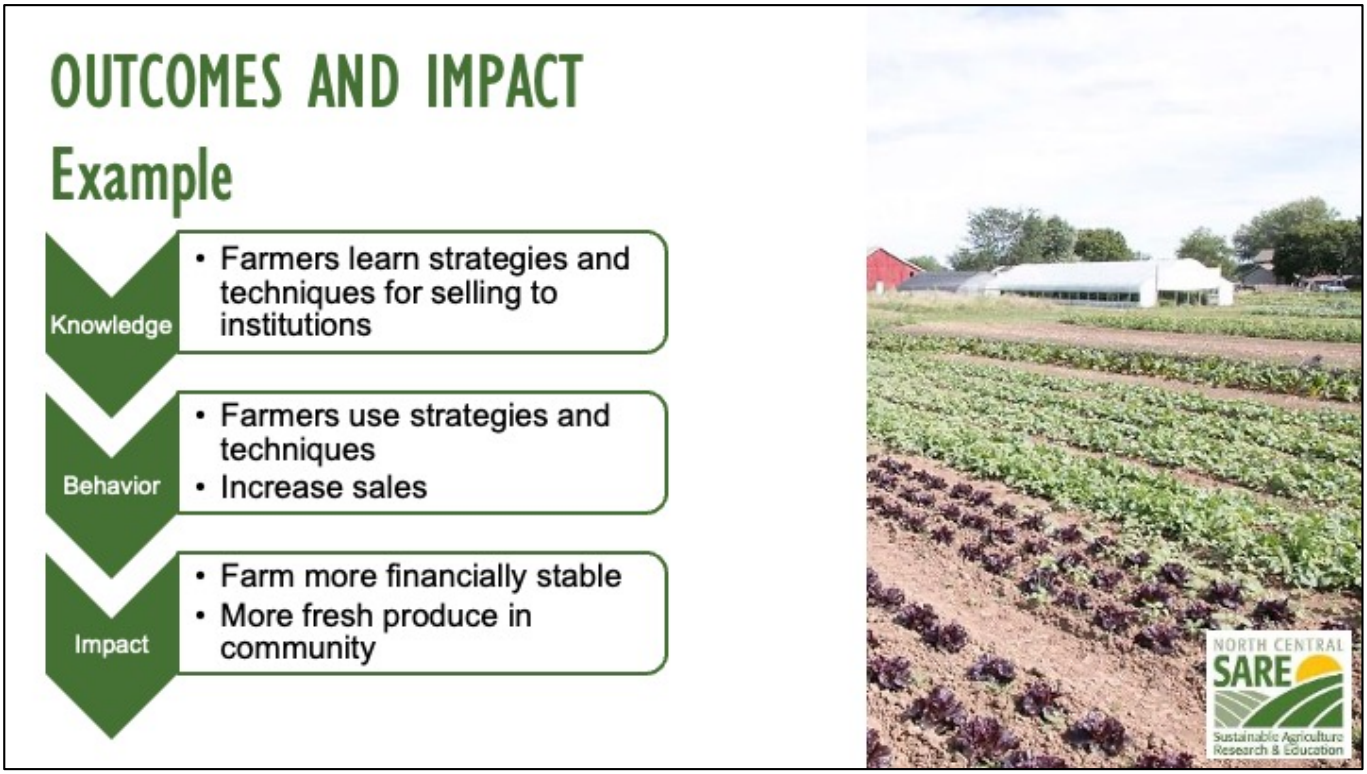
Even if your project focuses on one of these outcomes, you should indicate how the outcomes might impact all three.

These are long term condition change impacts. They take time.



To define your project outcomes—think about what you want to happen as a result of you completing this project. Learning outcomes can happen fairly quickly, and are things like changes in awareness, skills, knowledge or attitude; action outcomes are changes in behavior, practice or decision-making, and those are the outcomes that might achieve at the end of your project.

Think about how you might know you achieved
- Knowledge gains
- Behavior change
- Condition change/Impact



Here's one example. Perhaps you are an Extension Educator and there are a group of growers that are interested in learning strategies and techniques for selling to institutions, a they have seen other models out east. You might put together a project to bring out a speaker or curriculum, and get the group together on someone's operation to learn from the speaker, or do site visits for each operation.

- Notice that these are measurable things. As you develop your plan think of how you will measure your results. How will you know if you achieved your goals.

Impact/outcome examples?

Do you have examples?

Knowledge gains

Behavior change

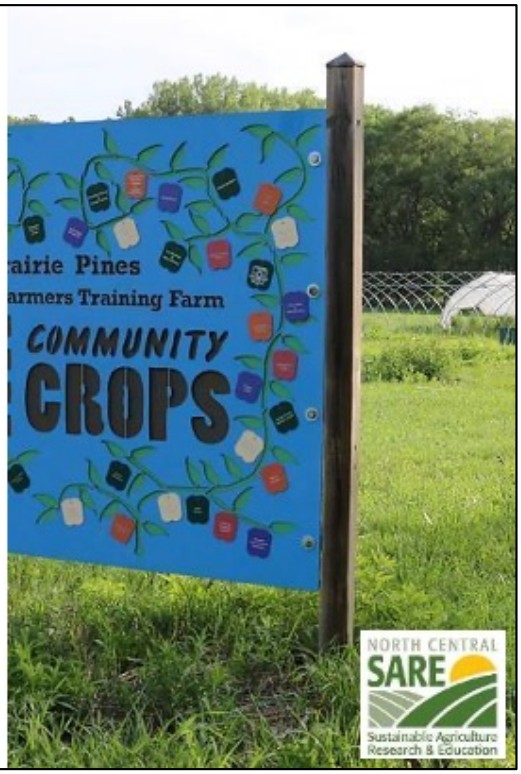
Impact long term

How would you measure them?

WHAT DO SARE PARTNERSHIP GRANTS FUND?

Helps ag professionals, farmers and ranchers explore innovative solutions to problems through on-farm...

- Research,
- Demonstration, or
- Education projects.



The grants help reduce the risk of trying out new ideas

You are invited to submit proposals

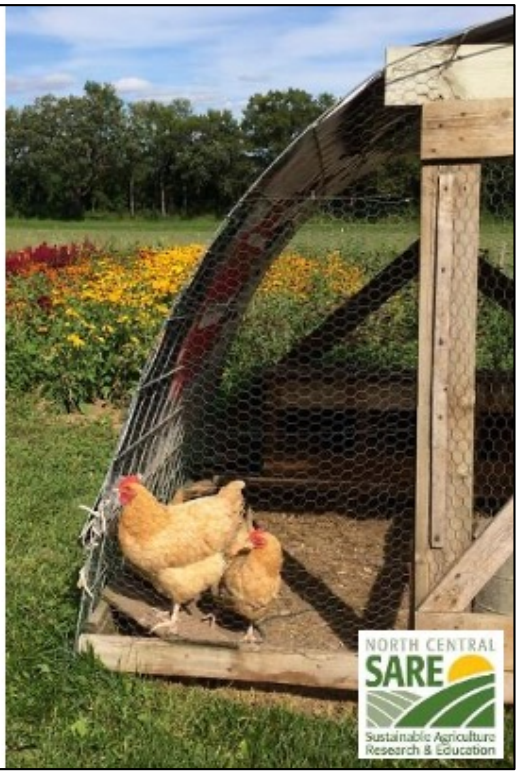
- that test, evaluate, and adapt sustainable agriculture practices for their operations;
- to conduct learning circles, educational events, field days or demonstrations to further disseminate information to other farmers and ranchers;
- Develop curriculum, factsheets, case studies, videos, etc
- develop new technologies; or create or modify equipment.

WHAT DOES "INNOVATIVE" MEAN?

A completely new idea...

OR

...an idea that's been proven in other places or settings but is innovative for your community



So you've got an idea you think would make a good proposal. Now what? Let's get you ready to apply.

Two main resources to help you

NCR-SARE Website
Northcentral.sare.org
- Call For Proposals
- Help from a person

National SARE Project Database
Projects.sare.org
- Research previously funded work
- Submit your application
- Manage your grant

I will talk about each of these resources as we go.

STEP #1: DECIDE: Is your idea a good fit?

- Read the Call For Proposals BEFORE you start your online application.
- Look at what's been funded recently that relate to your idea.
- Note how your ideas is similar or different. How do they complement each other?

First let's talk about your project idea.
NCR-SARE staff and state coordinators would love to talk with you about your ideas, to see what would work best, and how we may assist you.

PARTNERSHIP GRANT
Budget Item Examples

CAN pay for project expenses

- Partial salary
- Farmer time
- Supplies
- Equipment (Max $5000)
- Travel
- Meeting expenses
  - Food allowed if part of meeting continuity
- 10% indirect costs

CANNOT pay for

- Permanent structures
- Branded attire, promotional items
- Tuition

SEE CALL FOR PROPOSAL FOR MORE

These are examples, see the call for a full list.

PARTNERSHIP GRANT

Attachments

- Resume or CV of 1 ag professional
- Letters of participation for 3 or more distinct farming operations
- Animal welfare statement may be required if project is funded
- Institution application signoff sheet

To be eligible, your proposal will need the following items.

PARTNERSHIP GRANT Reporting

Plan to gather this data

- # of participating farmers/ranchers
- # activities, presentations, etc
- Research results
- # articles published, academic and popular
- # resulting citations
- # farmers/ranchers with behavior change
- New collaborations
- Additional grants leveraged by project
- Long term impacts on 3 legs of sustainability

See Grantee Reporting Expectations Matrix in Call for Proposals

Part of the obligation of receiving funds is to report your activities and outcomes of the project.

PARTNERSHIP GRANT

Sharing results

Reports

- Annually, unless shorter than an 18-month project
- Final (60 days after project completion)
- Submit in projects.sare.org

SARE visit and/or storytelling

WHO DECIDES WHICH PROPOSALS GET FUNDED?

A peer review panel...

...using scoring criteria found in the Call for Proposals.

Pro Tip: Try scoring your own application (or ask someone else to), and improve it based on that assessment.

See the Call for Proposals to see the scoring criteria that the Peer Review Panel uses to evaluate all proposals.

PARTNERSHIP GRANT

Timeline

Date	Item
Nov. 20, 2025	Proposals due online by 4:00
Feb. 2026	Applicants notified
April 1, 2026	Funds available to applicants
March 1, 2027	Progress report due
Project end date	Final report due 60 days later

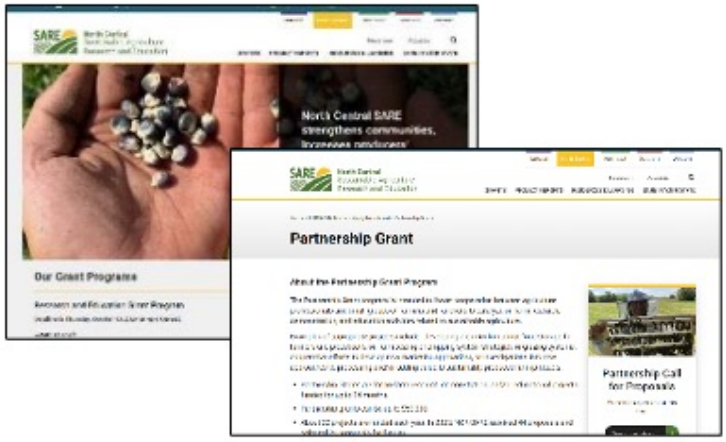
STEP #2: CALL A FRIEND

- Betsy Wieland
  - 612-626-6556
  - Eliza003@umn.edu
- NCR-SARE office
  - 612-626-3113
  - ncrsare@umn.edu
- NCR-SARE State Coordinators
  - northcentral.sare.org/state-programs/

NCR-SARE website

https://northcentral.sare.org/

- Learn about each of our programs
- Download calls for proposals
- Find state coordinators
- Find help



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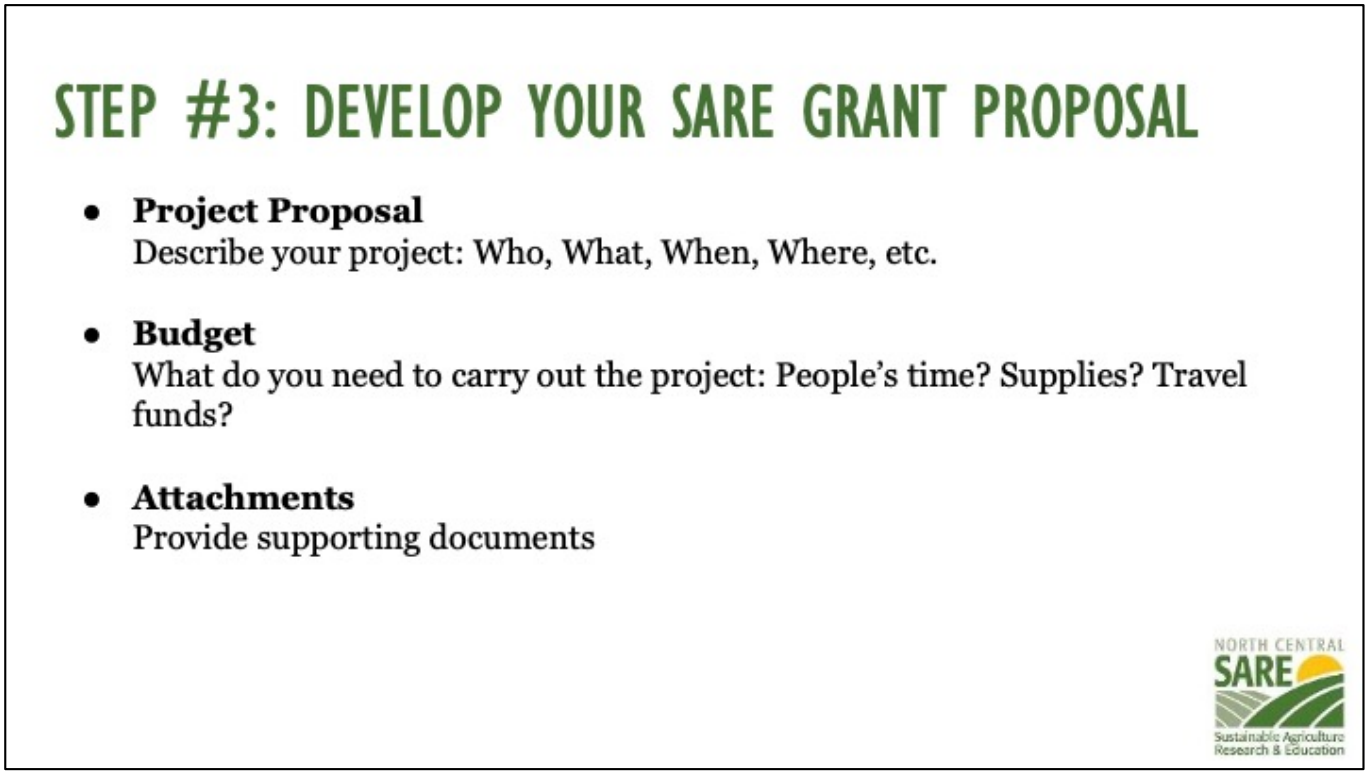
- Again, in applying for NCR-SARE grants, there are 2 websites you will work with: NCR-SARE's website, and National SARE's Project Website, projects.sare.org.
- NCR-SARE's main website has many resources including the calls for proposals, slide sets like this, and news articles about current and recent projects.
- If you have any problems downloading the call for proposals, please contact the NCR-SARE office and we can email you a copy or send a print copy.

An important resource for you is your state NCR SARE coordinator. If you click on the link indicated in this slide, you will pull up the contact information for your state coordinator. They can discuss your idea with you, offer suggestions, and may be able to link you to collaborators. They can be especially helpful in connecting you to farmers who might be interested in your work and willing to collaborate.



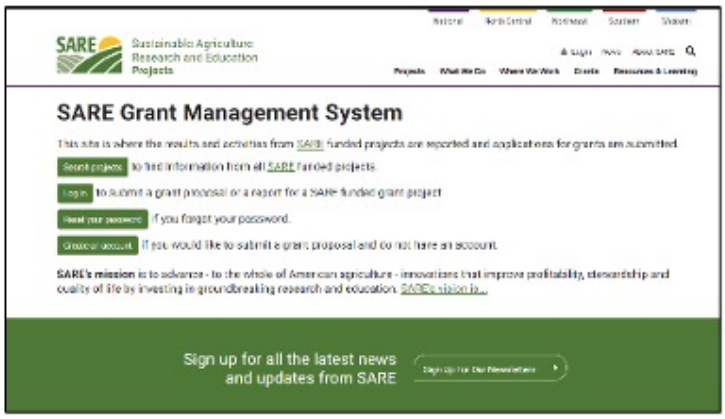
So you and your colleagues are thinking it's a good idea to apply. Let's get your information pulled together.

We recommend that you use a word processing app like Word or Google Docs to draft your sections so you can copy and paste them into the online system.

National SARE Projects Website

https://projects.sare.org/

- Search for SARE funded projects
- Apply for grants
- Manage grants



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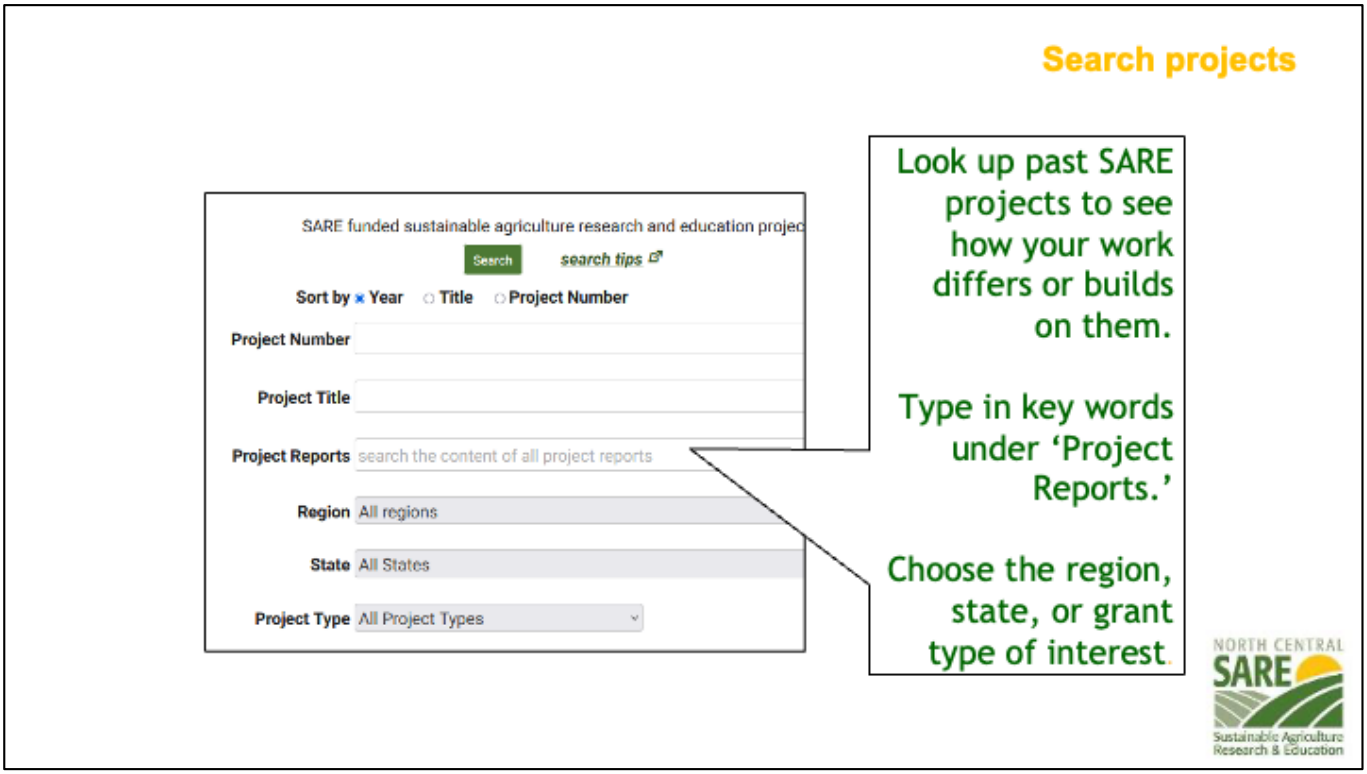
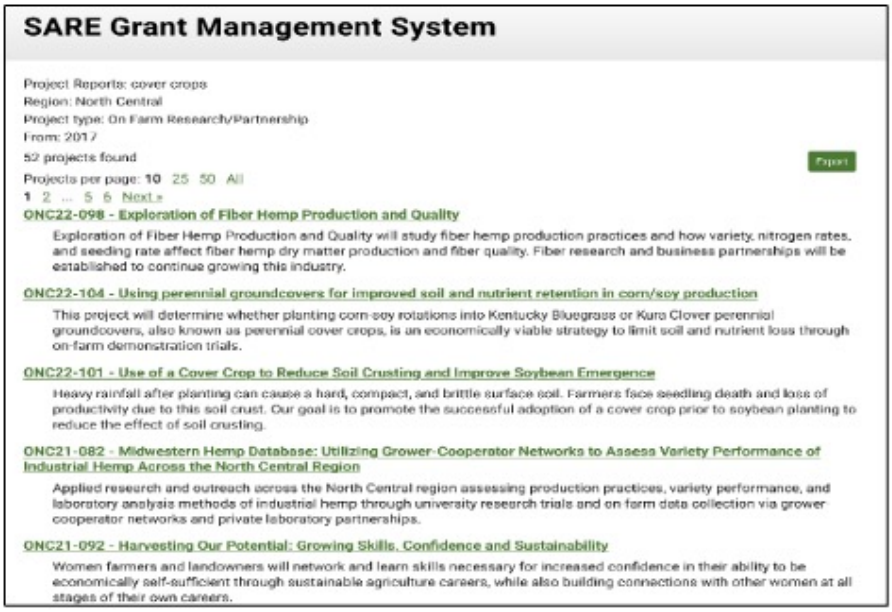
As I said, it's going to help you to research projects previously funded by SARE related to your project.

This is where all SARE funded projects are managed. Applications are submitted here. It also houses reports and materials created for those projects.



- You should look at past grant projects to see how your work builds on past projects and use that information in your preproposal.
- You do not need to create an account to search projects.

Search projects



SARE Grant Management System

Project Reports: cover crops
Region: North Central
Project type: On Farm Research/Partnership
From: 2017
52 projects found

Export

Projects per page: **10** 25 50 All
1 2 ... 5 6 Next »

ONC22-098 - Exploration of Fiber Hemp Production and Quality

Exploration of Fiber Hemp Production and Quality will study fiber hemp production practices and how variety, nitrogen rates, and seeding rate affect fiber hemp dry matter production and fiber quality. Fiber research and business partnerships will be established to continue growing this industry.

ONC22-104 - Using perennial groundcovers for improved soil and nutrient retention in corn/soy production

This project will determine whether planting corn-soy rotations into Kentucky Bluegrass or Kura Clover perennial groundcovers, also known as perennial cover crops, is an economically viable strategy to limit soil and nutrient loss through on-farm demonstration trials.

ONC22-101 - Use of a Cover Crop to Reduce Soil Crusting and Improve Soybean Emergence

Heavy rainfall after planting can cause a hard, compact, and brittle surface soil. Farmers face seedling death and loss of productivity due to this soil crust. Our goal is to promote the successful adoption of a cover crop prior to soybean planting to reduce the effect of soil crusting.

ONC21-082 - Midwestern Hemp Database: Utilizing Grower-Cooperator Networks to Assess Variety Performance of Industrial Hemp Across the North Central Region

Applied research and outreach across the North Central region assessing production practices, variety performance, and laboratory analysis methods of industrial hemp through university research trials and on farm data collection via grower cooperator networks and private laboratory partnerships.

ONC21-092 - Harvesting Our Potential: Growing Skills, Confidence and Sustainability

Women farmers and landowners will network and learn skills necessary for increased confidence in their ability to be economically self-sufficient through sustainable agriculture careers, while also building connections with other women at all stages of their own careers.

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This is what the search results look like.

SECTIONS OF YOUR SARE GRANT PROPOSAL

- **Project Proposal**
  Describe your project: Who, What, When, Where, etc.

- **Budget**
  What do you need to carry out the project: People's time? Supplies? Travel funds?

- **Attachments**
  Provide supporting documents

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PROJECT PROPOSAL

1) Summary

Provide a summary of your project (200 words)

2) Project objectives

What you plan to accomplish during the project as it relates to research, demonstration, or education activities. (100 words)

3) Relevance to Sustainability and Regional Agricultural Concerns

What problem are you trying to solve? (200 words)

4) Proposed Activities including Outreach Plan

Provide a detailed plan for the activities you will undertake in the project. (500 words)

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PROJECT PROPOSAL

5) Roles of Agricultural Professional(s), Farmer or Ranchers

Indicate the name, organization and role of each participant in the project. (350 words)

6) Previous Research on this Topic

Explain how you are building on past work or research and what makes your project innovative (250 words)

7) Outcomes and Impact

Identify the outcomes and impacts you expect the project to achieve. (200 words)

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SECTIONS OF YOUR SARE GRANT PROPOSAL

- **Project Proposal**
  Describe your project: Who, What, When, Where, etc.
- **Budget**
  What do you need to carry out the project: People's time? Supplies? Travel funds?
- **Attachments**
  Provide supporting documents

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You will lay out the budget to support your project.

BUDGET AND "JUSTIFICATION"

What items do you need to carry out the project? Examples:

Category	Description	Amount	Justification
Materials and Supplies	Wine Cap Mushrooms	$60	$30 each x 2 packages = $60
Materials and Supplies	Tomato starts	$80	$4 each x 20 plants = $80
Personnel	Ruby Farmer, intern. Cares for production and records harvest, soil data.	$1168	73 hrs x $16/hr = $1168
Travel	Dav Hay travel to present results at farming conference	$55	82 miles round trip x $0.67/mile = $55

Here are some example budget "line items."

All items need to be important to making the grant happen. We do go through to make sure the math adds up correctly, so make sure to show your math on how you calculated your request, and the need for it in the project.

SECTIONS OF YOUR SARE GRANT PROPOSAL

- **Project Proposal**
  Describe your project: Who, What, When, Where, etc.

- **Budget**
  What do you need to carry out the project: People's time? Supplies? Travel funds?

- **Attachments**
  Provide supporting documents:
  - Ag professional's resume or CV
  - Farmer/Rancher letters of participation
  - Application Signoff Sheet
  - Animal Welfare Statement (if funded)

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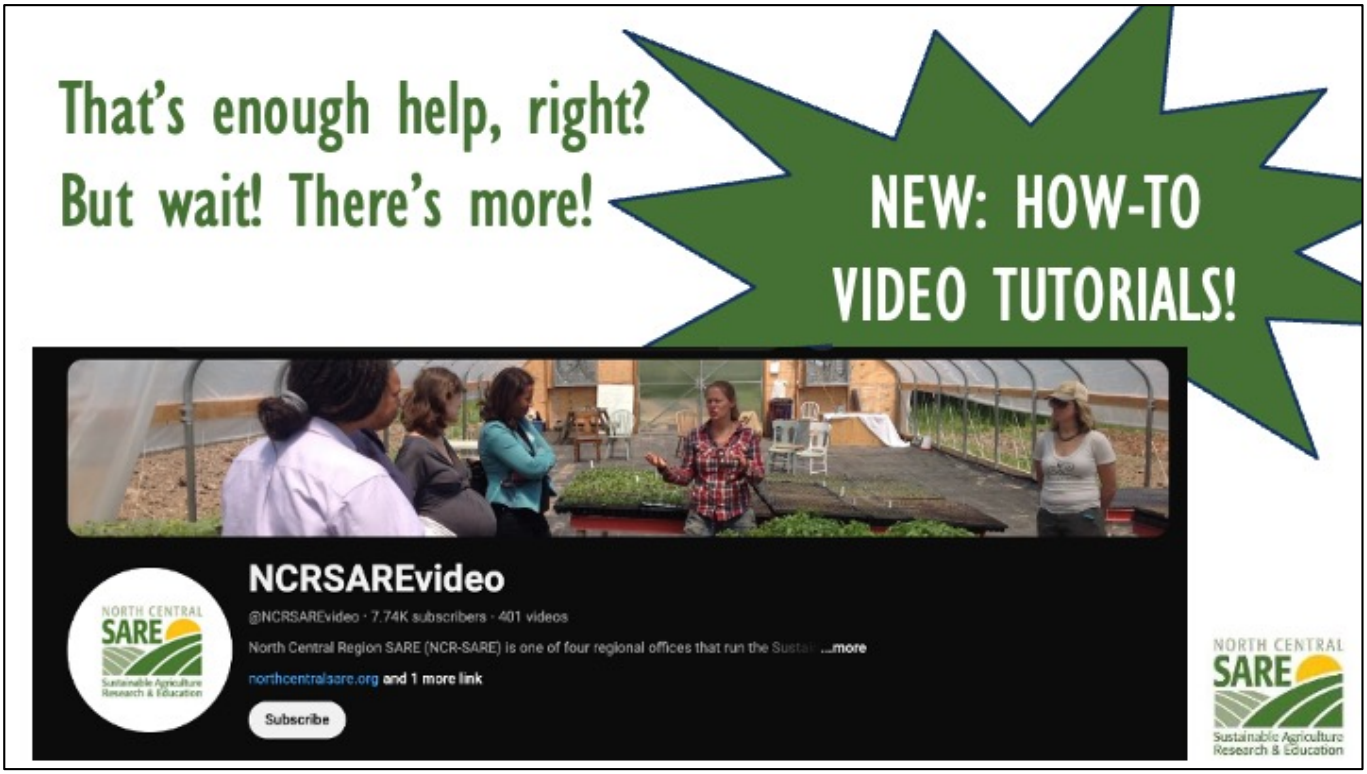
You will also need to fill out the "attachments," depending on your project.



I'd like to highlight a new resource we've created to help you feel equipped to apply for SARE grants. We have 11 short how-to videos. Each one is about 3 minutes and tackles a specific question we get frequently, like:

- Is my idea a good fit for a SARE grant?
- What do I put in the outreach section?
- Etc

Go to youtube.com and search "NCRSAREvideo" to find this playlist.

It's geared a bit more towards the Farmer Rancher grant program, but may have valuable tips for you.

Before we go to the step-by-step directions for using the SARE online system, I'd like to pause for questions.

If you are not interested in the application part, you are free to go at this time, feel free to contact me later, if you'd like.

Application process

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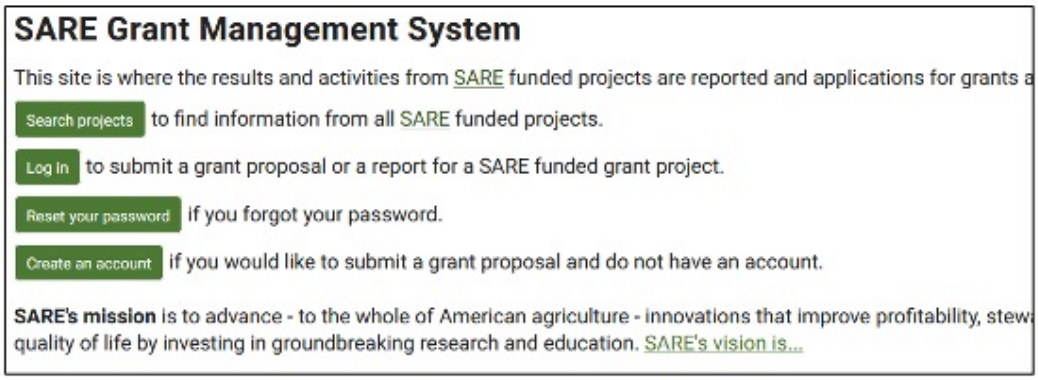
STEP #4: USE ONLINE SYSTEM TO APPLY.



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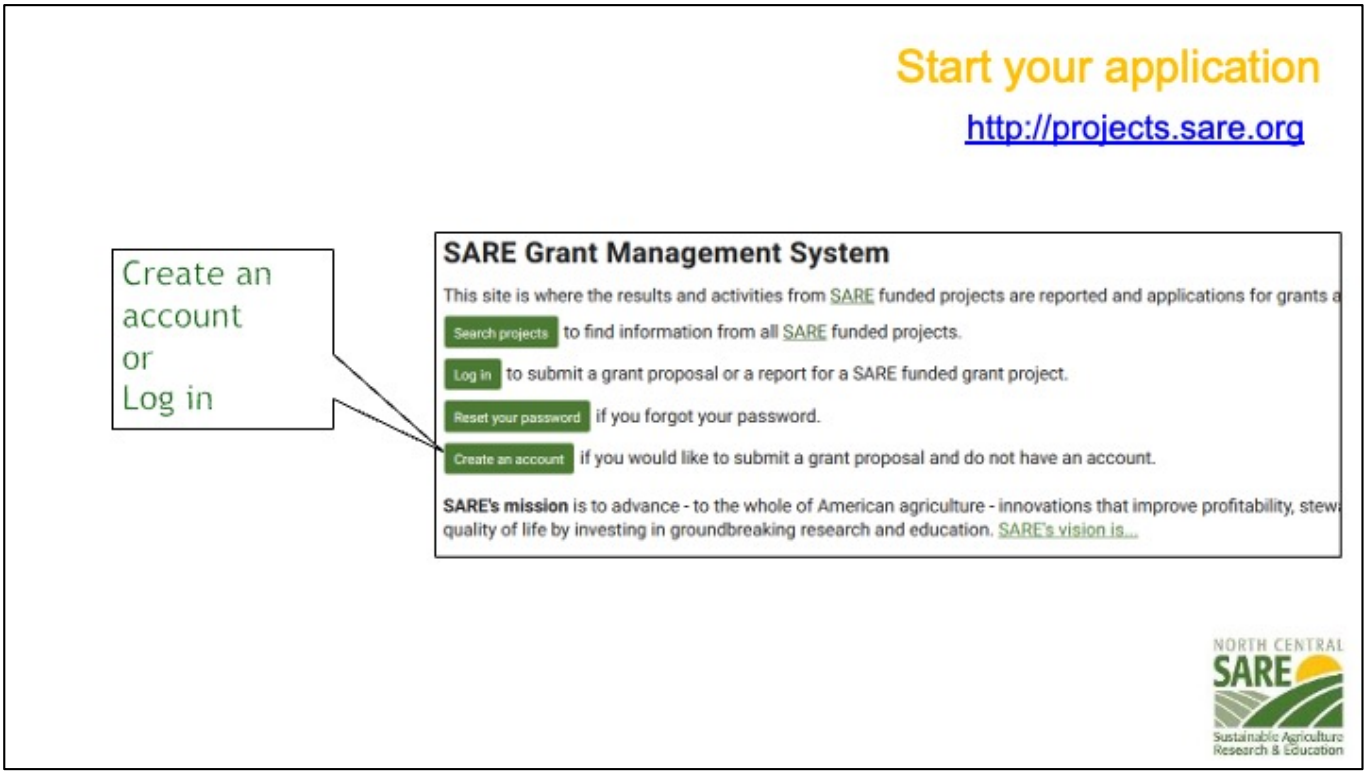
- Now we'll show a few of the screen shots from the online submission system so that you know what to expect. When you go to projects.sare.org, this is what you'll see.
- If you've never had a SARE grant before you will need to first create an account and complete your profile. Click on create account.
- If you've had a SARE grant previously and filed reports in this system, your profile will already be in the system and you can log in with the username and password you used for reporting.



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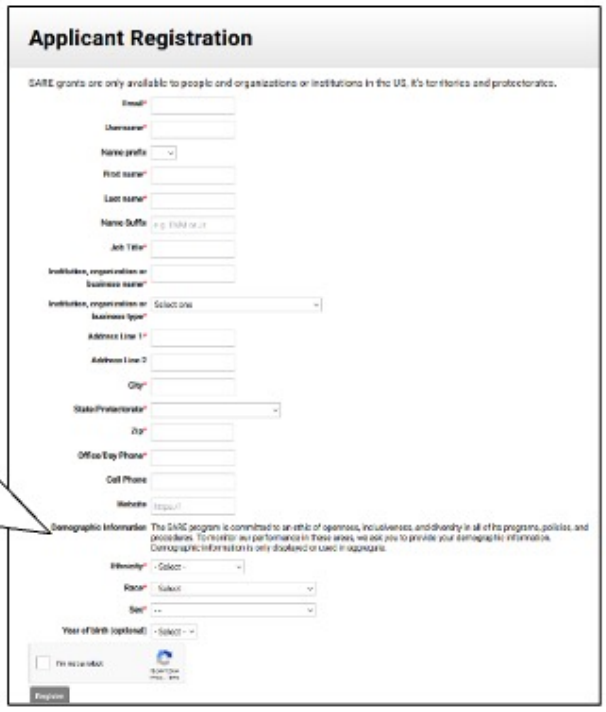
-

Application

Demographic data is not tied to you application.

It is used for our improvement



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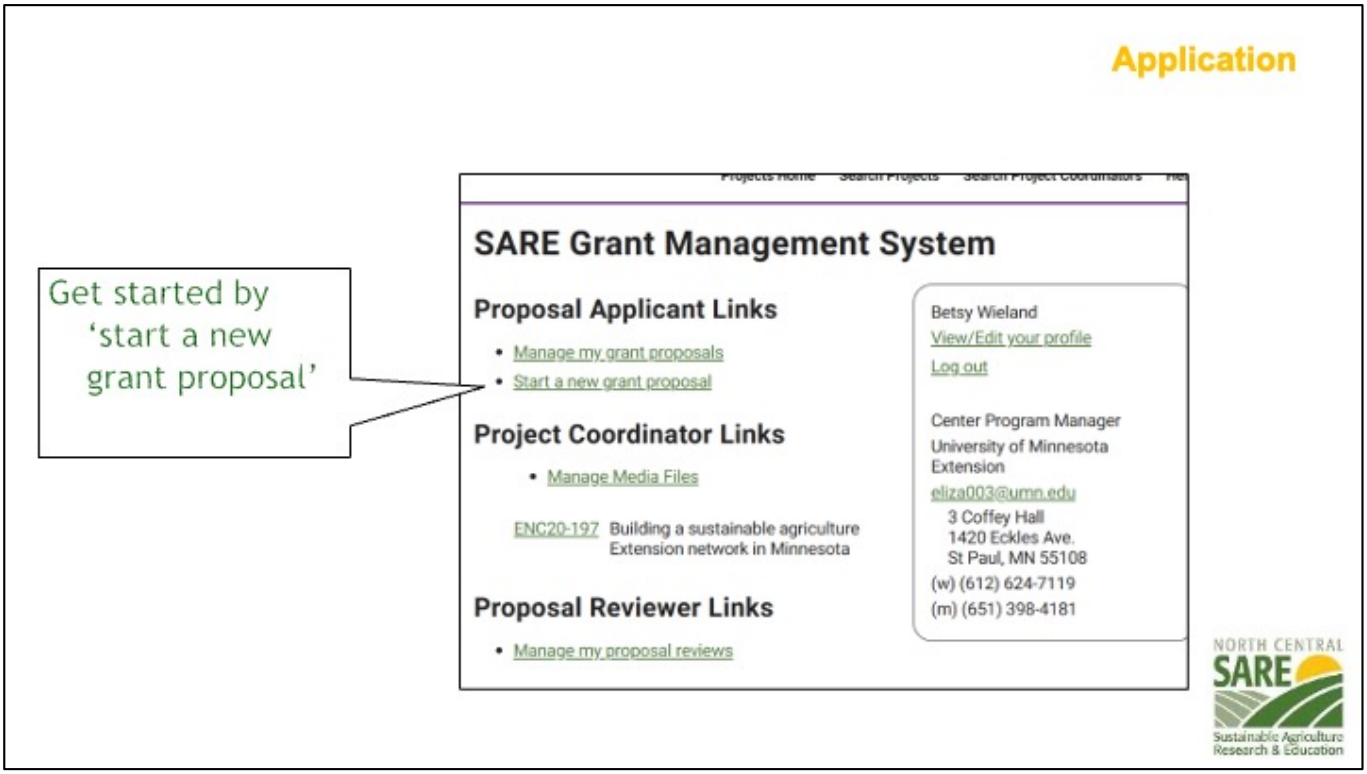
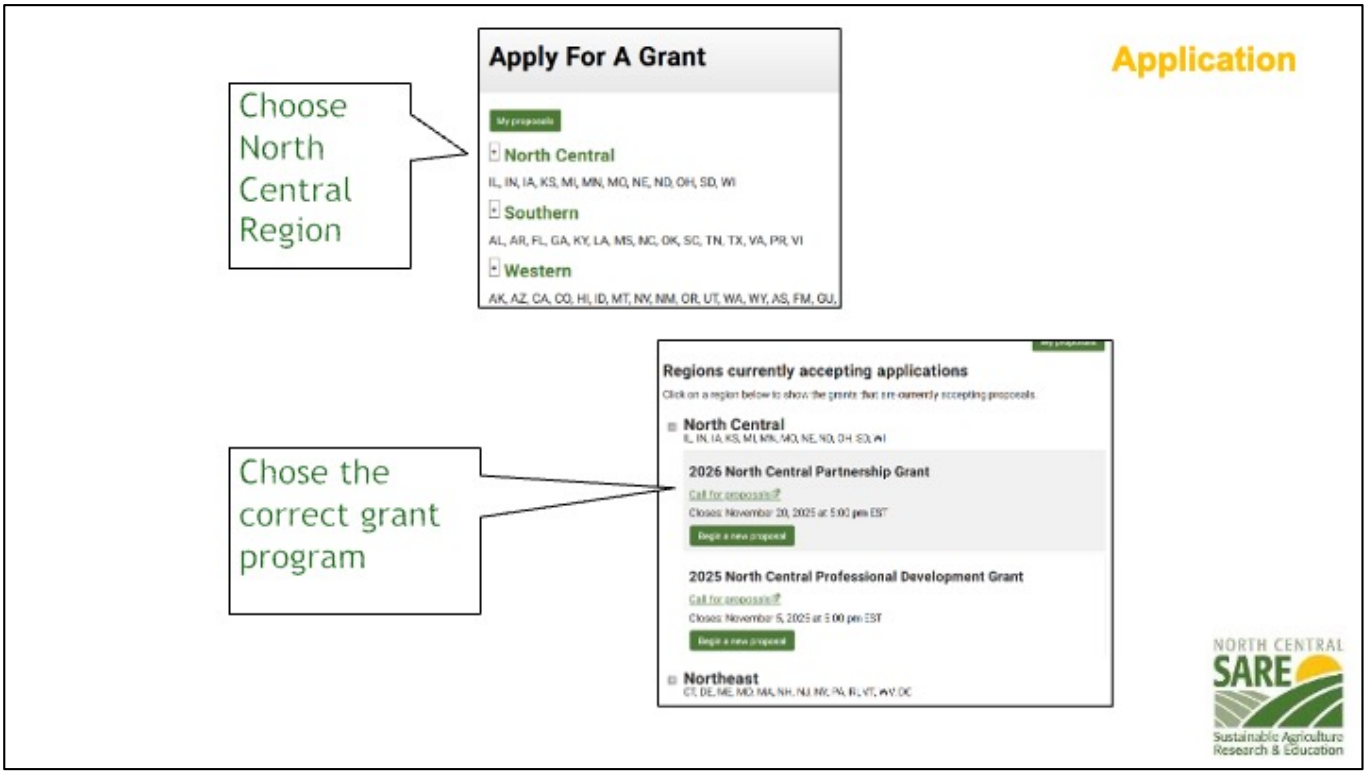
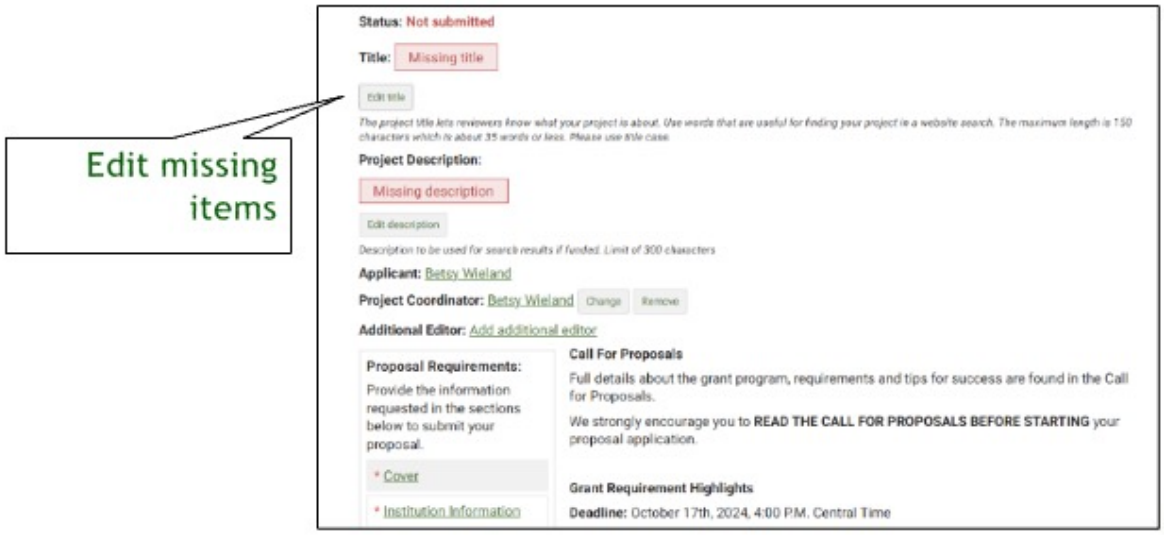


- Once you log in, you'll see this screen. Under projects, you'll see a list of all projects you've been associated with. Under the proposal Applicant Links, you'll see a link to manage applications. This is for you to edit proposals you've started but not submitted.
- Click on "Start a new grant proposal".



- You will see a list of all open grant applications, for all regions.
- Make sure you choose the correct grant program and the North Central Region. You will be completing the 2026 North Central Partnership Grant Proposal Application

Application



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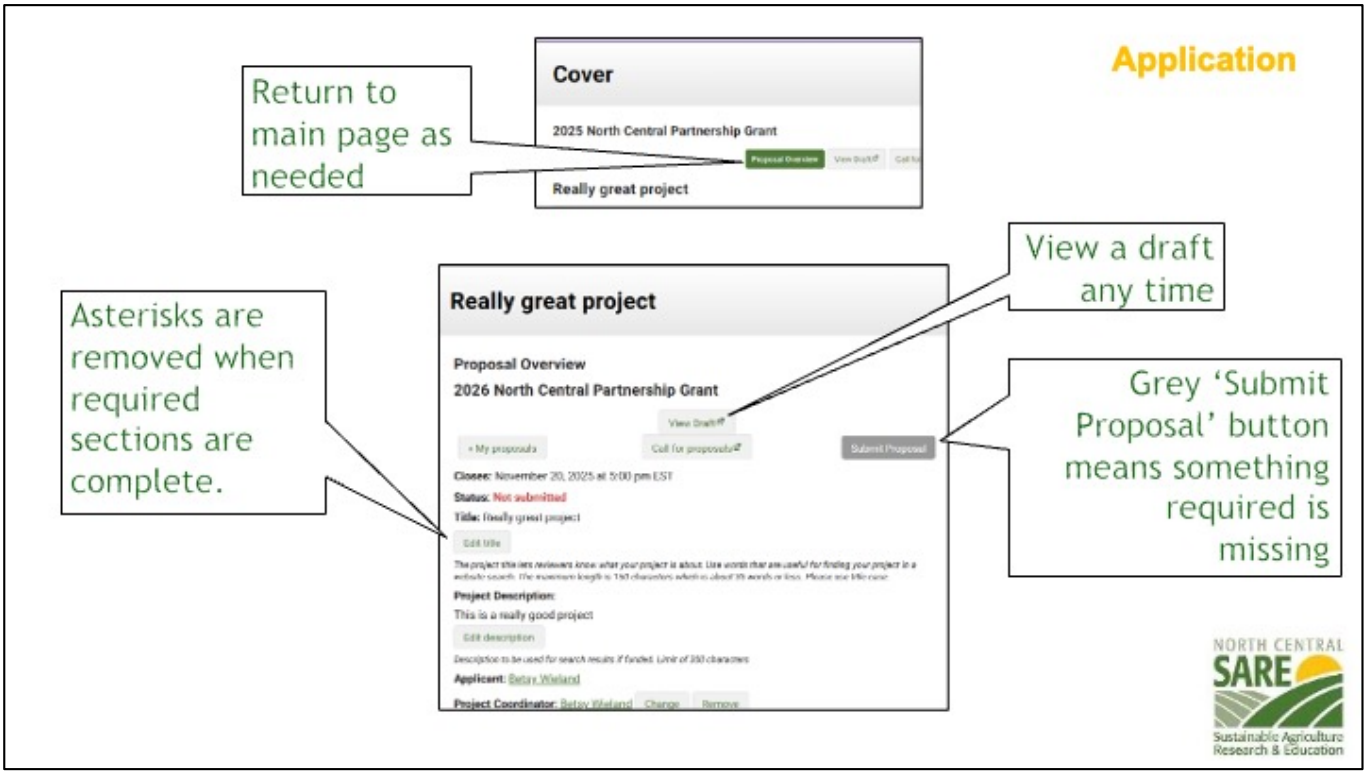
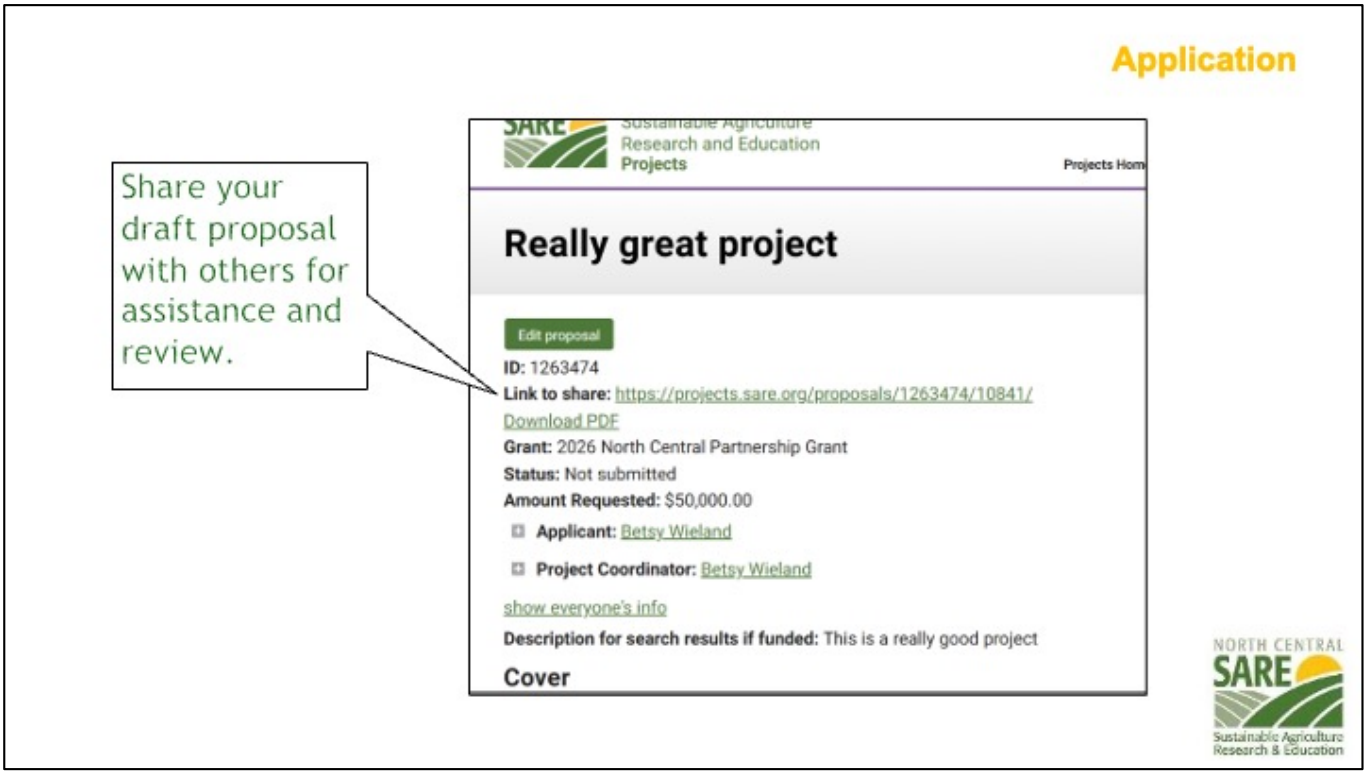
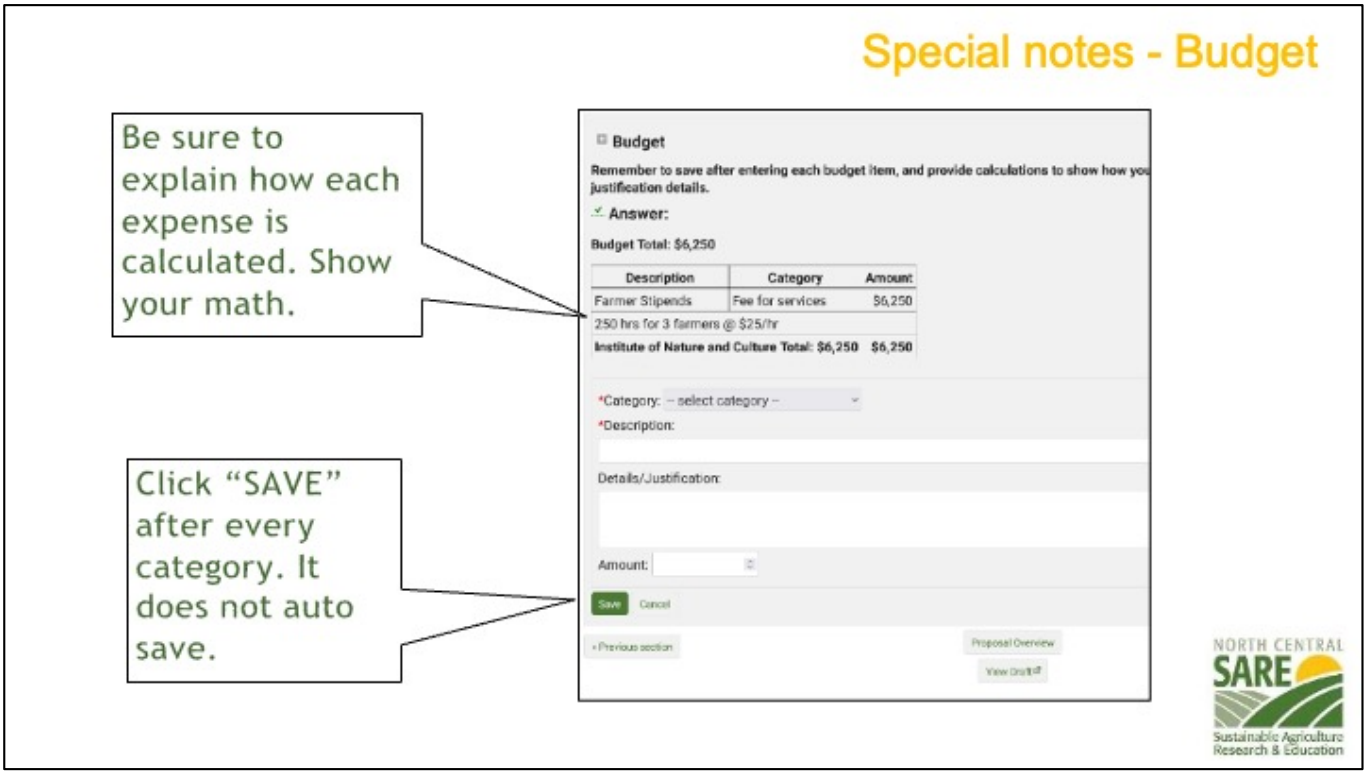
To begin, enter the title and brief project description (less than 150 characters). Then you can start on the various sections.



- Answer each question by clicking on "edit answer" and saving your answer. Once you've completed the cover page information, or at any time, you can click on "Proposal Overview" to go back to the main page.



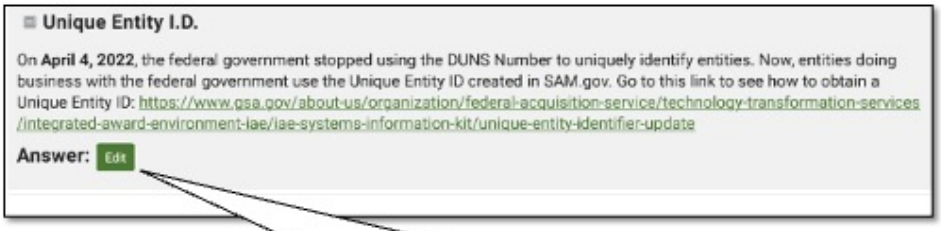
You can also share your draft with others before you submit.



Complete the budget section of your proposal, including justification of each expense.

Once you are satisfied with the budget items, click "save."

Special notes - Institution Information



LEAVE TIME!

For example, a University grants office or a non-profit's board

May take a week or more to obtain it.

For information on obtaining a Unique Entity I.D. (Formerly DUNS number), go to gsa.gov.

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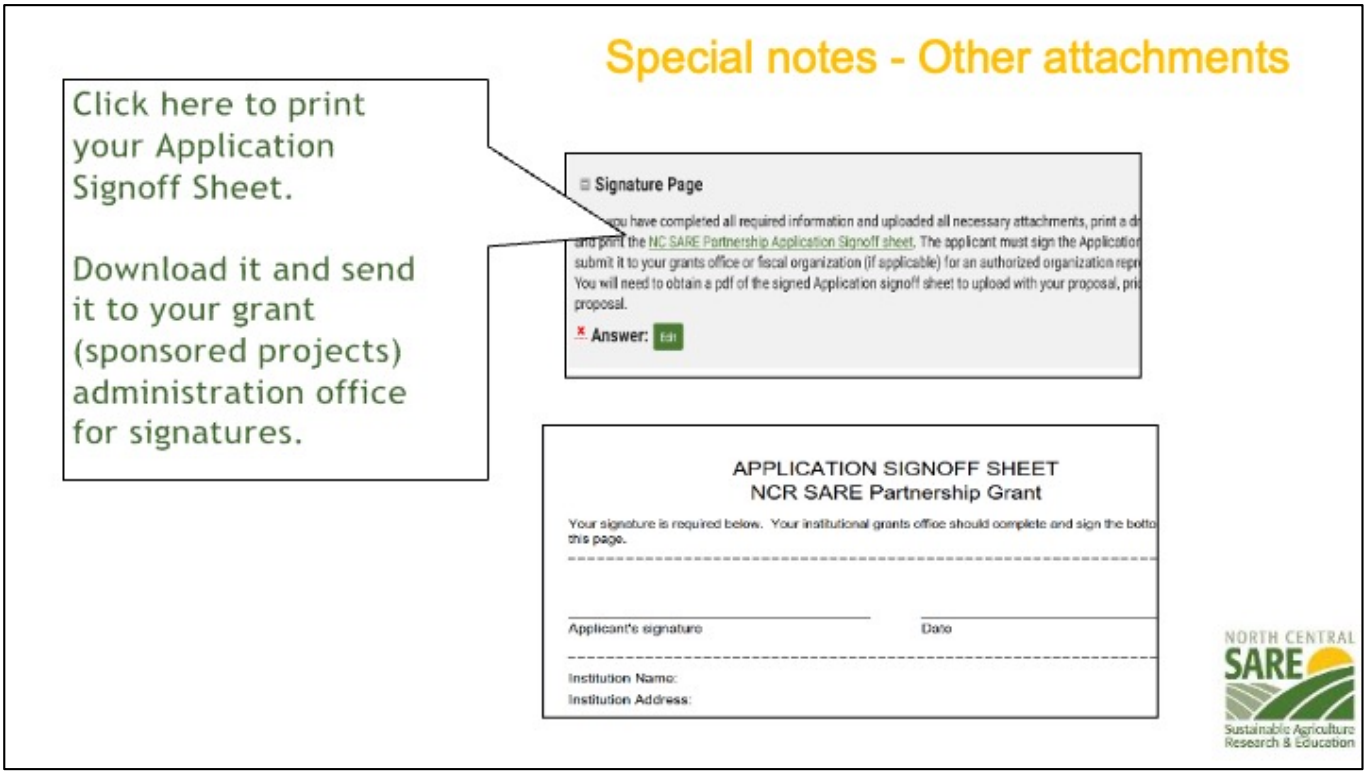


As part of the Other Attachments section,

You will also be asked to submit an applicant sign-off sheet. Remember to contact your institution's grants office to know their timelines for receiving your materials.

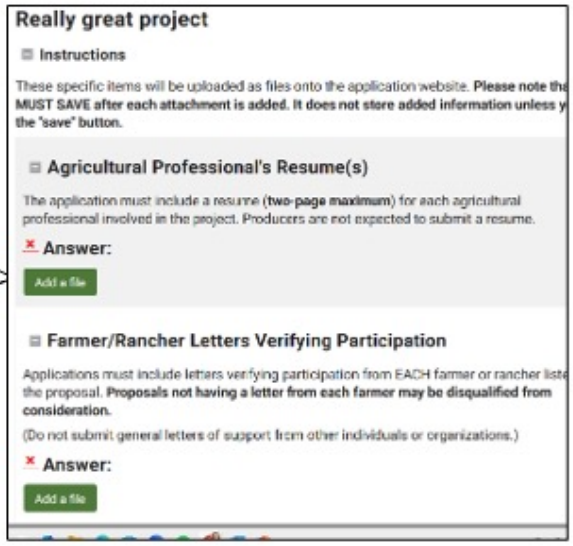
To create it, click on "Edit Answer" and you can download the applicant must Signoff Sheet.

You will need to complete all of the application sections before printing the Application Signoff Sheet.

You will submit it to your grants office or fiscal organization (if applicable) for an authorized organization representative's signature. You will need to obtain a pdf of the signed Application signoff sheet to upload with your proposal, prior to submitting your proposal.

Special notes - Other Attachments

You must upload the ag professional'(s) resume(s) or CV's and 3+ farmer/rancher letters of participation



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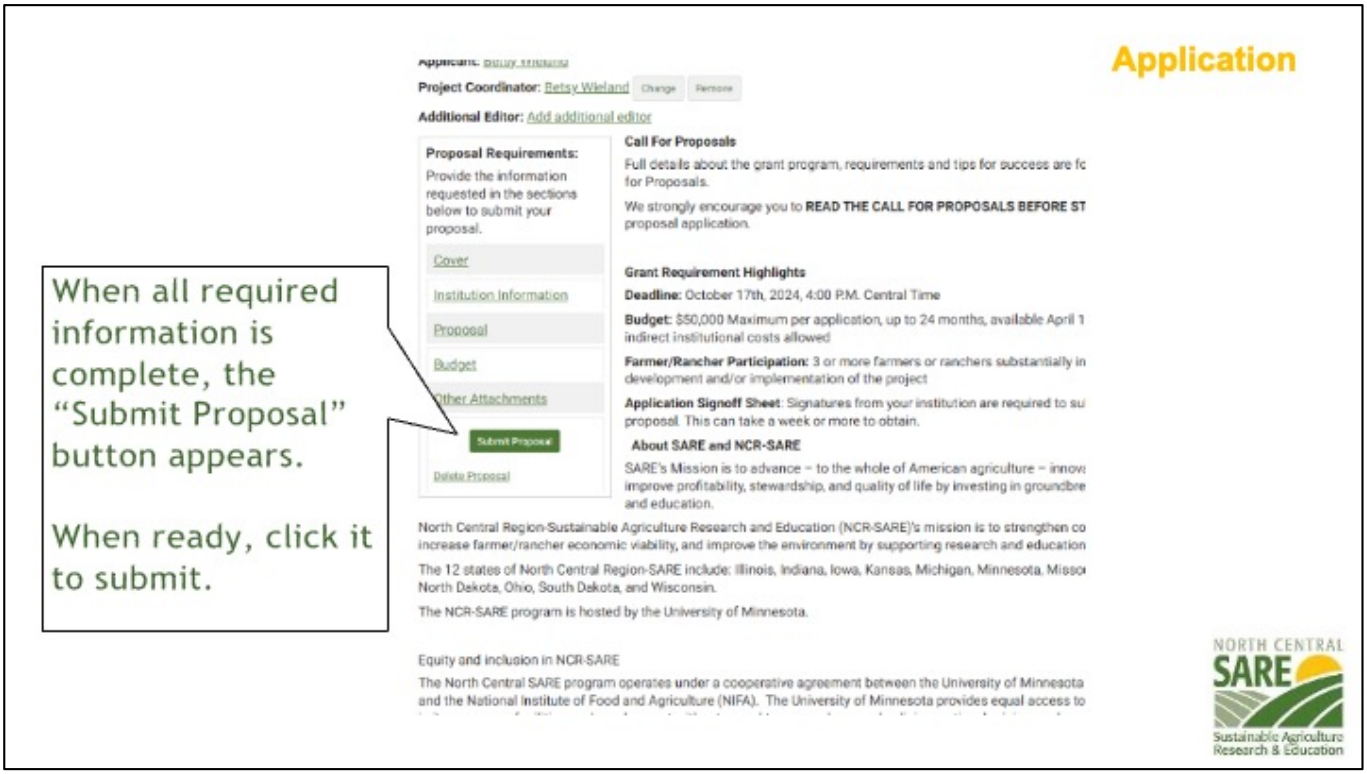
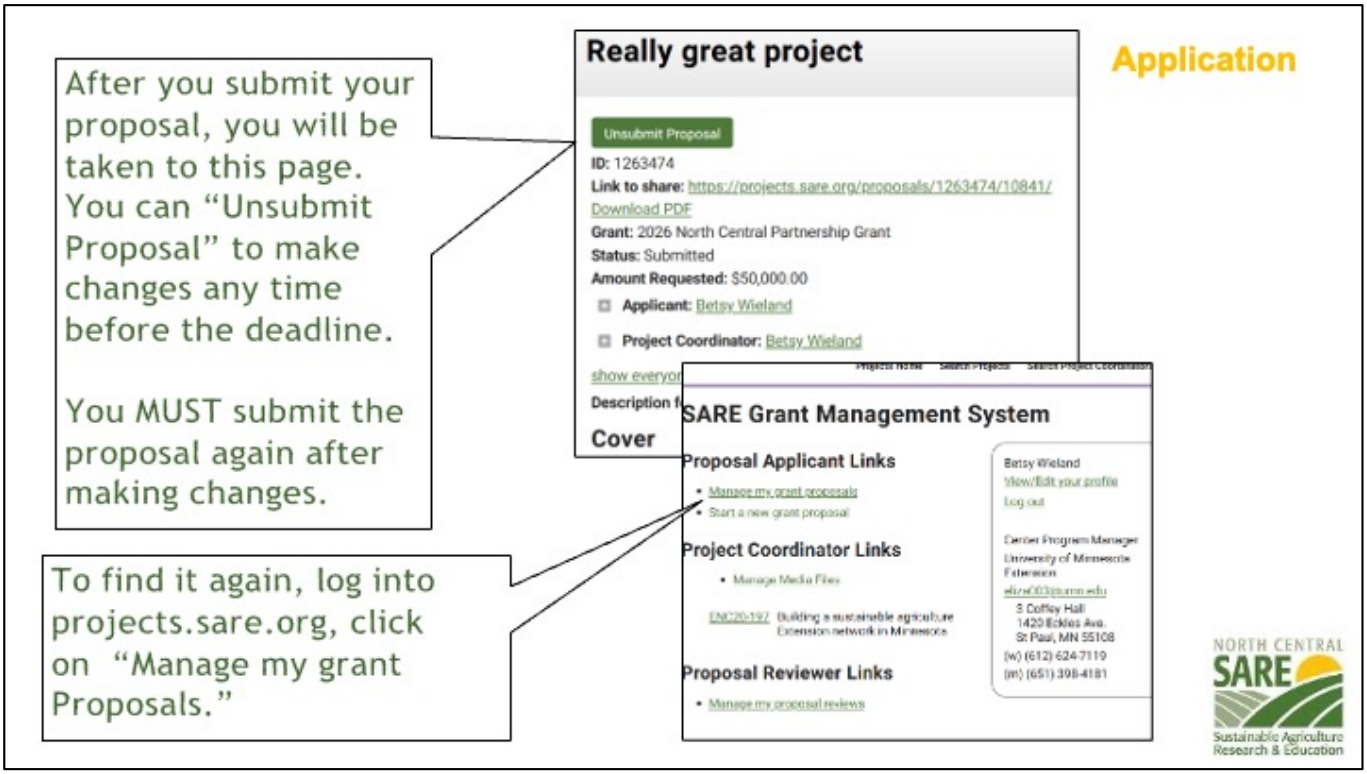
For Example, under Other Attachments, Include a resume for each agricultural professional involved in the project. Then include farmer/rancher letters from EACH farmer or rancher listed in the proposal verifying participation.



Once you have completed all required sections—the "submit proposal" button appears. If you don't see that button, you are still missing a required component. Check to make sure you've completed the project description and the title, which can often be overlooked.

Once you are satisfied with your proposals, click "submit proposal."

You'll land on this page to complete submission.



You will see this confirmation page. Note that in this system, you can "unsubmit" and make changes PRIOR to the closing date for the grant program. Make sure you resubmit by the closing date and time.

NEXT STEPS

- ❑ Read the Call for Proposals
- ❑ Call a friend
- ❑ Search the SARE database for related projects
- ❑ Start drafting your proposal
- ❑ Set up an account on projects.sare.org
- ❑ Try scoring your proposal
- ❑ Contact me with questions!

Congratulations! You have now submitted your Partnership Grant Proposal.

Good luck with your proposal. If you have any questions, contact NCR-SARE.

Stay in touch with SARE:
•On the web: http://www.northcentral.sare.org/
•On Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/NCRSARE
•On Twitter: https://twitter.com/ncrsare
•On Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/ncrsare
•On YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/user/NCRSAREvideo

Thank you for your time and interest in our Partnership Grant Program.

We look forward to working with you and reading your proposals!