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 manage this program and our graduate student program.

Partnership program webpage: https://northcentral.sare.org/Grants/Apply-for-a-Grant/Partnership-Grant/

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

- Main Website: https://northcentral.sare.org/
- NCR-SARE How To Videos: https://northcentral.sare.org/ncr-sares-grant-how-to-video-series/
- SARE GMS: https://projects.sare.org/

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.

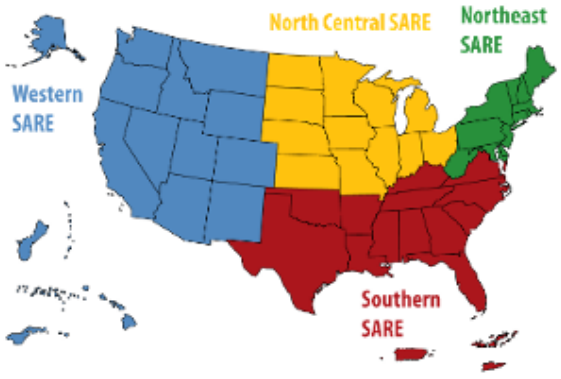
What is SARE?

Mission

To advance innovations that improve profitability, stewardship, and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education.

Vision

An enduring American agriculture of the highest quality - economically viable, ecologically sound, and a force for a rewarding way of life for farmers, ranchers, and their communities.



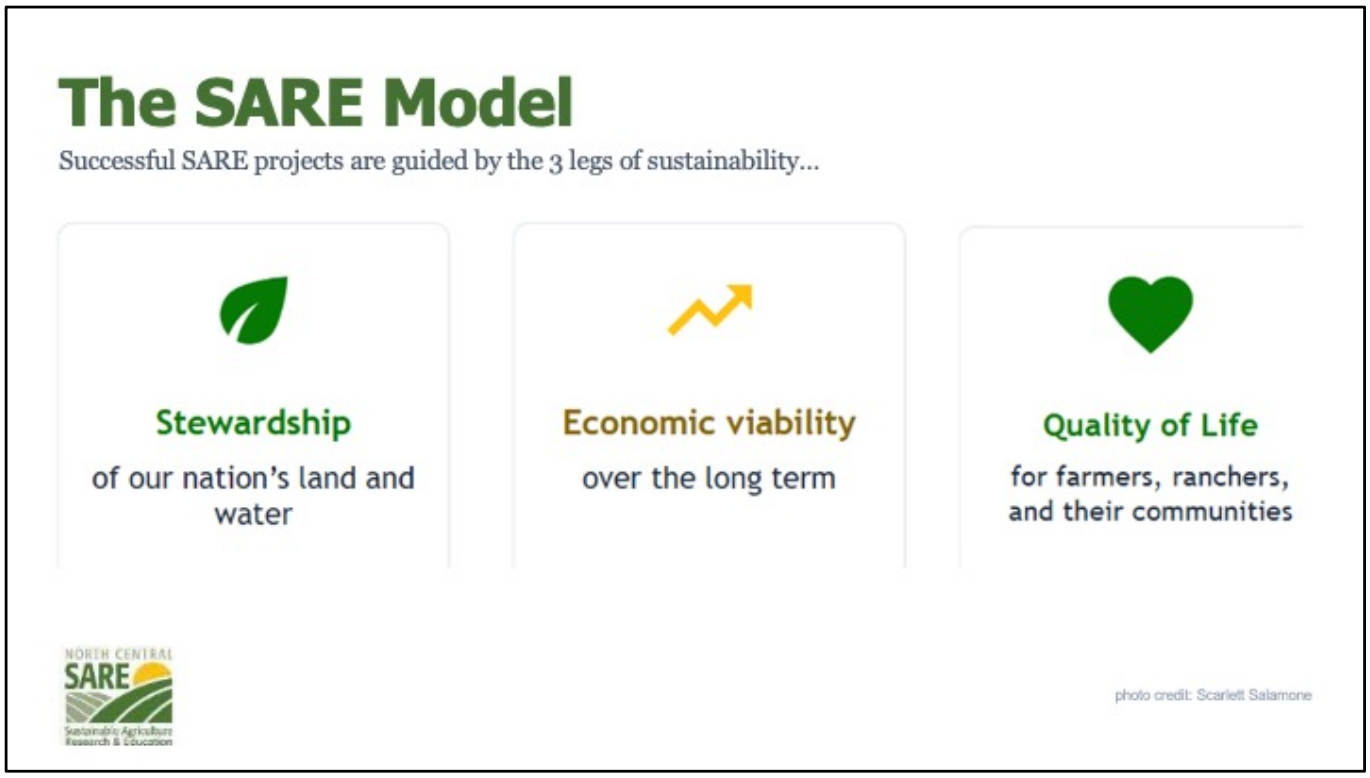
NORTH CENTRAL SARE
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

SARE is a USDA-NIFA funded program, but it is uniquely grassroots. We are governed by an Administrative Council that represents the diversity of North Central agriculture. Our mission is to strengthen communities, increase farmer viability, and improve the environment. We aren't just looking for good science; we are looking for science that moves the needle on sustainability.

A Different Kind of Grant Program

Started in 1988, SARE is…

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



We look for projects that will help advance agriculture in these three areas. SARE emphasizes a “system-level” perspective.

The SARE Model

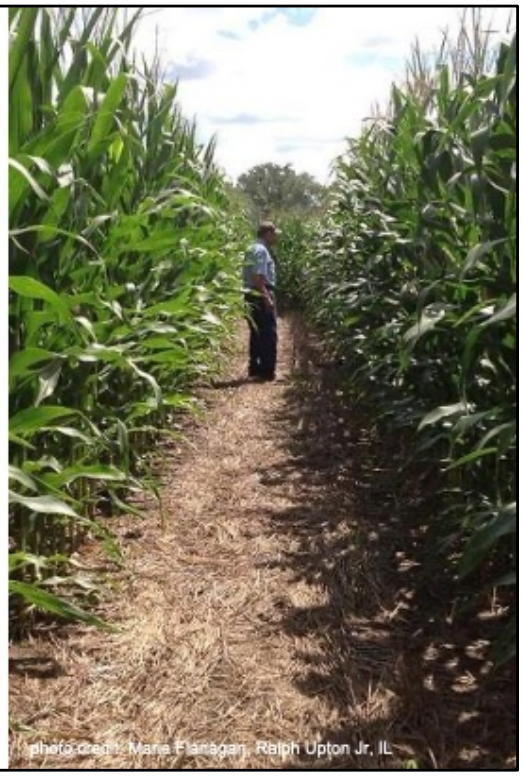
- USDA-NIFA funds SARE, so we are funded by the research arm of the USDA
- SARE Outreach produces practical information
- Four regional councils set priorities and make grants

Since 1988, SARE, funded through USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture or NIFA program, has funded more than 10,000 grant projects throughout its four regions. SARE's national project database features the project reports from the funded research.

SARE Outreach is the national communications arm of SARE and works with SARE's regions to share research results with farmers, ranchers, educators, and the public at large. SARE Outreach products cover the gamut of sustainable agriculture practices, from books on cover crops and building soil health, to bulletins on managing rangeland and water resources, to online courses for ag educators.

Stakeholder Involvement

- Exploring problems identified by farmers and ranchers.
- Farmers and ranchers are involved in research, education and outreach.
- Engaging stakeholders in their communities, like Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCU's) in our region - Mini grants and coordinators.



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.

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

Grant Details

- Due **Thursday, December 3rd by 12:00 Noon CT**
- Online application
- **Activity can begin May 1, 2027**
- 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 2026, 22 out of 66 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.

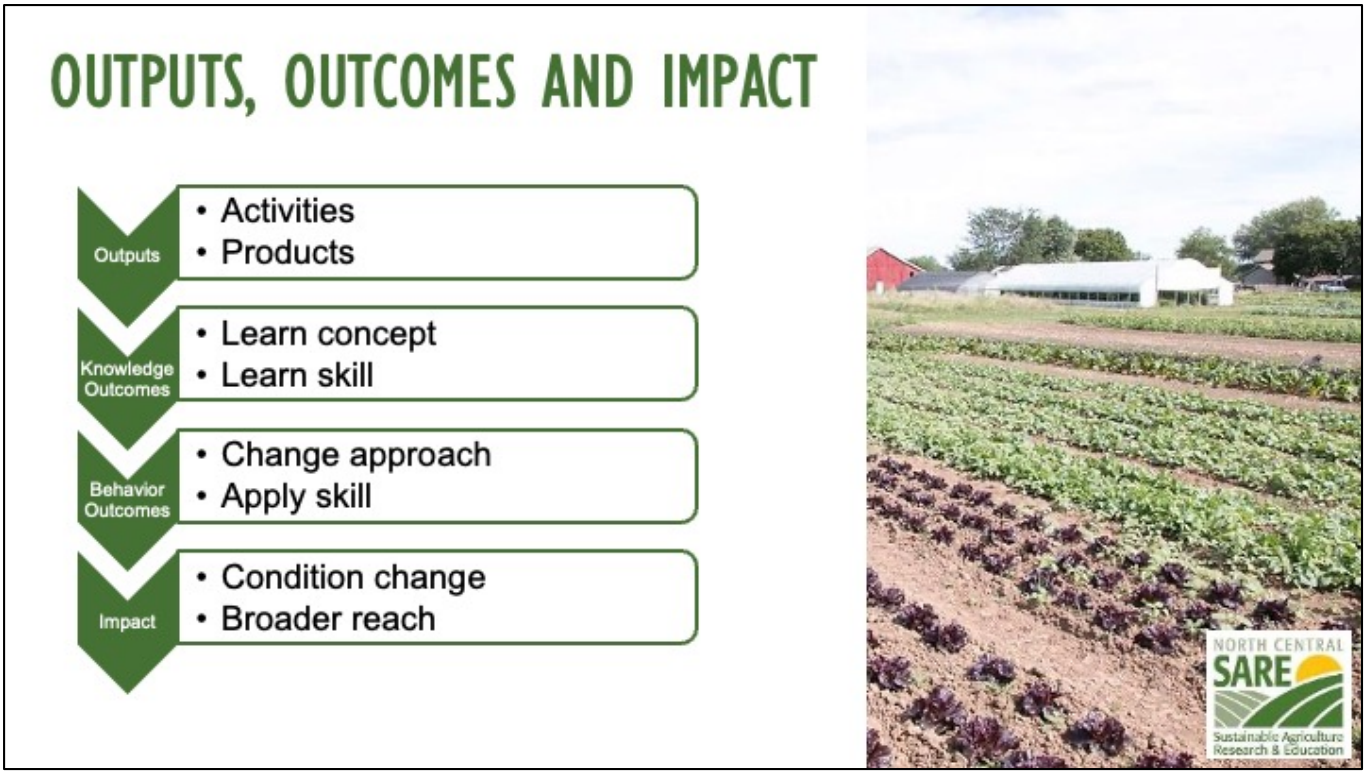
A critical aspect of the proposal is to indicate how your project outcomes align with NCR-SARE broad-based outcomes the 3 legs of sustainability.

- 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.



Outputs are the ‘deliverables’, tangible activities and products you do in the project.

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 document and know you achieved
- Knowledge gains
- Behavior change
- Condition change/Impact

OUTPUTS, OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Example

Outputs
- Field day with speaker, curriculum, videos

Knowledge Outcomes
- Farmers learn strategies and techniques for selling to institutions

Behavior Outcomes
- Farmers use strategies and techniques
- Increase sales

Impact
- Farm more financially stable
- More fresh produce in community

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.

Outcomes and impact examples?

Do you have examples?

Knowledge gains

Behavior change

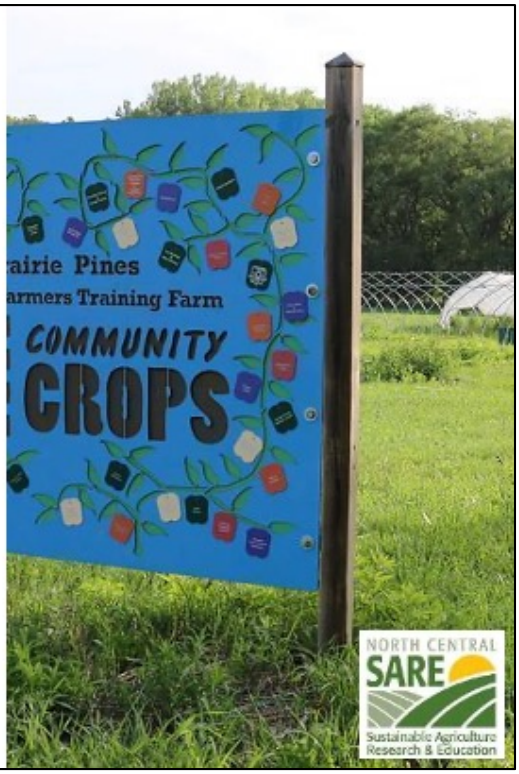
Impact long term

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

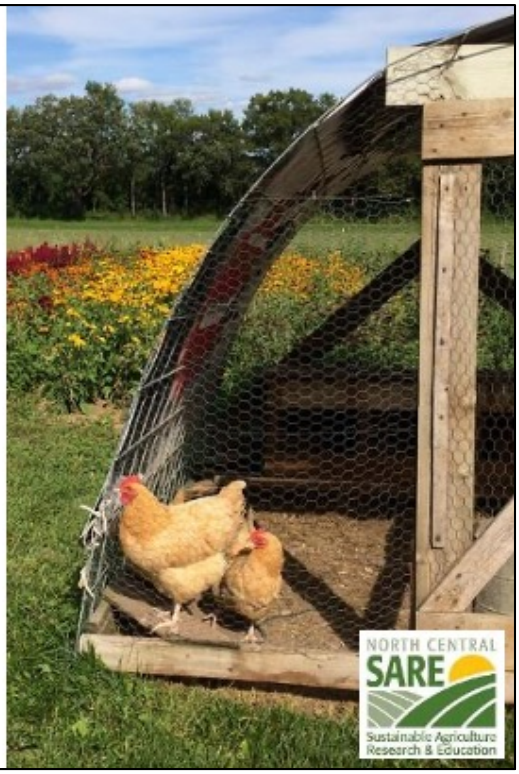
- that test, evaluate, and adapt sustainable agriculture practices for their operations;
- to conduct learning circles, educational events, field days or demonstrations to further disseminate information to other farmers and ranchers;
- Develop curriculum, factsheets, case studies, videos, etc
- develop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

northcentral.sare.org

- detailed information on our programs
- sample calls for proposals
- find contact information
- understand NCR-SARE better
- sign up for email lists
- eligibility quizzes

projects.sare.org

- submit proposals
- research funded projects
- manage funded projects
- submit reports

Pete

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?

- Try our new ELIGIBILITY QUIZ ON THE WEBSITE!

Read the call carefully. We've included a statement from USDA-NIFA, our funder so you can understand their priorities under the current administration. Note that they are exercising more oversight than they have in the past.

Budget Item Examples

CAN pay for project expenses

- Salaries
- 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.

Attachments

Required

- Resume or CV of 1 ag professional
- Letters of participation for 3 or more distinct farming operations
- Application signoff sheet

As needed

- IRB or IACUC approval
- Animal welfare statement may be required if project is funded

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

Note that the letters need to show how farmers will participate, not just support for the work. You can provide a template to them, if that helps.

Sharing results

SARE storytelling

- Social media, media
- Print pieces, like Field Notes

NCR-SARE visit possible

Reports

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

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.

It's important for us to document how the funds are being spent, and the good work it's supporting.

Grant timeline

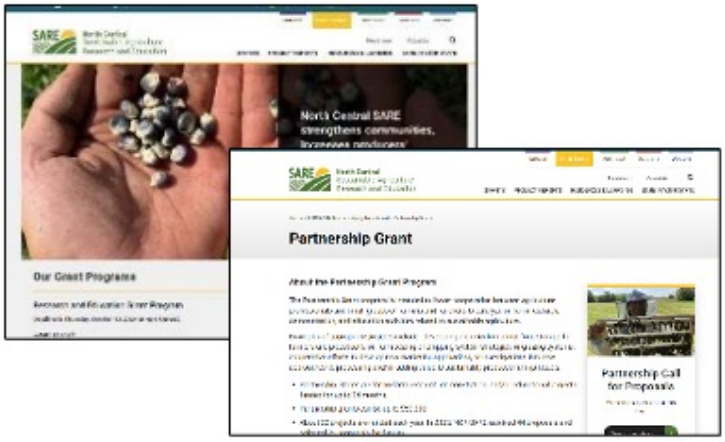
Date	Item
Dec. 3, 2026	Proposals due online by NOON Central Time
Jan-Feb 2027	Applications reviewed
March 2027	Applicants notified
May 1, 2027	Funds available to applicants
March 1, 2028	Progress report due
Project end date	Final report due 60 days later

Learn more

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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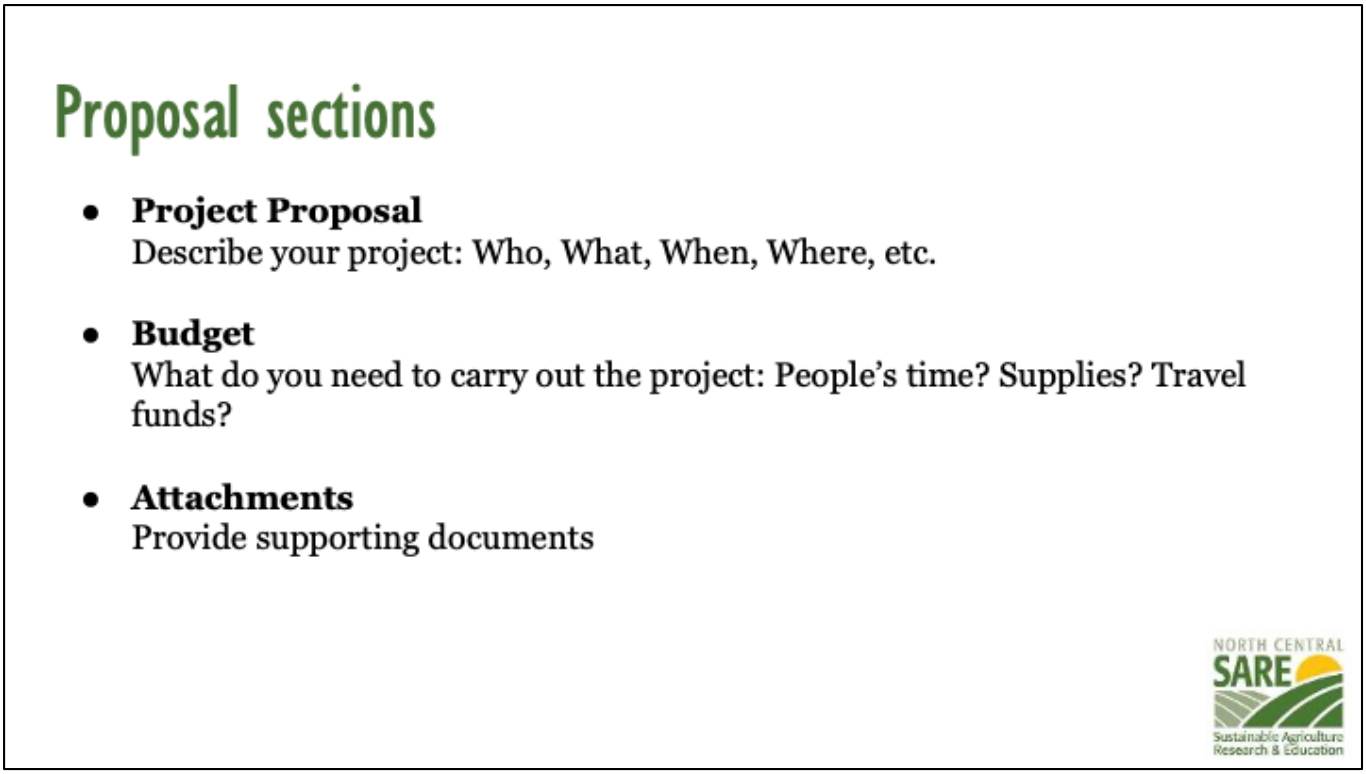
- Again, in applying for NCR-SARE grants, there are 2 websites you will work with: NCR-SARE's website, and National SARE's Project Website, projects.sare.org.
- NCR-SARE's main website has many resources including the calls for proposals, slide sets like this, and news articles about current and recent 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.

Phone 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/

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.

Proposal writing tips

Clearly demonstrate how the project:

- Addresses the 3 legs of sustainability
- Is innovative
- Is wanted by farmers/ranchers
- Will impact the region
- Has the team members needed for success
- Ties budget requests to activities

Contact your grants office right away

- Know their deadline to submit paperwork to them
- Will need their signature to submit application

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Pete

Alignment with Federal Administration Priorities

New Regulatory Mandate

- **Secretarial Memo 1078-021:** All USDA financial awards – including SARE - must now align with "America First" policies and national security interests.
- **Tribal Exemption:** Per Memo 1078-010, federally recognized Tribal Nations and Native communities remain exempt from these specific requirements.

The Procedural Change

- **Final NIFA Review:** Post-January 1, 2026, all proposals recommended for funding will be reviewed by USDA NIFA staff to ensure proposal language is in alignment with federal priorities before they are approved for funding. NCR SARE staff will work with applicants to adjust their proposals before this review. Proposals out of alignment will not be approved.

Now, I want to address an important update regarding federal award compliance and administration priorities.

Under USDA Secretarial Memorandum 1078-021, all financial assistance awards funded through USDA - including SARE grants - must align with federal policies prioritizing merit, efficiency, and national security interests. Please note that per Secretarial Memo 1078-010, federally recognized Tribal Nations and Native communities remain exempt from these specific requirements.

As a procedural change, all full proposals - meaning those preproposals invited next Spring - that are recommended for funding by our regional Administrative Council will undergo a final administrative compliance review by USDA-NIFA staff prior to contract execution. NCR-SARE staff will work collaboratively with invited applicants to ensure proposal language fully aligns with federal guidelines before final approval.

Alignment with Federal Administration Priorities

Preparing Proposals

- All applicants are encouraged to review the following:
  - USDA Directive on Departmental Research & Development Priorities
  - White House Executive Order on DEI: January 20, 2025
  - White House Executive Order on Gender: January 20, 2025
  - White House Executive Order on Energy: January 20, 2025
  - White House Executive Order on Discrimination: January 21, 2025
  - White House Executive Order on Federal Grantmaking: August 7, 2025
  - American Drone Security Act of 2023
- If applicants have questions about federal priorities and how they may or may not apply to their proposal, they are encouraged to contact NCR-SARE staff to set up a phone call to answer questions.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult the detailed Call for Preproposals and relevant USDA directives when preparing their application language.

- USDA Directive on Departmental Research & Development Priorities
- White House Executive Order on DEI: January 20, 2025
- White House Executive Order on Gender: January 20, 2025
- White House Executive Order on Energy: January 20, 2025
- White House Executive Order on Discrimination: January 21, 2025
- White House Executive Order on Federal Grantmaking: August 7, 2025
- American Drone Security Act of 2023
- https://research.umn.edu/units/ric/export-controls/federal-procurement-restrictions

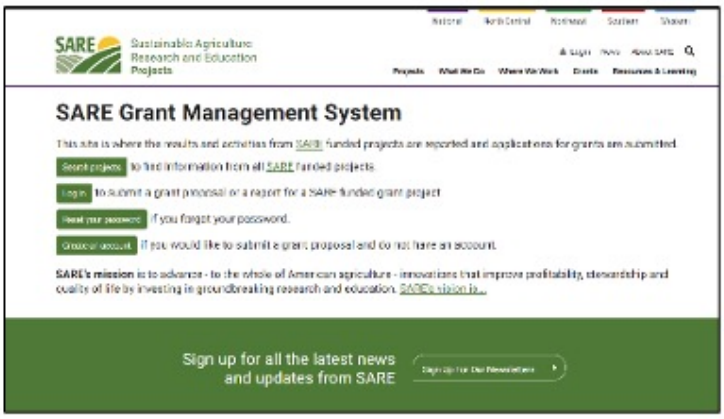
Focus your project narrative on solving pressing agricultural production challenges, protecting food and fiber security, enhancing economic competitiveness, and driving innovation for producers.

If you have any questions regarding federal priorities, please feel free to contact the NCR-SARE office directly. We are here to assist you.

National SARE Projects Website

https://projects.sare.org/

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



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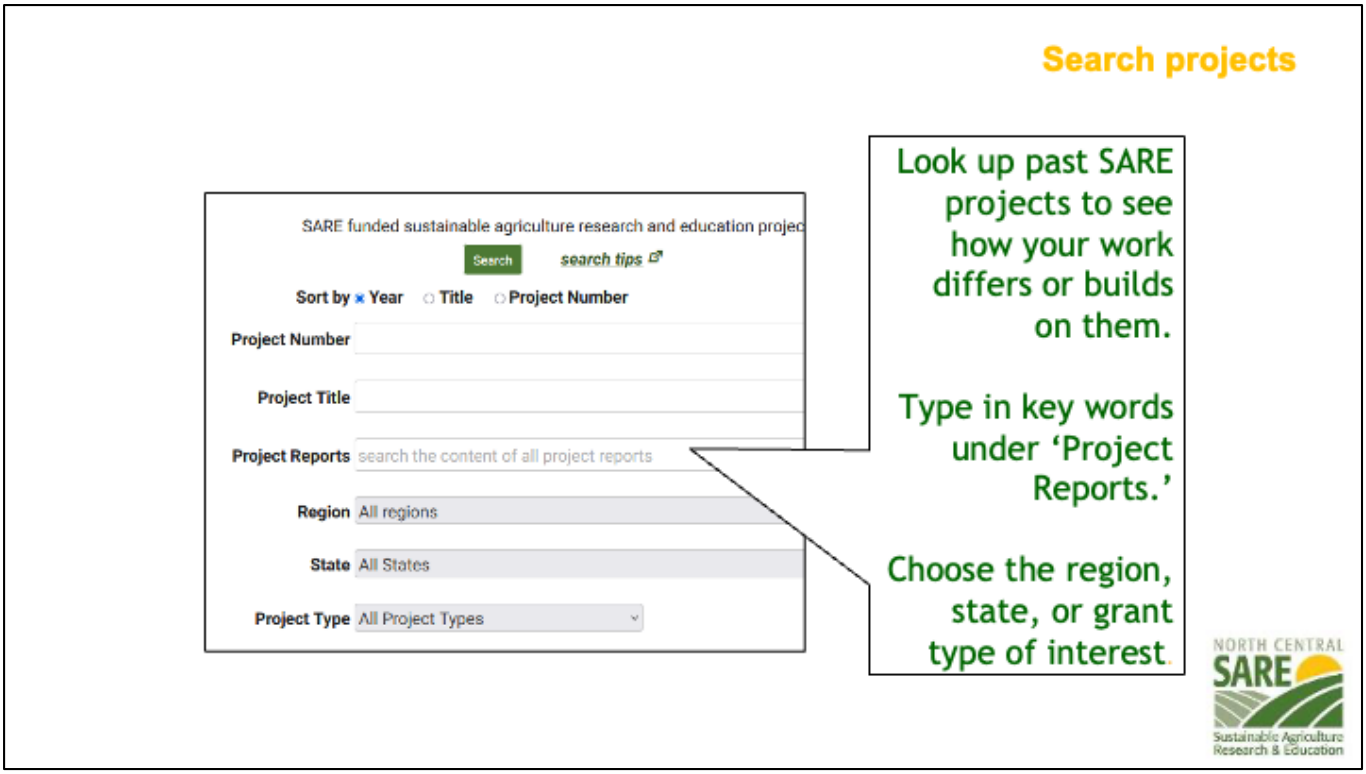
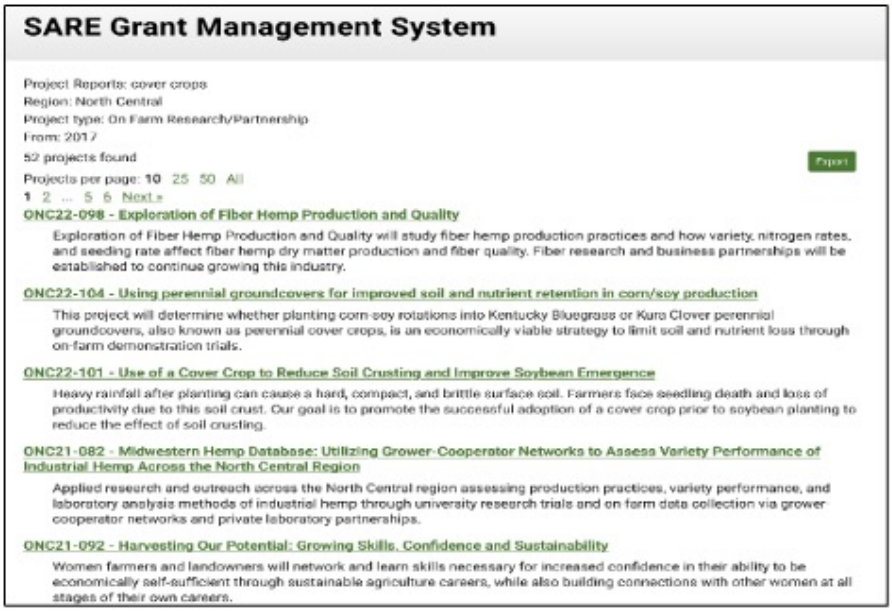
As I said, it's going to help you to research projects previously funded by SARE related to your project.

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.
- Note of caution, the current administrations priorities have changed and may not be willing to fund some projects that were previously funded, particularly regarding DEI and climate work. Contact me directly with further questions.

Search projects



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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? How did you calculate each item?

- **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. (150 words)

3) Relevance to Sustainability and Regional Agricultural Concerns

What problem are you trying to solve? (300 words)

4) Proposed Activities including Outreach Plan

Provide a detailed plan for the activities you will undertake in the project. (600 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. (400 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. (300 words)

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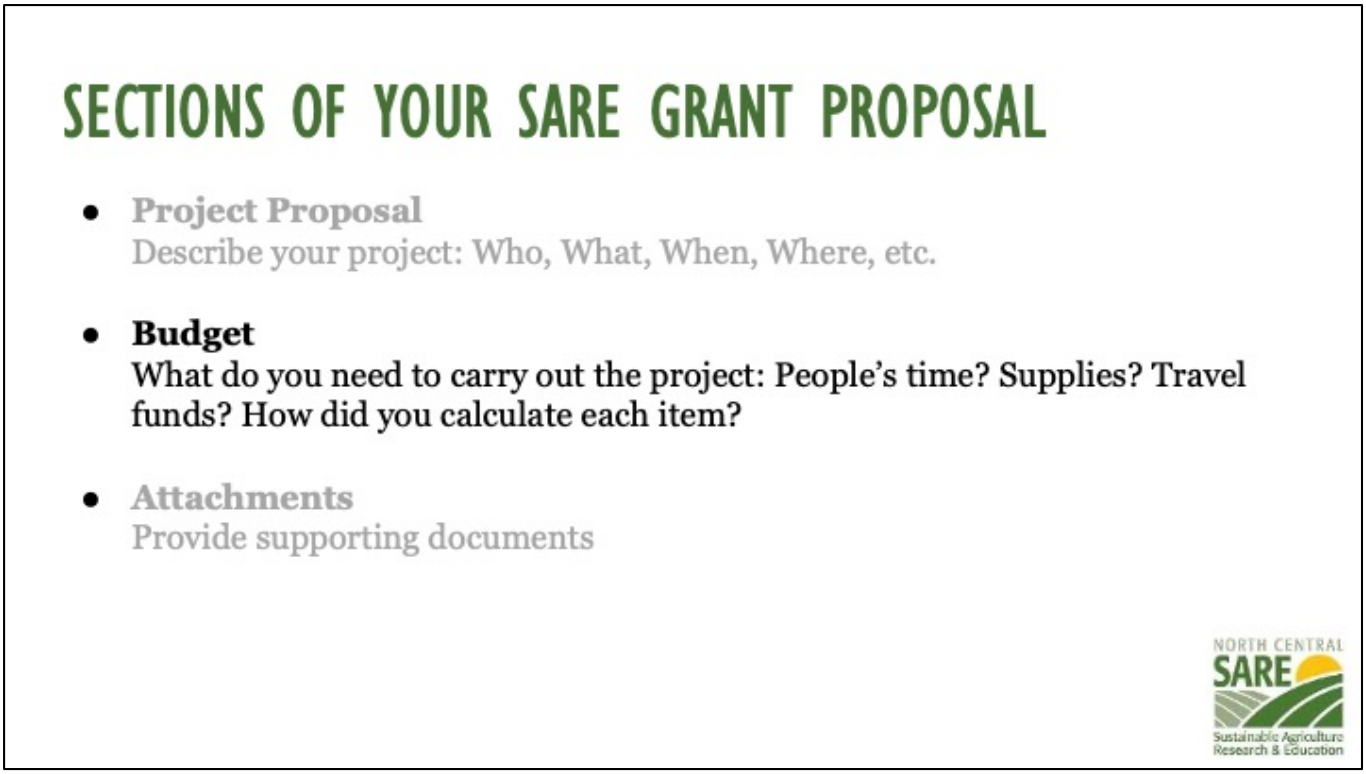


You will lay out the budget to support your project.

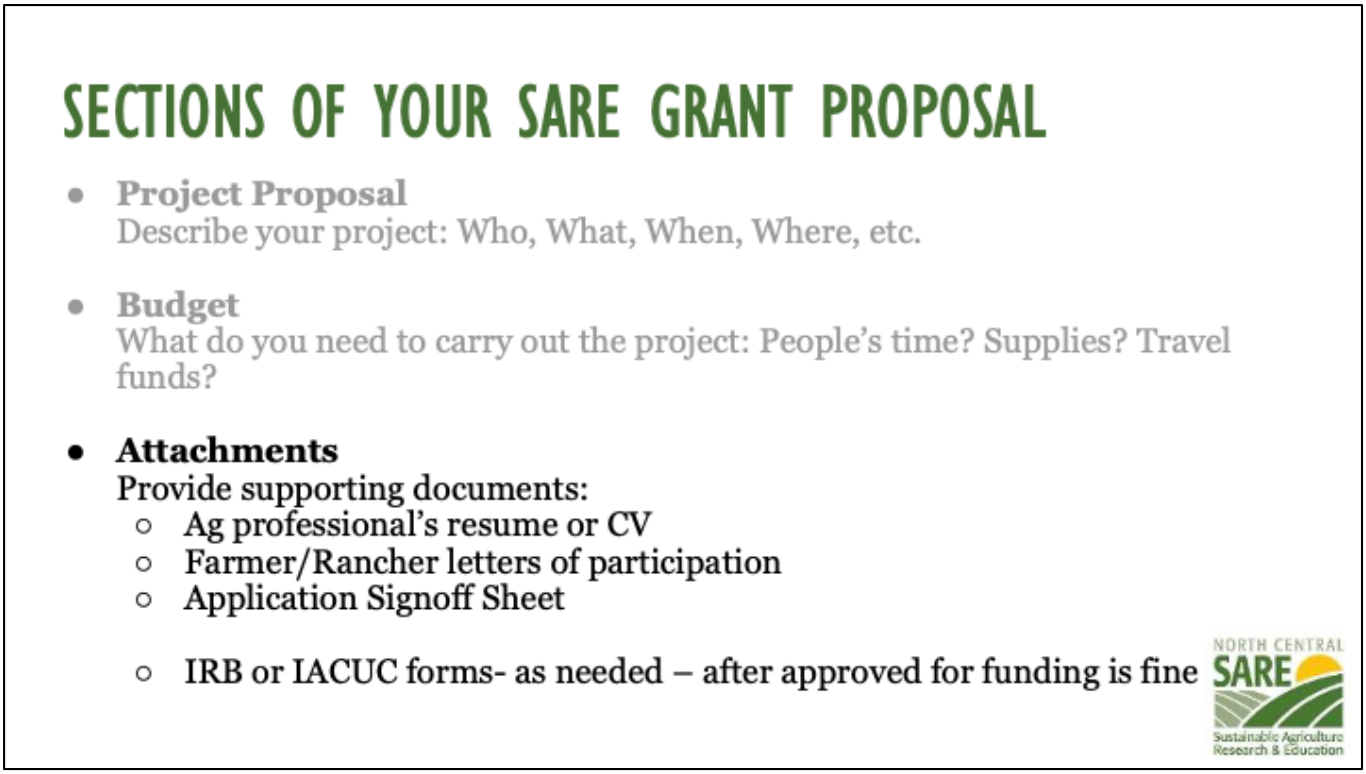
BUDGET AND "JUSTIFICATION"

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.



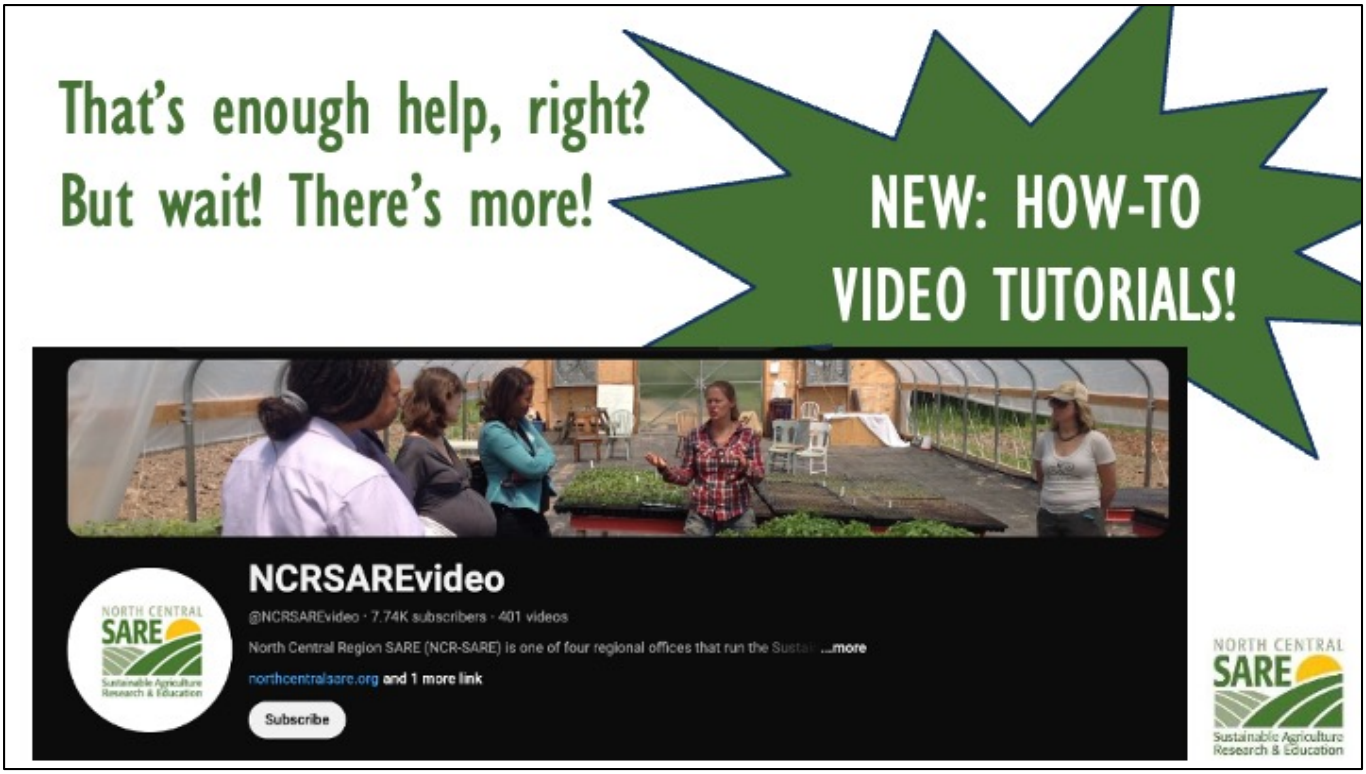
You will also need to fill out the "attachments," depending on your project.

Who decides which proposals get funded?

- A peer review panel: criteria found in the Call for Proposals.
- Administrative Council
- USDA-NIFA

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.



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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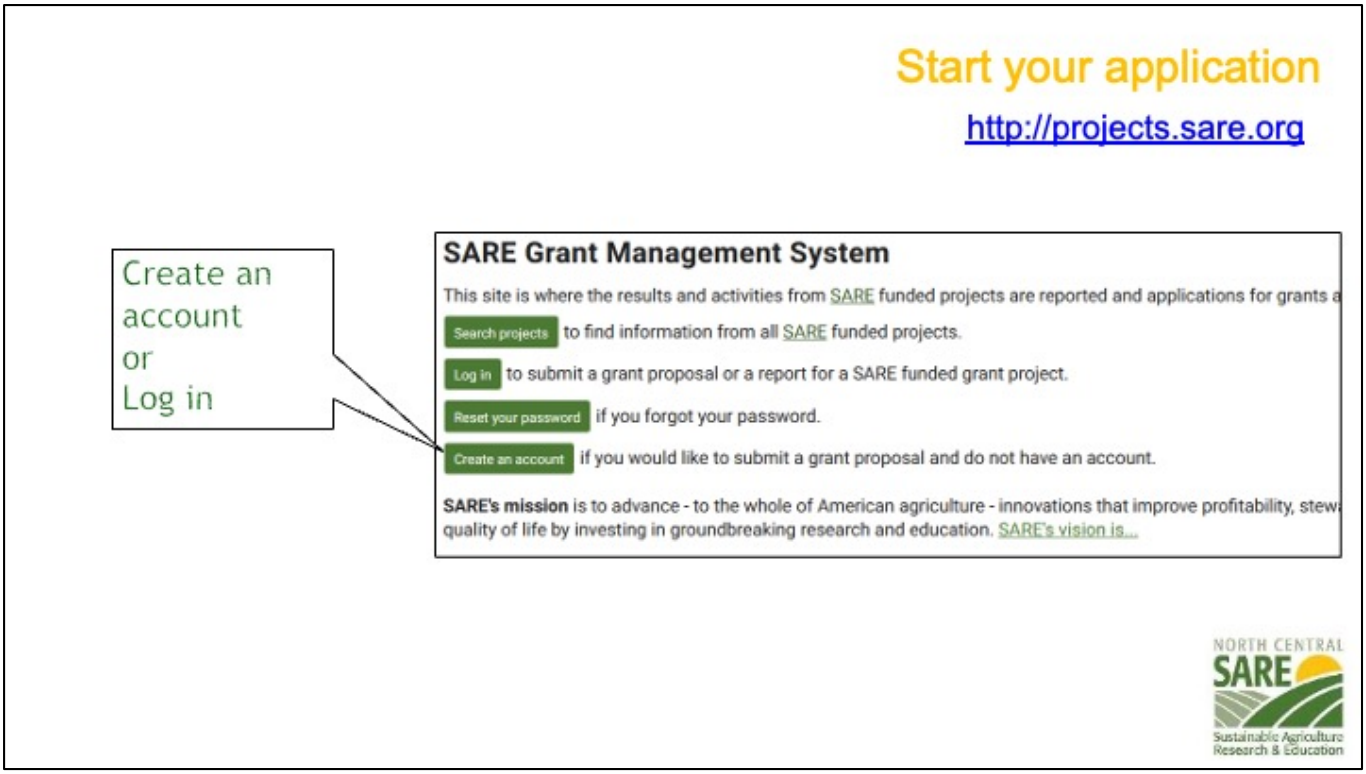
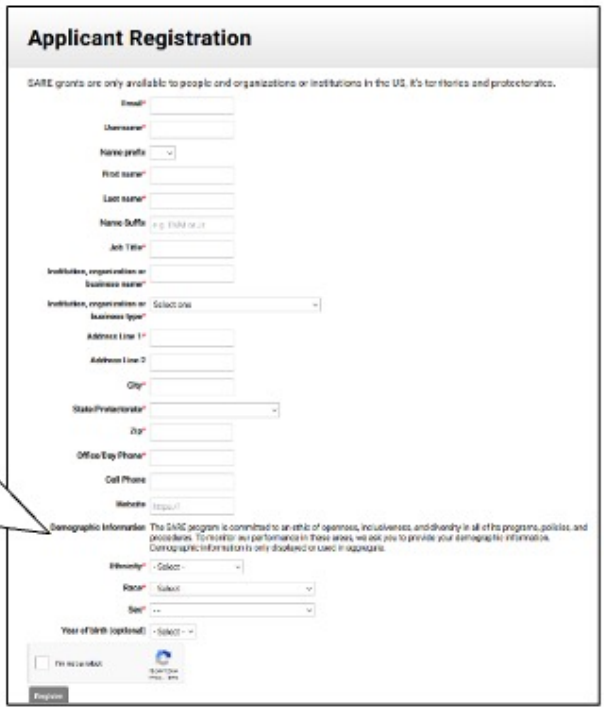


- Now we'll show a few of the screen shots from the online submission system so that you know what to expect. When you go to projects.sare.org, this is what you'll see.
- If you've never had a SARE grant before you will need to first create an account and complete your profile. Click on create account.
- 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.

Application

Demographic data is not tied to you application.

It is used for our improvement



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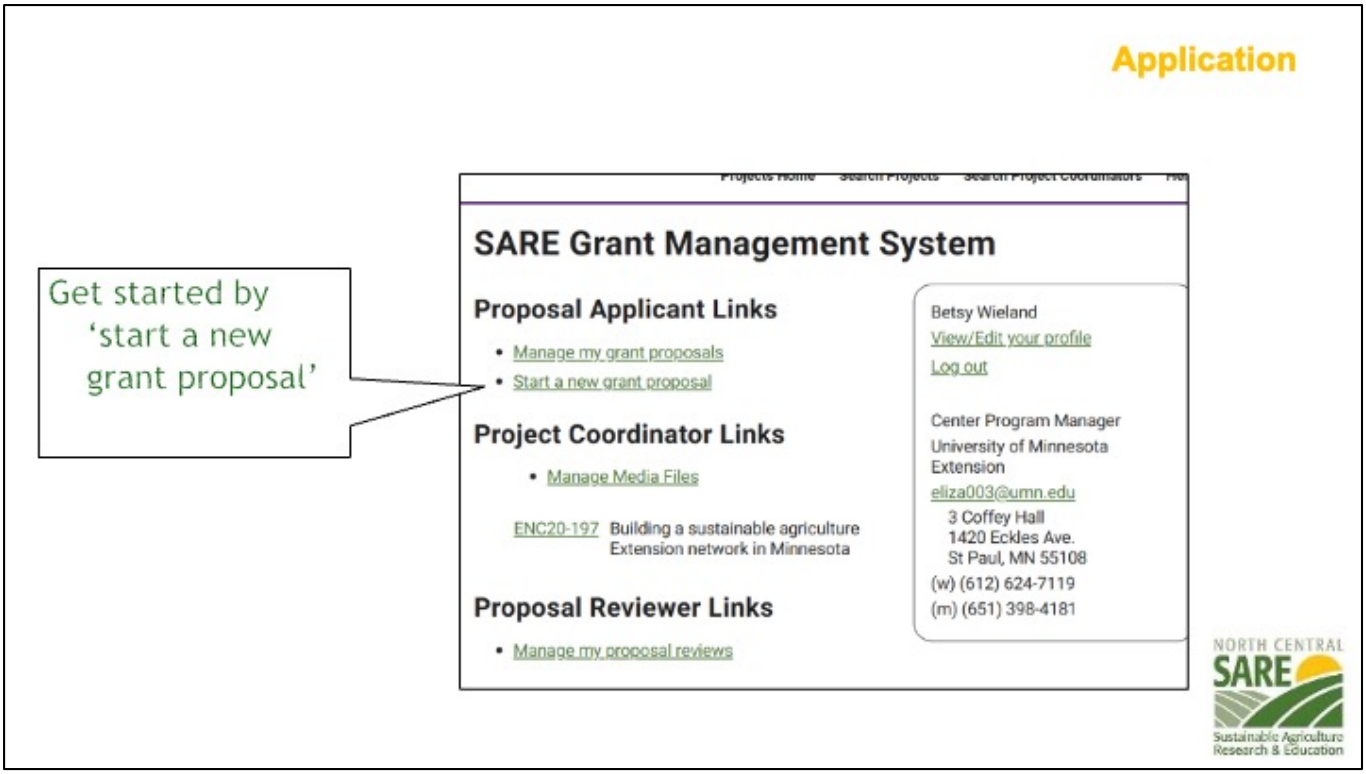
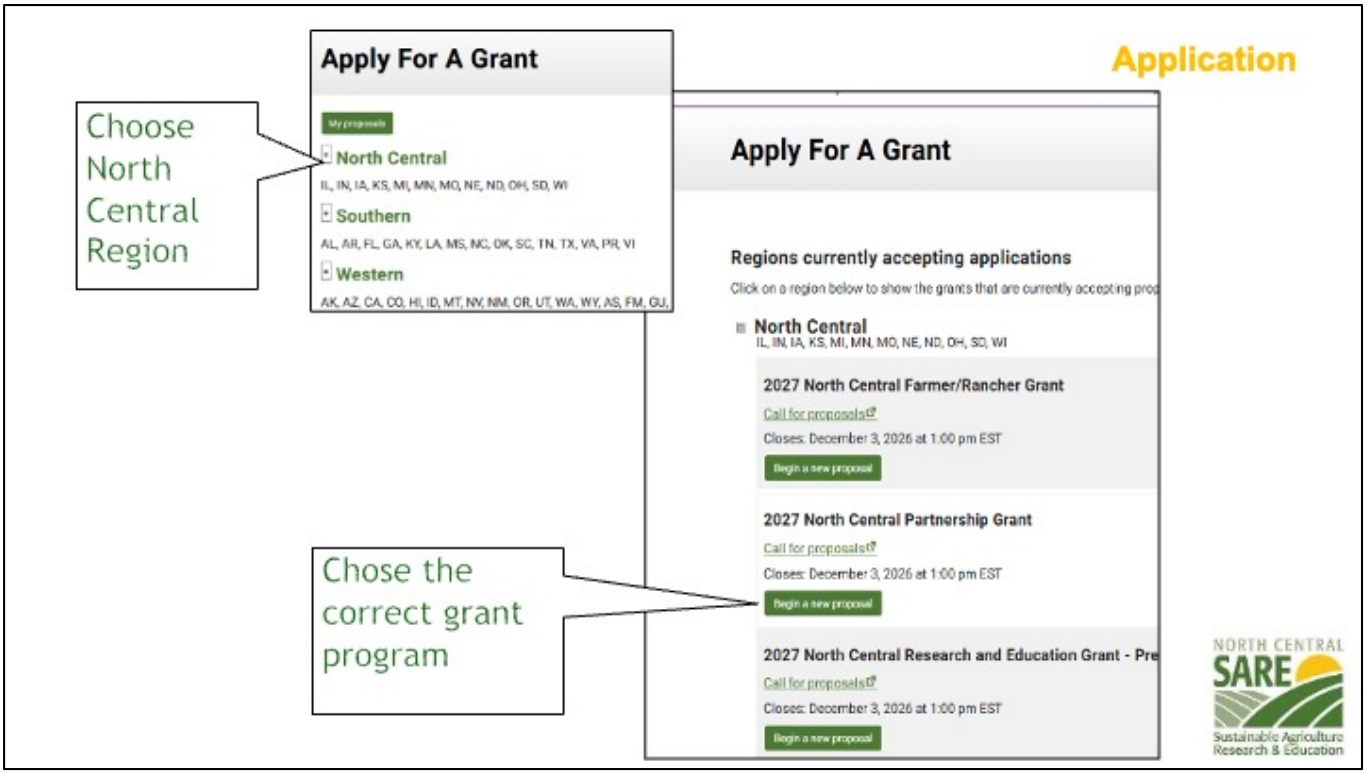
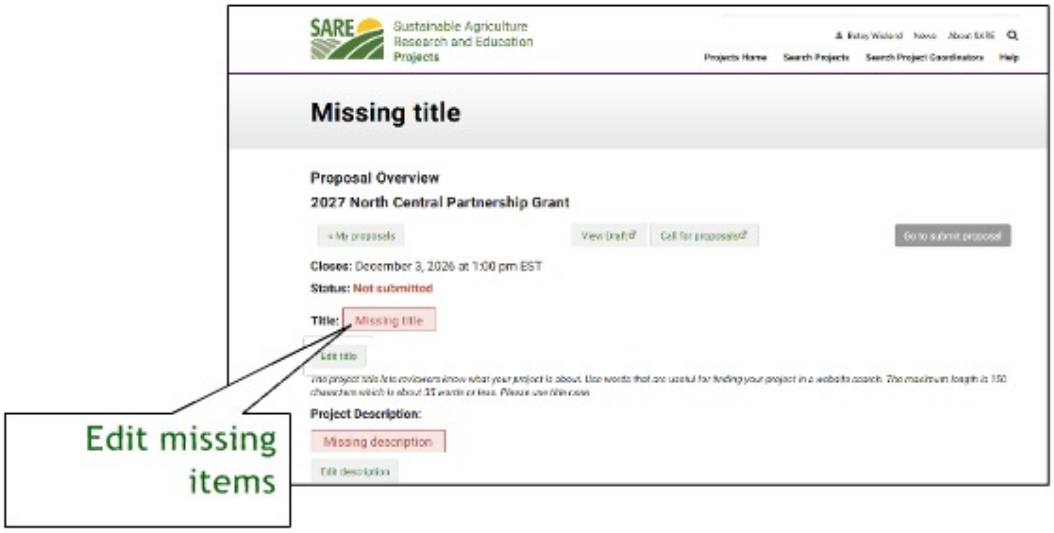


- Once you log in, you'll see this screen. Under projects, you'll see a list of all projects you've been associated with. Under the proposal Applicant Links, you'll see a link to manage applications. This is for you to edit proposals you've started but not submitted.
- Click on "Start a new grant proposal".



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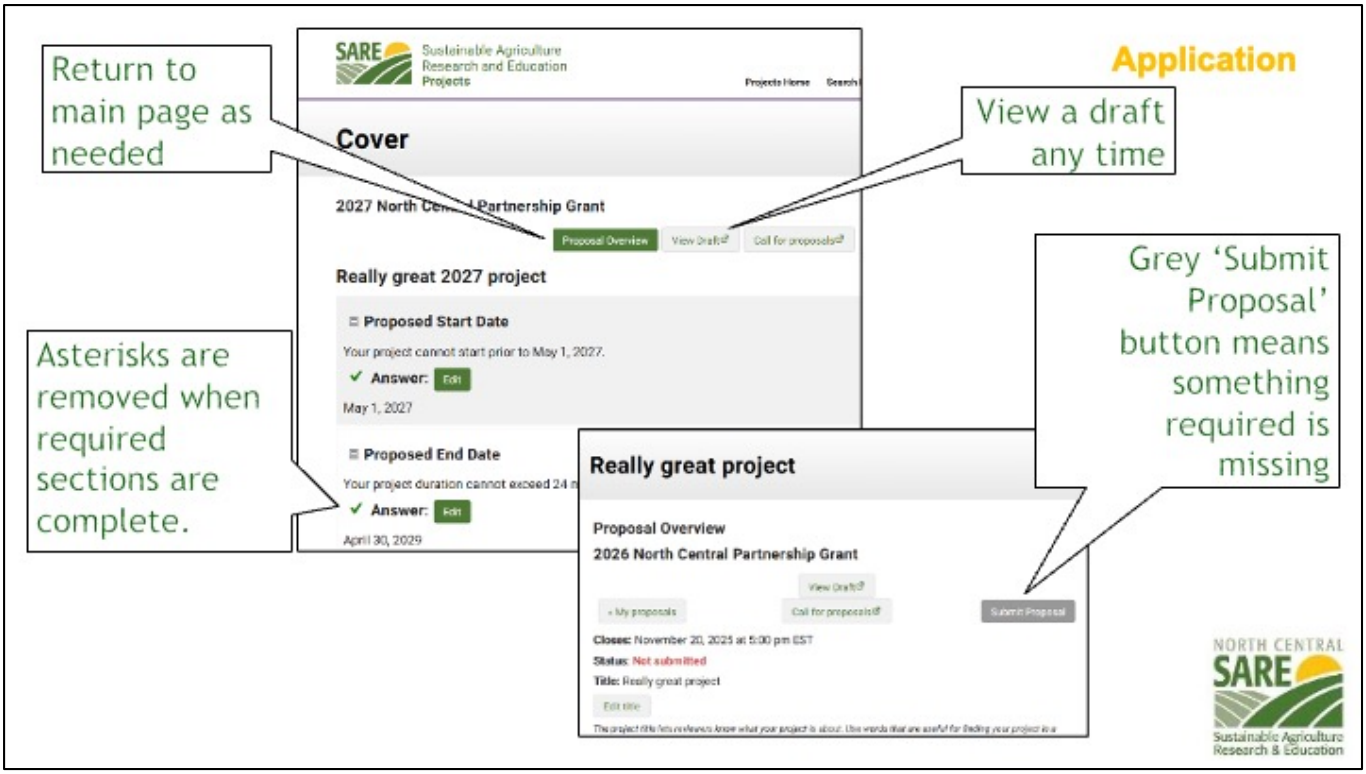
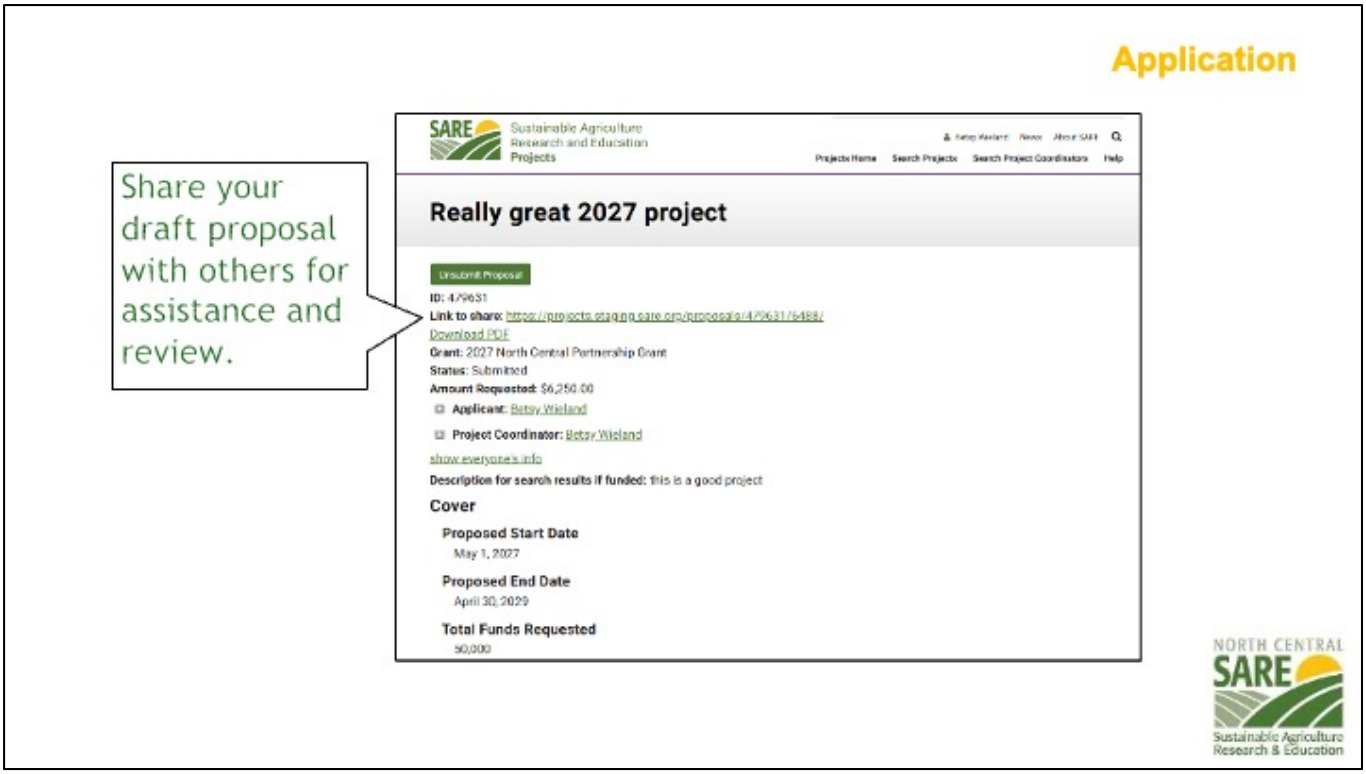
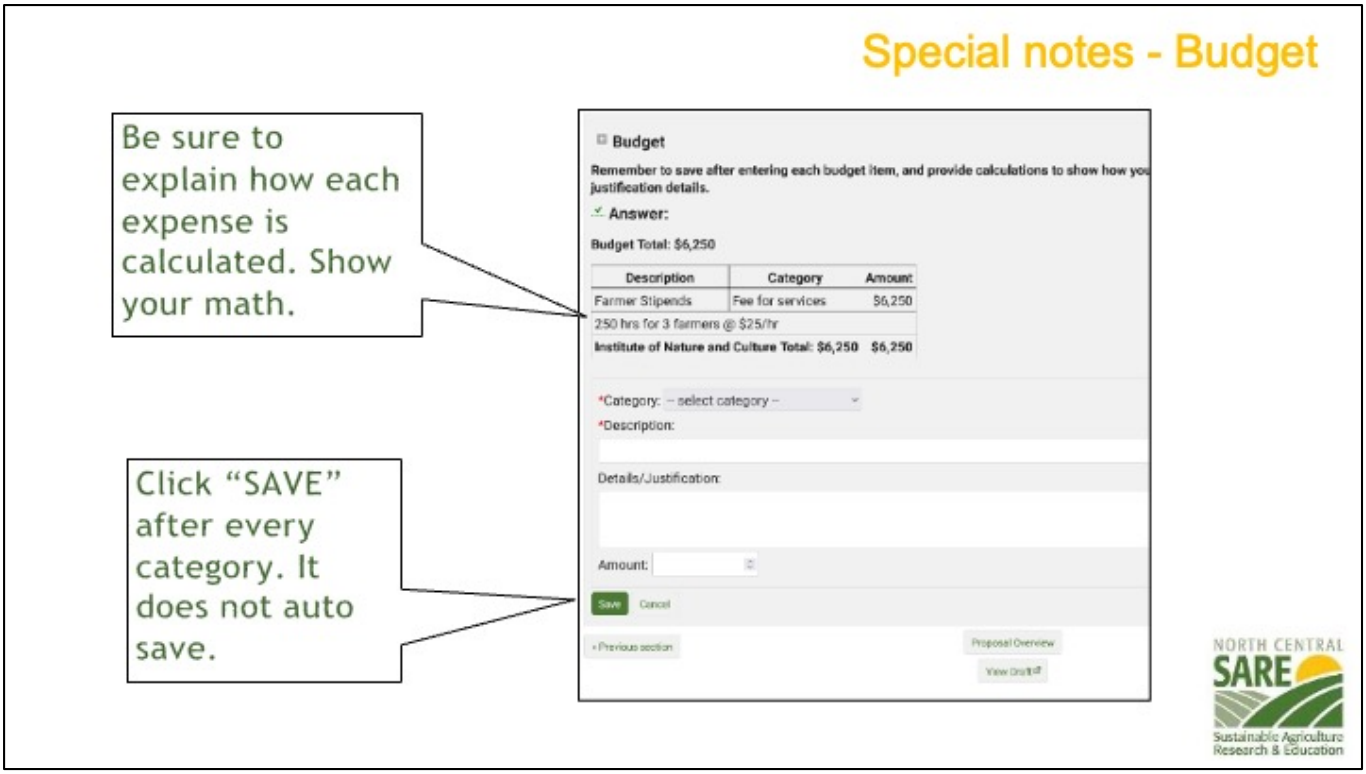
To begin, enter the title and brief project description (less than 150 characters). Then you can start on the various sections.



- 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.



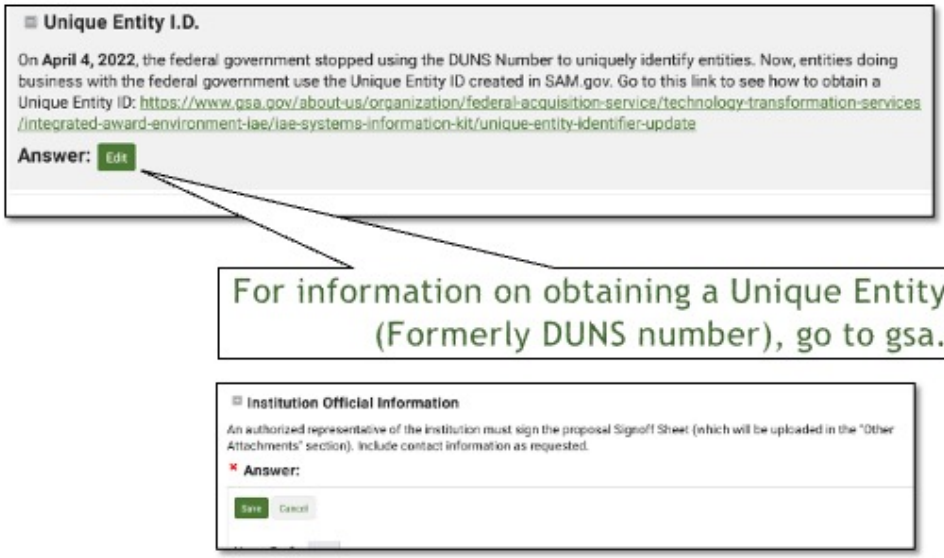
You can also share your draft with others before you submit.



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



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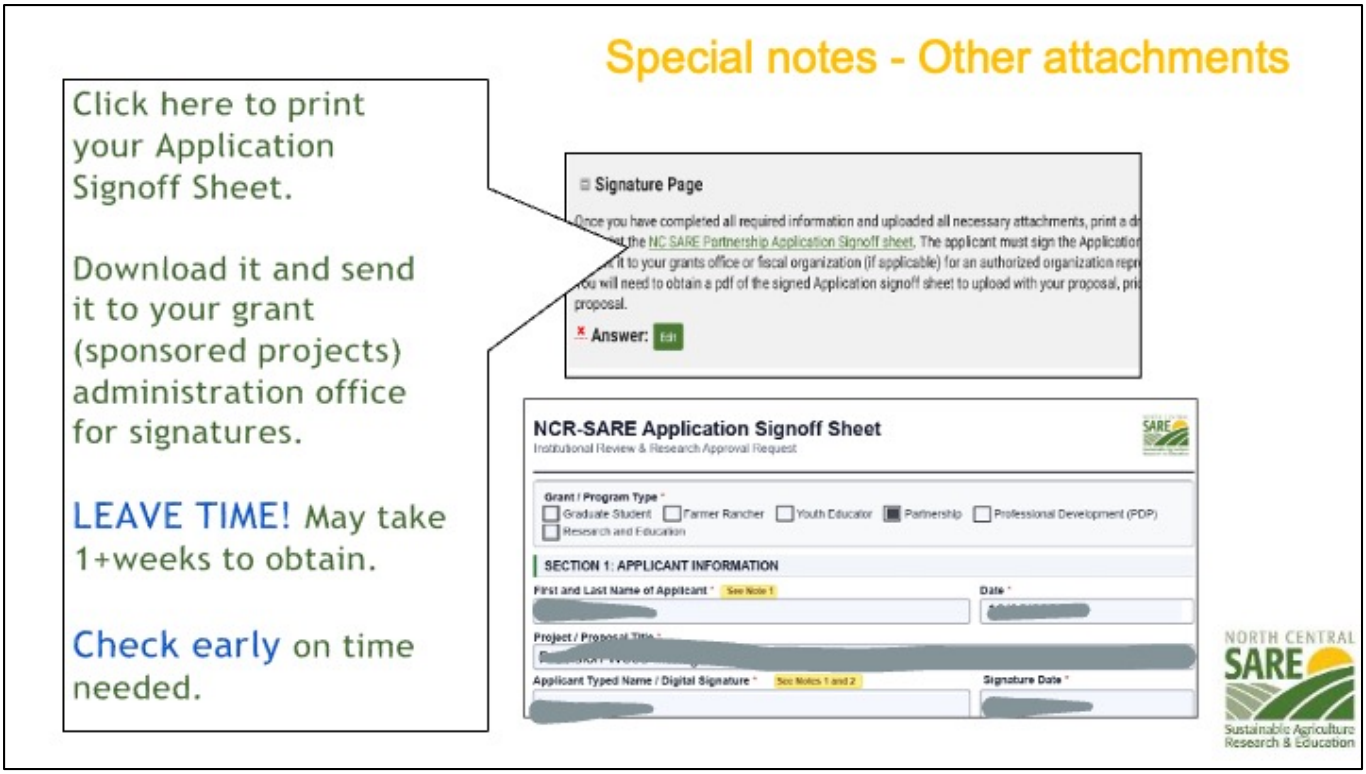


As part of the Other Attachments section,

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.

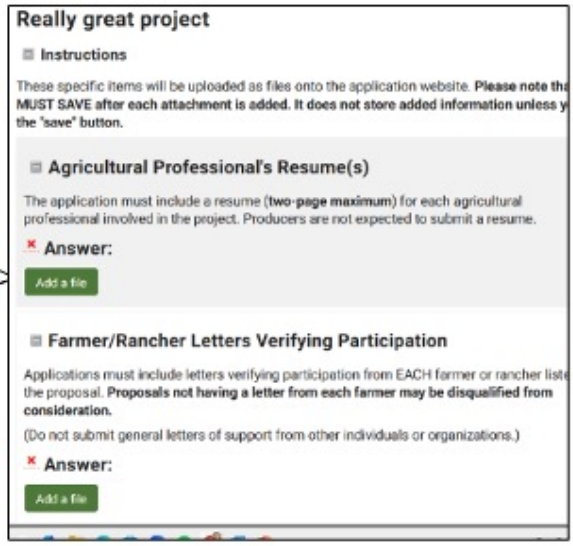
To create it, click on "Edit Answer" and you can download the applicant must Signoff Sheet.

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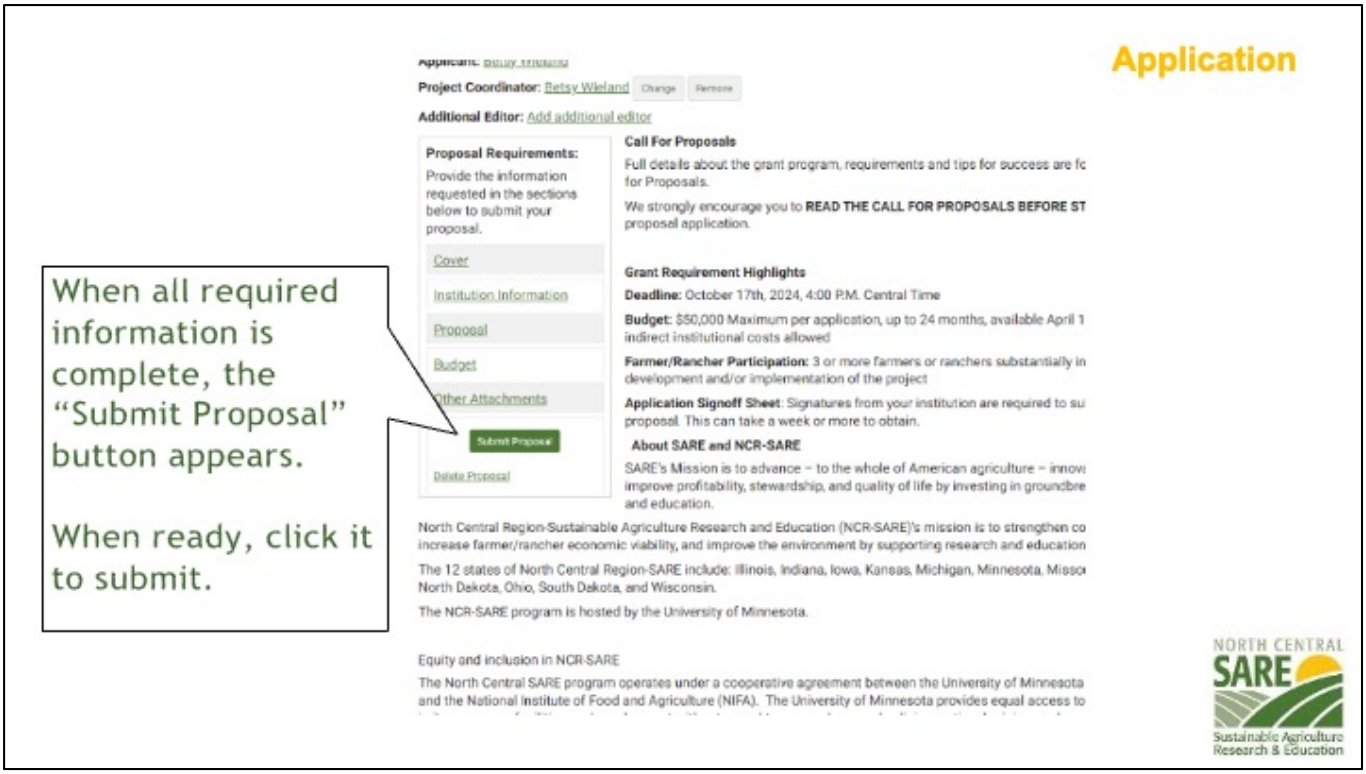
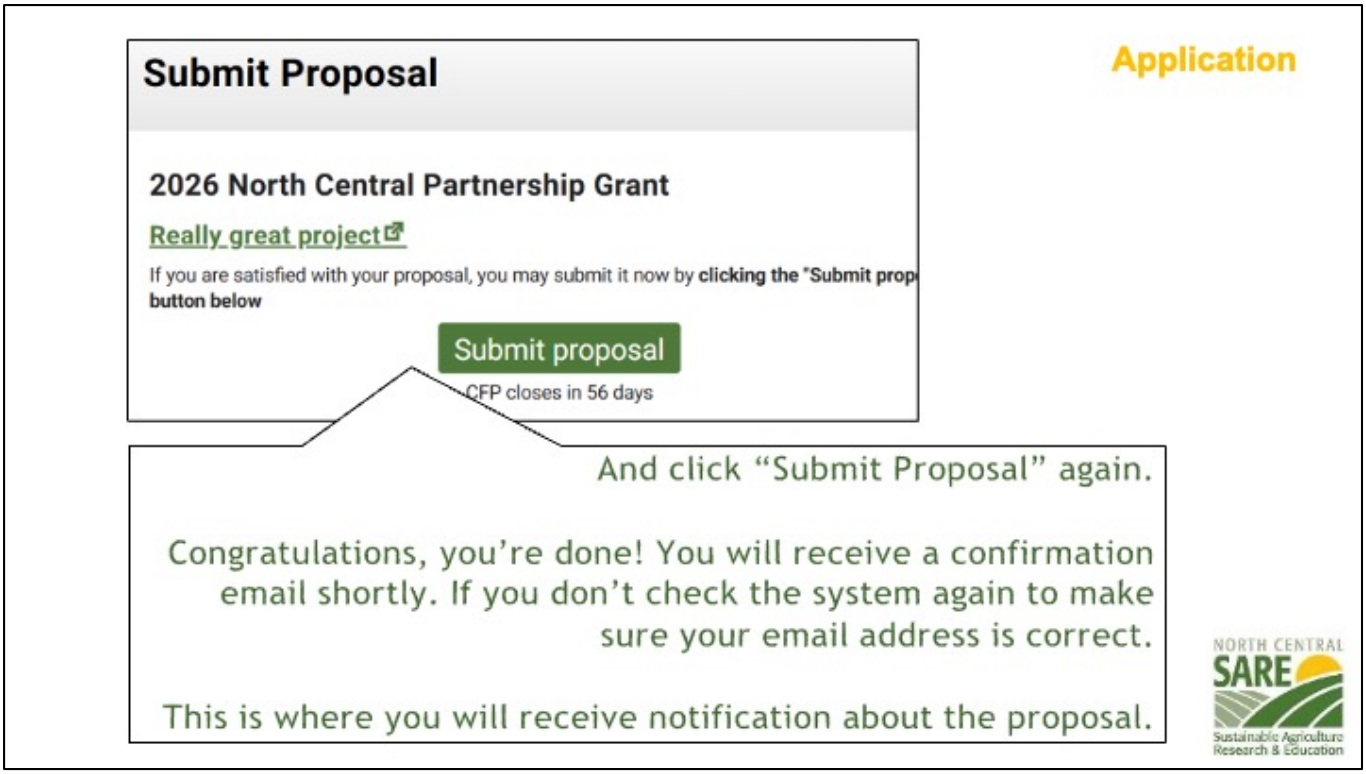
For Example, under Other Attachments, Include a resume for each agricultural professional involved in the project. Then include farmer/rancher letters from EACH farmer or rancher listed in the proposal verifying participation.

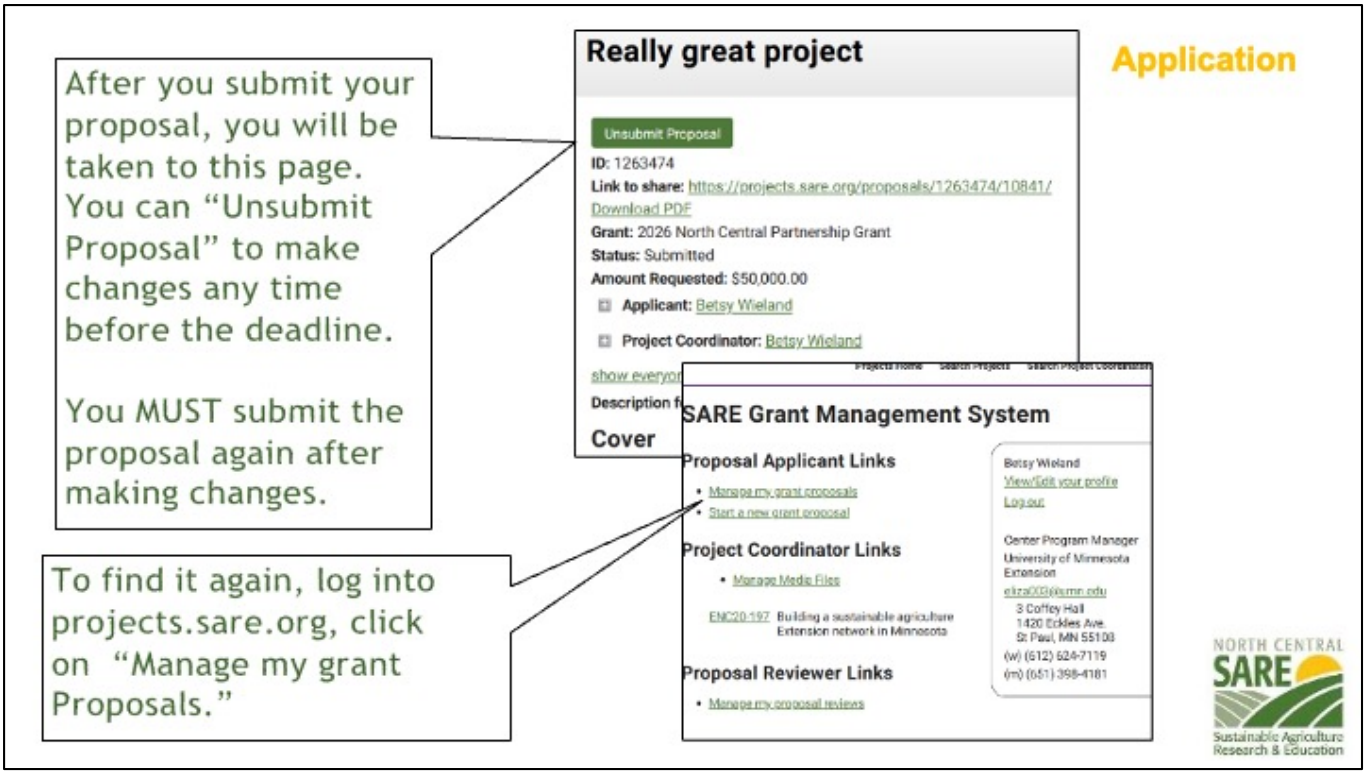


Once you have completed all required sections—the "submit proposal" button appears. If you don't see that button, you are still missing a required component. Check to make sure you've completed the project description and the title, which can often be overlooked.

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
- ❑ Search the SARE database for related projects
- ❑ Start drafting your proposal
- ❑ Set up an account on projects.sare.org
- ❑ Contact your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR)
- ❑ Try scoring your proposal
- ❑ Look for email confirmation after submitting
- ❑ 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

Questions and Discussion

NORTH CENTRAL SARE
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

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