NORTHEAST SARE
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

Graduate Student Research Grant Program
2021 Call for Proposals

Important Dates

The online system will open to accept proposals starting on: **March 2, 2021**

Proposals, with all required documents, are due no later than: **April 27, 2021, 5:00 p.m. ET**

> ### Proposals are submitted online at: projects.sare.org

Questions?

Visit the Northeast SARE website at: www.northeastsare.org/GraduateStudentGrant.

For questions about this call, contact Deb Heleba at: debra.heleba@uvm.edu or 802/651-8335 x552.

About Northeast SARE

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

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

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

Projects must take place in the Northeast region that includes:

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

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USDA United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

About the Northeast SARE Graduate Student Research Grant Program

Overview

Northeast SARE offers grants to graduate students to conduct research on topics specific to sustainable agriculture under the supervision of a faculty advisor. Proposals should address issues of current or potential importance to Northeast farmers, agricultural researchers, and farm support professionals like NRCS personnel, Extension educators, and nonprofit staff.

Projects may address a range of topics including, but not limited to, cropping systems, pest management, livestock health, social sustainability, soil quality, farm energy production, farm labor, urban agriculture, and the marketing of local agricultural products. They must also explore one or more of the sustainable agriculture themes of environmental stewardship, profitability, and quality of life for farmers and the farm community. We specifically seek projects that are both consistent with our outcome statement *(see page 1)* and address the program's review criteria *(listed on pages 10-13)*.

To understand the content, duration and complexity of proposals that reviewers expect, examples of funded Graduate Student Research Grant projects may be found at: projects.sare.org/search-projects/.

Eligible Applicants

This grant program is open to any graduate student enrolled at an accredited college, university, or veterinary school located in the Northeast region who is proposing to conduct research relevant to the farming community in our region. Proposals are limited to one per graduate student per year. An applicant may receive only one Northeast SARE Graduate Student Grant during the student's graduate program.

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

Proposals should be written you, the graduate student applicant. It must support your individual research effort and not a group project or team of researchers. While collaboration is encouraged, you, the graduate student applicant, are the manager and contact for the project. As such, you are expected to lead all aspects of the application and project. If funded, it is your responsibility to make sure the work proposed is completed and reports are filed in a timely fashion. If the project is part of a larger project or overall thesis, the portion of work proposed for SARE funds must be clearly identified in the proposal.

Northeast SARE will not fund proposals that appear to duplicate work that has been approved for funding by another grant program within or external to SARE. It is your responsibility to make clear to reviewers that any proposed work is unique, especially if it seems similar to work proposed to another grant program. The proposed work may build on or complement another project, but it must be clearly differentiated. If your SARE proposal is approved for funding and a proposal for the same work is also approved by an external grant program, then you must only accept funding from one source.

The proposal you submit will specify your faculty advisor. Should the proposal be funded, if either of you drop from the project prior to the award being made, the proposal will be withdrawn; it cannot be transferred to a different student or faculty member.

Projects must take place within the Northeast region that includes Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Vermont, and Washington, D.C.

Faculty Advisor Role

Because universities typically do not allow students to manage institutional grant awards, your faculty advisor will be named the principal investigator of the awarded grant. Your faculty advisor must endorse the proposal, oversee the research, and act as the official principal investigator; therefore, they must ensure the project and budgeted expenditures being proposed are acceptable. Their approval will be confirmed with the completion of a Grant Commitment Form attached to the application and by setting up an account in projects.sare.org. The proposal will not be moved forward to review without these elements.

Funding Available

Individual projects are capped at $15,000. There is approximately $400,000 available to fund projects for this cycle of the Graduate Student Research Grant program; we estimate that around 25 projects will be awarded.

Project Duration

Typical project length is 2 years. All projects must be completed by November 30, 2024.

Conflict of Interest

Members of the Northeast SARE Administrative Council, SARE staff, and SARE State Coordinators are not permitted to be funded or named in proposals submitted to this grant program. Members of proposal review teams are not permitted to discuss or vote on proposals that involve organizations they work for, organizations for which they serve as board member or adviser, former graduate student advisees, or close personal friends.

Public Domain

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

Acknowledging SARE

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

Use of Funds

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

Eligible Expenses

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

- **Labor**, including wages or salary and benefits, for the student or other individuals working on the project;
- **Supplies**, including copies, research supplies, outreach materials, program participation incentives (when used to compensate for participation in research), and software;
- Farm equipment **rental or operating charges;**
- **Equipment** that is necessary for, and unique to, the project. Equipment with general uses are not eligible;
- **Travel and per diem necessary for the project**;
- **Journal publication fees** so long as they are incurred during the contract period; and
- **Indirect costs** up to 10 percent of total grant request.

Ineligible Expenses

Funds may NOT be used for:

- **Costs associated with preparing a thesis**;
- **Purchase of classroom texts**;
- **Incentive offers and promotional items**, including items of clothing (hats, tee shirts, aprons, etc.), swag, giveaways, subsidies, raffles, and branded material;
- **Travel to scholarly meetings** unless essential to the project, such as presentation of project results;
- **International travel** unless integral to the project's success and described in the budget justification (Note: There are certain restrictions on costs and carriers);
- **Capital costs**, including any purchase of land, buildings, livestock, orchards, greenhouses, and other major farm or laboratory improvements;
- Purchase of **motorized vehicles** and **equipment** used for normal operations;
- **Cell phone charges**, even if you use your cell phone in the course of the project;
- **Food expenses** unless necessary for the continuity of a training event or project meeting; and
- **Expenses outside of the grant period**. SARE cannot pay for expenses incurred before the award start date or after the end date on the grant contract.

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

Grant Timeline

Online system opens for proposal submissions...March 2, 2021

Online submission deadline...**April 27, 2021, 5:00 p.m. ET**

Review of proposals ....May to July 2021

Northeast SARE Administrative Council makes final selections ....July 2021

Award decisions announced to applicants...late July 2021

Contract start date for awarded projects ....August 1, 2021

Preparing Your Proposal

Advanced Planning

You will submit your proposal online at: **projects.sare.org**. Please prepare your proposal well in advance of the deadline. Most sponsored programs or grant support offices need two to four two weeks to review and approve proposals, so confirm the policies at your institution and plan accordingly. Note that a completed Grant Commitment Form is required at the time of submission – it must be signed by you, your faculty advisor, and an authorized official at your institution before it is submitted as an attachment to your proposal.

All required documents must be included with your online proposal by the deadline; incomplete proposals will not be reviewed.

Text Limits, Formatting, and Writing Suggestions

We highly recommend you prepare your questions offline, completing your responses per the instructions that follow and then copying and pasting your responses into the online system. To that end, we have posted a Word document of the proposal questions at: www.northeastsare.org/GradStudentPrepDoc. This document is provided for your convenience for proposal development only and is **not** intended as a substitute for the application itself.

There are word limits for most sections of the proposal. When you develop the proposal content offline, be sure that it is accurate and complies with the word limits. Depending on the word processor used, your word count may differ from the online submission system and additional editing may be necessary after pasting into the online system.

Note that when word count limits are exceeded in the online submission system, the word count font changes to red and you will not be able to save your answer until the word count is at or below the limit. Also note that copying and pasting from some word processing programs may result in the loss of formatting; make any formatting corrections within the online system. Figures, tables, and other supporting graphics are allowed only in specified sections.

Keep your writing clear and simple. Avoid jargon and write for a mixed audience that includes farmers, researchers, Extension staff, and other agricultural service providers. You can assume grant reviewers have agricultural knowledge, but may not necessarily have deep expertise in your subject area.

Consider asking a friend or colleague to read your proposal. A fresh set of eyes can help you identify sections that are unclear or need corrections. Reviewers look less favorably on proposals that have careless errors or are confusing. Make sure your faculty advisor reads your proposal so they are fully informed when they sign the Grant Commitment Form.

Proposal Outline / Checklist

Components of the proposal and their word limits appear below, listed in the order they appear in the online system within section headings. You may use the outline as a checklist to ensure your proposal is complete before submitting.

Items with an asterisk (*) are required documents that need to be uploaded with your proposal. Proposals with missing or incomplete required documents will not advance to grant review.

- ❑ Project Title (150-character limit, including spaces)
- ❑ Project Description (300-character limit, including spaces)
- ❑ Faculty Advisor

Graduate Student Applicant Information

- ❑ Graduate Student Degree Sought
- ❑ College Program/Department
- ❑ Expected Date of Graduation

Proposal Information

- ❑ Project Start Date
- ❑ Project End Date
- ❑ State
- ❑ Primary Commodities
- ❑ Primary Practices
- ❑ Primary Benefits and Impacts
- ❑ Does this project involve research with animals?
- ❑ Does this project involve human subjects research?
- ❑ Project Abstract (250-word limit)

Introduction

- ❑ Statement of the Problem and Rationale (500-word limit)
- ❑ Justification of Need (500-word limit)

Plan of Work

- ❑ Objectives (400-word limit)
- ❑ Materials and Methods (2,000-word limit)
- ❑ Outreach Plan (500-word limit)
- ❑ Timeline (500-word limit)

Project Team

- ❑ Key Individuals (500-word limit)
- ❑ *Letters of Commitment, if applicable (file upload, PDF format)

Previous Work

- ❑ Literature Review (500-word limit)
- ❑ Citation List (2,000-word limit)

Budget

- ❑ *Budget Justification and Narrative Template (file upload in .xlsx format)
- ❑ Budget Summary

Host Institution Approval

- ❑ *Grant Commitment Form (file upload, PDF format)
- ❑ Institutional Official Contact Information
- ❑ FDP Clearinghouse Information

Supporting Materials

If your project involves collaborators—including farmers cooperators in your research—you must include a Letter of Commitment from each collaborator (saved as a single PDF) that describes their role and commitment to the project.

In the Materials and Methods section, you may also upload supporting documents that add specificity and clarity; these may include plot plans for field experiments, draft survey or evaluation instruments, an explanation of statistical design, or perhaps diagrams or photographs of project components that are otherwise difficult to explain.

Do not attach letters of general support from people who are not direct participants, curriculum vitae, or a letter from your faculty advisor. If provided, these documents will not move forward in the review.

SARE's Online Submission System

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

The online submission system will be open to accept Graduate Student Research Grant proposals from March 2, 2021 until the deadline, **5:00 p.m. ET on Tuesday, April 27, 2021.** Staff are available to answer questions and address technical submission issues until 5:00 p.m. ET on the due date. Proposals submitted after 5:00 p.m. ET on April 27 will not be accepted. We strongly suggest you submit your proposal well in advance of the deadline in the unlikely event you experience technical issues that take time to resolve.

The proposal must be submitted by you, the grant applicant, and not your faculty advisor or other individual.

Getting a User Account

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

If you have previously received SARE grants and submitted reports, you are registered as a user in the system and should use your account to submit your proposal. Once logged in, be sure to update your account profile.

If either you or your faculty advisor have incomplete account profiles, you will not be able to submit your proposal. Here, the online submission system will show a message next to either or both your and your advisor's name that says, "Missing contact information. <Individual's Name> must log in and update their profile before application can be submitted."

Logging In

From the SARE Grant Management System landing page at: projects.sare.org, select **"Log in."** Once logged in, select **"Start a new grant proposal."** Grant opportunities for all four SARE regions will be listed; scroll down until you see "**Northeast**" and click the "+" button. Under "**2021 Northeast SARE Graduate Student Grants**", choose "**Begin a New Proposal**."

Entering Your Proposal

Start the proposal by clicking "**Edit Title**" and entering a clear, succinct title of under 150 characters (including spaces) that captures the essence of the project's intent. Avoid acronyms, jargon or unnecessary words.

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

The **"Graduate Student"** field should list you, the graduate student, as the applicant.

Next, the "**Faculty Advisor**" field defaults to "none" so you will click "**Change**". Select "**No**" to the question, "**Will [your name] will be the project's Faculty Advisor?**" Enter your faculty advisor's email address. If they are already in the system, your faculty advisor's information will auto-populate and you can select "Save". If they are not in the system, enter their first and last name, title and institution.

Note: Your faculty advisor must update their profile with the required contact and demographic data before you can submit your proposal application to the online system.

Be sure to click "**Save**" after each entry.

Next, complete the proposal sections. Click on each section and submit responses to the questions. To enter information, click "**Edit Answer**" for each question and be sure to click "**Save**" after each entry. See the Step-by-step instructions that follow for more guidance on these sections.

At any time during the writing of your proposal, you may preview a draft from the **Proposal Overview Page** by clicking "**View Draft**". Once there, you can also share the draft of your proposal with your advisor and other collaborators by either sending the "**Link to Share**" found at the top of the draft page (after clicking **View Draft**) or by creating and sending a PDF of the proposal.

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

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

Step-by-Step Instructions

The proposal is divided into sections that contain multiple questions. Instructions for questions within all sections are presented below. Review criteria appear next to their associated questions throughout the proposal.

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

Graduate Student Applicant Information

Graduate Student Degree Sought. Use drop-down menu to select type of degree.

College Program/Department. Enter as text.

Expected Date of Graduation. Enter as text.

Proposal Information

Project Start Date: Choose a start date from the calendar pop-up. Contract start dates will be August 1, 2021 but projects may begin after that date. Note: SARE cannot pay for expenses incurred before the contract start date.

Project End Date: Choose an end data from the calendar pop-up. All projects must be completed by November 30, 2024.

State: Select the state where the majority of the work will be carried out, i.e., the primary location of the grant activities. Usually this is the home state of the institution.

Primary Commodities: Choose only the primary production commodities being addressed or investigated by the project, not every commodity that might potentially be affected. If your project is not commodity-specific, select "Does not apply to specific commodities".

Primary Practices: Choose only the primary production practices being addressed or investigated by the project, not every practice that might potentially be affected.

Primary Benefits and Impacts: Of the choices listed, how will your project have the most benefit and impact?

Does this project involve research with animals? Please answer either yes or no. If your project is funded and involves vertebrate animals, SARE will require certification of protocol review from an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Federal animal welfare regulations require that all activities involving the use of live vertebrate animals used or intended for use in research, research training, experimentation, biological testing or for related purposes are reviewed to ensure animal welfare and humane care.

Does this project involve human subjects research? Please answer either yes or no. If your project is funded and involves human research subjects, SARE will need a completed approval document from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Protection of Human Subjects in Research.

Project Abstract (250-word limit): This is a standalone summary of the project. It should briefly describe the issue, the project objective(s), key components of your study's plan of work, and outreach strategy. Since the abstract is the first thing reviewers will see, take some time to make it clear and compelling. You may want to compose the abstract after you have written the rest of your proposal.

Introduction

Description of the Problem (500-word limit). Explain the issue being addressed, why it is important, and how your project will contribute to agricultural sustainability.

Begin with, "The purpose of this project is to..." Describe how your inquiry will advance current knowledge in a way that will have a positive effect on sustainable agriculture.

Review criteria: The issue and its importance is clearly described. Addressing it will clearly enhance the sustainability of a specific group of farmers or the farming community in the Northeast. The proposal addresses Northeast SARE's outcome statement and at least one of the following key themes in sustainable agriculture:

- Reduction of environmental and/or health risks in agriculture;
- Improved productivity, reduction of costs and/or the increase of net farm income;
- Conservation of soil, the improvement of water quality, and protection of natural resources;
- Enhancement of employment in farm communities; and
- Improvement of quality of life for farmers, their employees, and the farm community.

Justification of Need (500-word limit). Explain how the approach explores new territory and builds on prior work. Provide evidence of a demonstrated need for your project on the part of farmers or the wider agricultural community, and describe how potential results could be used by farmers.

If possible, quantify the economic, social and/or environmental impacts of the problem and the research potential.

If your research is not directly applicable to farmers, tell us how it will result in benefits for farmers. If your project is part of a larger research program, describe how your proposed work will contribute to the overall goals of that effort.

Review criteria: The proposed project clearly explains how it will contribute new information that will directly benefit farmers or the farming community in the Northeast. Clear evidence is provided of a demonstrated need on the part of farmers and/or the wider agricultural community.

Plan of Work

Objectives (400-word limit). Please use a numbered list of project objectives. If your project is part of a larger research program, please only list the objectives that this proposal will address.

Outreach activities should be listed here *only* if they are part of the research. Generally, recommendations and sharing of project results are not considered objectives and should be described in the outreach section.

Materials and Methods (2,000-word limit). Number each approach and method according to each corresponding objective, providing a succinct description of the methods to be used.

Describe what you will measure and how, your experimental design, and explain how the methods used will address the problem. Describe how plot sizes, replications, controls, surveys, interviews, focus groups, or other project elements are likely to yield meaningful information. Clearly define your response variables and, if appropriate, be sure to consult with a statistician while developing your experimental design.

You may supply supporting documents that add specificity and clarity; these may include plot plans for field experiments, draft survey or evaluation instruments, an explanation of statistical design, or perhaps diagrams or photographs of project components that are otherwise difficult to explain. Use the "**Add Media**" button to insert images or upload a PDF.

Outreach Plan (500-word limit). Effective outreach is key to long-term impact. Provide a thoughtful outreach plan for sharing project information and results. List specific outreach events and publications (other than your thesis) you will offer and who will benefit from these activities.

The audience for the outreach plan will differ for different projects. For some projects, outreach to other researchers and Extension personnel will be sufficient while, for others, outreach directly to farmers is more appropriate. Discuss the potential for further outreach to farmers for practical application once the research concepts have been developed.

Timeline (500-word limit). Provide a clear timeline of the research and outreach activities you will accomplish in this proposal. Keep in mind that SARE funds will not cover any work prior to August 1, 2021.

To give context of how your project may fit into a larger research program, you may include in the timeline, "PRE" to describe efforts that occurred previous to the application; "DURING" to describe work to be conducted in this proposal; and "POST" to describe planned activities after the end date of this project.

Project Team

Key Individuals (500-word limit). Briefly describe your experience relative to the project, your role in the project, and how the project relates to your thesis or dissertation. Then describe your faculty advisor's role, background and expertise.

If applicable, identify and describe any collaborators with whom you will work--you will also need to provide letters of commitment from them, see below. Descriptions should include name, title, business or organization, skills, relevant experience, and role with the project.

Describe any other sources of funding that will support this project or that this project builds upon (do not include them in budget section of the application).

Be sure to describe your access to the required resources to carry out this work, such as labs, equipment, greenhouses, field plots, etc. This is the place to convince reviewers that you and your team have the capacity to conduct a successful project.

Review criteria: The applicant and their faculty advisor have been described and demonstrate they have the capacity and experience to conduct the project. Additional collaborators are described if applicable. Necessary facilities and equipment are available to carry out the project.

Letters of Commitment (file upload). If your project involves collaborators (including farmers as cooperators in your research), you must include a letter from each collaborator that describes their role and commitment to the project. Letters should be written by the individual team members (not you) and addressed to you as the project leader.

Do **not** upload: A letter from your faculty advisor (unnecessary since they sign the Grant Commitment Form), letters of general support from individuals not directly involved in the project, curricula vitae, and sample promotional materials about your institution. If provided, these documents will not move forward in the review.

Review criteria: If the project involves collaborators, signed letters of commitment from collaborators (including farmers) have been uploaded.

Previous Work

Literature Review (500-word limit). Outline the scientific foundation and merits of your project and identify and explain the references used to understand the problems, challenges, opportunities, and current knowledge associated with the project. Include only those sources that are most relevant to your proposed work.

This section is the place to convince reviewers that there is a body of knowledge that provides a compelling rationale for the project.

Review criteria: Previous relevant work is described, is compelling, and is directly connected to the proposed project.

Citation List (2,000-word limit). Provide a list of citations referenced in the literature review and elsewhere in your proposal. Include only those citations directly related to the proposed project. Use the citation style with which you are familiar (APA, Tri-Societies, Chicago, etc.).

Review criteria: A citation list is provided with relevant references included.

Budget

A detailed description and justification of the budget is necessary to establish the specifics of your request for funding. All expected expenses should be itemized in the Budget Justification and Narrative. Calculate your costs as precisely as possible to show reviewers what funds are needed to carry out your project, and why they are needed.

The budget should be realistic and complete. A budget lacking sufficient detail, containing grossly over- or under-estimated expenses, or including unallowable expenses may decrease the chances for funding.

See the Appendix for a sample Budget Justification and Narrative and Budget Summary.

Budget Justification and Narrative Spreadsheet (file upload).

Download and complete the Northeast SARE Budget Justification and Narrative Template (Excel spreadsheet) provided at: www.northeastsare.org/GraduateStudentGrant.

Use only the funding categories provided in the template (i.e., personnel, materials and supplies, travel, publications/printing, and other direct costs), adding rows or expanding row heights as needed to accommodate your narrative and justification. For all items, give brief but clear descriptions of their purposes. Justify each expense with narrative description. Itemize all expected expenses and calculate their costs as precisely as possible. Include the quantity and per-unit cost of each expense and let the formulas in the template calculate the totals.

Use the spreadsheet as given, do not add extra worksheets. For multiple year budgets, record expenses by year if necessary (for example, personel costs by year may be recorded on separate lines).

Take time to calculate your expenses for this project—the budget submitted is what reviewers will consider and requests for changes after submission may not be approved. Only include funds requested from SARE in this budget justification.

When complete, upload the Excel file (do not convert to a PDF format) to the online application system.

Budget Summary

Enter the summed subtotals for each major budget category from the completed Budget Justification and Narrative into the Budget Summary. Click "**Add a budget item**" and select the appropriate funding category (i.e., personnel, materials and supplies, travel, printing and publication costs, other direct costs, subawards, and indirect costs). In the "**Item Description**" box, type "**See budget narrative**".

Skip and leave the "**Details/Justification**" section blank as that information has been provided in the completed Budget Justification and Narrative spreadsheet.

Click on "**Add another budget item**" to enter summed subtotals for more categories.

The total in your Budget Summary is the proposal amount requested so be sure that it matches the total in your Budget Justification and Narrative spreadsheet. If an application is approved for funding with different numbers in the submission system as compared to the spreadsheet, it will be up to reviewers to determine which number is appropriate.

Commitment of Organization

Grant Commitment Form (file upload). This form certifies that you have received approval from your advisor and an authorized official at your institution. Print out the Grant Commitment Form at: www.northeastsare.org/GraduateStudentGrant. The form must be signed by you as the applicant, your faculty advisor as the principal investigator, and an authorized official at your institution.

We require that the form be completed and uploaded at the time of application, so be sure to bring it to your institution's grants office well before the application deadline. You may share your proposal with your institution's authorized official by clicking on "View Draft" and printing the proposal or by sharing the proposal by providing the "Link to Share" URL.

Upload a PDF or image copy of the completed, fully officiated Grant Commitment Form

Next, enter the information from the form into the following two question fields.

Institutional Official. Provide the name and contact information of the authorized official for this proposal.

FDP Clearinghouse. Check the response to the question, "Is this institution registered in the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) Expanded Clearinghouse?" This information will most likely be provided by your authorized official and "Yes" or "No" will be indicated on your completed Grant Commitment Form. A list of participating organizations can be found at: fdpclearinghouse.org/organizations. It is not necessary to be part of FDP. If your project is awarded, this information will be used for contracting.

Funded Proposals

Proposals are evaluated, based on the criteria listed in the instructions above, by independent review teams made up of farmers, researchers, and agricultural service providers from across the region. Grants are awarded by Northeast SARE's Administrative Council based on the review team rankings. The Administrative Council may give additional consideration to states, audiences and topics that are underrepresented in Northeast SARE's portfolio. If the Northeast SARE Administrative Council selects your project for funding, you may expect the following.

Notification

The Northeast SARE Administrative Council will select applications for funding by the end of July 2021 and SARE staff will notify applicants of the status of their proposals soon after that.

Contracting and Disbursement of Funds

Graduate Student Research Grants are awarded to your host institution with your faculty advisor acting as the principal investigator. The Sponsored Programs Office or Authorized Representative of the grant recipient will receive a Subcontract Agreement from the University of Vermont, the host institution for Northeast SARE. Funds are to be used exclusively for your project, outlined in your budget narrative and subject to the restrictions outlined in "Use of Funds." Funds are released on a reimbursement basis to the institution in response to invoices from the institution's financial office. Northeast SARE will hold the last 20 percent of the award until your final project report has been received and approved. For more information on grant management, please refer to Manage Your Graduate Student Grant at: northeast.sare.org/grants/manage-a-grant/manage-your-graduate-student-grant/.

IACUC and IRB Documentation

If your project is funded and involves research with animals, SARE will require certification of protocol review from your university's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC).

If your project is funded and involves human research subjects, SARE will need a completed approval document from your institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Protection of Human Subjects in Research.

Documentation of the review determination must be provided to Northeast SARE before research funds are released.

Required Reporting

Northeast SARE requires annual progress reports and a comprehensive final report for all projects. All reports will be submitted in our online system using our reporting template. Reports should describe the progress made on the project, detail the findings observed, and document any outputs and impacts. All outreach and educational activities should be reported as well as any measured changes in knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes, and/or the adoption of new practices or approaches. Publications, educational tools, and outreach materials developed with SARE funds should include SARE acknowledgement and be uploaded to the online system. Photos should be included to help document the project.

Progress reports for the previous calendar year are due by January 15 each year the project is active and final reports are due within 60 days of the project's end date. The final report should include full, detailed results of project activities that were defined in the proposal, regardless of pending submissions or published journal articles.

It is useful to review SARE logic models and be familiar with performance indicators that will be evaluated as part of grantee and post-project reporting. SARE logic models provide a description of the resources, activities, outputs, and outcomes of the program. For more information, please visit: www.northeastsare.org/logicmodels.

Northeast SARE asks that grant recipients provide contact information for at least two years after the project has ended to allow for follow-up and response to inquiries about the project.

Resources

The following resources may help you as plan and write your application.

- Tips for writing a strong proposal are available at: www.northeastsare.org/graduatestudentgrant.

- Visit the national Grant Management System to learn about past funded projects. Go to: projects.sare.org/search-projects and select "Northeast" region and "Graduate Student" project types.

- The Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC) at the National Agricultural Library specializes in identifying resources about sustainable food systems and practices: www.nal.usda.gov/afsic. Information specialists can share resources and search techniques that may be relevant to your proposal.

Appendix: Budget Guidance--Explanation of Budget Categories and Items to Include

Personnel Costs

Show personnel costs – your time or the time of other key employees – as an hourly rate multiplied by anticipated time needed to complete the project, or, if salaried, the percentage of time (FTE) and salary rate. There is also a separate line in the personnel section for fringe benefits which should be calculated as a percentage of the salary or wage amounts.

Only people employed by your organization should be listed in this section. Those employed elsewhere should be listed under "Other direct costs" or, if individuals are to be paid by another organization via a subaward, they should be included in a separately detailed subaward budget -- the subaward total should be listed below under "Subawards" in "Other direct costs". Use your timeline section to help you estimate the hours worked.

Non-Personnel Costs

Non-personnel expense categories include: materials and supplies, travel, publications/printing, and other direct costs (communications, photocopying, consultant/speaker/trainer fees, services, conferences/meetings/workshops, trainee support, off-site office rental, purchase of equipment, rental of equipment or land-use charges, and other). Under each category, name each expense, provide narrative justifications of the expense, and provide information on units, quantities, and per unit costs. See "Use of Funds" (page 4) for a general list of allowable and ineligible expenses.

Materials and Supplies. This section is for items that are specific to the project and have a reasonable useful life of less than three years. Supplies can include items such as project-specific software, specialized tools, measuring devices, and other materials that will be used and used up during the course of the project. Be sure to itemize the quantity and a per-unit cost of each expense. Again, be specific, for example:

> *Soil test kits to measure soil health before and after treatment. 4 kits x $22 each = $88*
>
> *Mapping software to collect, store and visualize project field data = $420*
>
> *Paper for in-house project flyers and workshop handouts. 10 reams x $2.60 each = $26*

It is important to include narrative justification about why the item is necessary and why not otherwise available through your institution. Items must be project-specific and able to be tracked as being used for the project. General-use items such as office supplies are not allowable unless the items can be tracked.

Travel. This section is for the travel of employees of the applicant's organization only; list consultant travel under consultants and list conference attendee travel under trainee support. Specify the purpose of the trip and include who is traveling, the destination, and expenses per trip. Break out each cost to different lines (such as registration fees, lodging, airfare or mileage, per diem, etc.).

When requesting funds for travel by car, use the mileage reimbursement rate set by the organization administering the grant. If your organization does not have a rate, then you should use the Federal mileage rate. This rate is adjusted each year and is currently $0.560 per mile. For auto travel, indicate who is traveling, the destination, number of trips, and total anticipated mileage. For lodging, state the room cost and number of nights. If including travel meals (when on a trip requiring an overnight stay), specify the per diem or allowance to be used.

If the budget includes air travel, long-distance trips must clearly be justified as central to the project. All plane travel must be booked according to the guidelines of the Fly America Act which roughly states that, except under certain circumstances, all flights must be booked on U.S. flag carriers. In addition, all flights must be booked in coach class.

Publications and Printing. This budget category is specific to any publication development costs (editing, design and printing) that the project may incur, including project brochures and educational materials. Include publishing costs for scientific or technical journal articles here. You may include the cost of developing web-based publications here, but would not include general web hosting or photocopying as these expenses belong in "Other Direct Costs." Show a per-piece cost for any publications you plan to develop. For example:

> *24-page resource directory, layout and design at $30/hour, 15 hours = $450*
> *Printing at $1.12 each, 1000 pieces = $1,120*

Other Direct Costs

This budget category includes: communications, photocopying, consultant/speaker/trainer fees, services, conferences/meetings/workshops, trainee support, off-site office rental, purchase of equipment, rental of equipment or land-use charges, and other expenses.

Communications costs typically include postage, fax and telephone expenses. Please note that charges for cell phones are not allowable.

Photocopying. If you will make copies over the course of the project, estimate the number of copies needed and the cost per page. You may also estimate your copying costs based on past experience.

Consultant, speaker, and/or trainer fees. For those receiving stipends or payments for services, speaking, or training, include their name, the name of their organization or farm, description of the services they are providing, and a breakdown of number of days or hours of service, rate of pay, expenses to be reimbursed (travel), etc.

Farmer collaborators are often paid a stipend. SARE strongly feels that farmers should be paid for the time they contribute to a project at a reasonable rate; Northeast SARE compensates farmers who serve on its Administrative Council and review teams a rate of $300 per day. Please note: there is a distinction between paying farmers that contribute to a project (by participating in planning or project evaluation or in the role of a trainer or presenter—these are appropriate and encouraged) versus paying farmers to receive the benefits of training (by attending a workshop or conference as a recipient—here, payment would not be appropriate).

Services. If an outside entity is hired for a specific custom job, it should be listed under Services. Provide details of these non-contracted services rendered for the project, including fees or hired payments, purpose and quantities. An example of such services would be laboratory testing. This section can also include monthly subscriptions, such as internet service, online meeting, storage, survey platforms, and trade publications if specific to the project.

Conferences, meetings, and workshops. Costs of hosting project conferences, meetings, training events, and workshops are included in this category. Expense examples include the rental of facilities, equipment for the meeting, and signage for field days. Details of costs for each conference or meeting should be itemized and provided in the budget narrative.

Meal expenses may be included in the budget only in situations where providing the meal maintains the continuity of a formal group meeting or educational training, and not offering such a meal would impose inappropriate discomfort for the meeting participants. Conversely, meals may not be charged as project costs when individuals decide to go out for breakfast, lunch or dinner together when no need exists for continuity of a meeting; this kind of activity is considered an entertainment cost and is not an eligible expense.

Reminders: Expenses for a project leader or employee attending a conference should be listed under Travel. List presenter expenses under Consultant, speaker, and/or trainer fees. List trainee-participant expenses under Trainee support, below.

Trainee support (participant support costs). If meals, registration costs, transportation, lodging, or other travel expenses are to be paid on behalf of participants who are receiving training as the project beneficiaries, these expenses should be listed as trainee support costs. When using Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, these expenses are removed to determine MTDC.

Off-site office rental is most often covered under the organization's indirect costs (see below) and would only be applicable if a remote site was specifically needed to carry out the project. When using Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, these expenses are removed to determine MTDC.

Purchase of equipment or **cost of fabrication.** Fabrication of equipment is only appropriate when a project plan of work calls for a piece of equipment to be constructed as an integral part of the project. Only project specific research equipment with clear justification of need and full use in the project is allowable. General use equipment is not allowed. When using Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, these expenses are removed to determine MTDC.

Rental of equipment or **land-use charges.** Land-use charges are most typical in field research situations when a rental rate is applied or a research station that has a standard per-acre fee for field plot maintenance. When using Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, these expenses are removed to determine MTDC.

Other. If you have a project expense that truly does not fit into any of the above categories, it should be included in this section. Avoid using this budget category for items that really belong somewhere else. Each item must be clearly identified and justified to be allowed. Unidentified, unjustified, and undefined ("miscellaneous", "etc." or "contingency expense") items are not allowed.

Subawards

If there is a portion of the project that will be subawarded to another organization, it should be included in this section. List the institution, organization or farm, the subaward leader's name and the amount of the subaward. Each subawardee will need to complete a Budget Justification and Narrative Template and Grant Commitment Form – these must be uploaded to the proposal in the online submission system. When using Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, these expenses are removed to determine MTDC.

Indirect Costs

USDA currently allows indirect costs. Applicants whose organizations have a negotiated federal indirect cost rate may request up to 10% of the overall award as indirect costs. This is the maximum, a cap on indirect set by USDA on SARE grants.

Calculate the maximum amount by dividing the project's direct costs by nine, or estimate it as 11.11 percent of direct costs. If your institution's rate is less than this calculation, you must use the lesser amount. If your institution does not have a federally negotiated rate, you may request a de minimis rate of 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC). MTDC includes all direct costs except for trainee/participant support, off-site office rental, equipment purchases, equipment rental, land-use expenses and subaward amounts above $25,000 for each subaward organization.

Example of Budget Justification and Narrative

The following example is provided for illustrative purposes only.

Northeast SARE Budget Justification and Narrative - Overall Project Template to be used for Farmer Grants, Graduate Student Grants, and Partnership Grants

1. For budget line entries:
   - Columns A-E must be completed for each expense. Column F autocalculates when columns D and E are filled.
   - Insert rows as needed for additional entries.
   - Expand row height as needed to provide full justification narrative as to the need for the item and it's use in the project.
2. All applicants must complete the check-off box at the bottom on allowed indirect costs.
3. Upload this budget to the submission system in spreadsheet format, not as a pdf or image file.
4. For more information and guidance on the categories below, please see the Appendix in the relevant call for proposals.

Budget Detail, Justification and Narrative

It is required to maintain formulas in column F. Column F autocalculates based on columns D and E.

Applicant's name and institution:

Item name	*Narrative justification of expense*	Unit	Quantity	$ per unit	Quantity x $ =
PERSONNEL					
Only people employed by the recipient organization or farm should be listed in this category. Those employed elsewhere should be listed under "Other direct costs," or, if individuals are to be paid by another organization via a subaward to that organization, they should be included in a separately detailed subaward budget and the subaward total should be listed below under "Subawards" in "Other direct costs."					
Salaries and wages.					
Provide narrative detail of each person's role in the project or the services they are providing through their work on the project. Show full-time equivalency as a percentage and salary for each year, or provide hourly wage multiplied by number of hours, to equal total $ requested.					
Project leader(s).					
Mary Green, Graduate Investigator	5 hrs/wk for 10 weeks and 20 hrs/wk for 15 weeks to complete field and laboratory work in year 1, and 10 hrs/wk for 5 weeks to complete data analysis, reporting and preparing outreach materials in year 2	hr	400	$ 15.50	$ 6,200.00
					$ -
Student wages.					
Student Worker	10 hours per week for 5 weeks in year 1 and 10 hours per week for 5 weeks in year 2 to process samples	hr	100	$ 10.00	$ 1,000.00
					$ -
Support staff.					
					$ -
Other hired labor.					
					$ -
	Subtotal: Salaries and wages (rounded to the nearest dollar)				$ 7,200
Fringe benefits.					
If applicable, provide the fringe rate that will be applied to the wages above and the total for each wage line or category.					
Fringe for Mary Green, graduate investigator	Fringe rate is 8%		0.08	$ 6,200.00	$ 496.00
					$ -
	Subtotal: Fringe benefits (rounded to the nearest dollar)				$ 496
	PERSONNEL TOTAL (salaries, hourly labor, and fringe benefits)				$7,696
NON-PERSONNEL		Unit	Quantity	$ per unit	Quantity x $ =
Materials and supplies.					
This section is for items that are specific to the project. Indicate each item with estimated quantity and per-unit cost. Include narrative justification on why the item is necessary and why not otherwise available through the organization. Items must be project-specific and able to be tracked as being used for the project. General-use items such as office supplies are not allowable unless the items can be tracked and itemized for a project-specific purpose.					
Seed	For treatment plots	lbs	120	$ 7.00	$ 840.00
Insect traps	For sample collection	ea	125	$ 4.50	$ 562.50
Zip-lock bags	For field samples	box	7	$ 2.99	$ 20.93
					$ -
	Subtotal: Materials and supplies (rounded to the nearest dollar)				$ 1,423
Travel.					
For travel of employees/personnel only; list consultant travel under consultants and list conference attendee travel under trainee support.					
Specify the purpose of the trip and include who is traveling, the destination, and expenses per trip. Break out costs onto different lines (such as registration fees, lodging, airfare or mileage, per diem, etc.). For mileage reimbursement, indicate who is traveling, the destination, number of trips, and total anticipated mileage. For lodging, state the room cost and number of nights. If including travel meals (when on a trip requiring an overnight stay), specify the per diem or allowance to be used.					
Mileage	20 round trips to Expirement Station to process samples, 6mi/round trip	mi	120	$ 0.560	$ 67.20
Mileage	20 round trips to collaborator's farm for trap setup, monitoring and data collection, 12 mi/round trip	mi	240	$ 0.560	$ 134.40
					$ -
	Subtotal: Travel (rounded to the nearest dollar)				$ 202

Publications/printing. *Any publication development costs (editing, design and printing) that the project may incur, including project brochures and educational materials. Include publishing costs for scientific or technical journal articles here. You may include the cost of developing web-based publications here, but would not include general web hosting or photocopying as these expenses belong in "Other Direct Costs." Show a per-piece cost for any publications you plan to develop.*						
Brochures	For field day at research farm and twilight meeting at Dodge Farm	ea	100	$ 0.25	$	25.00
					$	-
Subtotal: Publications (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**25**
Other Direct Costs		**Unit**	**Quantity**	**$ per unit**	**Quantity x $ =**	
Communications. *Mailings, postage, conference calls. Cell phone charges are not allowable.*					$	-
Subtotal: Communications (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**-**
Photocopying. *In-house photocopying. Estimate the number of copies needed and the cost per page.*						
Copies	Field scouting check-off sheets	ea	200	0.09	$	18.00
					$	-
Subtotal: Photocopying (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**18**
Consultant, speaker, and/or trainer fees *Include the name of those receiving stipends or payments for services, speaking, or training. Also include the name of their organization or farm, description of the services they are providing, and a breakdown of number of days or hours of service, rate of pay, expenses to be reimbursed (travel), etc. Farmer collaborators are often paid a stipend and that expense should be included here.*						
Katherine Dodge, farmer	Oversee crop establishment and cultivation	hr	20	25	$	500.00
					$	-
Subtotal: Consultant, speaker, and/or trainer fees (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**500**
Services. *If an outside entity is hired for a specific custom job, it should be listed under services. Provide details of these non-contracted services rendered for the project, including fees or hired payments, purpose and quantities.This section can also include monthly subscriptions, such as internet service, online meeting, storage, survey platforms, and trade publications if specific to the project.*						
Lab tissue analysis	conducted at university lab	ea	60	12.5	$	750.00
					$	-
Subtotal: Services (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**750**
Conferences/meetings/workshops. *Costs of **hosting** project conferences, meetings, training events, and workshops are included in this category. Details of costs for each conference or meeting should be itemized and provided in the budget narrative. Meal expenses may be included in the budget only in situations where providing the meal maintains the continuity of a formal group meeting or educational training, and not offering such a meal would impose inappropriate discomfort for the meeting participants.* *List expenses for a project leader or staff attending a conference under **Travel**. List presenter expenses under **Consultants, speaker, and/or trainer fees**. List trainee-participant expenses under **Trainee support.***					$	-
Subtotal: Conferences/meetings/workshops (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**-**
Trainee support *(participant support costs).* *If meals, registration costs, transportation, lodging, or other travel expenses are to be paid on behalf of participants who are receiving training as the project beneficiaries, these expenses should be listed as trainee support costs. Payments for services rendered should be listed above in speaker/trainer fees or consultant payments. Other Conference/meeting/workshop expenses may be listed in that category above. **When calculating Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, trainee support expenses are not included.***					$	-
Subtotal: Trainee support (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**-**
Off-site office rental. *Office rental is often covered under the organization's indirect costs and would only be applicable if a remote site was specifically needed to carry out the project. **When calculating Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, off-site office rental expenses are not included.***					$	-
Subtotal: Off-site office rental (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**-**
*Purchase of equipment (or the **cost of fabrication** of equipment)* *Fabrication of equipment is only appropriate when a project plan of work calls for a piece of equipment to be constructed as an integral part of the project. Only project specific research equipment with clear justification of need and full use in the project is allowable. General use equipment is not allowed. **When calculating Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, equipment expenses are not included.***					$	-
Subtotal: Equipment (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**-**
*Rental of equipment or **land-use** charges* *Land-use charges are most typical in field research situations when a rental rate or per acre fee is applied. **When calculating Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, equipment rental and land-use expenses are not included.***					$	-
Subtotal: Rental of equipment or land-use charges (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**-**
Other *For project expense that truly do not fit into any other category. Each item must be clearly identified and justified to be allowed. "Miscellaneous" and "contingency expenses" are not allowed.*					$	-
Subtotal: Other (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**-**
Subtotal: Other Direct Costs before subcontracts/subawards (rounded to the nearest dollar)					**$**	**1,268**

Subcontracts/Subawards.	

If there is a portion of the project that will be subawarded to another organization, list it in this section. List the institution, organization, or farm, the subaward leader's name, and the amount of the subaward. Each subawardee will need to complete a Budget Justification and Narrative Template and Grant Commitment Form – these must be uploaded to the proposal in the online submission system. It is expected that the prime recipient is taking the lead on the effort with full responsibility for reporting, and each subaward must be less than 50% of the overall project funding request. **When calculating Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, subaward amounts above $25,000 for eeach subaward organization are not included.**

Total from separate spreadsheet:	
Sum of all subcontracts	$ -
Other Direct Costs total (rounded to the nearest dollar)	$ 1,268
NON-PERSONNEL TOTAL	$ 2,918
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	**$10,614**

Indirect costs.
Complete the check-off below as to the basis for the amount being requested. Enter total indirect request amount on this line.
Farms and other private businesses should leave the indirect cost amount blank or enter $0 (see below).

$ 1,179.00

TOTAL SARE REQUEST	**$ 11,793**

Acknowledge that indirect has been offered through the application instructions by checking (X) in the appropriate box on the left below.

X	**Indirect is requested, based on having a federally negotiated indirect rate** (subject to USDA/NIFA cap of 10% federal funds). We have entered the amount requested on the **Indirect costs** line above.
	Indirect is requested, based on the de minimis rate (our organization does not have a federally negotiated indirect rate). We have entered the amount requested for indirect on the **Indirect costs** line above.
	No indirect is requested (check if your organization is a farm or other for-profit business ineligible for indirect, as specified below). Overhead expenses that are directly attributable to the project are itemized in the direct cost budget and **do not exceed the USDA/NIFA cap of 10% of total SARE request.**
	No indirect is requested (check if your organization is eligible but chooses not to request indirect).

Example of Budget Summary

The subtotals are taken from the budget justification and narrative template above and entered into the online application system.

Category	Description	Amount
Personnel	Subtotal from budget justification and narrative template	$7,696
Materials and supplies	Subtotal from budget justification and narrative template	$1,423
Travel	Subtotal from budget justification and narrative template	$202
Printing and publications	Subtotal from budget justification and narrative template	$25
Other direct costs	Subtotal from budget justification and narrative template	$1,268
Indirect costs*	Subtotal from budget justification and narrative template	$1,179
Total		$11,796

*The indirect shown here is 10 percent of the total award, based on the organization having an approved federal indirect cost rate.