



Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture Grant Program 2023 Call for Preproposals

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

Important Dates

The online system will open to accept proposals starting on:

May 10, 2022

Preproposals are due no later than:

August 2, 2022, 5:00 p.m. ET

As part of Northeast SARE’s Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Strategic Plan we will be examining our grant programs and procedures and may make structural changes to our grantmaking systems. To accommodate that work, this grant program may not call for preproposals in 2023.

Questions?

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

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

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About Northeast SARE

The Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program offers competitive grants to farmers, educators, service providers, researchers, nonprofit staff, 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 (NIFA). The program—including funding decisions—is driven by the Northeast SARE **outcome statement**:



Agriculture in the Northeast will be diversified and profitable, providing healthful products to customers. Farmers and the people they work with will steward resources to ensure sustainability and resilience, and foster conditions where farmers have high quality of life and communities can thrive. The Northeast region includes Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Vermont, and Washington, D.C.

Northeast SARE
University of Vermont
140 Kennedy Drive, Suite 202
South Burlington, VT 05403
802/651-8335
northeastsare@uvm.edu
www.northeastsare.org



Northeast SARE, one of four regional SARE programs, is hosted by the University of Vermont and is funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Northeast SARE programs are offered to all without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status.

About Northeast SARE Research for Novel Approaches Grants

Overview

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

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

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

A wide variety of topics can be funded by Northeast SARE, including marketing and business, crop production, raising livestock, aquaculture, social sustainability, urban and Indigenous agriculture and much more. Projects that address climate-smart agriculture practices intended to improve ecological, social, and economic resilience to climate change; increase carbon sequestration; and reduce greenhouse gas emissions can also be funded by Northeast SARE. Climate-smart practices include reduced- and no-till, cover crops, prescribed grazing, ruminant feed management, manure management, fertilizer management, and on-farm energy efficiency. In addition, projects may address traditional ecological knowledge.

About Preproposals

Preproposals are required for Research for Novel Approaches Grants, as well as for Northeast SARE’s Research and Education and Professional Development Grant programs.

The preproposal is a preliminary concept document. Preproposals are evaluated by independent review teams made up of farmers, researchers, nonprofit staff and agricultural service providers. Reviewers evaluate proposals on a scale of 1 to 5 using the criteria that are listed beside the Step-by-Step Instructions that follow. Reviewers assign a single score to the preproposal based on the extent to which it addressed review criteria. Reviewers consider a preproposal’s score, its contribution to Northeast SARE’s outcome statement, and fit with the grant program’s goals and audience and determine which preproposal applicants to invite to submit a full proposal.

In general, about one-third to one-half of preproposals are invited to submit full proposals and about one-third of full proposals are approved for funding by the Northeast SARE Administrative Council. All applicants will receive feedback.

New for this Call

Northeast SARE will give additional consideration to projects that serve or engage historically underserved farmers and has added a new question to address this.

We no longer require an estimate of your funding request in the preproposal. Invited full proposals must still include a full budget.

Eligible Applicants

Research for Novel Approaches Grants are open to anyone who works with farmers¹, including personnel at agricultural and community nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities, Cooperative Extension, municipalities, tribal governments, state departments of agriculture, federal agencies, research farms and experiment stations, and for-profit business entities (such as private consultants, farmers veterinary practices, and other businesses that serve the farming community).

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

Your organization must have the legal structure and financial capacity in place to receive and implement a Northeast SARE contract, including expending funds needed for the project prior to receiving reimbursements from Northeast SARE; advance payments are not possible.

Projects must take place within the Northeast region, described on page 1. Applicants and host organizations may be located outside of the Northeast region if the project activities and the farmers served are located within the Northeast region.

An individual project leader may not submit more than two preproposals per grant program per year. If you submit multiple preproposals and more than one is invited to submit a full proposal, you may submit only one full proposal across the Research for Novel Approaches, Research and Education, and Professional Development Program. Current SARE grant recipients who are behind in their reporting will not be invited to apply for full proposals.

Northeast SARE will not fund proposals that appear to duplicate work that has been approved for funding by another grant program (within or external to SARE).

Northeast SARE is committed to accessibility for all eligible applicants. We encourage you to reach out to us regarding any challenges as you plan and submit your preproposal. To do so or to request a disability-related accommodation, please contact Northeast SARE as soon as possible at 802-651-8335 or northeastsare@uvm.edu. It may take our team two or more weeks to provide accommodations. We appreciate advance notice when possible, so we have time to address your request.

Funding Available

Approximately \$1.75 million has been allocated to fund projects for this cycle of Research for Novel Approaches Grants. There is no funding cap for this program. Awards typically range from \$30,000 to \$200,000 depending upon the project's complexity and duration. We estimate that 8 to 12 awards will be made in 2023.

Project Duration

¹ See Northeast SARE's Definition of a Farm document at northeast.sare.org/farmdefinition.

Typical project length is 2 to 3 years. All projects must be completed by November 30, 2026.

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. Members of proposal review teams are not permitted to discuss or vote on proposals that are submitted by organizations they work for, organizations for which they serve as a board member or paid consultant, former graduate student advisees or advisors, family members, or close personal friends. Reviewers may not review a proposal in which collaborators on research projects or co-authors on peer reviewed publications (including pending publications and submissions) serve as project leaders; the timeline for this prohibition is for any projects or publications within the past three years. Northeast SARE's full Conflict of Interest policy can be found at:

<https://northeast.sare.org/northeast-sare-conflict-of-interest-policy/>.

Public Domain

Preproposals and reviews are kept confidential, shared only among Northeast SARE staff, Administrative Council, and grant program reviewers. However, Northeast SARE, as a USDA NIFA program, is committed to public accessibility of results of funded projects; therefore, funded proposal text, and funded project reports will be in the public domain.

Acknowledging Northeast SARE

All funded projects are required to acknowledge Northeast SARE as the funding source in all project publications and outreach materials. You can find more information about acknowledging Northeast SARE at: <https://northeast.sare.org/about/northeast-sare-logo-and-acknowledgement/>.

Use of Funds

Eligible and ineligible expenses for this grant program are listed below. All grant expenses must be incurred during the contract period.

Eligible Expenses

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

- **Labor**, including wages, stipends, salary and benefits;
- **Graduate student tuition remission** when a component of an assistantship compensation package;
- **Materials and supplies**, including research and education supplies, outreach materials, and software;
- **Travel** and per diem expenses;
- **Journal and other publication fees** if they are incurred during the contract period as well as copies, postage and other communications expenses;
- **Compensation for services** like farmer stipends, presenter fees and other services rendered, lab fees, as well as research incentives and compensation for interviewees, and subscriptions for project-specific services, e.g., for video conferencing or online data storage;
- **Meeting and training expenses**, including facility rental and participant support costs;
- **Equipment purchases and fabrication** necessary for, and specific to, the project (equipment with general uses, like a computer or tractor, are not eligible);
- **Rental or operating charges** for farm equipment, land, or greenhouse space;

- **Subawards** for portions of the project conducted by other organizations;
- **Indirect costs** up to 10 percent of total direct costs. Please note that for-profit businesses generally cannot include indirect costs in the budget (see Appendix for more information).

Ineligible Expenses

Funds may NOT be used for:

- **Capital costs** including the purchase of land, buildings, livestock, general use machinery, greenhouses, and major improvements, fixtures or expansion expenses;
- **Normal operating expenses** that would be incurred in the absence of the project such as utilities, general maintenance, or general supplies.
- **Promotional items**, including clothing (hats, tee shirts, aprons, etc.), swag, giveaways, subsidies, raffles, and branded promotional material;
- **Travel to conferences** and other meetings unless essential to the project’s success, such as presentation of project results or to explicitly bring information back to project participants;
- **International travel** unless essential to the project’s success and described in the budget justification (Note: There are certain restrictions on costs and airline carriers);
- **Cell phone charges**, even if cell phones are used during 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** (before the start date or after the end date on the grant contract).

Costs for copiers, cameras, computers, video equipment, and other items that have uses beyond the project must be provided by the applicant, as they are considered indirect costs. To be considered as a direct cost, the item must be clearly essential and specific to the proposed project.

Grant Timeline

Preproposal submission deadline	5 p.m. ET, August 2, 2022
Applicants notified whether or not they are invited to submit a full proposal	August 29, 2022
Feedback sent to invited applicants	September 2022
Feedback sent to not-invited applicants	early October 2022
Full proposal submission deadline	5 p.m. ET, October 25, 2022
Tier 1 Review* decisions announced to applicants	mid December 2022
Award decisions announced to applicants	late February 2023
Contract start date for awarded projects	March 1, 2023
New grantee orientation meetings with Northeast SARE staff	March 2023

*There are two tiers of full proposal review. Applicants will be notified whether their proposal moves on from Tier 1 to Tier 2 review.

Preparing Your Preproposal

Submit your preproposal online at: projects.sare.org. Please prepare your preproposal well in advance of the deadline.

There are word limits for most entries. We suggest using a word processing program to develop your preproposal content offline, ensuring it is accurate and complies with the word limits before pasting into the online system. To that end, a Word document of the preproposal questions is available at: <https://www.northeast sare.org/NovelApproachesPrepDoc>.

Keep your writing clear and simple. Avoid scientific jargon and specialized vocabulary -- write for a mixed audience that includes farmers, researchers from multiple disciplines, Extension and non-profit educators, and other agricultural service providers. You can assume that grant reviewers have solid agricultural knowledge, but not necessarily deep expertise in your subject area.

Do not include links to external sites, as they will not be considered by reviewers.

SARE's Grant Management System

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

The Grant Management System will be open for preproposals from May 10, 2022 until the deadline, **5 p.m. ET on Tuesday, August 2, 2022**. Staff are available to answer questions until 5 p.m. ET on the due date. We strongly suggest you submit your preproposal well in advance of the deadline in case you experience technical issues that take time to resolve.

Getting a User Account

All new users should select “**Create an account**” and complete a registration. The system will send you an email with instructions to create your password.

If you have previously received SARE grants, submitted project reports, or recently reviewed SARE grants, you are registered as a user in the system and should use your account to submit your preproposal. Once logged in, be sure to update your account profile. If your account profile is incomplete, you will not be able to submit your preproposal. Here, the Grant Management System will show the message, “Missing contact information. <Individual's Name> must log in and update their profile before application can be submitted.”

Logging In

From the SARE Grant Management System landing page at projects.sare.org, 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 “**2023 Northeast SARE Research for Novel Approaches Preproposal**”, select “**Begin a New Proposal.**”

Entering your Preproposal

Start your preproposal by clicking “**Edit Title**” and enter a clear and succinct title, in title case, of under 150 characters (including spaces) that captures the essence of the project's intent. Avoid acronyms, jargon and unnecessary words.

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

In the majority of cases you, the grant applicant, are also the project leader (PL). If this is the case, you should ignore the button that says “**Change**” under the “**Project Leader**” heading. If it is necessary for the applicant and the PL to be different, use the “**Change**” button to add PL information here. If the PL does not currently have a projects.sare.org account, they need to create one in order to change the PL from the applicant and they must complete their full profile information before the preproposal can be submitted. Only the applicant can submit the preproposal, but the PL will be able to edit the preproposal. Note: The PL is responsible for oversight of the project and must be housed at the same organization as the project’s authorized official (the person authorized to sign for the organization hosting the grant, if funded).

Next, complete the preproposal sections. To navigate the preproposal online, each section appears on the menu in the left sidebar of the Proposal Overview page; clicking on the section heading will open the fields for entering responses to questions. To enter information, click “**Edit Answer**” for each question and be sure to click “**Save**” after each entry. See the Step-by-Step instructions that follow for additional guidance. At any time during the writing of your preproposal, you may preview a draft from the Proposal Overview Page by clicking “**View Draft**”. Once there, you can also share the draft of your preproposal with collaborators by either sending the “**Link to Share**” found at the top of the draft page or by creating and sending a PDF of the preproposal.

You may log out of the Grant Management System at any time during entry of your application and reenter it to continue. Log in and select “**Manage Grant Applications**” to return to your application. Your application will be listed under “**Unsubmitted Proposals.**” Previously saved responses can be edited and new sections can be filled in. Remember to save your entries.

When all preproposal questions are answered to your satisfaction, go to the Proposal Overview page and click the “**Submit Proposal**” button at the bottom of the page. The button will not appear until you have answered all required questions. Clicking once will advance your submission to a confirmation page. Please make sure to select “**Submit proposal**” again. You will receive an email confirmation of your submission. Your submission is not complete until this final step, and it is important that you see the email confirmation to be sure your submission went through.

Prior to the deadline, you may unsubmit to revise the preproposal, but if you do so, don’t forget to submit it again when you are done, otherwise it will not go forward to review.

Step-by-Step Instructions

The preproposal is divided into two sections, each containing multiple questions. Instructions for all questions are presented below. Review criteria appear next to their associated questions throughout the preproposal. Answers should be written per the instructions and should adequately address the associated review criteria when applicable.

Please note:

- No attachments are allowed in the preproposal application.
- Do not include links to external sites; they will not be considered by reviewers.

- No authorized signatures are required for preproposals.

General Information

Note: This section has no review criteria and is not scored by reviewers.

Organization: Name of organization or institution hosting the project. An answer to this question is not required; only enter if different from the applicant's institution, because the applicant's institution is automatically populated from their profile.

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

Optional Geographic Scope: If this project will take place in more than just the primary state, list all the states where this project will take place.

Project Length: Enter the anticipated project length, in years.

Resubmission: Was a full proposal of this work submitted previously to Northeast SARE? Answer yes or no.

Optional Additional Context (150-word limit):

Describe any challenges you and others face in accessing resources to support the type of work outlined in this proposal.

Preproposal Questions

1. Project Objective (100-word limit)

Summarize the purpose of this project by describing:

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

Review criteria:

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

2. Statement of Need (200-word limit)

Describe:

1. How the project will address a problem or opportunity faced by farmers that affects sustainable agriculture as described by Northeast SARE's outcome statement (see page 1);
2. The number, type, size and location of farms in the Northeast that could benefit from the research; and
3. Why these farmers are interested in the approach.

Review criteria:

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

Note: Citations are not required in the preproposal.

3. Historically Underserved Farmers (200-word limit)

Northeast SARE does not require projects to serve or engage historically underserved farmers. However, preproposals that advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) will be elevated by reviewers in the final ranking in relation to preproposals that do not. You can either write “N/A” or provide a description of how your project serves, centers leadership by, or otherwise engages historically underserved farmers. Describe which audience(s) these farmers represent and any plans to compensate participants.

USDA defines historically underserved audiences to include socially-disadvantaged producers, limited resource producers, beginning farmers/ranchers, and veterans. They further define socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers belonging to the following groups: American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women. Northeast SARE also considers LGBTQIA+ farmers to be historically underserved.

4. Key Individuals (150-word limit)

Use the following format to describe people with essential roles in this project:

Name, title, business or organization. Describe this person’s skills, relevant experience and primary responsibilities on the project.

Start with yourself, then list other key individuals.

If some team members have not yet been identified, provide descriptions of their roles, as placeholders. For example, an acceptable entry might say, “a veterinarian with poultry expertise who works in the target states,” or “two state health department personnel with experience in water quality programs.”

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

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

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

Review criteria:

Northeast SARE does not require that projects focus on historically underserved farmers. Reviewers will elevate preproposals in the final ranking that contribute to Northeast SARE’s DEIJ goals, provide a description of the historically underserved farmers the project will serve or engage, and how this will be done.

Review criteria:

The key individuals have the skills and experience to conduct the project. Their roles are well defined.

Review criteria:

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

6. Farmer Engagement Plan (200-word limit)

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

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

Review criteria:

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

7. Research Description (200-word limit)

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

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

Review criteria:

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

Next Steps

Applicants will be notified if they are invited to submit a full proposal by August 29, 2022. Feedback that may be used to strengthen a full proposal will be provided to applicants with invited preproposals in September 2022.

Full proposal instructions will be sent directly to invited applicants; full proposals are due by 5 p.m. ET on October 25, 2022.

Full proposals require more detailed information for all sections of the preproposal, including data to substantiate farmer interest. The full proposal also requires: a project advisory committee, literature review and citation list, letters of commitment from key individuals, a project budget with justification, and a grant commitment form with authorized official signature. The 2021 Call for Full Proposals is available at <http://www.northeastsare.org/NovelApproaches>.

Full proposals include required and optional attachments in Microsoft Excel and Adobe Acrobat formats. If you are invited to submit a full proposal and do not have access to those programs, please contact Northeast SARE staff so we can assist you.

An informational webinar will take place at noon on June 23, 2022. Register for the webinar here: northeast.sare.org/NortheastSAREGrantWebinar.