

**Northeast SARE Partnership Grant 2026 Scoring Rubric**

1 - 3	4 - 5	6 - 7	8 - 9	10	<b>Weight</b>
<b>Criterion 1: Comprehensive Review</b>					<b>15% of total score</b>
Reviewers should consider the FULL proposal when scoring the following three questions.					
<b>LEGISLATION</b>					<b>5%</b>
Does this project contribute to SARE's legislated purpose? These include: 1) maintain and enhance the quality and productivity of the soil; 2) conserve soil, water, energy, natural resources, and fish and wildlife habitat; 3) maintain and enhance the quality of surface, and ground water; 4) protect the health and safety of persons involved in the food and farm system; 5) promote the well being of animals; 6) increase employment opportunities in agriculture.					
Does not address any legislative priorities.	References one or more priority but lacks detail on benefits.	Addresses one or more priority with examples of anticipated benefits.	Demonstrates clear benefits with measurable outcomes relevant to one or more priority.	Demonstrates strong benefits with ambitious, achievable, and measurable outcomes relevant to one or more priority.	
<b>INNOVATION</b>					<b>5%</b>
Is this project innovative by addressing new practices, improving existing practices, or introducing existing practices to a new farmer audience?					
Not innovative	Minimal demonstration of innovation.	Somewhat innovative.	The project is clearly innovative.	The project is highly innovative and proposes meaningful improvements.	
<b>IMPACT</b>					<b>5%</b>
Will the project have substantive impact on service provider's and farmer's ability to steward resources to ensure sustainability, resilience, economic viability, and a high quality of life in the Northeast?					
No impact	Minimal expected impact.	Somewhat impactful.	The project will have lasting impact that addresses present needs.	The project is highly and demonstrably impactful with a lasting impact that addresses present needs and anticipates future ones.	

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<b>Section Criteria</b> These criteria apply to specific sections of the proposal. Reviewers should focus on the information in that section to score, but should also consider information found elsewhere in the proposal as relevant.					<b>85% of total score</b>
<b>Criterion 2: CONTEXT</b> Includes Summary, Introduction, Previous work, and Citations					<b>20%</b>
Issue being addressed is not explained. Solution not defined or not feasible, no benefits shown, does not contribute to outcome statement. No evidence of understanding of previous work. No evidence of farmer need for or interest in the project.	Issue is somewhat explained. Some definition of solution, limited potential of benefits to farmers and/or limited contribution to outcome statement. Basic mention of previous work but weak integration. General or anecdotal evidence of farmer need for project.	Issue and need are explained. A solution is defined and is likely to provide benefits to farmers and contributions to outcome statement. Demonstrates solid understanding of previous work and shows how project builds on it. Demonstrates evidence of farmer need.	Issue is well-explained. Solution is highly focused and innovative with lasting benefits to farmers. Strong integration of previous work with clear adaptation plans. Strong evidence of need.	Exceptionally clear and innovative solution with specific and transformative benefits to farmers. Comprehensive mastery of existing work and clear advancement. Demonstrated need by and impact on farmers.	
<b>Criteria 3: PROJECT TEAM</b> Includes Project Leader and Team, Technical Advisor, Collaborators (optional) and Letters of Commitment. Also consider "Other resources" under Budget section.					<b>15%</b>
The project leader, partner farmer, or collaborators have no relevant experience or have major gaps in experience. Team member roles are not defined. Collaborator Letters of Commitment are missing. Key resources are not available.	Minimal description of qualifications. Gap in needed expertise and/or resources. Roles are unclear. Farmer partner minimally engaged. Letters of commitment are weak.	Relevant experience is well-described and appropriate. Roles are clear. Farmer partner actively engaged in project. Letters of Commitment provide acknowledgement of roles and commitment. Project has access to appropriate resources.	Relevant experience is strong, appropriate, and complimentary. Roles are well defined. Farmer partner engaged in project design and activities. Letters of commitment include detailed acknowledgement. Necessary resources are described and available.	Team has exceptional experience. Collaborators bring different perspectives. Farmer partner is strongly engaged throughout project. Resources are available and well considered. Letters demonstrate verified commitment and readiness.	
<b>Criterion 4: PLAN OF WORK</b> Includes Project Objectives, Project Activities, Timeline, and Optional Other Relevant Research Information					<b>25%</b>
Objectives are lacking or unclear. Activities are not described with no timeline. Project design does not align with objectives. Potential challenges and risks are not considered. If included, optional supporting materials do not provide relevant information.	Objectives are stated, but do not align with intended solution or the issue being addressed. The timeline is not realistic for plan of work. Key activities are described, but vague or confusing. The project has some well thought out aspects but it is unclear if the design would allow the project to be successfully completed. Potential challenges and risks are marginally considered. If included, optional supporting materials are somewhat relevant.	Objectives are stated and align with intended solution or the issue being addressed. The timeline is presented and reasonable. Key activities are minimally described and allow for completion of objectives. Potential challenges and risks are marginally considered. If included, optional supporting materials are relevant.	Objectives are clearly stated and align with intended solution or the issue being addressed. The timeline is detailed and appropriate to the plan of work. Key activities are well described and allow for completion of objectives. Potential challenges and risks are well considered and alternative plans are provided. If included, optional supporting materials are detailed and relevant.	Clear and appropriate objectives. Exceptional project design with rigorous methodology that is extremely likely to be successful. Potential challenges and risks are prepared for. If included, optional materials are detailed, well integrated, and enhance clarity and feasibility.	
<b>Criteria 4: OUTREACH AND IMPACT</b> Includes Outreach and Impact					<b>15%</b>
Outreach plan is missing. No audience for dissemination of results is defined or audience defined is inappropriate. Farmer impact is not considered.	Outreach plan is vague and is unlikely to meaningfully share results with an audience of farmers. Potential for impact from outreach is minimal.	Outreach plan is described with minimal detail. Audience is appropriate. Outreach will facilitate farmer impact.	Outreach plan is well developed and integrated into the project design. Specific events and activities are described in detail. Activities will meaningfully engage an audience of farmers and others, likely resulting in positive impact.	Outreach is extremely well designed and integrated into the project plan. Specifics are detailed. The outreach seems likely to result in a change in the farmer behaviors.	
<b>Criteria 5: BUDGET</b> Includes the Budget Spreadsheet, Total Direct Costs, Total Indirect Costs, Total SARE Request, and Optional: Other Funding Sources					<b>10%</b>
Budget is incomplete or includes unreasonable costs.	Costs are not justified or unclear alignment to scope. Other funding sources seem to be necessary but are not described.	Costs are clear, reasonable justified for scope of work. Presence of other funding sources is unclear.	Detailed, well-reasoned budget with clear alignment to scope of work. Other Funding Sources are mentioned if relevant.	Exceptionally clear, transparent, reasonable budget with strong justification and alignment to scope of work. Other Funding Sources are clearly described if relevant.	