# 2025 Call for Proposals

Partnership Grant Program

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| Grant Highlights |  |
| Deadline | **Thursday, October 17, 2024 at**  **4:00 P.M. Central Time** |
| Who's eligible | An agriculture/natural resource professional (defined broadly) in the North Central region partnering with 3+ farmers/ranchers |
| Funding amounts | **$50,000 maximum** per application up to 24 months, **available April 1, 2025** |
| Grant goals | To foster cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers to catalyze on-farm research, demonstration, and education activities related to sustainable agriculture. |
| Allowable expenses | Personnel costs, materials and supplies, equipment, travel, 10% indirect institutional costs. |
| Unallowable expenses | Permanent structures, motorized vehicles, tuition or books for courses, branded attire, promotional items, etc. |
| Submit | Online at [**projects.sare.org**](https://projects.sare.org/) |

# Questions?

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Learn more about the [Partnership Grant program](https://northcentral.sare.org/Grants/Apply-for-a-Grant/Partnership-Grant/): | Betsy Wieland  Eliza003@umn.edu  612-626-6556  ­  [www.northcentral.sare.org](http://www.northcentralsare.org)  ncrsare@umn.edu  612-626-3113 | See past funded [SARE grants:](https://projects.sare.org/search-projects/) |

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## Background

#### About SARE and NCR-SARE

SARE’s Mission is to advance – to the whole of American agriculture – innovations that improve profitability, stewardship, and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education.

North Central Region-Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE)’s mission is to strengthen communities, increase farmer/rancher economic viability, and improve the environment by supporting research and education.

The 12 states of North Central Region-SARE include: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

The NCR-SARE program is hosted by the University of Minnesota.

#### Equity and inclusion in NCR-SARE

The North Central SARE program operates under a cooperative agreement between the University of Minnesota (host institution) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The University of Minnesota provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. To learn more about diversity at the University of Minnesota: http://diversity.umn.edu

North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (NCR-SARE) recognizes the power and value of diversity in our grantmaking and outreach programs. We recognize that for the greatest and broadest impact when addressing challenges for the whole of agriculture, our programs need to reach many, including those who have been historically excluded. We encourage diversity, equity, and inclusion in our peer grant review teams and in applicants and the audiences applicants are serving in their projects.  We encourage projects that involve minority-serving organizations or in other ways include work with historically underserved audiences. We recognize that this asks for ALL of us to sit in both the discomforts and the possibilities that can come when diverse perspectives are encouraged to participate in finding solutions and expanding access to our programs for all.

**Note**

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

## Timeline

* August 2024 - Call for Proposals Released
* October 2024 - Proposals Due
* February 2025 - Funding Decisions
* April 2025 - Funds Available to Recipients

## About the Program

The Partnership Grant program is intended tofoster cooperation between agriculture professionals and small groups of farmers and ranchers to catalyze on-farm research, demonstration, and education activities related to sustainable agriculture.  **The "partnership" aspect refers to an agriculture professional partnering with three independent farming enterprises, working together to solve a problem.**

Examples of appropriate projects include:

* On-farm testing of cropping system strategies or grazing systems
* Cooperative efforts to develop new marketing approaches
* Investigations into new approaches to processing and/or adding value to sustainably produced farm products
* Projects intended to increase food sovereignty
* Projects that lead to resilient agricultural systems

Last year we received 39 proposals in this grant program and funded 23. The typical funding success rate for program applications prior to last year has been 30 to 50 percent.

## Eligibility

#### Applicant

The Project Coordinator must be an agriculture/natural resource professional in the North Central Region. These professionals could be:

* university educators including extension agents and specialists
* Soil and Water Conservation District field staff
* agricultural consultants (individuals who actively consult with farmers and ranchers as certified crop advisors, soils consultants, ranching consultants, etc.)
* nonprofit or agency staff assisting farmers and ranchers at the local level

The project coordinator, through their institution, is fiscally responsible for the project. You may have more professionals assisting with the project, but only one will be listed as the Project Coordinator. Professionals can be paid for their travel expenses. They can also be compensated for their services.

#### Collaborators

Farmers/ranchers

* **Three or more farmers or ranchers are expected to be substantially involved** in development and implementation of the project.
* Each farm/ranch must be an independent and separate/distinct operation.

Reviewers are likely to rate poorly any proposals that does not make it clear how the farmers or ranchers will be actively contributing to the research or education activities. For example, a proposal that only listed the farmers and said they would provide land for the research would be scored low for that aspect. Describe the process by which they have been and will be involved and any specific ideas the farmers have already contributed to the concept being proposed; project ideas must be based on farmer ideas and concerns. If the farmers or ranchers each have somewhat different roles, be sure to describe their respective roles and contributions.

For purposes of this grant program, a farmer or rancher is someone who raises crops or livestock, especially as a business. Each farmer/rancher identified must be an independent and separate operation.

NCR-SARE recognizes that farmers and ranchers are skilled workers who should be paid $25/ hour or more for their labor in grant projects. Please be sure to list or describe the farmer compensation method in the budget part of the proposal.

## Budget

#### Allowable expenses

* Cost of field sampling, crop analysis and educational surveys.
* Materials and supplies needed for the project, including seed, fertilizer, portable fencing or other farming/ranching inputs.
* Reimbursement of farmers and ranchers for their time involved with the project.
* Partial or full cost of small tools and equipment, or any piece of equipment costing less than $5,000. Describe type of equipment (for example, pH meters, balances, scales, etc.), cost and a brief narrative on the intended use of the equipment for project objectives.
* Outreach expenses such as holding a field day, tours, making a brochure, creating a website, etc.
* Out-of-town travel needed for the project. State purpose, destination, and number of travelers and estimated cost per trip. Foreign travel is generally not allowed in this grant program.
* Local travel (where personal auto is used and reimbursed) needed for the project. State the purpose and total dollar amount of reimbursement for vehicle use. If any overnight stays are anticipated, include the number of nights and the amount for meals and lodging. (i.e., local travel for site visits to farmers in neighboring counties - $500 for mileage and $500 for meals and lodging (five days @ $100/day) = $1,000). Maximum mileage allowance depends on institutional policy; otherwise use the current federal mileage reimbursement rate.
* Refreshments at field days or group meals for events are allowable if they maintain the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the meeting participants.
* Services of Agricultural Professionals can be compensated - provide hourly rate.

**Note**

SARE **limits indirect costs to 10 percent** of the total direct costs provided under each award. When preparing budgets, you should limit your request of the recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of your institution’s official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 10 percent of total direct costs awarded.

#### Unallowable Expenses

* Starting or expanding a farm or farm operation.
* Any single piece of equipment costing more than $5,000. This limit cannot be used toward the purchase of a piece of equipment or the modification of **equipment costing more than $5,000** or to purchase or purchase parts for tractors, irrigation systems, etc. You should check with the NCR-SARE office before including it in your budget proposal.
* Capital expenses for things like land purchases, general farm improvements, and construction of buildings, greenhouses, and laboratories are NOT allowed.
* Costs for things like cameras, computers, video equipment, and other items that could have a wide range of uses beyond the boundaries of the project must be clearly essential to a particular project, in which case applicants must develop a clear justification and make sure that these requests are reasonable, defensible, and not extravagant.
* Permanent improvement to a farm or ranch, such as constructing or remodeling a building, permanent fencing, etc.
* Any meal that does not maintain the continuity of the meeting.
* Testing of specific commercial products.

## Review and Selection Process

#### Reviewers

The Partnership Program Review Committee will evaluate proposals for technical merit and relevancy of the project to sustainable agriculture and NCR-SARE criteria. The committee is made up of Administrative Council members and NCR-SARE state coordinators. This committee will make recommendations to the NCR-SARE Administrative Council (AC). The AC will approve projects for funding in late January. The AC is responsible for ensuring that the selected projects reflect not only scientific merit, but include projects from as many priority areas as possible, from across states, institutions, stakeholder groups and NGOs.

Applicants will be notified about the status of their proposal in February 2025. Projects selected for funding will have their budgets reviewed for compliance with federal and host institution guidelines prior to subcontracts being executed.

#### Selection Criteria

Reviewers and the Administrative Council will consider the following factors in evaluating proposals:

##### Relevance (20%)

* Did they clearly articulate how the project and outcomes are relevant to the three basic elements of sustainable agriculture—economically viable, environmentally sound and socially responsible?
* Did they identify how the project addresses a need relevant to local or regional agricultural issues?

##### Activities and Outreach (30%)

* Did they provide a detailed plan for activities (research, demonstration, education or outreach?)
* Is there a reasonable timeline?
* Have they provided specific details on research or educational methods?
* Do they have a clear outreach plan?

##### Team (20%)

Roles of Agricultural Professional(s), Farmers/Ranchers:

* Are farmers truly engaged in meaningful ways?
* Did they describe how farmers have been and will be involved and how the project ideas are based on farmer ideas and concerns?
* Does the Project Coordinator have sufficient expertise to lead the project?

##### Outcomes and impacts (30%)

* Have they clearly articulated the expected outcomes and impacts of the project?
* Have they described how they will measure impact, such as new knowledge or awareness, skills or practices, or changes in attitude?

## Funds Distribution

Grants are awarded to the organization specified on the Cover Page (Primary Grantee), with the funds to be dedicated to the project.

Funds are transferred from the host institution, University of Minnesota, for the NCR-SARE program to the Primary Grantee on **a reimbursement basis**. The Project Coordinator’s institution sends invoices to the host institution after the project has incurred expenses.

Funds will be available for use on the projects **after April 1, 2025**.

If you submit your grant proposal to another funder and are funded for the same work as in your Partnership proposal, you must notify NCR-SARE.

## Reporting Expectations

NCR-SARE requires the Project Coordinator to gather and report specific information about all projects at different points in the project. See **Table 1** for details. How this will be done should be described in your Evaluation Plan.

###### Table 1. Grantee Reporting Expectations Matrix

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Performance indicator | Collection time | Reporter |
| Number of farmers/ranchers participating in research | During and at end of project | Project coordinator |
| Number of farmers/ranchers reached through presentations or educational events | During and at end of project (optional) | Project coordinator |
| Number and type of outreach activities conducted to share project results | During and at end of project | Project coordinator |
| Research results of the project | During and at end of project | Project coordinator |
| Number journal articles, in press or published | During and at end of project, Post project | Project coordinator and/or Farmer/Rancher partner |
| Number and types of other, non-refereed outreach publications | During and at end of project, Post project | Project coordinator and/or Farmer/Rancher partner |
| The number of farmers/ranchers directly involved in project who report changes in KASA (knowledge, attitudes, skills, awareness) | During and at end of project, Post project | Project coordinator and/or Farmer/Rancher partner |
| Number of farmers/ranchers directly involved in project who use information learned to adopt a practice, approach, technology (including what is adopted) | During and at end of project, Post project | Project coordinator and/or Farmer/Rancher partner |
| New collaborations as a result of project (by graduate student and/or advisor) | During and at end of project, Post project | Project coordinator and/or Farmer/Rancher partner |
| SARE grant leveraged another grant (by graduate student and/or advisor) | During and at end of project, Post project | Project coordinator and/or Farmer/Rancher partner |
| Number of citations of project results | Post project | Project coordinator and/or Farmer/Rancher partner |
| Economic, environmental, social benefit(s) for farmers/ranchers from making changes on farm/ranch | Post project | Project coordinator and/or Farmer/Rancher partner |

#### Final Report and Publications Requirements

The host institution is authorized to withhold payment of invoices for your project until you have submitted all reports and other required documents. Instructions for completing annual and final reports will be sent to the agricultural professional listed on the proposal cover page.

## Grant Writing Help

#### Instructions

#### This section is to provide you with information about writing and submitting a successful grant.

**Note**

Copies of these instructions can be downloaded from the North Central SARE website at www.northcentralsare.org as a PDF or Word file. If you prefer a printed application, call 612.626.3113.

We suggest you complete a draft proposal in a word processing document and edit to meet word limits, then cut and paste into the online system. Tables and images can be embedded in certain sections but you should limit them to crucial information.

##### Follow Budget Guidelines

Make sure that you and your accounting personnel follow NCR-SARE budget guidelines.

##### Program Coordinator Information

The first time you register in the SARE projects system you will be required to provide individual and organizational contact information. You will also be asked to provide demographic information. The SARE program is committed to an ethic of openness, inclusiveness, and diversity in all of its programs, policies, and procedures. To monitor our performance in these areas, we collect demographic information from grant applicants the first time they register in the SARE application system. Demographic information is not linked to your individual proposal and is compiled in a separate database. Submission of the requested information is voluntary.

You must respond to each question, but each question has a “prefer not to answer” option.

##### Institutional Information

This section asks for information about the organization that will administer the project budget if your proposal is funded. The institution will send invoices to NCR-SARE, receive funds from NCR-SARE, and disburse funds to any cooperating organizations. An authorized representative from this organization will review the budget and must sign the Application Sign-off Sheet. A pdf of the signed signature page will be uploaded as a required attachment to the application in the attachment section.

##### Application Signoff Sheet

You **must upload a copy of the application signoff page with required institutional signatures** to complete your application.

To obtain institutional approver signatures, print your draft application with the application signoff sheet and submit it to your grants office for review. Consult with them ahead of time to determine how much time they need for this. It may be a week or more. Then upload the signed page as the final attachment and submit electronically, prior to the deadline.

##### Submission Procedure

Partnership grant program proposals must be submitted online at **projects.sare.org**.

On the following pages are the questions you will be asked on the online submission website at projects.sare.org.

A PowerPoint slide presentation with instructions and tips for the submission procedure can be found on the Partnership Grant Program webpage, <https://northcentral.sare.org/Grants/Apply-for-a-Grant/Partnership-Grant/> It is strongly encouraged that you view before you begin submitting your proposal.

#### Proposal Sections

##### Cover

Complete general information about the project, including type of project, start date and duration, and requested amount of funding. **Your project efforts cannot start before April 1, 2025.**

##### Summary (200 word maximum)

Summarize the research, demonstration, and/or education and outreach components of your proposal and briefly explain these in the context of why this project is important and innovative. What problems or situations are being addressed related to sustainability? How will your project distinctively or creatively address those problems? Identify the agricultural region being targeted and the types of farms or ranches involved in the project.

##### Project Objectives (100 word maximum)

List achievable objectives of your project. These are the major things you plan to accomplish during the project as it relates to research, demonstration, or education activities.

##### Relevance to Sustainability and Regional Agricultural Concerns (200 word maximum)

Clearly articulate how the project and its possible outcomes are relevant to **all three basic elements of sustainable agriculture, specifically an agricultural system that is economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially responsible.** Proposals that do not explain how the project contributes to sustainability are unlikely to be funded. Also identify how the project addresses a need relevant to local or regional agricultural issues. Where possible, use specific estimates of benefits – for example, potential dollars saved per acre, tons of soil protected from erosion, reduction in inputs or increased biodiversity, number of acres or people affected, markets expanded, etc.

##### Proposed Activities, including Outreach Plan (500 word maximum)

Provide a detailed plan for the activities you will undertake on the grant, whether it be research, demonstration, education, or outreach activities. Provide a general timeline for activities. For research or demonstration, describe the types of field or livestock treatments to be used and information on the locations involved. Indicate whether the trials are replicated or not and whether economic data will be gathered. For education projects, provide details on who the target audience is for the educational programs, how you will promote the educational program, and what the content will be.

Explain how you will communicate about your project, including through field days, workshops, or other farmer and rancher-oriented events. Provide a list of any educational materials you plan to produce and describe the type of materials – such things as factsheets, PowerPoint presentations, articles, brochures, social media, web-based material, etc.

##### Roles of Agriculture Professional(s), Farmers or Ranchers (350 word maximum)

For each agriculture professional and farmer/rancher involved in the project, state their name, county and state (and organization if relevant) and provide a few sentences on the role of each participant in the project. **Farmers or ranchers should be true partners in the project and fully involved in the project activities.** Describe the roles of the partner farmers in the project and describe how this project is farmer-driven. Note that the agriculture professional(s) does not count as one of the farmers/ranchers on the project. Normally, at least three farmers or ranchers should be involved in the project. The only exception would be if the project is unique to a set of farmers or ranchers which are small in number in a given area, such as aquaculture producers or certain specialty crop producers; in such cases at least two farmer/ranchers should still be involved in the project locally, and perhaps a third farmer/rancher from another area can be an advisor or collaborator on the project.

##### Previous Research on this Topic (250 word maximum)

What efforts have been made by others to solve the problem? Explain how you are building on past work or research and what makes your project innovative and different from what has already been done. It is recommended that applicants review reports from previous SARE grants on this topic (see projects.sare.org and click on Search Projects).

##### Outcomes and Impact (200 word maximum)

Identify the outcomes and impacts you expect the project to achieve. Describe how you will measure the impact of your project results on the farming/ranching community. This plan should also describe changes expected in these farmers or ranchers (new skills or practices, increased knowledge or awareness, changed attitudes or opinions, etc.) and ways to measure these changes such as a before-and-after questionnaire, survey, etc.

##### Project Evaluation and Reporting Requirements

The Grantee Reporting Expectations List shows what results you report on during the project and what SARE may assess two to four years after the project’s completion.

##### Budget and Budget Justification (no word limit)

Provide a concise budget, with proper justification, that is appropriate to the proposed project. Your budget line items should be for the total project period, rather than broken down by year.

**Note**

Any single item or piece of equipment over $1000 must be listed separately with proper budget justification.

#### Examples

###### Table 3. Example Budget Justification Items

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Item** | **Units** | **Cost per unit** | **Total** |
| Personnel - Salary/wages and Fringe | Project coordinator  Undergraduate  Advisor | 50% time for 6 months  full time for 8 weeks  2.5% time | $20/hr  $15/hr  $100,000 annual salary | $10,000  $4,800  $2,500  $17,300 |
| Materials and supplies | Field day equipment/ supply rental | 1 Portable restroom  1 Tent | $100  $100 | $200 |
| Travel | travel to study plot | 3 round trips of 100 miles | $0.655 | $197 |
| Printing and publications | Building soils for Better crops | 10 | $23/book  plus $20 for shipping | $250 |
| Fee for service | - | - | - | $0 |
| Other direct costs | farmer participation | 8 hours | $25/hr | $200 |
| **Subtotal** |  |  |  | **$18,147** |
| Indirect costs |  | 10% of subtotal |  | $1,815 |
| **Total** |  |  |  | **$19,962** |

#### Attachments

##### Agricultural Professional’s Resume(s)

The application must include a resume (two-page maximum) for each agricultural professional involved in the project. Producers are not expected to submit a resume.

##### Farmer/Rancher Letters of Participation

Applications must include letters verifying participation from EACH farmer or rancher listed in the proposal. Proposals not having a letter from each farmer may be disqualified from consideration. (Do not submit general letters of support from other individuals or organizations.)

##### Application Signoff Sheet (see online instructions)

Once you have completed all required information and uploaded all necessary attachments, print a draft copy of your proposal and print the Application Signoff Sheet (download from the signature page question link). The applicant must sign the Application signoff sheet and submit it to your grants office or fiscal organization (if applicable) for an authorized organization representative’s signature. You will need to obtain a pdf of the signed Application signoff sheet to upload with your proposal, prior to submitting your proposal.

##### Animal Welfare Assurance Statement

If your project includes vertebrate animals in the study, you must have the statement signed by you and an IACUC (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee) representative or attending veterinarian. You may wait until award notification to submit the signed statement.

#### Who Can Help

##### NCR-SARE Office

For assistance with guidelines for this grant program, please contact Betsy Wieland (University of Minnesota, eliza003@umn.edu, phone 612-626-6556).

The **NCR-SARE office** can share information and resources from SARE Outreach, plus contact information for state SARE Coordinators. Contact: North Central Region SARE, 120 BioAgEng, UMN, 1390 Eckles Ave, Saint Paul MN 55108, phone: 612-626-3113, e-mail: ncrsare@umn.edu, web: www.northcentral.sare.org .

##### State Coordinators

Contact information for State Coordinators can also be found on the NCR-SARE website at:<https://northcentral.sare.org/state-programs/state-coordinators/>

##### Publications

* **SARE** has many publications that are available, some at no cost. The full list can be found at <https://www.sare.org/resources/>. Or contact the NCR-SARE office for assistance.
* **Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA)** will provide information packets on various agricultural issues. If you are contacting ATTRA via e-mail, please provide your role in sustainable agriculture. By mail or fax, please include “ATTRA Information Request” near the top of the correspondence. (Preferred method of contact is telephone.) Contact: ATTRA, P.O. Box 3657, Fayetteville AR 72702, phone: 800-346-9140 (7 am to 7 pm, Central Time), fax: 501-442-9842, web: [http://www.attra.ncat.org](http://www.attra.ncat.org/).

## Proposal Submission

#### Process

* Create an account at **projects.sare.org.**
* Copy and paste information from a word processing application.
* Upload all attachments, except Application Signoff Sheet(colleges and universities).
  + Obtain required signatures.
  + Upload signed Application Signoff Sheet.
* Submit a proposal **before the deadline.**

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| --- |
| **Deadline: Thursday, October 17, 4:00 p.m. Central Time** |

## Checklist

**STOP!** Before you begin submitting your proposal, make sure you have all **required** documents and information.

* Agricultural Professional’s resume or CV
* Farmer/rancher letter(s) of commitment/participation
* Detailed budget
* Application signoff sheet

#### 

#### Thank you for your interest in applying for an NCR-SARE Partnership Grant. We look forward to reading your application and working with you.

#### Sincerely,

#### NCR-SARE staff