Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture
2019 Preproposal Instructions

Important Dates

The online system will open for submissions: **June 1, 2018**

Preproposal submissions are due: **July 10, 2018, 11:59 p.m. ET**

> ## Applications are submitted online at: **www.ciids.org/nesare/RNApre**.

Questions?

Visit our website at: **www.northeastsare.org/NovelApproaches**.

Contact the Northeast SARE office at **northeastsare@uvm.edu** or 802/651-8335.

About Northeast SARE

The Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program offers competitive grants to farmers, educators, service providers, researchers, and graduate students to address key issues affecting the sustainability of agriculture throughout our region. With funding from the USDA, Northeast SARE is one of four regional SARE programs that aims to improve farm profits, stewardship, and quality of life for farmers.

The program—including funding decisions—is driven by our **outcome statement**:
Agriculture in the Northeast will be diversified and profitable, providing healthful products to its customers; it will be conducted by farmers who manage resources wisely, who are satisfied with their lifestyles, and have a positive influence on their communities and the environment.

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.

Inside

United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

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.

Revised 1 May 2018

About Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture

Overview

Northeast SARE's Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture grant program funds projects that conduct applied research leading to the feasibility of new practices and approaches that have high potential for adoption by farmers. These practices may be related to production, marketing, business management, human resource management, farm family issues, or other topics related to sustainable agriculture. By "novel," Northeast SARE means that there is some evidence the approach is beneficial but more data is needed prior to recommending the approach for farmer adoption.

The 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.

About Preproposals

Preproposals are required for Research for Novel Approaches grants, as well as for Northeast SARE's two other major grant programs: Research and Education and Professional Development. An individual project leader may submit no more than two preproposals per grant program per year.

The preproposal is a preliminary concept document that allows SARE reviewers to select the most promising projects to be invited to submit full proposals. In previous years, about one-third of preproposals have been invited to submit full proposals, and about one-third of full proposal submissions have been awarded. Four to eight awards are made each year, depending on available funding.

Eligible Applicants

There is no requirement that project leaders have a specific affiliation, but they must have the institutional capacity and support networks necessary to carry out the project. Typically, proposals come from university and extension staff, agricultural nonprofits, research farm and experiment station personnel, private consultants, agriculture related businesses and organizations, and government agencies. Project leaders must have the skills and experience needed to oversee and carry out their proposed work.

Funding Available

Reviewers prefer projects in the $30,000 to $200,000 range. Funding requests should align with project duration and the scope of the work. Amounts higher than the typical range will be considered for projects that include multi-disciplinary or multi-institutional research and education networks, especially when those networks enable a more comprehensive systems approach to addressing challenges or opportunities.

Northeast SARE encourages projects to request the funding necessary to support collaboration with 1890 land grant universities. Projects are also encouraged to include funding to specifically address or assess social dimensions of the proposed work.

Project Duration

Typical project length is 2 to 3 years. The maximum project length allowed is 3.5 years.

Conflict of Interest

Members of the Northeast SARE Administrative Council and their immediate family members or business associates are not permitted to apply for or receive funding from SARE grants. Members of proposal review teams are not permitted to discuss or vote on proposals that involve institutions they work for, organizations for which they serve as board member or adviser, former graduate student advisees, or close personal friends.

Public Domain

While applications and reviews will remain confidential, Northeast SARE considers funded projects, subsequent reports, and related information to be in the public domain.

Grant Timeline

Preparing Your Preproposal

Preproposals are submitted online at: **www.cifds.org/nesare/RNApre/**. The online application system will be open for submissions from June 1 until the deadline, 11:59 p.m. ET on July 10, 2018. Staff support to answer questions or deal with technical submission issues will be available until 5:00 p.m. ET on the due date. Preproposals submitted after 11:59 p.m. on July 10 will not be accepted.

There are word limits for all sections of the preproposal. It is highly advisable to use a word processing program to develop the application offline, ensuring it is accurate and complies with the word limits. Do not use special formatting or symbols. These will be lost when you paste the text into the online application. Use only the keyboard symbols.

No attachments are allowed in the preproposal application.

No authorized signatures are required for preproposal submission.

The online application system will prompt you to set up an account and log you into the site. If you have applied in a previous year and are using the same email, the system may remember your account from before.

You will start the application by entering a clear, succinct title of under 120 characters, including spaces, that captures the essence of the project's intent. Avoid acronyms, jargon, or unnecessary words.

Next, enter your project's expected project start and end dates, your name, organization, and contact information.

Step by Step Instructions

Note that grant review criteria appear next to related sections. All prepoposals are evaluated using these criteria and they must be adequately addressed for applicants to be invited to submit full proposals.

1. Problem and novel approach justification (225 words)

In this section:

- Explain the problem or missed opportunity for farmers affecting the sustainability of agriculture in the Northeast that the novel approach will address. Include the number, type, and size of farms and the extent of agricultural production affected.

- Describe the causes (or hypothesized causes) of the problem, and explain how the novel approach has potential to address the problem or opportunity and benefit farmers and the sustainability of agriculture in the Northeast.

Review criteria:
The problem is important to sustainable agriculture in the Northeast; the type, number and scale of farms affected is described; the need to address the problem is significant. The novel approach clearly has potential to address the problem, and the benefits to farmers from solving the problem are meaningful. Descriptions are clear, and claims made about the problem and solution are supported by specific evidence (data).

2. Knowledge gap and new knowledge (225 words)

- Explain the gap in research results that prohibits promotion of adoption of the novel approach, demonstrating why adoption of the approach is not yet feasible.

- Describe the knowledge expected to be generated by the project to address the gap.

Provide data and literature-based rationale to justify the statements made about the two items above. Citations not required in a prepoposal, but will be for a full proposal.

Review criteria:
A substantiated gap in research results exists that prevents promoting adoption of the novel approach. The knowledge expected to be generated by the project will address this gap. Statements are justified with data.

3. Project objective (75 words)

State the objective of this project in terms of the knowledge expected to be generated that will address the knowledge gap that currently hinders the adoptability of the novel approach.

Review criteria:
The project objective clearly describes new knowledge expected to be generated by the project that is capable of addressing the existing knowledge gap.

4. Interest of farmers and service providers (125 words)

State the evidence you have about the interest of farmers to adopt the novel approach, and the interest of service providers to promote it, should research demonstrate the approach's benefits and feasibility.

Review criteria:
Evidence is presented that farmers are interested in adopting, and service providers are interested in promoting the novel approach, should it prove beneficial and feasible.

5. Research description (250 words)

Research may include field research or social science research.

A description of field research must include:

- The hypothesis for proposed research;
- The experimental design and treatments; and
- Methods and data collection.

A description of social science research must include:

- The proposed study objective and hypothesis to be tested;
- The target population(s); and
- Data collection and anticipated analysis methods to be used.

6. Key individuals – coordinator and cooperators (150 words)

Key individuals are essential team members who devote significant time to the project.

Provide a brief description of the project leader (coordinator) and other key individuals (cooperators) who will play an essential role leading the project. Name the individuals and state their affiliations, qualifications and the primary role they will play in the project.

Name any other organizations, outside of your own, that will be receiving some of the money requested from SARE to carry out the project, or contributing significant money, personnel time, facilities, or equipment to the project.

7. Funding request estimate (3 words)

Select a range that estimates the total budget request you anticipate for this project including the allowed indirect to your institution (limited to 10% of the total): "Under $50,000;" "$50,000 to $99,000;" "$100,000 to $149,000;" "$150,000 to $199,000;" or "Over $200,000."

Next Steps: Planning for Full Proposal Submission

As a reminder, an individual project leader may submit no more than two preproposals per grant program (includes this Research and Education program, Research for Novel Approaches, and Professional Development Program) per year.

Only project leaders with an invited preproposal may submit a full proposal. A project leader may submit **only one full proposal per year**, selecting just one of Northeast SARE's major grant programs, even if more than one preproposal was invited to submit a full proposal.

Project leaders will be notified as to whether or not they are invited to submit a full proposal on August 17, 2018. Feedback that may be used to strengthen a full proposal will be provided to project leaders with invited preproposals by September 7, 2018. For preproposals not invited to submit full proposals, feedback will be provided to project leaders in late September.

Full proposal instructions will be sent to invited preproposal project leaders.

The full proposal will require additional information for all sections included in the preproposal plus the addition of evidence that the research is of interest to farmers and service providers, a listing members of a Project Advisory Committee, literature review and citation list, attachments such as letters of commitment from key individuals and Current and Pending support of the project leader, and a complete project budget. An outreach plan for communication of the research results before the end of the project is also required in a full proposal. Plans may include: presentations at conferences, workshops and field days; publication of fact sheets, booklets, videos and peer-reviewed articles, etc. Communication of both positive and negative results of the research benefits farmers so they may know what works as well as what doesn't.

Budget planning

While the preproposal only asks for an estimate of the project budget, the full proposal will require a detailed Excel spreadsheet of the funding needs with justification for each item requested. Invited project leaders will receive a budget template. Full proposal budgets should not differ significantly from the pre-proposal estimates.

SARE funds can be used for the following project expenses: personnel, travel, materials and supplies, communications, and other direct costs. USDA currently allows indirect costs up to 10% of total funds, which may be estimated as 11.11% of direct costs.

SARE funds cannot be used for the following: capital expenditures--items like land, buildings, livestock, greenhouses, other major fixtures and improvements, general use items, and machinery not essential to the project.