NORTHEAST SARE
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

Call for 2020 Preproposals
Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture

About this Call

The Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program invites prepoposals to its Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture Grant Program for the 2020 grant cycle. This call includes information about the grant program, how to apply, and submission instructions.

Important Dates

The online system will open for submissions: **May, 31, 2019**

Research for Novel Approaches Preproposal submissions are due: **June 25, 2019, 5:00 p.m. ET**

Questions?

Visit our website at: **www.northeastsare.org/NovelApproaches**. Specific questions should be directed to David Holm at 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, agricultural service providers, researchers, graduate students, and others 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 the Northeast SARE **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

About Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture

Overview

This grant program funds projects that conduct applied research testing the feasibility of new practices and approaches for sustainable agriculture that have high potential for adoption by farmers. Practices researched may address any of the three tenets of sustainable agriculture: environmental quality, financial viability, and social sustainability including farm succession/transfer, farmer health and well-being, and quality of life. As such, the practices and approaches may be related to production, marketing, business management, human resource management, farm family issues, or other topics relevant to sustainable agriculture.

By "novel," Northeast SARE means that there is some evidence the concept is beneficial but more data is needed prior to recommending the practice or approach for farmer adoption. Should the concept prove feasible, Northeast SARE has an expectation that the project leader or collaborators would follow-up with outreach to farmers and agricultural services providers to promote adoption. Such outreach could be supported by future submissions to Northeast SARE's grant programs (eg., Partnership, Research and Education, or Professional Development Program grants).

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 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, and other convincing evidence of need for the research.

> **New for the 2020 Cycle**
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> The time applications are due has been moved to 5:00 p.m. ET.
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> Northeast SARE has recently migrated its online grant submissions to projects.sare.org, SARE's national grant management system. Instructions on how to access and submit preproposals in the system are included on page 4.

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 the Professional Development Program. An individual project leader may submit no more than two preproposals per grant program per year. If multiple preproposals are approved and invited as full proposals, *only one* full proposal may be submitted per year, regardless of how many preproposals are approved.

The preproposal is a preliminary concept document. Reviewers select the most promising projects to invite 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. About ten awards for the Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture Grant Program are expected to be made this year, depending on the amounts requested and available funding.

Eligible Applicants

Project leaders must have the skills, experience and institutional capacity necessary to carry out the project.

Northeast SARE welcomes preproposals from a wide range of stakeholders including university and extension staff, agricultural nonprofits, research farm and experiment station personnel, private consultants, agriculture related businesses and organizations, government agencies, and others who work in farming and food systems.

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 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 Minority Serving Institutions (including 1890s and other historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, etc.) and other organizations in the Northeast region that work with diverse communities. 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. All projects must be completed by November 30, 2023.

Conflict of Interest

Members of the Northeast SARE Administrative Council 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, business partners or close personal friends.

Public Domain

Applications 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.

Grant Timeline

Online application system opens for submissions .... May 31, 2019

Preproposal submission deadline .... June 25, 2019

Project leaders notified whether or not they are invited to submit a full proposal .... August 12, 2019

Feedback provided to invited preproposals to strengthen full proposal .... August 30, 2019

Feedback provided to preproposals not invited .... September 30, 2019

Full proposal submission deadline .... October 29, 2019

Awards announced to project leaders.. Late February 2020

Earliest start date for projects, with contracts from UVM to follow shortly .... Late February 2020

Grant management conference calls with Northeast SARE staff .... March 2020

Navigating the Online Submission System

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

The online application system will be open for submissions from May 31, 2019 until the deadline, **5:00 p.m. ET on June 25, 2019**. Staff support to answer questions or deal with technical submission issues will be available until 5:00 p.m. ET on the due date. Applications submitted after 5:00 p.m. ET on June 25 will not be accepted.

Northeast SARE has recently migrated its online grant submissions to **projects.sare.org**, SARE's national grant management system. 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 preproposal(s). New users should select "Create an account" and follow the prompts.

From the SARE Grant Management System landing page, 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.** Under "**2020 Northeast SARE Research for Novel Approaches (preproposal)**" choose "Begin a New Proposal."

Start the application by clicking "Edit Title" and 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.

There are two sections of the preproposal:

- **Basic Information**. Here, enter the organization or institution hosting the project, and whether a full proposal for this work was submitted previously to Northeast SARE.

- **Preproposal Questions**. See pages 5-7 for instructions for this section.

To enter information, click "Edit Answer" for each question and be sure to click "Save" after each entry. At any time during the writing of your preproposal, you can preview a draft from the proposal overview page by clicking "View Draft." You can also share the draft of your preproposal with collaborators by sending the "link to share" found at the top of the draft page or by creating and sending a PDF of the preproposal.

When all preproposal questions are answered to your satisfaction, click the "Submit Proposal" button. 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. Each time you submit or unsubmit the preproposal, you will receive an email confirmation.

Remember, individual applicants may submit up to two preproposals per Northeast SARE grant program (Research and Education, Novel Approaches for Research, and/or Professional Development) in a single year. However, only one full proposal may be submitted per year, regardless of how many preproposals are approved.

Preparing Your Answers to Preproposal Questions

There are word limits for all entries in the Preproposal Questions section. It is advisable to use a word processing program to develop the preproposal, ensuring it is accurate and complies with the word limits.

No attachments are allowed in the preproposal application.

No authorized signatures are required for preproposal submission.

Instructions for Preproposal Questions

Each numbered section below appears as a "Preproposal Question" in the online submission system along with its associated review criteria. Responses are entered online by clicking "Edit Answer" after each question. Preproposals are evaluated using the review criteria; answers entered in response to the prompts below must adequately address these review criteria.

1. Problem and novel approach justification (200 words)

Explain the problem or missed opportunity for farmers that affects the sustainability of agriculture in the Northeast that this novel approach proposed for research 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 the extent to which the novel approach could address the problem or opportunity, if it's proven feasible.

Provide numerical data to justify the statements made about the items above. Data sources that provide justification may include references in literature, the work of others, farmer and Extension surveys, census data, etc. Citations are not required in the preproposal, but will be required in a full proposal.

Review criteria:
The problem is important to advance sustainable agriculture in the Northeast; the type, number and scale of farms affected is described; the need to address the problem is significant. The approach proposed for research clearly has potential to address the problem, and the extent of the potential benefits is clearly explained.

2. Knowledge gap to be addressed (150 words)

Explain the missing knowledge or information (gap in research results) that would be needed to allow development of an educational program to promote adoption of the novel approach, demonstrating why adoption of the approach is not yet feasible.

Describe the specific knowledge or information expected to be generated by the project to address the gap.

Provide data and literature-based rationale to justify the statements made about the research gap. Citations not required in a preproposal, but will be for a full proposal.

Review criteria: A substantiated gap in research results exists that prevents development of an education program to promote adoption of the novel approach. The knowledge expected to be generated by the project will address this gap.

3. Project Objective (75 words)

Succinctly summarize the objective of this project in terms of the knowledge expected to be generated that would enable adoption of the novel approach, and the impact this could have on farms in the Northeast.

Review criteria:
The project objective clearly describes new knowledge expected to be generated to enable adoption of the novel approach, and the potential impact the adoption could have on farms in the Northeast.

4. Research description (200 words)

Research may include field research or social science research.

A description of field research must include:

- The objective(s) of the research proposed to address the knowledge gap.
- The main treatments.
- Key data to be collected.

A description of social science research must include:

- The objective(s) of the research proposed to address the knowledge gap.
- The target population(s).
- Key data to be collected.

5. Key individuals – coordinator and cooperators (125 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 essential roles in leading the project. Name the individuals and state their affiliations, qualifications, and the primary roles 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 those contributing significant money, personnel time, facilities, or equipment to the project.

6. Funding request estimate (select category)

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

Applicants will be notified if they are invited to submit a full proposal on August 12, 2019. Feedback that may be used to strengthen a full proposal will be provided to project leaders with invited preproposals by August 30, 2019. For preproposals not invited to submit full proposals, feedback will be provided to project leaders by the end of 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 additional questions pertaining to evidence that demonstrates the research is of interest to farmers and service providers, a Project Advisory Committee, literature review and citation list, and an outreach plan for communicating research results before the end of the project. Outreach plans may include: presentations at conferences, workshops and field days; publication of fact sheets, booklets, videos and peer-reviewed articles, etc.

Attachments such as letters of commitment from key individuals, research plot or sampling plan, experiment diagram, outline of focus group or interview plan, and other supporting research documentation are also required for full proposal submission.

Budget planning

A full proposal submission will require a detailed Excel spreadsheet of the funding needs with justification for each item requested. Invited project leaders will receive a budget template to complete. Full proposal budgets should not differ significantly from the preproposal estimates.

SARE funds can be used for the following project expenses: personnel, travel, materials and supplies, farm equipment rental, 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; incentive offers and promotional items; most international travel; purchase of motorized vehicles and equipment; cell phone charges; food expenses (unless necessary for the continuity of a training event or project meeting); and machinery not essential to the project.

Resources

The following resources may help you as plan your project.

- Visit SARE's national database of projects to discover the types of projects that have been funded. Go to: projects.sare.org/search-projects/ and select "Northeast" region and "Research Only" project type.

- 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.

- Specific questions about Northeast SARE's Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture Grant Program should be directed to David Holm at northeastsare@uvm.edu or 802/651-8335.