NORTHEAST SARE
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education

Research and Education Grant Program
2020 Full Proposal Instructions

Important Application Dates

The online system will open for submissions: **September 17, 2019**

Applications, with authorized signatures, are due: **October 29, 2019, 5:00 p.m. ET**

Questions?

Visit the Northeast SARE website at: **www.northeastsare.org/RandE**. Contact David Holm 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 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.

Northeast SARE
University of Vermont
140 Kennedy Drive, Suite 201
South Burlington, VT 05403
802/651-8335
northeastsare@uvm.edu
www.northeastsare.org

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

About Northeast SARE Research and Education Grants

Overview

The Research and Education Grant Program funds sustainable agriculture projects that result in gains in farmer knowledge and skills applied to make verifiable changes that lead to greater sustainability throughout the Northeast region.

Proposals may be submitted with or without a research component but all projects must have an outcome-based education program for farmers. Projects must explore, improve or expand on practices and approaches that address one or more of the three tenets of sustainable agriculture: environmental quality, financial viability, and social sustainability including farm succession, equity, community connections, and farmer health and well-being.

> **New for the 2020 Cycle**
>
> The time applications are due has been moved to 5:00 p.m. ET.
>
> 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 proposals in the system are included on page 4.

Outcome Funding

The Research and Education Grant Program uses an outcome funding approach that directly connects project activities to measurable goals. Central to this approach is the performance target, a statement that describes the changes in behavior and conditions among project beneficiaries (in this case, farmers) that are expected as a result from the proposed project. Milestones that describe the steps taken by farmers to acquire new knowledge and skills needed to make desired changes are also key components in outcome-funded projects. Applicants are strongly urged to become familiar with outcome funding. Learn more from our *"Guide to Outcome Funding"* at: **www.northeastsare.org/RandE**.

Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are those who submitted a 2020 preproposal and were notified by Northeast SARE that they were approved to submit a full proposal to the Research and Education Grant program. A project leader may submit only one full proposal per year—selecting just one of Northeast SARE's major grant programs (Research and Education, Research for Novel Approaches, or Professional Development), even if more than one preproposal was invited to submit a full proposal.

Changes to an Approved Preproposal

Minor revisions to the approved preproposal, such as refinements to the project title, performance target, milestones, or key individuals are acceptable, especially if such changes were suggested by preproposal reviewers. Reviewers will not accept a full proposal that differs significantly from the preproposal unless the changes made were those suggested by preproposal reviewers. Full proposal reviewers will have the preproposal and the suggestions and comments sent from the preproposal review team, so please be sure that the content of the full proposal answers any questions and concerns that were raised.

Project Duration

Typical project length is 2 to 3 years. All projects must be completed by November 30, 2023.

Funding Available

The funding request should fall within the budget range requested in the preproposal, or as otherwise requested by the preproposal review team.

Use of Funds

SARE funding must comply with USDA guidelines and, therefore, there are certain allowable and ineligible expenses for this grant program, see the following list.

Funds may be used only for expenses specific to the project:

- Labor, including wages or salary and benefits, for individuals working on the project;
- Supplies, including copies, research supplies, outreach materials, and software;
- Farm equipment rental or operating charges;
- Equipment that is necessary for, and unique to, the project. Equipment with other general uses is not eligible.
- Travel and per diem necessary for the project;
- Journal publication fees so long as they are incurred during the contract period; and
- Indirect costs up to 10 percent of total grant request.

Funds may NOT be used for:

- Incentive offers and promotional items, including items of clothing, swag, giveaways, subsidies, raffles, and gift cards;
- Expenses for enduring and non-project specific items such as land purchases, general farm improvements, and construction of buildings, greenhouses, and laboratories;
- Travel to scholarly meetings unless essential to the project, such as presentation of project results;
- International travel unless integral to the project's success and described in the budget justification (Note: There are certain restrictions on costs and carriers.);
- Purchase of motorized vehicles and general use equipment;
- Cell phone charges; and
- Food expenses unless necessary for the continuity of a training event or project meeting. (Note: When SARE funds are used for meals, USDA employees should note this on their expense reports and deduct meal costs from any per diem reimbursements.)

It is expected that costs for copiers, cameras, computers, video equipment, and other items that have a wide range of uses beyond the boundaries of the project be provided by the institution and covered as indirect costs. To be considered as a direct cost, the item must be clearly essential to the particular project and applicants must provide clear justification, making sure that these requests are reasonable and defensible.

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, 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.

Acknowledging SARE

All funded projects are required to acknowledge Northeast SARE as the funding source in all project publications and outreach materials.

Grant Timeline

Navigating the Online Submission System

Proposals are submitted online at: **projects.sare.org**. The online application system will be open for submissions from September 17, 2019 until the deadline, **5:00 p.m. ET on October 29, 2019**. Staff support to answer questions and address 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 October 29 will not be accepted.

From the SARE Grant Management System landing page at **projects.sare.org**, select "Log in." Once logged in, select "Manage my grant proposals." You should see a list of your approved preproposal titles as "Active Proposals" in the system. Note that if you log in before the submission open date—September 17—you will be able to view your approved preproposal(s), but you won't be able to edit to submit a full proposal. After the open date, select the proposal title that you intend to complete from the "Active Proposals" list.

Click on each section on the left, then submit responses to the questions. Detailed guidance for each section is provided in this document. Enter responses by clicking on "Edit Answer" for each question. Be sure to click "Save" after each entry; you must save each question individually—clicking "save" for one question does not save responses entered in other questions.

At any time during the online submission of your proposal, you may preview a draft from the proposal overview page by clicking "View Draft." You can also share the draft of your proposal 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 proposal questions are answered to your satisfaction and you have uploaded all required attachments, click the "Submit Proposal" button. Prior to the deadline, you may "unsubmit" to revise the proposal. If you choose to unsubmit, don't forget to submit it again when you are done editing, otherwise it will not go forward to review. Each time you submit or unsubmit, you will receive an email confirmation.

Preparing Answers to Proposal Questions

Recommend Crafting Responses Offline

We highly recommend you prepare your questions offline, completing your responses per the instructions that follow and then copying and pasting your responses into the on-line system. To that end, we have posted a Word document of the proposal questions, see: **www.northeastsare.org/RandE**.

Text Limits, Formatting and Writing Suggestions

Keep your writing clear and simple. Avoid jargon and write for a mixed audience that includes farmers, researchers, extension staff, and other agricultural service providers. You can assume grant reviewers have agricultural knowledge, but may not necessarily have deep expertise in your subject area.

There are word limits for most sections of the application. Again, it is highly advisable to develop the proposal content offline, ensuring it is accurate and complies with the word limits. Depending on the word processor used, your word count may differ than the online submission system and additional editing may be necessary after pasting into the online system.

Note that when word count limits are exceeded in the online submission system, the word count font changes to red and you will not be able to save that answer until the word count is at or below the limit. Also note that copying and pasting from some word processing programs may result in the loss of formatting; make any formatting corrections applied from within the online system.

Advanced Planning

Please prepare your application well in advance of the deadline. Most sponsored programs or grants offices need two to four two weeks to review and approve applications, so confirm the policies at your institution and plan accordingly. The Grant Commitment Form, officiated and signed by you and your institutional official, and for any subawardee institutions, must be included as an upload when you submit your application. Letters from your co-operating project leaders must also be included as an upload. Failure to upload required documents will result in the rejection of your proposal.

Full Proposal Outline / Checklist

Components of the full proposal and their word limits appear below, listed in the order they appear in the online application system within section headings. You may use the outline as a checklist to ensure the application is complete before submitting.

General Information

- ❑ Project start date
- ❑ Project end date
- ❑ State
- ❑ Primary Commodities
- ❑ Primary Practices

Summary Information

- ❑ Performance Target Narrative (50 words)
- ❑ Abstract (450 words)

Statement of Need

- ❑ Description of Problem (400 words)
- ❑ Solution and Benefits (400 words)
- ❑ Beneficiaries and their Interest in the Problem (300 words)

Achieving the Performance Target

- ❑ Education Plan (500 words)
- ❑ Milestones
- ❑ Performance Target
- ❑ Verification Plan (300 words)
- ❑ Draft Verification Tool (upload)

Research – only for projects that include a research component

- ❑ Research Hypothesis or Question (100 words)
- ❑ Research Description (1200 words)
- ❑ Other relevant research information—plot plan or survey design, etc. (upload)

Project Team

- ❑ Key Individuals (400 words)
- ❑ Letters of Commitment from Key Individuals (upload)
- ❑ Project Advisory Committee (350 words)

Previous Work

- ❑ Literature Review (1800 words)
- ❑ Citation List (1000 words)

Budget

- ❑ Institutional Affiliation of Subawardees
- ❑ Budget Justification and Narrative Template (upload)
- ❑ Budget Summary

Host Institution Approval

- ❑ Grant Commitment Form (upload)
- ❑ Institutional Official Contact Information
- ❑ FDP Clearinghouse Information

Step-by-Step Instructions for Proposal Content

When you begin to enter your proposal, you will see the project title and description carried forward from your approved preproposal. If needed, you may edit these by clicking on the edit button.

Project Title. Remember, use a clear, succinct title that captures the essence of the project's intent. Avoid acronyms, jargon and unnecessary words. Please limit the title to 150 characters, including spaces.

Description. A short description of what the project intends to accomplish is used by search engines in the reporting system database, should your project be funded. Please limit to 160 characters including spaces.

Proposal Sections and Questions

The online application system is divided into sections that contain multiple questions. Instructions for questions within all sections are presented below. Aside from the General Information and Summary Information sections, questions have associated review criteria that reviewers use to rate proposal responses.

Online, the proposal sections appear in a list in the left sidebar of the application system; clicking on the section heading will open the fields for entering responses to questions. To enter a response, click the "Edit Answer" button after each question. Answers should be written per the instructions below and should adequately address the associated review criteria.

General Information

This section asks for the following general information:

Project start date. Choose a start date from the calendar pop-up. Projects should not start before March 1, 2020.

Project end date. Choose an end data from the calendar pop-up. You will be asked for yearly budget information for each project period of 12 months or more, as defined by start and end dates. All projects must be complete by November 30, 2023.

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.

Primary Commodities. Please choose only the primary production commodities being addressed or investigated by the project, not every commodity that might potentially be affected.

Primary Practices. Please choose only the primary production practices being addressed or investigated by the project, not every practice that might potentially be affected.

Summary Information

This section has two questions—the first summarizes the performance target objective and the second summarizes the totality of your project activity.

Performance Target Narrative (50 words). Write a narrative statement that combines all the components of the performance target that are entered for the Performance Target question found later in the application. (see detailed instructions for the performance target question below)

Abstract (450 words). This is a standalone summary of the project; the abstract should not refer to subsequent parts of the proposal (eg., do not use language like, "This will be described later"). The abstract should comprise three subsections, as follows. Include the subheadings in the text you enter to identify each element.

Problem and Justification: A brief description of the problem or opportunity to be addressed, the target farmer audience affected, and justification for the project's need from the perspective of farmer beneficiaries.

Solution and Approach: The proposed solution to the problem or opportunity and the approach for reaching or carrying out the solution.

Milestones and Performance Target: The final portion of the abstract summarizes the number of beneficiaries who will be engaged and the knowledge and skills they will acquire through the milestones; it ends with the behavior change to be achieved, as described in the performance target.

Statement of Need

The three questions in this section define the problem and the opportunities for solutions to be addressed by the project, and the beneficiary audience that will be engaged to participate.

Description of Problem (400 words). Explain the problem, harm, or missed opportunity for farmers that the project will address; the causes (or hypothesized causes) of the problem; and why - in the context of social, economic and/or environmental sustainability for agriculture - it is important that it be addressed.

Describe the number, type, and size of farms where the problem or opportunity occurs, and the extent of agricultural production affected.

Provide references and numerical data to justify claims made in the description. Data sources that provide justification may include references in literature, the work of others, farmer surveys, extension surveys, census data, etc.

> **Review criteria:**
>
> The problem or opportunity is clearly described, including the type and scale of agriculture affected. The need to address the problem or opportunity is substantial and is supported by specific evidence (data). Addressing the problem or opportunity has potential to contribute to the sustainability of agriculture in the Northeast.

Solution and Benefits (400 words). State the proposed solution(s) that will be the focus of the project's educational efforts. Describe the expected measurable benefits to social, economic and/or environmental sustainability the solution offers farmers. Provide evidence that supports how and why the solution is expected to be effective.

Projects will rely on education about proven beneficial techniques that comprise the solution. This information may include demonstrations of these techniques with collaborating farmers.

> **Review criteria:**
>
> The project proposes a feasible and realistic solution capable of leading to the targeted changes and measurable benefits that will improve sustainability. The likelihood of success is supported with data from previous work.

For projects with a research component, the solution may also include education about new practices or application strategies under investigation in the project research. Examples include education about the use of known cover crops while studying optimal seeding rates or new cover crop species, or the development of farm transfer plans while evaluating the most effective family goal setting tools.

Beneficiaries and their Interest (300 words). Specify the number and type of farmers you will engage as participants, and the total pool, including geographic range from which you will recruit. These should be farmers who experience the problem and can benefit from the proposed solution.

Describe and quantify these farmers' interest to solve the problem and their interest and willingness to participate in and learn through this project. Justify statements of interest with numerical data (not expressed as percentages of unknown numbers) from surveys or other quantified inquiries conducted by the applicant (or others) that demonstrate farmer interest in participating in the project to help solve the problem.

Achieving the Performance Target

The five questions in this section describe the educational and other interactions farmer beneficiaries will engage in to achieve the performance target, and methods and questions the project team will use to verify farmers' learning and performance target achievements.

Education Plan (500 words). Describe the outcome-focused education program you will conduct to teach farmers about the problem and proposed solution(s) and facilitate their adoption of the new practice(s) or strategies, as described in the performance target. The plan must be realistic, describe content and methods appropriate to engaging farmers, and be likely to lead to achievement of the performance target.

The education program should be grounded in research about solutions already proven useful and suitable for adoption. If the project proposes research about new practices or adaptations to existing practices, the information gained though that research should be integrated to complement educational activities based on existing knowledge. Engaging farmers in research activities may be an integral part of the educational approach.

The education plan must include:

- Methods for recruiting and enrolling farmers.
- Topics to be addressed that will increase farmer knowledge and skills, assisting in overcoming known challenges to farmer adoption.
- Instructional methods (in sequence) to facilitate learning (eg., workshops, demonstrations, webinars, consultations, etc.).
- Methods for supporting farmers as they learn, plan and take actions (eg., post-training contacts by email, phone, in-person; record-keeping tools or templates; fact sheets, videos and other instructive materials; etc.).

Milestones (Limit of 12 milestones – 75 words each). Milestones list logically connected learning, skills acquisition, and action steps that farmers will accomplish, in sequence, as they participate in activities outlined in the education plan (and research activities as appropriate). The progression of milestones should prepare beneficiaries to achieve the performance target.

Milestones describe what farmers (quantified by number) will experience as they interact with the project team throughout the project – from recruitment and pre-training engagement, through steps for learning and support for follow-up actions to achieve the performance target, to verification of follow-up actions and resulting benefits.

They are written in terms of what the farmer beneficiaries will do and learn; they are not a plan of work or list of activities that the project team will perform.

If funded, the project's milestones will become the benchmarks for required progress reports; as such, they must be verifiable (measurable).

Each milestone is written as a statement with three required components and one optional component that will be entered online into separate fields:

- The project interactions or educational experiences in which farmers participate; and the specific knowledge or skills they learn or the intermediate action step they complete as a result of participating;
- A realistic number of farmer beneficiaries who participate;
- [*Optional*: Number of agricultural service providers who participate]; and
- Proposed completion date.

Performance Target (50 words). The performance target is the core statement in the proposal that defines the specific, beneficial and verifiable actions farmers take as a result of participating in the project and the measurable benefits derived from these actions. The target is a project's measurable goal, not a guarantee.

The performance target has four required components that will be entered online into four separate fields:

1. The number (not an undefined percentage) of farmers who will adopt a recommended practice or strategy.
2. The specific, verifiable practice or strategy that these farmers will adopt by the end of the project as a result of their participation. These may include adoption a new or improved:
   - crop, or livestock production practice;
   - system for food safety, product processing, pest management;
   - approach to business management, marketing, or value-added enterprise; and
   - plan for intergenerational farm transfer, human resource management, etc.
3. The extent of adoption or the amount of production that will be affected, expressed in measurable units. Examples of extent of adoption statements include the total number of:

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- acres, animals or other production units switched to a new practice;
- new markets, products or enterprises developed;
- new farm management plans or strategies implemented;
- employees, farm families, or communities affected by a new plan, practice or strategy.

Strong engagement and input from farmer beneficiaries during proposal planning are essential for establishing realistic numbers of farmers and the extent of their adoption.

4. The measurable benefit(s) that result from farmers adopting the new practice or strategy. These benefits must be able to be measured directly or extrapolated, calculated from values already established in the literature. Resulting measurable benefits may include environmental, financial and social factors. Examples from past projects include:
   - excess nutrients removed from livestock diet and waste products (expressed in pounds) resulting from adoption of recommended practices to improve nutrient balance of feed rations;
   - inputs reduced (expressed in quantity of materials, number of applications, labor hours, dollars) from adopting recommended pest control or nutrient management strategy;
   - increased sales (expressed in quantity or volume of product, dollars) resulting from planting acres to a new crop, adopting a new marketing strategy, or developing a new enterprise;
   - farmer-reported improvements in quality of life, such as increase in personal satisfaction, increased number of vacation days, or improvements in farm efficiency resulting from adoption of project recommendations; etc.
   - acres and value of farmland passed on to younger farmers after creation and implementation of farm transfer plans.

Note: The performance target must **not** be dependent on research results; rather, it should be based on proven beneficial practices related to the research topic. The proposed research should complement the learning participants will engage in as they progress to the performance target, but the level to which participants achieve the performance target should not depend on the findings of the research program.

Farmers' participation in project research and education activities should **not** be included as part of the performance target. Remember, the performance target must focus on what farmers do by the end of the project, as a result of their participation.

While the majority of projects have one level of achievement described in the performance target, sometimes a more complex performance target is used to describe multiple achievement levels for different audiences or results impacts—the performance target should include no more than three levels.

Verification Plan (300 words). Describe how and when measurements will be made to verify participants' learning through the milestones and their follow-up actions to accomplish the performance target.

The verification plan should include:

- Data collection methods and tools project leaders will use to collect milestone (learning) and performance target (action) data from farmer beneficiaries.
- Timing of when data will be collected and/or reported to you by farmers.
- Supportive guidance and tools you will provide to farmer beneficiaries to inform them of the performance target, help them record data about actions and results, if appropriate, and be prepared to respond to your requests for data about their follow-up actions. Examples of supportive guidance and tools for beneficiaries include the following:
  - Project introduction or enrollment forms that explain the project focus, scope, and performance target, and that are used to obtain written commitment to participate.
  - Data sheets, templates or checklists where beneficiaries can record data and information about their project activities on paper or online.

Draft Verification Tool (upload). A draft verification tool is required. Please include questions that beneficiaries will answer to verify the extent to which they have made the changes described in the performance target.

For guidance on developing your verification plan and tools, please refer to the examples in the appendix and our *Project Verification Planning Guide* at: www.northeastsare.org/RandE.

Research – Only for projects that include a research component

Projects that include research that is related and complementary to the education program should describe the research in the next three questions. If the project will **<u>not</u>** conduct research, enter "N/A" in first question.

Research Hypothesis or Question (100 words). If the project includes a research component, state the hypothesis(es) or research question(s) to be tested or evaluated.

Research Description (1200 words). Describe the research proposed to test the stated hypothesis(es) or research question(s).

For field or laboratory research, the description must include the elements listed below (e. is optional). Include the subheadings in bold in the text you enter to identify each element.

> **Treatments**: Proposed treatments and rationale for their selection.

> **Methods**: Experimental design, experimental unit size, and treatment application.

> **Data Collection and Analysis**: Data to be collected, measurement protocols, and statistical methods of analysis.

> **Farmer Input**: How farmers contributed to development of hypothesis and treatment selection, and the ways they may contribute to conducting the research.

> (Optional) **Additional Information**: Other relevant features of the proposed research.

For social science research, the description must include the elements listed below (e. is optional). Include the subheadings in bold in the text you enter to identify each element.

> **Target Population(s)**.

> **Methods**: Experimental design, methods and instruments to be used.

> **Data Collection and Analysis**: Data to be collected, measurement protocols, and methods of analysis.

> **Farmer Input**: How farmers contributed to development of research and its design, and the ways they may contribute to conducting or participating in the research.

> (Optional) **Additional Information**: Other relevant features of the proposed research.

Optional: **Other relevant research information (upload)**. Here you will upload materials that clarify the research plan such as a plot or sampling plan, experiment diagram, outline of focus group or interview plan, or other supporting research documentation.

Project Team

The three questions in this section describe the project leadership and guidance for project direction.

Key Individuals (400 words). Briefly describe the project leader (coordinator/principal investigator) and other key individuals (cooperators) who will devote significant time to the project leading major components of the work. Descriptions should demonstrate the ability to manage the project and conduct its activities. Name the individuals, their organizational affiliation, and their primary responsibilities in the project. If some key individuals have not yet been identified, provide a description of the type/qualifications of the persons who would be recruited to fill those positions.

Also name any other individuals and their organizations, outside of your own, that will be receiving funds requested from SARE to carry out the project, as well as those organizations who will be contributing significant money, personnel time, facilities or equipment to the project.

Letters of Commitment from Key Individuals (upload). Each key individual (other than the principal investigator/project leader who is the applicant) must provide a letter of commitment. Each letter should indicate that the individual understands their role, describe what they will bring to the effort, and acknowledges their willingness to participate. Letters should be written by the individual team members, not the project leader.

Combine all letters into one PDF attachment for the upload.

Do **not** upload: letters of general support from individuals not involved in your project, curricula vitae, or sample promotional materials about your institution.

Project Advisory Committee (350 words). An advisory committee consisting of at least two farmers and one agricultural service provider (eg., Extension, NRCS or other federal or state agency, private or non-profit sectors, veterinarian, or other farm advisor) is required. Additional people representing other affiliations, such as researchers, may also be included on the committee.

It is expected that project advisory committee members have provided input to the project team during proposal development and will periodically do so throughout the project, for example, in the assessment of farmer interest, research design and treatment selection, and plans to share project findings. Advisory committee meetings may occur in person or by conference call or webinar.

Provide the names and affiliations of those who will serve on the advisory committee. State how they were engaged for advice during proposal development and how and when they will meet throughout the project.

Previous Work

The two questions in this section describe and define the previous work that this project builds upon.

Literature Review (1800 words). Outline the scientific foundation and merits of your project and identify and explain the references used to understand the problems, challenges, and opportunities your project will address, as well as current knowledge associated with the proposed solution. Include only those sources most relevant to your project. This section is the place to convince reviewers that there is a body of knowledge that provides a compelling rationale for the project.

Clearly describe how your project will complement or build upon the results of previous research efforts. Show that you are informed about previous relevant research including grants from SARE if they are relevant to your project. The national SARE database of projects (projects.sare.org/search-projects) contains projects from all four SARE regions and is searchable by state, type of grant, author and keyword.

Citation List (1000 words). Provide a list of full citations referenced in the literature review and elsewhere in your proposal. Include only those citations directly related to the proposed project.

Budget

The questions in this section establish the specifics of the request for funding.

The funding needed is defined by your budget, an expense plan that provides your best estimate for the expenses you expect to encounter.

Itemize all expected expenses and calculate their costs as precisely as possible to show reviewers what funds are needed to carry out your project, and why they are needed.

Even the most persuasive proposal will not be funded if the budget is not clear, is too high or too low for the efforts described, or if it includes requests for items not relevant to the proposed work or for items not allowed by SARE.

Both a detailed budget justification/narrative and a budget summary are required. The budget justification/narrative is provided by completing a spreadsheet template. The category subtotals from the spreadsheet are then entered into the budget summary in the on line system.

Institutional Affiliation of Subawardees. The institutional affiliation of the project leader (principal investigator) is already defined in the applicant profile and does not need to be entered again. Enter any additional institutions that will receive funding.

In the budget summary question, all institutions entered are made available for you to select and enter a budget.

Budget Justification and Narrative Template (upload). Use the Northeast SARE Budget Justification and Narrative Template (Excel spreadsheet) provided at

www.northeastsare.org/RandE. Be sure to select a template that matches your project length (i.e., two or three years).

In the template, itemize the quantity and per-unit cost of each expense and include a narrative description that explains the need for and use of each expense. The spreadsheet should calculate the total cost of each item, the category subtotals for each year, and overall project totals. Budget categories in the spreadsheet are explained in Appendix A.

The competitiveness of applications is undermined by an inadequately justified budget. For example, if a budget shows expenses of $18,450 for lab tests but provides no number of tests, cost per unit or explanation about the purpose of these tests, the justification is inadequate. If the total of itemized expenses does not sum to the amount requested in the budget, the amount is not properly justified. If an item is requested without any detail as to why it is needed or how it is related to the project, the budget is not properly justified. This level of detail is required by USDA/NIFA and the University of Vermont. It also shows reviewers you have carefully considered the funding needed for your project.

A budget justification and narrative template is required for each institution that will receive funds through subcontracts.

The completed template(s) must be uploaded as an Excel file (.xls or .xlsx) to the online submission.

Budget Summary. Once the Budget Justification and Narrative Template is complete, enter the summed subtotals for each major budget category from the template—personnel, materials and supplies, travel, printing and publications, other direct costs (before subawards), and indirect costs—into the budget summary in the online submission system. Individual line item expenses are **not** needed in the budget summary. Since detailed narrative and justification are provided in the Budget Justification and Narrative Template, for "Item Description," you may enter "subtotal from budget detail spreadsheet" and you may leave the "Details/Justification" box blank.

You will be provided data entry columns for each year of the project. The number of years provided are defined by the project start and end dates entered in the General Information section at the beginning of the application.

If other institutions are to receive funds under subawards, their budget amounts should be reported in the relevant institution/organization budget, not in the lead institution budget (otherwise the amount will be summed twice in the overall budget total request). To enter, subawardee budget information, be sure to select the appropriate institution (found in the last data entry line).

Finally, make sure that the subtotals in the budget summary match the subtotals in the budget detail template(s).

Host Institution Approval

This section has the final required components of your proposal.

Grant Commitment Form (upload). Please print the Grant Commitment Form available at: www.northeastsare.org/RandE. The project leader must sign as applicant on the Grant Commitment Form. An authorized official at the applicant's institution (typically a sponsored programs officer or organization's financial manager or executive director) must also sign.

Note: You may share your proposal with your host institution's authorized official by clicking on the "View Draft" button on the previous page, then print the proposal or share the proposal by providing the "Link to share" URL.

Upload a pdf or image copy of the completed, fully officiated Grant Commitment Form here, and enter the information from the Form into the next two questions.

Institutional Official. For the institution serving as fiscal agent for the project, provide the name and contact information of the official for the institution serving as fiscal agent for the project.

FDP Clearinghouse. Please check the response to the question, "Is this institution registered in the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) Expanded Clearinghouse?" A list of participating organizations can be found at: fdpclearinghouse.org/organizations.

Note: Completed Grant Commitment Forms are also required from **all** institutions that receive SARE funds under cooperator subawards—so please sure to work with your project partners to receive their completed (and signed) Grant Commitment Form well in advance of the deadline. You must upload PDFs (or image files) of these forms with your submitted proposal.

Required Documents

Applications with missing or incomplete required documents will not advance to grant review so be sure the following required documents are uploaded:

- ❏ Draft Verification Tool (as a PDF)
- ❏ Letters of Commitment from Key Individuals (as a single PDF)
- ❏ Budget Justification and Narrative Template (in spreadsheet format) for each institution receiving funds
- ❏ Grant Commitment Form for each institution receiving funds (as PDFs or image files)

Selected Applications

If the Northeast SARE Administrative Council selects your project for funding, you may expect the following.

Notification

The Northeast SARE Administrative Council will select applications for funding by February 20, 2020 and Northeast SARE staff will notify applicants of the status of their applications on February 21, 2020.

Contracting and Disbursement of Funds

The Sponsored Programs Office or Authorized Representative of the grant recipient will receive a Subcontract Agreement from the University of Vermont, the host institution for Northeast SARE. Funds are to be used exclusively for the proposed project, subject to the restrictions outlined in "Use of Funds." Funds are released on a reimbursement basis to the institution in response to invoices from the institution's financial office. Northeast SARE will hold the last 10 percent of the award until the final project report has been received and approved.

IACUC and IRB Documentation

If your project is funded and involves livestock, SARE will require certification of protocol review from your university's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). If your project is funded and involves human research subjects, SARE will need a completed approval document from your institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Protection of Human Subjects in Research.

Required Reporting

Northeast SARE requires annual progress reports and a comprehensive final report for all projects. All reports will be submitted in our online system using our reporting template. Reports should describe the progress made on the project, detail the findings observed, and document any outputs and impacts. All outreach and educational activities should be reported as well as any measured changes in knowledge and skills, attitudes and opinions, and/or the adoption of new practices. Products and educational tools should

be added to the report as attachments. When possible, photographs should be included to help document and promote the project.

Progress reports are due by January 15 each year the project is active and final reports are due within 60 days of the project's end date. The final report should include full, detailed results of project activities that were defined in the application. Also at the close of projects, SARE asks for contact information of 8-12 project participants whom SARE may contact in the future for program evaluation.

To strengthen your proposal and to understand further what you will be asked to report on if you are awarded a grant, please look at the performance indicators in Grantee Reporting and SARE Post-Project Evaluation (Appendix B). This table lists information you will be asked to report during the project and items SARE may assess two to four years after the project's completion. To be eligible for funding, it is not necessary that your project include results under all of the performance indicators. For more information on what SARE hopes its project investments will achieve, please review the SARE Logic Models at: www.northeastsare.org/About-Us/SARE-logic-models.

Resources

The following resources may help you as plan and write your application.

- To learn about all projects funded to date by the SARE program, visit the national reporting site at: projects.sare.org/search-projects. You may search the database by region, state, project type, year, commodities and practices addressed, as well as by keywords.

- 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. Information specialists can share resources and search techniques that may be relevant to your application. Contact AFSIC via the web, email at: afsic@nal.usda.gov, or phone: 301-504-6559.

Appendix A: Explanation of Budget Categories and Items to Include

Personnel Costs

Personnel costs include those for the project leader, student wages, support staff or other hired labor. These must be shown as either an hourly rate multiplied by the anticipated time needed to complete the project or as a percentage of FTE at a given salary. There is also a separate line in the personnel section for fringe benefits.

Only people employed by the recipient organization should be listed in this category. If people outside your institution will be paid to work on the project, they should be listed under "Other Direct Costs" (categorized as "Speaker/Trainer Fees," "Consultants," or "Services") or "Subcontracts/Subawards."

Non-Personnel Costs

Non-personnel expense categories include: materials and supplies, travel, publications/printing, and other direct costs (communications, photocopying, speaker/trainer fees, consultants, services, conferences/meetings/workshops, trainee support, off-site office rental, purchase of equipment, rental of equipment or land-use charges, and other/miscellaneous). Under each category, name each expense, provide narrative justifications of the expense, and provide information on units, quantities, and per unit costs.

Materials and Supplies. This section is for items that are specific to the project and have a reasonable useful life of less than three years. Supplies can include items such as office supplies, project-specific software, specialized tools, measuring devices, and other materials that will be used and used up during the course of the project. Again, be specific, for example:

> *Soil test kits to measure soil health before and after treatment. 4 kits x $22 each = $88*

> *Mapping software to collect, store and visualize project field data = $420*

> *Paper for in-house project flyers and workshop handouts. 10 reams x $2.60 each = $26*

Travel. Specify the purpose of the trip and include who is traveling, the destination, and expenses per trip. When requesting funds for travel by car, use the mileage reimbursement rate set by the institution administering the grant. If you are not associated with an institution, then you may use the rate established by the University of Vermont (host of Northeast SARE); this rate is adjusted each year and is currently $0.58 per mile. For auto travel, indicate who is traveling, the destination, number of trips, and total anticipated mileage. For lodging, state the room cost and number of nights. Here are some sample budget lines:

> *Research assistant making 4 trips to cooperating farm, 14 miles each; 56 miles @$0.58/mile = $32.48*

> *Project leader making 3 trips to soil lab, 26 miles each; 78 miles @$0.58/mile = $45.24*

> *Project leader making 1 trip to growers' meeting; 104 miles @$0.58/mile = $60.32*

If the budget includes air travel, long-distance trips must clearly be justified as central to the project. All plane travel must be booked according to the guidelines of the Fly America Act which roughly states that, except under certain circumstances, all flights must be booked on U.S. flag carriers. In addition, all flights must be booked in coach class.

Publications and Printing. This budget category is specific to any publication development costs (editing, design and printing) that the project may incur, including project brochures and educational materials. Include publishing costs for scientific or technical journal articles here. You may include the cost of developing web-based publications here, but would not include general web hosting or

photocopying as these expenses belong in "Other Direct Costs." Show a per-piece cost for any publications you plan to develop. For example:

> *24-page resource directory, layout and design at $30/hour, 15 hours = $450*

> *Printing at $1.12 each, 1000 pieces = $1,120*

Other Direct Costs. This budget category includes: communications, photocopying, speaker/trainer fees, consultants, services, conferences/meetings/workshops, trainee support, off-site office rental, purchase of equipment, rental of equipment or land-use charges, and other/miscellaneous.

Communications costs typically include postage, fax and telephone expenses. Please note that charges for cell phones are not allowable.

For example, if you plan to mail 350 flyers to announce a field day, the line item would read:

> *Postage for 350 field day flyers at $0.50 each = $175*

If you are planning ongoing long-distance telephone contact with cooperators, it is fine to estimate what these will cost. For example:

> *10 hours in-state evening long distance phone calls to cooperating farmers = $ 50*

> *4 hours in-state daytime long distance phone calls to project cooperator = $ 45*

> *2 conference calls with planning committee @ 1 hour each = $ 72*

Photocopying. If you will make copies over the course of the project, estimate the number of copies needed and the cost per page. You may also estimate your copying costs, based on past experience. For example:

> *500 copies of the bulletin for distribution at field day @ .05 each = $25*

> *100 pages a month @ .05 each X 12 months = $60*

Speaker and trainer fees. This section should include the name(s) of speakers and trainers you will use, description of the services they are providing and their fees.

Consultants. If outside entities are hired on a temporary basis to carry out specific tasks, these charges are listed under consultants. Include those receiving stipends or payments for services and their organization or farm, statement of work or description of what will be done to earn the payment, and a breakdown of number of days or hours of service, rate of pay, etc. For example:

> *John Abrahamson, education consultant, assist in organizing and facilitating 4 meetings at $325 each = $1,300*

Farmer collaborators are often paid a stipend, while some institutions process payment for such contributors under consultants. Either is acceptable. SARE strongly feels that farmers should be paid for the time they contribute to a project at a reasonable rate; Northeast SARE compensates farmers who serve on its Administrative Council and review teams a rate of $300 per day. Please note: there is a distinction between paying farmers to contribute to a project (by participating in planning or project evaluation or in the role of a trainer or presenter—these are appropriate and encouraged) versus paying farmers to receive the benefits of training (by attending a workshop or conference as a recipient—here, payment would not be appropriate).

Services. If an outside entity is hired for a specific custom job, it should be listed under services. Provide details of these non-contracted services rendered for the project, including fees or hired payments, purpose and quantities. For example:

> *Darla Adams, WonderMark, precision spraying, 4 applications of fungicide at $300 each = $1,200*

Conferences, meetings, and workshops. Costs of holding project conferences, meetings, and workshops are included in this category. Expense examples include the rental of facilities and equipment for the meeting, signage for field days, fees for guest speakers, and travel and per diem for presenters. Details of costs for each conference or meeting should be itemized and provided in the budget narrative.

Meal expenses may be included in the budget only in situations where providing the meal maintains the continuity of a formal group meeting or educational training, and not offering such a meal would impose inappropriate discomfort for the meeting participants. Conversely, meals may not be charged as project costs when individuals decide to go out for breakfast, lunch or dinner together when no need exists for continuity of a meeting; this kind of activity is considered an entertainment cost.

Note: Costs for project personnel to travel conferences should be included under "Travel" and payments made to or for recipients of these trainings should go under "Trainee Support," see below.

Trainee support (participant support costs). If meals, transportation or lodging are to be paid on behalf of participants who are receiving training as the project beneficiaries, these expenses should be listed as trainee support costs. When using Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, these expenses are removed to determine MTDC.

Off-site office rental is most often covered under the institution's indirect costs (see below) and would only be applicable if a remote site was specifically needed to carry out the project.

Purchase of equipment or **cost of fabrication.** Fabrication of equipment is only appropriate when a project plan of work calls for a piece of equipment to be constructed as an integral part of the project.

Rental of equipment or **land-use charges.** Land-use charges are most typical in field research situations when a rental rate is applied or a research station that has a standard per-acre fee for field plot maintenance.

Other and miscellaneous. If you have a project expense that truly does not fit into any of the above categories, it should be included in this section. Avoid using this budget category for items that really belong somewhere else. Each item must be clearly identified and justified to be allowed. Unidentified, unjustified, and undefined ("etc." or "contingency expense") items are not allowed.

Subcontracts or Subawards

If there is a portion of the project that will be subcontracted out to another institution, list it in this section. List the institution, organization or farm. Provide the subaward leader's name and budget amount. Each subawardee will need to complete a Budget Justification and Narrative Template and Grant Commitment Form – these must be uploaded to the proposal in the online submission system.

Indirect Costs

USDA currently allows indirect costs. Applicants whose institutions have a negotiated federal indirect cost rate may budget the indirect portion to be up to 10 percent of total funds requested. This is the maximum, a cap on indirect set by USDA on SARE grants. This amount can be estimated as 11.11 percent of the total of direct costs, or more accurately by dividing total direct costs by nine. If you calculate a fractional dollar amount, round down so the amount of indirect remains under 10 percent of the overall total. If the negotiated institutional rate is less, then that lower rate limit applies. If your organization has never had a federally negotiated indirect cost rate, you may request a *de minimis* rate of 10% of modified total direct costs.

Appendix B: Northeast SARE Research and Education Program Grantee Reporting and SARE Post-Project Evaluation

Logic Model Category	Performance Indicators *(When you report, you will receive prompts for these indicators.)*	Who Collects/When Reported	
		Grantee Collects/ Reports by End of Project	**SARE Collects/ Post Project**
Participants	Number of farmers participating in research	✓	
	Number of farmers participating in education/outreach activities	✓	
	Number of agricultural service providers participating in education/outreach activities *(optional)*		
Outputs: – Activities – Information – Products	Research activities conducted	✓	
	Research results of the project	✓	
	Number and type of education/outreach activities conducted	✓	
	Number journal articles in press or published *(if produced)*	✓	✓
	Number and type of other, non-refereed outreach publications/products *(if produced)*	✓	✓
Learning Outcomes	Number of farmers that report changes in KASA *(knowledge, attitudes, skills, awareness)* as a result of participating in project	✓	
Action Outcomes	Number of farmers who use information learned to adopt a practice, approach, technology *(including what is adopted)*	✓	✓
	Number of acres, animals, or other production units affected by adoption *(as an indicator of scale of adoption)*	✓	✓
	New professional collaborations as a result of project *(if occurred)*	✓	✓
	Number of citations of project results *(if occurred)*	✓	✓
	SARE grant leveraged another grant *(if occurred)*	✓	✓
Condition Outcomes	Economic, environmental, social benefit(s) for farmers from adopting practice, approach, technology on farm	✓	✓