2021 Call for Preproposals: Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture Grant Program

Important Dates
The online system opens for submissions: May 5, 2020
Research for Novel Approaches Grant preproposals are due: July 23, 2020, 5:00 p.m. ET

Applications are submitted online at: projects.sare.org

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, agricultural service providers, researchers, graduate students and others to address key issues affecting the sustainability of agriculture throughout our region. Northeast SARE is one of four regional SARE programs funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

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.

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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.

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About Northeast SARE Research for Novel Approaches Grants

Overview
The Research for Novel Approaches in Sustainable Agriculture Grant Program funds “proof of concept” projects intended to confirm the benefit and/or feasibility of new practices and approaches that have high potential for adoption by farmers.

These practices and approaches may be related to production, marketing, business management, human resource management, farm family and other social issues, or other topics related to sustainable agriculture. By “proof of concept,” we mean that evidence from prior experiments or pilot projects strongly suggest a practice or approach is beneficial and feasible, but additional testing, data or refinement is needed before recommending 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 larger grant programs, Research and Education and the Professional Development Program.

The preproposal is a preliminary concept document. Reviewers select those that best meet the review criteria to be invited to submit full proposals. A preproposal is only invited if it has strong justification, a project objective that meets our “proof of concept” definition above, and a strong farmer engagement plan. In general, about one-third of preproposals are invited to submit full proposals and about one-third of full proposals are approved for funding by the Northeast SARE Administrative Council.

Eligible Applicants
Research for Novel Approaches Grants are open to personnel at colleges and universities, Cooperative Extension, agricultural and community nonprofit organizations, municipalities, state departments of agriculture and federal agencies, research farms and experiment stations, for-profit entities (such as private consultants and agricultural businesses), and others who work with farmers and in food systems.

Northeast SARE encourages projects submitted from or in collaboration with Minority Serving Institutions (including 1890s and other historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions and tribal colleges and universities) and other organizations in the Northeast region that work with socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Projects are invited to include funding to specifically address or assess social dimensions of the proposed work.

Your organization must have the legal structure and financial capacity in place to receive and execute a Northeast SARE contract, including expending funds needed for the project prior to receiving reimbursements from Northeast SARE; advance payments are not possible.

Projects must take place within the Northeast region which includes Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Vermont, and Washington, D.C.

An individual project leader (Principal Investigator) may not submit more than two preproposals per grant program per year. If you submit multiple preproposals and more than one is invited to submit a full
proposal, you may submit only one full proposal. Current SARE grant recipients who are behind in their reporting will not be invited to apply for full proposals.

Northeast SARE will not fund proposals that appear to duplicate work that has been approved for funding by another grant program (within or external to SARE).

**Funding Available**
There is approximately $1,500,000 available to fund projects for this cycle of Research for Novel Approaches Grants. Proposals funded typically range from $30,000 to $200,000; we estimate that 8 to 12 awards will be made. Funding requests should align with project duration, scope of the work, and complexity of research. Budgets at the higher end of the range will be considered for projects that include multi-disciplinary or multi-institutional research, especially if the research takes a systems approach to addressing challenges or opportunities.

Matching funds are not required for SARE grants.

**Project Duration**
Typical project length is 2 to 3 years. All projects must be completed by November 30, 2024.

**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 members or advisers, former graduate student advisees, business partners or close personal friends and family.

**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 (including educational materials and project reports), exclusive or proprietary processes, procedures or techniques developed with SARE funds will be in the public domain.

**Grant Timeline**
Online application system opens for submissions .................................................................May 5, 2020
Preproposal submission deadline ..................................................................................5 p.m. ET, July 23, 2020
Applicants notified whether or not they are invited to submit a full proposal ..............August 24, 2020
Feedback sent to applicants ..........................................................................................September 2020
Full proposal submission deadline ............................................................................5 p.m. ET, October 20, 2020
Award decisions announced to applicants .................................................................Late February 2021
Contract start date for awarded projects .................................................................March 1, 2021
Pre-award conference calls with Northeast SARE staff........................................March 2021
SARE’s Grant Management System

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

The online application system will be open for submissions from May 5, 2020 until the deadline, 5 p.m. ET on Thursday, July 23, 2020. Staff are available to answer questions until 5 p.m. ET on the due date.

Getting a User Account

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 application at projects.sare.org.

All new users should go projects.sare.org and select “Create an account” to complete the registration information. The system will send you an email with instructions to create your password.

Logging In

From the SARE Grant Management System landing page at projects.sare.org, select “Log in”. Select “Start a new grant proposal”. Grant opportunities for all four SARE regions will be listed; scroll down until you see “Northeast” and click the “+” button. Under “2021 Northeast SARE Research for Novel Approaches Preproposal”, select “Begin a New Proposal”.

Entering your Preproposal

Preproposals must be submitted by you, the project leader (Principal Investigator). They do not require authorized signature by an institutional official.

Start the application by clicking “Edit Title” and enter a clear, succinct title, in title case, of under 150 characters, including spaces, that captures the essence of the project’s intent. Avoid acronyms, jargon or unnecessary words. Next, provide a brief “Proposal Description” of 300 characters or less, used by SARE for search engine optimization purposes. Be sure to click “Save” after each entry.

Under “Principal Investigator”, please do not use the “Change PI” button as you, the person submitting the preproposal, must be the Principal Investigator.

Next, complete the “Basic Information” and “Preproposal Questions” sections. To enter information, click “Edit Answer” for each question and be sure to click “Save” after each entry. See the Step-by-step Application Instructions for more guidance on these sections. At any time during the writing of your preproposal, you may preview a draft from the Proposal Overview Page by clicking “View Draft”. Once there, you can also share your preproposal draft with collaborators by either 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 and select “I understand” to confirm the submission. 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.
Step-by-Step Application Instructions

There are word limits for all entries. You may choose to develop your preproposal offline, ensuring it is accurate and complies with the word limits before pasting into the online system. To that end, a Word document of the proposal questions is available at: www.northeastsare.org/NovelApproaches.

The online application is divided into sections that contain multiple questions to answer. Instructions for all questions follow.

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 that grant reviewers have solid agricultural knowledge, but may not necessarily have deep expertise in your subject area.

- No attachments are allowed in the preproposal application.
- Do not include links to external sites in the preproposal application as they will not be considered by reviewers.
- No authorized signatures are required for preproposal submission.

Basic Information
Answer the four questions: 1) Name of Organization or Institution hosting the project (if different from the applicant’s institution; the applicant’s institution is automatically populated), 2) List the State or States where this project will take place, 3) Anticipated project length in years, and 4) Was a full proposal of this work submitted previously to Northeast SARE?

Preproposal Questions
Responses are entered online by clicking “Edit Answer” after each question—be sure to click “Save” after each entry. Preproposals are evaluated using the review criteria that appear in the boxes to the right. Answers entered in response to the prompts below must adequately address review criteria for an application to be invited for a full proposal.

1. Project Objective (100-word limit)
Summarize the purpose of this project by describing the research to be conducted, the knowledge expected to be generated by that research, and the novel approach that the research findings expected that will support Northeast farms.

2. Statement of Need (150-word limit)
Explain how the novel approach will address a problem or opportunity for farmers affecting the sustainability of agriculture in the Northeast. Provide the number, type, size and location of farms in the Northeast that could benefit from the research. Explain why these farms are interested in adopting the novel approach.

Review criteria:
A clear summary is provided of the proposed research, the new knowledge expected to be generated, and the novel approach that would support sustainable farming in the Northeast.

Review criteria:
The need for the novel approach is justified by describing the problem or opportunity it will address, and the number, type, size and location of farms potentially affected in the Northeast. The explanation of farmer interest in the research is compelling.
3. Knowledge Gap to be Addressed (200-word limit)
Describe why research is needed before the novel approach can be widely adopted by farmers. What is the specific lack of data (gap) that the proposed research will address? How could that data lead to adoption of the novel approach by farmers? Summarize previous research findings that provide evidence the novel approach has potential to be feasible on farms in the Northeast.

Note: Citations are not required in the preproposal.

4. Farmer Engagement Plan (150-word limit)
Describe the ways in which you will engage farmers in the research project, such as how you will get their input on the research design and/or implementation. Describe how you will conduct outreach to share research findings with farmers most likely to benefit from the new information.

5. Research Description (200-word limit)
Research may include field research or social science research. Briefly describe:

- The research objective and why it is relevant to adoption of the novel approach.
- The main treatments (field research) or study population (social science research).
- Key data to be collected.

6. Key Individuals (150-word limit)
Use the following format to describe people with essential roles in this project. Start with yourself, then list other key individuals.

Name, title, business or organization. Describe this person’s skills, relevant experience and primary responsibilities on the project.

If some team members have not yet been identified, provide an outline of the potential leadership team. Include descriptions of those roles as placeholders. For example, an acceptable entry might say, “a veterinarian with poultry expertise who works in the target states,” or “two health department personnel with experience in water quality.”

7. Funding Request Estimate (select category)
Select a range that estimates the total budget request you anticipate for this project (include the allowed indirect to your institution, limited to 10% of the total, in your estimate): “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 by August 24, 2020. Feedback that may be used to strengthen a full proposal will be provided to applicants with invited preproposals in September 2020.

Full proposal instructions will be sent directly to invited applicants; full proposals are due by 5 p.m. ET on October 20, 2020.

Full proposals require more detailed information for all sections of the preproposal, including data to substantiate farmer interest. The full proposal requires additional information including: a project advisory committee, literature review and citation list. Letters of commitment from key individuals, a complete project budget with justification, and a grant commitment form with authorized signature will also be required.