2015

Call for Preproposals

NCR-SARE

Research and Education Grant Program

Make sure that you have the 2015 Call for Preproposals. We have reduced the amount of information requested at the preproposal stage this year.

To submit, go to:

http://www.ciids.org/ncsare/repre

Preproposals must be submitted on line by 4:00 p.m. CDT, October 23, 2014.

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

Research and Education grant program preproposals must be submitted on line at http://www.ciids.org/ncsare/repre. The online application interface has strict word limits, and we suggest you prepare your preproposal using a word processing program, edit each response to comply with the word limits, and then copy and paste your proposal section by section into the online template, saving as you go.

Online Submission Deadline

4:00 p.m. CDT, October 23, 2014
Who we are

SARE stands for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, a competitive grants program funded by USDA-NIFA. The North Central Region (NCR) includes Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. NCR-SARE strengthens communities, increases farmer/rancher profitability, and improves the environment by supporting research and education.

Learn more about North Central Region SARE at www.northcentralsare.org.

Eligibility

The Research and Education (R&E) Grant Program provides funds to collaborative teams of scientists, farmers, institutions, organizations, and educators who are exploring sustainable agriculture through research projects or education\(^1\)/demonstration projects. Preproposals from any location are accepted, but the preproposal must convince reviewers that project results will benefit NCR agriculture. Typically, proposals come from university and extension staff, the agricultural nonprofit sector, and from people who work on research farms and experiment stations. There is no requirement that applicants have a specific affiliation, but awarded entities must complete required federal grant protocols when applicable, for example animal care and use protocol verification. Contact the NCR-SARE office for more information.

Amount of Funding Available

The funding level for the R&E grant program is dependent upon fiscal year 2015 appropriations from Congress and budget decisions by the NCR-SARE Administrative Council, but we anticipate that roughly **$1.6 million** will be available to fund approximately seven to ten grant projects, with individual grants not to exceed **$200,000** total for projects lasting up to three years (36 months). In 2014, NCR-SARE received 188 preproposals, invited 27 to be developed into full proposals, and selected 9 R&E proposals for funding. The average size of funded grants was about **$180,000** and grant lengths ranged from 24 to 36 months.

Preproposals will be reviewed by the NCR-SARE Administrative Council during the winter. All preproposal authors will be notified in early February, 2015. Selected project coordinators will be mailed a call for proposals and invited to develop full proposals **due in early April, 2015**. The NCR-SARE Technical Committee will review proposals and funding decisions will be made by the NCR-SARE Administrative Council in late July 2015. We anticipate that **project funds will be available during the fall months of 2015**.

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\(^1\) Education projects can be extension/outreach or other informal education projects, but SARE cannot fund formal degree or certificate programs
Desired Outcomes for 2015 Research and Education Projects

There are no specific priority areas in the 2015 Call for Preproposals, but preproposals must address issues of sustainable agriculture of current and potential importance to the North Central Region. Successful projects should contribute to the following NCR-SARE broad-based outcomes:

- Improving the profitability of farmers and associated agricultural businesses,
- Sustaining and improving the environmental quality and natural resource base on which agriculture depends, and
- Enhancing the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, communities, and society as a whole.

Preproposals should clearly explain:

- Relevancy of the project to sustainable agriculture in the North Central Region, including identifying expected outcomes for the project and how they will assist NCR-SARE in working toward the broad-based outcomes listed above,
- What impact the project will have on farmers/ranchers, communities, and society as a whole.
- How you will monitor progress toward outcomes and evaluate the project.

How to Prepare Your Proposal

On the following pages you can see all the questions you will be asked on the Online Submission website at http://www.ciids.org/ncsare/repro. Once you have read through this call for preproposals, click on that site, follow the directions and begin your preproposal.

Cover:

Title of Preproposal.

Start and End Dates, Project Duration. Indicate the proposed length of your project in years or months up to a maximum of three years (36 months) and indicate the proposed start and end dates; start date cannot be earlier than October 1, 2015.

Project Coordinator. This is the person who will be NCR-SARE’s primary contact for the project. If there are people from the Institution’s contracts and grants office, accountants, or co-workers who need to be informed about this grant, it is the Project Coordinator’s responsibility to communicate with those individuals. The Project Coordinator is the person who manages the project and provides reports to NCR-SARE. The Project Coordinator must sign the Title Page. Some organizations use the term Principal Investigator instead of Project Coordinator, but we use the term Project Coordinator because in some cases, that person is not eligible to be a Principal Investigator, as defined by their organization.
Institution **Name**. This is the organization that will administer the project budget if your proposal is funded. The Primary Grantee will send invoices to NCR-SARE, receive funds from NCR-SARE, and disburse funds to any Partner Organizations.

**Institutional Official Information.** Please include contact information as requested. NCR-SARE does not require an institution representative’s signature at the preproposal stage, but your institution might require that you submit your preproposal through your grant administration office.

**Type of Project.** Indicate whether your preproposal is primarily a Research project or an Education Outreach/Demonstration project - **check only one.** All Research projects should include some outreach effort.

**Systems Category and Commodity Category.** Please indicate the ONE Systems category and the ONE crop or animal enterprise category that best fits your proposed project from the drop down list provided in the online system.

**Add a Participating Institution or Organization.**
For each other institution or organization acting as a Major Participant on your project, list the key individual’s name and institutional affiliation and indicate whether or not the institution will be receiving subcontract funding. Individuals who will be working as consultants, paid directly by your institution, should NOT be listed here. Instead, you will be listing them in your institution’s budget as a consultant. The budget section will create a separate budget form for each collaborating institution that you designate to receive funding.

**Body of the Preproposal**

**Project Abstract** (250 word limit)
A brief summary of the contents of your preproposal. The Abstract should include a brief description of the problem and of the approach/methods proposed. It should include an abbreviated version of your proposed project outcomes, and a statement about how the outcomes are relevant to farmers and ranchers in the North Central Region.

**Project Description.** (75 word limit)
Provide a one or two sentence description of the project. This will be used to summarize your project for reviewers.

**Project Outcomes.**² (100 word limit)
Provide a narrative that lists learning and action outcomes expected from your project activities. Learning outcomes are changes in the knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes

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² NCR-SARE recognizes that exploratory research is needed to increase the knowledge base of sustainable agriculture. Often the output of exploratory research is in the form of scientific publications and the results may be too preliminary for immediate transfer to ultimate users of the information and therefore no direct end-user outcome is predictable. NCR-SARE may choose to support a limited amount of this type of research if a strong case can be made for the need and relevancy of the research to sustainable agriculture.
of participants. Action outcomes include changes in the behavior or practices of the target audience. You may also list system or condition change outcomes, which will eventually result from your project, even though those outcomes are longer-term outcomes and would be unlikely to occur within the one- to three-year period of your project. Specify the audience that will be involved in the project or that will use project results.

If you are not familiar with outcome planning, refer to the information contained on the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Program Development and Evaluation homepage (http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/).

**Method/Approach.** (200 word limit)
Briefly describe how your project will be implemented, including your general approach, activities, methods, and project inputs. In research preproposals, specify experimental treatments or other methods only to the extent needed to give a general idea of the work to be done and findings it will yield; if you are invited to submit a full proposal, you will be able to provide more specific information there. Similarly, education project preproposals may offer general descriptions of educational activities, participants, relationships among theme; invited full proposals will be expected to identify specific groups, processes, relationships, etc.

**Relevance.** (200 word limit)
Explain how your project will solve a problem or address an issue significant to sustainability in the North Central Region. Explain how your project is relevant to NCR-SARE’s broad-based outcomes (listed near the beginning of this call for preproposals). If your project will use genetically engineered varieties or organisms, state how their use will contribute to your project and make agriculture more sustainable.

**Impact.** (200 word limit)
Tell who will benefit from your project, and in what ways. Explain who will use the project’s outputs, the geographic areas in which they are likely to be used, conditions which may enhance or impede their use, etc.

**Suitability of Method.** (200 word limit)
Explain why your project’s approach or methodology is an appropriate way to reach your objectives or achieve the proposed outcomes. Tell how it is it different from or superior to other ways to reach those objectives, as well as how it is different from or complementary to other projects that SARE has funded on this subject. (You can use the national projects database on the SARE website www.sare.org to search for information on other SARE-funded projects.)
Estimated Budget.
Include a general, abbreviated, estimated total budget. Show projected expenditures for the following general categories: personnel salaries, equipment, supplies and materials, travel, other direct costs (honoraria or other payments to project participants other than those included in salaries), indirect costs, and any other categories that will help reviewers get a feel for how you plan to use NCR-SARE funds. *Be aware that tuition cannot be included in SARE budgets.* The reviewers want to know about how much your project would cost and how you expect to allocate the funds. The SARE program does NOT have a matching funds requirement for this grant program.

SARE does not limit personnel costs, but reviewers do not like to see budgets that are primarily personnel costs. Justify how personnel time requested in the budget will be used for proposal-related activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Total SARE Funds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Salaries</td>
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<td>2. Fringe benefits</td>
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<td><strong>SUBTOTAL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Non-Personnel</strong></td>
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<td>3. Supplies and Materials</td>
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<td>4. Travel</td>
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<td>5. Publications, websites</td>
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<td>6. Computer, Equipment (see info about capital expenses in footnote)</td>
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<td>7. Other Direct Costs (list)</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL DIRECT COSTS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>INDIRECT COSTS (10 % of total funds or federally negot. rate)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Request from NCR-SARE</strong></td>
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Indirect Costs
SARE allows up to 10% indirect costs (IDC) of total federal funds for R&E projects. This is actually calculated using the smaller amount based on the IDC rate negotiated with NIFA, or using 10%. Since our R&E projects are limited to $200,000, we expect that 10% IDC rate will be used in most cases.

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3 Capital expenses for things like land purchases, general farm improvements, and construction of buildings, greenhouses, and laboratories are NOT allowed. Equipment is rarely allowed. Costs for things like cameras, computers, video equipment, and other items that could have a wide range of uses beyond the boundaries of the project must be clearly essential to a particular project, in which case applicants must develop a clear justification and make sure that these requests are reasonable, defensible, and not extravagant.
For 2014, your total budget for an R&E grant, including both project and indirect costs cannot exceed $200,000.

If you are invited to submit a full proposal and the budget in your full proposal differs from the budget in your preproposal by more than 5%, you will need to include an explanation for the difference in your full proposal.

**Team Members** *(150 word limit)*
List team members who are committed to the project. Include name, affiliation, and area of expertise. No CVs are needed at the preproposal stage.

**Farmer Rancher Involvement and Compensation** *(100 word limit)*
The relevance and impact of a sustainable agriculture research or education project often are enhanced when farmers, ranchers, local organizations, or others who will use or benefit from the project are involved in its planning, design, and/or implementation. Describe how farmers, ranchers, or others will be involved in your project—for example, in defining the research problem, providing facilities for or conducting on-farm research, etc.—and whether they will be compensated for their time or other contributions to your project. Reviewers want to see that farmers or other participants in your project are appropriately compensated, so it is important to either include budget items showing compensation, or to indicate that participants have declined compensation.

The amount budgeted for participant compensation should be based on local wage rates and the nature of the participation, but if you are lacking better information, NCR-SARE pays $200 per day ($100 per half-day) for self-employed individuals to participate in NCR-SARE activities. It is helpful to provide names of specific farmers or ranchers if you can. If you can’t name specific individuals at the preproposal stage, explain why the names aren’t available and give your plan for identifying specific individuals if you are invited to submit a full proposal.

**Statement Regarding Resubmitted Ideas** *(100 word limit)*
Indicate whether you have submitted this idea to NCR-SARE before, and if so, when and in which grant program. Also, please indicate how you responded to reviewer comments. Resubmission does not guarantee success, but it can be helpful to show reviewers how you have responded to previous reviewer suggestions.

**Preproposal and Proposal Evaluation**
Review of NCR-SARE preproposals and proposals is a multi-stage process. Members of the NCR-SARE Administrative Council (AC) and a few members of the Technical Committee review preproposals in subgroups during the winter. The NCR-SARE AC then solicits full proposals in early March for review by the Technical Committee and by external reviewers. The Technical Committee provides a list of technically acceptable proposals to the Council for its consideration at its late summer meeting. The AC decides final awards for funding and all proposed project coordinators are notified. Funds for projects recommended for funding are expected to become available in fall of the decision year.
The Administrative Council will consider the following factors in evaluating preproposals:

- **Relevance of project outcomes**: Will the stated project outcomes contribute to sustainability of agriculture in the North Central Region? Will the project outcomes contribute to the NCR-SARE program's broad-based outcomes? Does the proposed project attempt to solve a problem and/or address an issue that is significant in the North Central Region? If applicable, was use of genetically engineered organisms addressed in terms of relevance to sustainable agriculture?

- **Lasting impact of the project**: For projects that are intended to be on-going, what is the potential for the project to become financially self-sufficient after NCR-SARE funding ends? Can others benefit from the results of this project? Are the results from this project likely to be used by others?

- **Suitability of proposed methods for achieving stated outcomes**: Are the proposed approach, activities, methods, and inputs likely to lead to the stated outcomes? In what respects are they more appropriate than other strategies for reaching similar outcomes? In cases where SARE has previously funded projects in the proposed area of work, reviewers will look for evidence that preproposal authors are aware of previously funded SARE projects and that they intend to **build on previous work** rather than just repeat it. (See “project reports” on the national SARE website, www.sare.org.) How is the proposed work different from previous work? How will the project build on information from previous SARE projects? How will the proposed project add to the body of sustainable ag knowledge or the practice of sustainable agriculture?

- **Farmer or other end-user involvement**: Preproposals that don’t include farmer or other end-user involvement are unlikely to make it to the full proposal stage. Farmers and other end-users of the information should be involved in ways that are appropriate for the type of project. For some types of projects, farmers or other end-users might be involved in all phases from development of the idea through planning, conducting, and/or evaluating the project. For other types of projects, farmers or other end-users might be heavily involved in identification of the problem and possible solutions, but they might be only minimally involved in conducting the project. Farmers and/or other end-users should be appropriately compensated for their involvement in the project. It is better to specifically name the individuals who will be involved in the project or at least to list a specific process for identifying them.

- **Feasibility of achieving the stated outcomes**: Does the project team include the disciplines and expertise necessary to carry out the project? Is achieving the stated outcomes within the scope of the proposed budget?

- **Project Coordinator’s reporting history for previous NCR-SARE grants**: The Administrative Council may choose to reject preproposals from Project Coordinators who have delinquent reports for previous NCR-SARE projects.

**Help with Proposals**

The **NCR-SARE office** can share information and resources from SARE Outreach, plus contact information for state SARE Coordinators. Contact info for State Coordinators can
also be found on the NCR-SARE website at: www.northcentralsare.org/About-Us/Advisory-Leadership-Committees/State-Coordinators
Contact: North Central Region SARE, 120 BioAgEng, UMN, 1390 Eckles Ave, Saint Paul MN 55108, phone: 612-626-3113, e-mail: ncrsare@umn.edu, web: www.northcentralsare.org.

The Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC) at the National Agricultural Library (partially funded by SARE), specializes in locating, collecting, and providing information about sustainable agriculture. Information specialists can answer questions, help you with literature reviews and background research, and identify experts and pertinent researchers and projects in the USDA. In addition, AFSIC has a number of documents on its website that may be relevant to your proposal. Contact: AFSIC, National Agriculture Library, USDA, 10301 Baltimore Ave., Room 132, Beltsville MD 20705-2351, phone: 301-504-6559, fax: 301-504-6927, e-mail: afsic@nal.usda.gov, web: http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/.

Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA) will provide information packets on various agricultural issues. If you are contacting ATTRA via e-mail, please provide your role in sustainable agriculture. By mail or fax, please include “ATTRA Information Request” near the top of the correspondence. (Preferred method of contact is telephone.) Contact: ATTRA, P.O. Box 3657, Fayetteville AR 72702, phone: 800-346-9140 (7 am to 7 pm, Central Time), fax: 501-442-9842, web: http://www.attra.ncat.org.

Contact Beth Nelson, NCR-SARE Coordinator, with questions (e-mail: bethnelson@umn.edu or phone: 612-626-4436).

Special Notes
The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact NCR-SARE at 612-626-3113 or ncrsare@umn.edu.

Distribution of preproposals is limited to people involved in the review process, but note that the NCR-SARE program considers all funded proposals and subsequent reports and related information to be in the public domain. A prime directive from Congress in the SARE enabling legislation ensures that results from all studies be provided to farmers, ranchers, and other interested parties in a timely and effective manner. All reports related to funded projects will be made available to all interested parties in printed, electronic, or other means of communication, without discrimination. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of Project Coordinators (from funded projects) may be provided to interested news entities, farmers, ranchers, or organizations for subsequent inquiries. Preproposals and proposals are used in the peer review process and submission to the program establishes consent by the author for appropriate distribution to fulfill review requirements.