# 2021

# Call for Preproposals

# NCR-SARE

# Research and Education Grant Program

Make sure that you have the **2021 Call for Preproposals.**

**To submit, go to:**

# projects.sare.org

**Preproposals must be submitted on line by
4:00 p.m. CDT, October 8, 2020**.

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

Research and Education grant program preproposals must be submitted on line at **projects.sare.org**. The system will open for applications August 01, 2020.  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 8, 2020**

**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/ranchers, 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**
We anticipate that roughly **$3.0 million** will be available to fund approximately twelve grant projects, with individual grants not to exceed $250,000 total for projects lasting up to three years (36 months). In 2020, NCR-SARE received 153 preproposals, invited 33 to be developed into full proposals, and selected 13 R&E proposals for funding. The average size of funded grants was $227,000 and grant lengths ranged from 18 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, 2021. Selected project coordinators will be mailed a call for proposals and invited to develop **full proposals due in late March, 2021**. The NCR-SARE Technical Committee will review proposals and funding decisions will be made by the NCR-SARE Administrative Council in late July 2021. We anticipate that **project funds will be available during the fall of 2021.**

We have a strong commitment to diversity. We encourage projects that either involve minority-serving institutions and non-profits (including 1890 colleges, 1994 colleges, and Hispanic-serving institutions) or in other ways include work with historically-underserved[2] audiences. We also encourage projects that, where feasible, include activities addressing the social dimensions of sustainability.

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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
2 USDA defines historically-underserved audiences to include socially-disadvantaged producers, limited-resource producers, beginning farmers/ranchers, and veterans. They further define socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers as belonging to the following groups: American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women.

**Desired Outcomes for 2021 Research and Education Projects**

Preproposals must address issues of sustainable agriculture of current and potential importance to the North Central Region. NCR-SARE is interested in projects that lead to resilient agricultural systems. Successful projects should contribute to the following NCR-SARE broad-based outcomes:

- Improving the profitability of farmers/ranchers 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.

For the 2021 funding cycle of the Research and Education Grant Program, $3.0 million is available for funding projects on any topic appropriate to the NCR-SARE program.

**Long-term funding option**
The North Central Region recognizes that some research/extension systems work is complex and requires a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that takes many years to complete. To be effective, these projects are likely to exceed the time limits of North Central SARE's normal one-to-three year funding cycle. Projects that are long-term (more than 3 years) should identify themselves as a long-term project by checking the appropriate box in the on-line portion of the preproposal application. The preproposal will be evaluated with other long-term preproposals, separate from the short-term (3-year) project preproposals. Applicants applying under the long-term option will be evaluated both for fit to SARE outcomes as well as the preproposal's justification for longer term funding. The preproposals selected to submit a full proposal will receive feedback/input on their justification for long-term funding. At this point, the investigators will need to decide if they submit the full proposal for traditional (1-3 yr) or long-term (4-9 yr) funding. There will be no consideration to switch funding categories after this time. The SARE Technical Committee who reviews the full proposals will recommend the proposal for either long-term funding, or no funding at all.

At both the preproposal level and potentially at the full proposal level, the investigator will be asked to justify why this project requires long-term funding to accomplish its goals and the estimated duration of the project. The justification might include the treatment and/or logistics complexity of the set-up of the project

or time for relationship building or cropping system development; the ecosystem processes at play; or need for longer-term data collection/analysis.  In addition to the long-term justification, you will also be asked to provide a short workplan for years 4-7 and years 7-9 (if applicable).

If invited to complete a full proposal, projects that check the long-term option will complete a typical proposal application, requesting funding at no more than the $250,000 cap for the first three year funding period, but will complete an additional segment that provides a projected work plan for a second (and third, if needed) three-year cycle. We anticipate inviting no more than five long-term preproposals to submit full proposals, and plan to fund up to one or two long-term proposals.

Long-term projects that are funded will receive their funding in three-year increments, and additional cycles will be contingent on NCR-SARE receiving funding. Each additional increment (up to $250,000 for the 3-year increment) of funding will be dependent on satisfactory performance in the first round based on reports submitted in a timely manner with yearly objectives and milestones reported, site visits and a detailed work plan for the next phase.

There are no priorities for long-term projects, but some examples of types of project topics that could be considered long-term include: soil/water quality enhancement or degradation, agroforestry systems, integrated crop-livestock systems, participatory action research and climate mitigation and/or adaptation.

### *How to Prepare Your Preproposal*

**On the following pages are the questions you will be asked on the online submission website at [projects.sare.org](projects.sare.org).  Once you have read through this call for preproposals, click on that site, follow the directions and begin your preproposal.** If you would like additional information about preparing a proposal, you can view a presentation at **https://umconnect.umn.edu/repre/** .  We suggest you complete a draft proposal in a word processing document and edit to meet word limits, then cut and paste into the online system.  **You may include tables and images in sections, but limit those to the equivalent of one two-sided page.**  Attachments are not allowed with the preproposal.

**Demographic information:**

The North Central Region SARE program is committed to an ethic of openness, inclusiveness, and diversity in all of its programs, policies, and procedures. To monitor our performance in these areas, **we collect demographic information** from grant applicants the first time they submit a proposal to SARE.  This information will not be part of the review process, will be confidential, and will be compiled in a separate database. Submission of the requested information is voluntary.

**Project Coordinator Profile:**

When you first register in the SARE projects system, you will be required to complete profile information for the Project Coordinator and for the Project Coordinator's organization.

**Project Coordinator Information:**
List contact information for 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. 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.

**Organization 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. 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. Check with your grant office, because we no longer require a budget at the preproposal stage.

**PREPROPOSAL APPLICATION**

**Title of Preproposal (150 character limit)**

**Project Description (160 character limit)**
Provide a one or two sentence description of the project. This will be used to summarize your project for reviewers.

**COVER**

**Start and End Dates:** Indicate the proposed start and end dates; start date cannot be earlier than November 1, 2021.

**Resubmission**? Did you submit this project as a full proposal in a previous year?

**Will your proposed research/outreach primarily focus on historically-underserved farmers/ranchers?**
If you answer yes, please provide a brief description of how your project will **focus** on this audience.

**Project Funding Request**
An itemized budget is no longer required at the preproposal stage, but please provide an estimate of your total funding request. You will be asked to mark your proposed request as:
- Less than $50,000
- $50,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to 149,999
- $150,000 to $200,000
- $200,000 to $250,000

In estimating your request, keep in mind:
Capital expenses for things like land purchases, general farm improvements, and construction of buildings, greenhouses, and laboratories are NOT allowed. Equipment is rarely allowed.
SARE limits indirect costs to 10 percent of the total federal funds (11.11% total direct costs) provided under each award.
Your total budget for an R&E grant cannot exceed $250,000

**Project Focus**
Indicate whether your preproposal is **primarily**:
**(check only one of the options)**
- a research project (all research projects should include some outreach)
- an education outreach/demonstration project

**Long-term Funding Option**
Check if this is being submitted as a long-term funding option (see instructions for clarification.) If checked you will be asked to provide a strong justification for long-term funding and a brief work plan for additional funding cycles beyond the three years allowed for this initial funding cycle.

**Systems Category**
Select the ONE Systems category that best represents the project from the following:
Animal Production—including aquaculture and apiary; Crop Production; Education & Training; Energy; Farm Business Management; Natural Resources/Environment; Pest Management; Production Systems; Soil Management; Sustainable Communities

**Commodity Category**
Indicate the ONE Commodity category that best represents the project from the following:
This project is not commodity specific or doesn't apply to commodities; Agronomic; Fruits; Nuts; Vegetables; Other plants (herbs, natives, etc.); Animals; Animal Products; Misc. (mushrooms, syrup, other).

**State**
Indicate the state where the majority of the work will be done.

**BODY OF THE PREPROPOSAL**

**Project Summary** (250 word limit)
A brief summary of the contents of your preproposal. The Summary 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 Objectives/Outcomes** (100 word limit)
List the project objectives, and learning and action outcomes expected from your project activities. Learning outcomes are changes in the knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes of participants.  Action outcomes include changes in the behavior or practices of the intended 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.
For more information about defining outcomes, see https://umconnect.umn.edu/repre/

**Relevance** (300 word limit)
Explain how your project will solve a problem or address an issue significant to agricultural sustainability in the North Central Region.

Who will benefit? Tell how your approach is different from or superior to other ways to reach your objectives or proposed outcomes, 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 http://www.sare.org to search for information on other SARE-funded projects.) If your project will use genetically engineered varieties or organisms, state how their use will contribute to your project and make agriculture more sustainable.

**Method/Approach** (500 word limit)
Describe how your project will be implemented, including your general approach, activities and methods.  In research preproposals, identify the research question, specify experimental units, treatments or other methods and measurements to be taken to the extent needed to give a general idea of the work to be done and findings it will yield. How will the information be shared in the North Central Region? If you are invited to submit a full proposal, you will provide more details.  Similarly, education project preproposals may offer general descriptions of educational activities and intended audience; invited full proposals will be expected to identify specific groups, processes, relationships, etc.

**Team Members** (250 word limit)
List team members who are committed to the project.  Include name, affiliation, and area of expertise.  You may provide a sentence describing their role in the proposed project, but no CVs are needed at the preproposal stage.

**Farmer Rancher Involvement** (200 word limit)
NCR-SARE strongly encourages having farmers, ranchers, local organizations, or others who will use or benefit from the project involved in its planning, design, and implementation. This participation enhances the relevance and impact of a sustainable agriculture research or education project. Describe how farmers, ranchers, or others will be engaged in your project—for example, in defining the research problem, conducting on-farm research, etc. 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.

**Long-term Funding Justification and Work Plan** (500 word limit)
Provide a strong justification for why long-term funding is necessary for this project. What about this project requires more than 3-4 years to accomplish? Is the set-up of the project complex, or require long-term relationship building? Are there ecosystem processes that take time to develop and show change as in long-term cropping system rotations? Most research projects can make use of additional time or lead to more studies, but that is not our intention with this funding option. Be very clear about why this could not be accomplished with 3-4 years of funding.

Provide a proposed work plan for a second three-year cycle of this project.
**Include outcomes/objectives that would be accomplished, activities that would be undertaken, outreach or outputs that would be produced.**

If a third funding cycle is envisioned include a work plan, again identifying outcomes/objectives, activities, outreach or outputs.

**IMPACT ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE IN THE NORTH CENTRAL REGION**

Even if your project focuses mostly on one aspect of sustainability, consider and explain how it contributes to the other two aspects of sustainability. In other words, how will the work affect the whole system, economically, environmentally and socially? If your project does not address the specific aspect, note that in the space provided.

Explain how your project will improve the profitability of farms and/or associated agricultural businesses. (75 word limit)

Explain how your project will sustain and improve the environmental quality and natural resource base on which agriculture depends. (75 word limit)

Explain how your project will enhance the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, communities, and society as a whole. (75 word limit)

**POST SUBMISSION SURVEY**

After the application is closed, registrants will be directed to a survey seeking feedback about the application process. We appreciate your time to let us know what works and what needs to be improved. Your comments are compiled separately from your proposal and are not connected to your contact information.

# 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 notifies applicants and invites full proposals in early February, due in April, 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:** Will the outcome of the project contribute to meeting NCR-SARE sustainability goals (listed below)?  Does it attempt to solve a problem or address an issue significant in the region?
    - Improving the profitability of farmers and associated agricultural businesses,
    - Sustaining and improving the environmental quality and natural resource base on which agriculture depends,
    - Enhancing the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, communities, and society as a whole.

  If applicable, was use of genetically engineered organisms addressed in terms of relevance to sustainable agriculture?
- **Method/Approach:** Is the proposed approach/method likely to achieve the objectives or lead to the outcomes proposed? Did they address previous work, and how the proposed work differs from, or will build upon previous work?
- **Farmer/Rancher or other end-user involvement:** Are farmers engaged in the project as advisors, collaborators?  Did farmers/ranchers identify the need for the research/extension-education?
- **Project Team:** Does the project team include the disciplines and expertise necessary to carry out the project?
- **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 .

**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 a.m. 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).

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**Special Notes**
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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.