



Graduate Student Research Grant Program 2024 Call for Proposals

Proposal Due Date: April 16, 2024 5:00 p.m. ET

Proposals are submitted online at: projects.sare.org

Questions?

Visit the Northeast SARE website at: www.northeastsare.org/GraduateStudentGrant. For questions about this Call for Proposals, please contact Kaitlyn Sirna at northeast-gs@sare.org or 440.336.0594.

At a Glance

The Graduate Student Research Grant program provides grants to graduate students to conduct research on topics specific to sustainable agriculture under the supervision of a faculty advisor. Grant requests can be up to \$15,000 and projects must be completed within 3 years. A faculty advisor is required and must be part of submitting the proposal.

About Northeast SARE

The Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program offers competitive grants to farmers, educators, service providers, researchers, nonprofit staff, 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 (NIFA).

The program—including funding decisions—is driven by the Northeast SARE **outcome statement**: *Northeast agricultural communities honor the holistic connection among land, water, air, and all living beings. Agriculture in the Northeast is accessible, sustainable, and just, addressing historic and current inequities so all farmers and farm employees can steward resources to ensure sustainability, resilience, economic viability, and a high quality of life.*



The Northeast region includes Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, West Virginia, Vermont, and Washington, D.C.

Inside	
About the Grant Program	2
Use of Funds	4
Proposal Questions and Instructions	5
Proposal Checklist	16
Example Budget	22



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.

About the Northeast SARE Graduate Student Research Grant Program

Grant Timeline

Live question and answer sessions (recordings will be available).....	March 12, 20, 26, and April 3 from noon-1 p.m. ET
To register:	northeast.sare.org/2024GraduateStudentGrantQA
Due date for accommodations requests	March 26, 2024, 5 p.m. ET
Online submission due date.....	April 16, 2024, 5 p.m. ET
Review panel ranks proposals	May to July 2024
Northeast SARE Administrative Council makes final selections	July 2024
Award decisions announced to applicants	Late July 2024
Contract start date for awarded projects	August 1, 2024

All contracts will have a start date of August 1, 2024. However, it often takes about a month past that date for Northeast SARE and the awardee organization to finalize the contract.

Overview

Northeast SARE offers grants to graduate students to conduct research on topics specific to sustainable agriculture under the supervision of a faculty advisor. Proposals should address issues of current or potential importance to Northeast farmers, agricultural researchers, and farm support professionals like NRCS personnel, Extension educators, and nonprofit staff.

Projects must explore one or more of the sustainable agriculture themes of Northeast SARE's outcome statement (*see page 1*) and address the program's review criteria (*listed on pages 7-12*).

A wide variety of topics can be funded by Northeast SARE, including marketing and business, crop production, raising livestock, aquaculture, social sustainability, urban and Indigenous agriculture and much more. Other aspects of projects funded through the Northeast SARE program include those that address climate-smart agriculture practices intended to improve ecological, social, and economic resilience to climate change; increase carbon sequestration; and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Climate-smart practices include reduced and no-till, cover crops, prescribed grazing, ruminant feed management, manure management, fertilizer management, and on-farm energy efficiency. In addition, projects may address traditional ecological knowledge. To see examples of funded Graduate Student Research Grant projects, visit the national SARE database at: projects.sare.org/search-projects/.

Eligible Applicants

This grant program is open to any graduate student enrolled at an accredited college, university, or veterinary school who is proposing to conduct research in the Northeast region. Proposals are limited to one per graduate student per year. An individual student may receive only one Northeast SARE Graduate Student Grant over the course of their studies.

Projects must take place within the Northeast region, described on page 1. Applicants and host organizations may be located outside of the Northeast region if the project activities and the audience served are located within the Northeast region.

Northeast SARE encourages projects submitted from or in collaboration with women, the LGBTQ+ community and Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC). Additionally, we

encourage projects submitted from or in collaboration with Minority Serving Institutions (including 1890 land grant institutions and other historically Black colleges and universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and tribal colleges and universities) and other organizations in the Northeast that work with historically underrepresented communities.

Proposals must be written by the graduate student applicant, in support of their individual research effort and not that of a group project or team of researchers. While collaboration is encouraged, the graduate student applicant will be the manager and contact for the project, if funded. They are expected to lead all aspects of the proposal and to make sure the proposed work is completed, and project reports are filed in a timely fashion. If the project is part of a larger project or thesis, the portion of work proposed for SARE funding must be clearly identified in the proposal.

Past SARE grant recipients with unfulfilled reporting requirements cannot apply (e.g. no final project report was filed). Current grant recipients must be up to date on their project reporting to be eligible to apply for a new grant (e.g. annual and/or final reports are filed on time). These restrictions also apply to potential faculty advisors.

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.

Northeast SARE is committed to accessibility for all eligible applicants. We encourage you to reach out to us regarding any challenges you experience as you plan and submit your proposal. To do so or to specifically request a disability-related accommodation, please contact Northeast SARE as soon as possible at 802-651-8335 or northeast_sare@uvm.edu. Disability accommodations must be requested at least **three weeks prior to the proposal deadline**. Northeast SARE will do our best to address requests made with less notice, but may not have the resources to do so.

Faculty Advisor Role

Graduate student applicants must propose to work with a specific faculty advisor. Because universities typically do not allow students to manage institutional grant awards, a faculty advisor will be named the principal investigator of the awarded grant. Faculty advisors must endorse the proposal, oversee the research, and as the official principal investigator they must ensure the project's budgeted expenditures are acceptable. Their approval must be confirmed with the completion of the [Grant Commitment Form](#) attached to the proposal and by setting up an account in projects.sare.org. The proposal will not move forward to review without these elements. If either the graduate student or the faculty advisor declines to be a part of the project prior to the award being made, the proposal will be withdrawn; it cannot be transferred to a different student or faculty advisor.

Funding Available

Northeast SARE's Administrative Council allocated \$500,000 to fund projects for this cycle of Graduate Student Research Grants. Individual projects are capped at \$15,000; about 30 projects will be awarded.

Project Duration

Typical project length is 2 years. All projects must be completed by November 30, 2027.

Public Domain

Proposals 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 accessibility of results of funded projects; therefore, funded proposal text, and funded project reports will be in the public domain.

Use of Funds

Eligible Expenses

Funds may be used for the following expenses if they are specific to the project:

- Labor, including wages, stipends, salary and fringe benefits for individuals working on the project
- Materials and supplies, including research and education supplies, outreach materials, and project-specific software
- Travel and per diem expenses necessary for the project
- Expenses to produce publications, like fact sheets, guides, flyers, etc., as well as copies, postage and other project communication expenses
- Compensation for services like farmer stipends, presenter fees and other services rendered, lab fees, as well as research incentives and compensation for interviewees, and subscriptions for project-specific services, e.g., for video conferencing or online data storage
- Meeting and training expenses, including facility rental and participant support costs
- Equipment purchases and fabrication necessary for, and specific to, the project; Equipment with general uses, like a computer or tractor, are not eligible —please see restrictions, described on p.18
- Rental or operating charges for farm equipment, land, or greenhouse space
- Subawards for portions of the project conducted by other organizations
- Indirect costs up to 10 percent of total direct costs. Please note that for-profit businesses generally cannot include indirect costs in the budget

Ineligible Expenses

Funds may not be used for:

- Capital costs including the purchase of land, buildings, livestock, general use machinery, orchards, greenhouses, and major improvements, fixtures or expansion expenses
- Normal operating expenses that would be incurred in the absence of the project such as utilities, general maintenance, or general supplies
- Promotional items including clothing (hats, tee shirts, aprons, etc.), swag, giveaways, subsidies, raffles, and branded promotional material
- Travel to conferences and other meetings unless essential to the project's success, such as presentation of project results or to explicitly bring information back to project participants
- International travel unless integral to the project's success and described in the proposal (Note: There are certain restrictions on costs and carriers)
- Cell phone charges, even if cell phones are used during the course of the project
- Food expenses unless necessary for the continuity of a training event or project meeting; and
- Expenses outside of the grant period. SARE cannot pay for expenses incurred before the award start date or after the end date on the grant contract

Additionally, it is expected that costs for copiers, cameras, computers, video equipment, and other items that have uses beyond the project be provided by the applicant. To be considered as a direct cost, the item must be clearly essential and specific to the proposed project.

Proposal Questions and Instructions

The proposal is divided into sections that contain multiple questions. Instructions for questions are presented below. Review criteria of the questions and the weights used in evaluating the proposals appear next to their associated questions throughout the instructions.

Please note: Do not include links to external sites in your submission (except as needed in the citation list); they will not be considered by reviewers.

Proposal Overview

Title. The project title lets reviewers know what your project is about. Use words that are useful for finding your project in a website search. The maximum length is 150 characters which is about 35 words or less. Please use title case.

Project Description. Description to be used for search results if funded. Limit of 300 characters which is about 70 words or less.

Applicant. Generally, this should be you, the Graduate Student. If your organization requires an organizational official to submit the application, then they would be the Applicant. To do this, they will need to set up a projects.sare.org profile and start the application.

Graduate Student: If the Graduate Student and the Applicant are the same, your information will be automatically populated. If the Applicant is not the Graduate Student, the Graduate Student will need to set up a profile with projects.sare.org, and the Applicant will need to add them to the proposal.

Faculty Advisor: Click “Change”. Select “No” to the question, “Will [your name] be the project’s Faculty Advisor?” Enter your faculty advisor’s email address. If they already have a profile in projects.sare.org, your faculty advisor’s information will auto-populate, and you can select “Save”. If they do not have a projects.sare.org account, they will need to set one up before you can finalize and submit your proposal.

Note: If your faculty advisor has an existing account, they may need to update their profile with the required demographic and contact data **before** you will be able to submit your proposal.

Graduate Student Applicant Information

Graduate Student Degree Sought. Use the drop-down menu to select type of degree.

College Program/Department. Enter as text.

Expected Date of Graduation. Choose a date from the calendar pop-up.

General Information

Project Start Date: Choose a start date from the calendar pop-up. Contract start dates will be August 1, 2024, but projects may begin after that date. Note: SARE cannot pay for expenses incurred before the contract start date.

Project End Date: Choose an end data from the calendar pop-up. All projects must be completed by November 30, 2027.

Primary State: Select the state where the majority of the work will be carried out, i.e., the primary location of the grant activities. Usually this is the home state of the applicant organization.

Optional: Geographic Scope: If this project will take place in more than just the primary state, list all the states where this project will take place.

Primary Commodities, Primary Practices, and Primary Benefits and Impacts:

Choose only the primary categories being addressed or investigated by the project, not every category that might potentially be affected. If your project is not commodity-specific, select “Does not apply to specific commodities”. Use the following links for the complete list of choices that may help you select the appropriate categories. This information will be used to categorize projects and aggregate project results.

Commodities: projects.sare.org/commodities/

Practices: projects.sare.org/practices/

Benefits and Impacts: projects.sare.org/benefits-and-impacts/

Does this project involve research with vertebrate animals? Please answer yes or no. If your project is funded and involves vertebrate animals, SARE will require certification of protocol review from an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). Federal animal welfare regulations require that all activities involving the use of live vertebrate animals used or intended for use in research, research training, experimentation, biological testing or for related purposes are reviewed to ensure animal welfare and humane care.

Does this project involve human subjects research? Please answer yes or no. If your project is funded and involves human research subjects, SARE will need a completed approval document from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Protection of Human Subjects in Research. If your organization does not have IRB protocols in place, please consult this resource: www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/decision-charts-2018.

Plan for IACUC/IRB Determination (no word limit): If your project does **not** involve animal research or human research subject, write “not applicable.” If your project does involve animal research or human research subjects, describe your plan for obtaining IACUC and/or IRB determinations. Identify that your organization has an IACUC/ IRB board that will review this project or identify a partner (typically compensated) that has agreed to provide this review. If your organization does not have this capability, you should include at least one key collaborator that is compensated in the budget from an institution with this service and who has agreed to conduct the animal care or human subjects review. If your project is awarded, you will be required to provide the documentation before any research funds can be reimbursed.

Optional: Additional Context (150-word limit): If relevant, this is an opportunity to inform reviewers regarding any challenges or opportunities that you and others conducting this type of work face in accessing resources.

Project Abstract (250-word limit): This is a standalone summary of the project. It should briefly describe the project focus, the objective(s), key components of your study’s plan of work, and outreach strategy. Since the abstract is the first thing reviewers will see, take some time to make it clear and compelling. You may want to compose the abstract after you have written the rest of your proposal.

Introduction

Description of Project Focus (750-word limit)

Explain the issue being addressed, why it is important, and how your project will contribute to **Northeast SARE's outcome statement** (p1). Begin with, "The purpose of this project is to..." Describe how your inquiry will advance current knowledge in a way that will have a positive effect on sustainable agriculture.

If possible, quantify the economic, social and/or environmental impacts of the problem and the research potential. If your project is part of a larger research program, describe how your proposed work will contribute to the overall goals of that effort.

Review criteria:

The project focus and its importance are clearly described. The proposed work focuses on building knowledge, awareness, skills, or attitudes that farmers can use. The proposed work clearly contributes to Northeast SARE's Outcome Statement. It is clear how the project relates to other work in the topic area and whether it is a stand-alone project or part of a larger effort.

Criteria Weight: 10%

Key Individuals (500-word limit)

Briefly describe your experience relative to the project, your role in the project, and how the project relates to your thesis or dissertation. Then describe your faculty advisor's role, background and expertise.

If applicable, identify and describe any collaborators with whom you will work—you will also need to provide letters of commitment from them, see below. Descriptions should include name, title, business or organization, skills, relevant experience, and role with the project.

Be sure to describe your access to the required resources to carry out this work, such as labs, equipment, greenhouses, field plots, etc.

Review criteria:

The applicant and their faculty advisor have been described and demonstrate they have the capacity and experience to conduct the project. Additional collaborators are described if applicable. Necessary facilities and equipment are available to carry out the project.

Criteria weight: 10%

Please note: Members of the Northeast SARE Administrative Council, SARE staff, and SARE State Coordinators are not permitted to be funded or named in proposals. Other restrictions apply, see the full Conflict of Interest policy at:

www.northeastsare.org/COI.

Letters of Commitment (file upload)

If your project involves collaborators (including farmers collaborating in your research), you must include a letter from each that describes their role and commitment to the project. Letters should be written by the individuals (not you) and addressed to you as the project leader.

Do **not** upload: A letter from your faculty advisor (unnecessary since they sign the Grant Commitment Form), letters of general support from individuals not directly involved in the project, curricula vitae, and sample promotional materials about your institution. If provided, these documents will not move forward in the review.

Review criteria:

If the project involves collaborators, signed letters of commitment from collaborators (*including farmers*) have been uploaded.

Agricultural Community (500-word limit)

Describe the agricultural community(ies) the project team seeks to engage, addressing the questions below. If your project does not directly engage participants, tell us about the agricultural communities you expect to benefit from project results. Use the following questions as a guide.

Who is the project serving? What are their needs and how do you know?

Will the project team engage directly with participants? How?

Are there others in the community addressing this need and, if so, what is your relationship with them?

Please note that according to [Northeast SARE's values](#), we aim to elevate authentic engagement with communities of Black, Indigenous, and all Farmers of Color (BIPOC). In the next question you will be able to indicate if your project intends to empower a historically underserved community as defined by the USDA.

Review criteria:

The applicant has demonstrated:
An understanding of the communities they aim to benefit and their needs or interests;
If the applicant is working directly with participants they also demonstrate:
The community has been and will be meaningfully engaged in project design and implementation.

Criteria weight: 10%

Historically Underserved Participants

If you are working directly with participants, please check all relevant boxes below to indicate if the agricultural community you work with is historically underserved as defined by the USDA. If you are not directly engaging participants, skip this question. According to [Northeast SARE's values](#) we aim to elevate **authentic** engagement with communities of Black, Indigenous, and all Farmers of Color (BIPOC)*:

- BIPOC (USDA socially disadvantaged)*
- Women
- Beginning farmer or rancher
- Veteran
- Limited resource farmer or rancher
- None of the above

*Northeast SARE understands BIPOC to align with the USDA definition of socially disadvantaged individuals as those belonging to groups that have been subject to racial or ethnic prejudice, including but not limited to farmers who are Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Hispanic or Latino, and Asian or Pacific Islander.

Plan of Work

Objectives (400-word limit)

Please use a numbered list of project objectives. If your project is part of a larger research program, please only list the objectives that this proposal will address.

Outreach activities should be listed here *only* if they are part of the research. Generally, recommendations and sharing of project results are not considered objectives and should be described in the outreach section.

Review criteria:

This question is not required. Reviewers may elevate proposals in the final ranking that support historically underserved communities.

Review criteria:

The objectives are clearly described.

Criteria weight: 10%

Materials and Methods (2,000 word-limit)

Number each approach and method according to each corresponding objective, providing a succinct description of the methods to be used.

For field and laboratory research, include a description of proposed treatments, experimental design, data to be collected, measurement protocols, and methods of analysis. Quantitative methods should yield statistically valid results when possible. If you plan to use a statistical method, state the design (e.g., one-way ANOVA, etc.) and the sample size sufficient for the method chosen.

For social science and marketing research, include a description of the target population(s), research design, methods and instruments to be used, data to be collected, measurement protocols, and methods of analysis. Explain how you will analyze, summarize, interpret and present any data gathered or program results, whether qualitative or quantitative.

Optional: Upload a maximum of 5 supporting documents that add specificity and clarity; these may include plot plans for field experiments, draft survey or evaluation instruments, an explanation of statistical design, or perhaps diagrams or photographs of project components that are otherwise difficult to explain. Use the "Add Media" button to insert images or upload a PDF or spreadsheet.

Outreach Plan (750-word limit)

Effective outreach is key to long-term impact. Describe a thoughtful outreach plan for sharing project information and results. List specific outreach events and publications (other than your thesis) you will offer and who will benefit from these activities. For some projects, outreach to other researchers and Extension personnel will be sufficient while, for others, outreach directly to farmers is more appropriate. If relevant, include and describe activities that will reach historically underserved communities (see list under [Historically Underserved Participants](#) above).

Review criteria:

Materials and methods are clearly articulated and provide sufficient detail of what will be done to achieve the project objectives, and how tangible, measurable results will be collected. The work proposed reflects the degree sought.

Criteria weight: 15%

Review criteria:

The outreach plan describes adequate and appropriate activities for communicating project information and results; it contains clear deliverables and realistic expectations for reaching audiences.

Criteria weight: 10%

Project Timeline (500-word limit)

Outline all project activities in a chronological timeline of the steps you will take, including planned outreach activities. Beginning with your start date, specify in a month/year format when key activities happen. Include how long each step will take and who will do them.

The timeline should align with your project budget in terms of personnel costs, testing fees, travel expenses, etc. You may write out your timeline in outline form or put it in a table format as below.

Example timeline in table form:

Time Period	Activity	Personnel involved/time allotted
August - September, 2023	Conduct preliminary tests on methodology for plant tissue and soil experiments	Franklin Ford - Faculty Advisor, Diya Patel -- Graduate Student est. 10 hours per person.
March 2024, first 2 weeks	Establish in-field crop trials on 3 affected farm fields and on 1 control farm	Diya Patel and Erica Gamache – Undergraduate Assistant est. 16 hours per person.
March - June 2024	Take measurements weekly	Erica Gamache, est. 2 hours /week for 18 weeks

Review criteria:

The timeline is realistic and includes all project activities and outreach; it describes who will do what, when and how long each step will take. The timetable is aligned with the project's budget and plan of work.

Criteria weight: 15%

Previous Work

Previous Work (500-word limit)

What efforts have been made by others to solve the problem or take advantage of this opportunity? Describe the current knowledge and practice on this topic to show how your project builds on existing efforts. If the practice is known but has not been applied in your community, explain how you will test what has worked elsewhere or make adaptations for your area.

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 foundation for the project.

Review criteria:

Previous relevant work is described and connected to the proposed work.

Criteria weight: 10%

References may include but are not limited to published literature, SARE project reports, unpublished reports, survey data, focus groups data, cultural experiences and stories, records of meetings, the Census of Agriculture, etc. 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, project coordinator and keyword.

Citation List (2,000-word limit)

Provide a list of citations referenced in the previous work section and elsewhere in your proposal. Include only those citations directly related to the proposed project. Links are allowed in this section of the proposal. Use the citation style most familiar to you. Many resources exist online to support with citing references, such as

<https://www.scribbr.com/citation/generator/>, <https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/create-a-bibliography-citations-and-references-17686589-4824-4940-9c69-342c289fa2a5>, and more.

Review criteria: A citation list is provided with relevant references included.

Budget

A detailed budget is required. The budget is provided by completing and uploading Budget Justification and Narrative Spreadsheet(s) and entering totals into the online proposal.

Funding requests should align with project duration, scope of the work, and detailed expenses to complete the proposed work.

Northeast SARE strongly encourages that farmers (and others who take time out of their normal work to provide a service to the project) be paid for the time they contribute to a project at a reasonable rate. For example, Northeast SARE compensates farmers who serve on its Administrative Council and review teams at a rate of \$387 per day.

See the **Appendix** for more details on budget categories and samples of the Budget Justification and Narrative.

Review criteria:

Budget items reflect the realistic needs of the project. The budget is internally consistent, and units are provided. Budget items are allowable, and all expenses are well-defined and justified. The total amount requested in the submission system and in the budget template spreadsheet match.

Criteria weight: 10%

Budget Justification and Narrative Spreadsheet (file upload)

Download and complete the Northeast SARE Budget Justification and Narrative Template (Excel spreadsheet) provided at: www.northeastsare.org/graduatestudentgrant.

Use only the funding categories provided in the template (i.e., personnel, materials and supplies, travel, publications/printing, and other direct costs), adding rows or expanding row heights as needed to accommodate your narrative and justification. Justify each expense with a brief and clear narrative description. Itemize all expected expenses and calculate their costs as precisely as possible. Include the quantity and per-unit cost of each expense and let the formulas in the template calculate the totals. 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. The competitiveness of proposals is undermined by an inadequately justified budget.

An overview of allowable and unallowable uses of funds is given on page 18 of this Call.

The Template should calculate the total cost of each item, the category subtotals for each year, and overall project totals. Budget categories in the Template are explained in the Instructions and are also provided in the Appendix for your convenience. Do not override formulas—all totals for each category should be calculated using the formulas in the Template.

Matching funds are not required for SARE grants. If your organization is providing facilities, resources or significant in-kind contributions to the project, these are best described in the next section and not in the budget justification.

Total Direct Costs

Enter the total direct dollar amount requested from the Budget Justification and Narrative Template (“TOTAL DIRECT COSTS”).

Indirect Costs

Enter the total indirect dollar amount requested from the Budget Justification and Narrative Template (“Indirect Costs”).

Total SARE Request

Enter the total dollar amount requested from the Budget Justification and Narrative Template (“TOTAL SARE Request”). The total of indirect plus direct costs requested above should add up to this number.

Optional: Other Funding Sources (200-word limit)

SARE recognizes that the program cap of \$15,000 may not cover the full cost of a research project. When evaluating your project, it is helpful for reviewers to understand how the rest of the project expenses will be covered. Describe any other sources of funding that will support this project or that this project builds upon. If your organization is providing facilities, resources or significant in-kind contributions to the project, these are best described here.

There are no review criteria for this question. This information is used to support reviewer understanding of and ability to assess your budget.

Host Organization Approval

Grant Commitment Form (file upload)

This form certifies that you have received approval from your advisor and an authorized official at your institution. Print out the Grant Commitment Form at:

www.northeastzare.org/graduatestudentgrant. The form must be signed by you as the applicant, your faculty advisor as the principal investigator, and an authorized official at your institution.

We require that the form be completed and uploaded at the time of proposal, so be sure to bring it to your institution's grants office well before the proposal deadline. You may share your proposal with your institution's authorized official by clicking on "View Draft" and printing the proposal or by sharing the proposal by providing the "Link to Share" URL.

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

Authorized Official Contact Information

Provide the name and contact information of the authorized official for the organization who will serve as fiscal agent for the project.

FDP Clearinghouse Information

Is this institution registered in the Federal Demonstration Partnership (FDP) Expanded Clearinghouse? Please answer yes or no. A list of participating organizations can be found at: fdpclearinghouse.org/organizations.

Preparing and Submitting your Proposal

Submit your proposal online at: <https://projects.sare.org/>.

Writing Suggestions

We recommend preparing your proposal well in advance of the deadline. A Word document with the proposal questions is available to prepare your proposal offline, ensuring it is accurate and complies with word limits before pasting into the Grant Management System at:

<http://northeast.sare.org/GradStudentPrepDoc>

Keep your writing clear and simple. You can assume grant reviewers have solid sustainable agriculture knowledge, but not necessarily deep expertise in your subject area.

Do not include links to external sites as they will not be considered by reviewers.

Online Submission System

Proposals must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. ET on April 16, 2024 to our Grant Management System online at: <https://projects.sare.org/>.

At least 1-2 weeks before the due date, go to projects.sare.org to setup a user account, log in, and begin to enter your proposal in the grant management system to ensure that you are able to use the system. If you have any questions about this process, or would like to request a PDF of detailed instructions on using the grant management system, contact Kaitlyn Sirna, the Graduate Student Grant Administrator at northeast-gs@sare.org or 440.336.0594.

Entering your Proposal

We recommend you allow for a full day to enter and submit your proposal online. Required documents must be included and submitted by the due date; incomplete proposals will not be reviewed.

You will begin by entering a Title, Project Description, and information about the Applicant, Graduate Student, and Faculty Advisor, as described in Proposal Questions and Instructions.

Be sure to click “Save” after each entry. Next, complete the proposal sections. Each section appears on left sidebar of the Proposal Overview page, click on the section heading enter responses to questions.

You may preview a draft of your proposal anytime by clicking “View Draft.” You can share the draft with others with “Link to Share” at the top of the draft page.

You may log out and return later to work on your proposal. Log in and select “Manage Grant Proposals.” Your draft proposal will be listed under “Unsubmitted Proposals.”

When you are done, click the “Submit Proposal” at the bottom of the Proposal Overview page. The button will not appear until you have answered all required questions. Click once to see the confirmation page, then make sure to select “Submit proposal” again. You will receive an email confirmation of your submission.

Prior to the deadline, you may unsubmit to revise your proposal. If you do so, remember to submit it again when you are done! Each time you submit or unsubmit the proposal, you will receive an email confirmation.

Full Proposal Checklist

Components of the proposal and their word limits appear below, listed in the order they appear in the online grant management system within section headings.

- Project Title (150-character limit)
- Project Description (300-character limit)
- Applicant
- Graduate Student
- Faculty Advisor
- Key Individuals (500-word limit)
- Letters of Commitment, if applicable (file upload, PDF format)
- Farming Community (500-word limit)
- Historically Underserved Farmers

Graduate Student Applicant Information

- Graduate Student Degree Sought
- College Program/Department
- Expected Date of Graduation

General Information

- Project Start Date
- Project End Date
- Primary State
- (Optional) Geographic Scope
- Primary Commodities, Primary Practices, and Primary Benefits and Impacts
- Does this project involve research with vertebrate animals?
- Does this project involve human subjects research?
- Plan for IACUC/IRB Determination (no word limit)
- (Optional) Additional Context (150-word limit)
- Project Abstract (250-word limit)

Introduction

- Description of Project Focus (750-word limit)

Proposal Selection Process

Proposals are evaluated by independent review panels using the criteria in the call for proposals. Panel scores and comments are provided to the Northeast SARE Administrative Council, which decides which proposals to fund.

Plan of Work

- Objectives (400-word limit)
- Materials and Methods (2,000-word limit)
- Outreach Plan (750-word limit)
- Project Timeline (500-word limit)

Previous Work

- Previous Work (500-word limit)
- Citation List (2,000-word limit)

Budget

- Budget Justification and Narrative Template (file upload in .xlsx format)
- Other Funding Sources
- Total Direct Costs
- Indirect Costs
- Total SARE Request

Host Institution Approval

- Grant Commitment Form (file upload, PDF format)
- Authorized Official Contact Information
- FDP Clearinghouse Information

Proposals and reviews are kept confidential among Northeast SARE staff, Administrative Council, and grant reviewers. If funded, proposals and funded project reports will be in the public domain.

Northeast SARE is hosted by the University of Vermont. The University prohibits discrimination on the basis of unlawful criteria such as race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, or gender identity or expression, as those terms are defined under applicable law.

Conflict of Interest

Members of the Northeast SARE Administrative Council, SARE staff, and SARE State Coordinators are not permitted to be funded or named in proposals.

Members of proposal review teams are not permitted to discuss or vote on proposals that are submitted by organizations they work for, organizations for which they serve as a board member or paid consultant, former graduate student advisees or advisors, family members or close personal friends.

Reviewers may not review a proposal in which their collaborators on research projects or co-authors on peer reviewed publications (including pending publications and submissions) serve as project leaders; the timeline for this prohibition is for any projects or publications within the past three years.

Northeast SARE's full Conflict of Interest policy can be found at: www.northeastsare.org/COI

Expectations for Funded Proposals

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

Notification

The Northeast SARE Administrative Council will select proposals for funding by the end of July 2024 and Northeast SARE staff will notify applicants of the status of their proposals soon after that.

Contracting and Disbursement of Funds

Those selected for funding will receive a contract from the University of Vermont (Northeast SARE's host institution) to establish reimbursements for approved project expenses. Before a contract is issued, Northeast SARE staff will send information detailing the next steps, including any proposal or budget revisions that need to be made.

Funds are to be used exclusively for the proposed project, as described in the budget. Funds are released on a reimbursement basis. As such, you need to have the financial capacity to pay project expenses up front and be reimbursed for invoices submitted on a net 30-day term. Northeast SARE will hold the last 20 percent of the total award until the project work, including outreach, has been completed and your final project report has been received and approved. For more information, refer to "Managing Your Northeast SARE Graduate Student Grant" at:

<https://northeast.sare.org/grants/manage-a-grant/manage-your-graduate-student-grant/>.

Acknowledging SARE

All funded projects are required to acknowledge Northeast SARE as the funding source in all project publications and outreach materials. You can find more information about acknowledging Northeast SARE at: <https://northeast.sare.org/about/northeast-sare-logo-and-acknowledgement/>.

Required Reporting

Northeast SARE requires annual progress reports and a comprehensive final report for all projects. All reports will be submitted in the Grant Management 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 or awareness, attitudes, and/or the adoption of new practices. Publications and educational tools should be added to the report as attachments. 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 a final report is due within 60 days of the project's end date. The final report should include full, detailed results of the project and outreach activities conducted that were outlined in your proposal.

Northeast SARE asks that grant recipients provide us with their contact information for at least two years after the project has ended to allow for follow-up and response to inquiries about the project. For more information about the types of information SARE collects post-project, visit: www.northeast.sare.org/logicmodels.

Appendix: Explanation of Budget Categories and Items to Include

Use the Northeast SARE Budget Justification and Narrative Templates (Excel spreadsheet) provided at: <https://northeast.sare.org/GraduateStudentGrantBudget>. List each item and provide a narrative description that explains the need for and use of each expense. Itemize each expense with the quantity and per-unit cost; the Template will calculate the totals for each category.

While descriptions of budget items are provided in the Template, see below for explanation of some budget categories. Save and upload the Budget Justification and Narrative in a spreadsheet format (.xlsx only – contact us if you do not have access to Excel).

Personnel Costs

Personnel costs include those for you (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. These should be calculated as a percentage of salary or wage amounts.

Only people employed by the applicant's organization should be listed in this category. Those employed elsewhere should be listed under "Other direct costs" or, if individuals are to be paid by another organization via a subaward, they should be included in a separately detailed subaward budget and the subaward total should be listed below under "Subawards" in "Other direct costs".

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).

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 project-specific software, specialized tools, measuring devices, and other materials that will be used and used up during the course of the project. Indicate each item with estimated quantity and cost. Again, be specific, for example:

It is important to include narrative justification on why the item is necessary and why not otherwise available through the organization. Items must be project-specific and able to be tracked as being used for the project. General-use items such as office supplies are not allowable unless the items can be tracked and itemized for a project-specific purpose. **Advertising and public relations** activities and materials that are not project specific, such as those promoting a farm or organization generally, are not allowable, nor are costs of promotional items and memorabilia, including gifts and souvenirs.

Travel. This section is for the travel of employees/personnel of the applicant's organization only; list consultant travel under consultants and list conference attendee travel under trainee support. Specify the purpose of the trip and include who is traveling, the destination, and expenses per trip. Break out costs onto different lines (such as registration fees, lodging, airfare or mileage, per diem, etc.).

When requesting funds for travel by car, use the mileage reimbursement rate set by the organization administering the grant. If your organization does not have a rate, then you should use the Federal mileage rate. This rate is adjusted each year and is currently \$0.655 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. If including travel meals (when on a trip requiring an overnight stay), specify the per diem or allowance to be used. Here are some sample budget lines:

Research assistant making 4 trips to cooperating farm, 14 miles each; 56 miles @\$0.655/mile = \$36.68

Project leader making 3 trips to soil lab, 26 miles each; 78 miles @\$0.655/mile = \$51.09

If the budget includes air travel, these trips must be clearly justified as necessary to the project. Foreign travel is typically not allowed under the SARE program except in cases where sufficient justification has been provided and it must be pre-approved by Northeast SARE staff if your project is funded. To justify foreign travel, grant applicants need to demonstrate the travel is 1) directly related to the project, 2) important for project completion, and 3) well justified (i.e., provide explanation for why the activity cannot be done in the USA, detail relevance to Northeast agriculture sustainability, and provide foreign institution and colleagues' qualifications when relevant, etc.). All airline travel must be booked according to the guidelines of the Fly America Act which roughly states that, except under certain circumstances, flights must be booked on U.S. flag carriers. In addition, all flights must be booked in coach class.

Publications/Printing. This category includes costs of developing, printing and distributing all publication, education, and outreach materials. Include publishing costs for scientific or technical journal articles here. You may include the cost of developing web-based publications here, but web hosting expenses belong in the "Subscriptions" category. Show a per-piece cost for any publications you plan to develop.

Please note that charges for cell phones are not allowable.

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. Charges for cell phones are not allowable.

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

Consultants, Speakers, and Other services. If outside entities will be compensated on a temporary basis to carry out specific tasks, these charges are listed here. Expenses for specific services, consultants and speakers/presenters should all be included here. Indicate in column A whether the cost is a consultant, service, or speaker. Include the names (if applicable) of those receiving stipends or payments for services, the organizations or farms, a description of the services they are providing, and a breakdown of the number of days or hours of service, rate of pay, and expenses to be reimbursed (travel), etc.

For consultant expenses: if the grant is awarded, you must keep a resume and scope of work on file for each consultant. If you are unable to name a specific consultant at the time of award, you will need to get Northeast SARE approval of the consultant before costs can be reimbursed.

Research incentives and compensation for interviewees or other research participants should also be included here when clearly necessary for the success of the program. These individuals do not need to be named. Farmer collaborators, if conducting work on behalf of the project team, are often paid a stipend and that expense should be included here. Stipends for farmer trainees or participants should be listed under Participant support costs.

Conferences/Meetings/Workshops. Costs of hosting project conferences, meetings, training events, and workshops are included in this category. 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.

Reminder: List expenses for a project leader or staff attending a conference under Travel. List presenter expenses under Consultants, Speakers and Other Services. List trainee-participant expenses under Participant Support Costs.

Participant Support Costs. If meals, registration costs, transportation, lodging, stipends or other expenses are to be paid on behalf of participants who are receiving training as the project beneficiaries, these expenses should be listed as participant support costs. If participant support costs are requested for conferences/meetings, describe the purpose, dates, and location of the event. Payments for services rendered should be listed above under Consultants, speaker, and/or trainer fees. Other Conference/meeting/workshop expenses may be listed in that category above. When calculating Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, participant support costs are not included.

Off-site Office Rental is most often covered under the organization'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 the cost of fabrication of equipment). 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. Only project specific equipment with clear justification of need and full use in the project is allowable. General use equipment is not allowed. When calculating Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, equipment expenses are not included.

Rental of equipment or land-use charges. Land-use charges are most typical in field research situations when a rental rate or per acre/square foot fee is applied. When calculating Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, equipment rental and land-use expenses are not included.

Other. For project expense that truly do not fit into any other category. Tuition remission for students with assistantships can be included here. Each item must be clearly identified and justified to be allowed. "Miscellaneous" and "contingency expenses" are not allowed. Research incentives and compensation for interviewees or other research participants should also be included here when clearly necessary for the success of the program. When calculating Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, other expenses are not included.

Subawards

If there is a portion of the project that will be subawarded to another organization, list it in this section. List the institution, organization, or farm, the subaward leader's name, and the amount of the subaward. 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. It is expected that the prime recipient is taking the lead on the effort with full responsibility for reporting, and each subaward must be less than 50% of the overall project funding request. When calculating Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) calculations, subaward amounts above \$25,000 for each subaward organization are not included.

Indirect Costs

USDA currently allows indirect costs. Applicants whose organizations have a negotiated federal indirect cost rate may budget the indirect portion to be up to 10 percent of total direct costs. This is the maximum, a cap on indirect set by USDA on SARE grants. If the negotiated organizational 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.

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Example of Budget Justification and Narrative

The following example is provided for illustrative purposes only.

Northeast SARE Budget Justification and Narrative Template to be used for Farmer Grant, Graduate Student Research Grant, and Partnership Grant Programs

1. For budget line entries:
 - Columns A-E must be completed for each expense. Column F auto calculates when columns D and E are filled. Please do not override the formulas.
 - Insert rows as needed for additional entries. Double check that formulas and subtotals are accurate when you do!
 - Expand row height as needed to provide full justification narrative as to the need for the item and it's use in the project.
 2. All applicants must complete the check-off box at the bottom regarding allowed indirect costs.
 3. Upload this budget as an Excel file to the submission system **not** as a pdf or image file.
 4. Enter the category subtotals (cells highlighted in yellow) into the online budget summary. Double check that the Total SARE Request here matches your total Amount Requested in your online proposal.
 5. For more information and guidance on the categories below, please see the Appendix in the relevant call for proposals.

Budget Detail, Justification and Narrative It is required to maintain formulas in column F. Column F auto calculates based on columns D and E.

Applicant's name and institution:

Item name	Narrative justification of expense	Unit	Quantity	\$ per unit	Quantity x \$ =
PERSONNEL					
<i>Only people employed by the recipient organization or farm should be listed in this category. Those employed elsewhere should be listed under Consultants in Other Direct Costs, or individuals are to be paid by another organization via a subaward to that organization, they should be included in a separately detailed subaward budget and the subaward total should be listed below under Subawards in Other Direct Costs.</i>					
Salaries and wages.					
<i>Provide narrative detail of each person's role in the project or the services they are providing through their work on the project. Show full-time equivalency as a percentage and salary for each year, or provide hourly wage multiplied by number of hours, to equal total \$ requested.</i>					
Project leader(s).					
Diya Patel, Graduate Student	5hrs/wk for 10 weeks and 15 hrs/wk for 15 weeks to complete field and laboratory work in year 1	hr	275	\$ 20.00	\$ 5,500.00
Diya Patel, Graduate Student	10 hrs/wk for 5 weeks to complete data analysis, reporting and preparing outreach materials in year 2	hr	50	\$ 20.00	\$ 1,000.00
Student wages.					
Scott Porter, Undergraduate Assistant	10 hrs/wk for 5 weeks to process samples in year 1	hr	50	\$ 15.00	\$ 750.00
Support staff.					
				\$	-
				\$	-
				\$	-
				\$	-
Subtotal: Salaries and wages (rounded to the nearest dollar)					7250
Fringe benefits.					
<i>If applicable, provide the cost of fringe benefits. These should be calculated as a percentage of the salary and/or wage amounts above. Tuition remission for students with assistantships should be listed under Other in Other Direct Costs.</i>					
Year 1 fringe for Diya Patel	Fringe rate is 8%	% of salary	0.08	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 440.00
Year 2 fringe for Diya Patel	Fringe rate is 8%	% of salary	0.08	\$ 750.00	\$ 60.00
Subtotal: Fringe benefits (rounded to the nearest dollar)					500
PERSONNEL TOTAL (salaries, hourly labor, and fringe benefits)					\$7,750
NON-PERSONNEL					
Materials and supplies.					
<i>This section is for items that are specific to the project. Indicate each item with estimated quantity and per-unit cost. Include narrative justification on why the item is necessary and why not otherwise available through the organization. Items must be project-specific, available to be tracked as being used for the project. General-use items such as office supplies are not allowable unless the items can be tracked and itemized for a project-specific purpose.</i>					
Seed	For treatment plot	lbs	100	\$ 6.00	\$ 600.00
Insect traps	For sample collection	ea	110	\$ 4.00	\$ 440.00
Zip-lock bags	For field samples	box	7	\$ 2.99	\$ 20.93
Mapping software	To collect, store and visualize project field data	license	1	\$ 420.00	\$ 420.00
Subtotal: Materials and supplies (rounded to the nearest dollar)					1,481
Travel.					
<i>For travel of employees/personnel only, list consultant travel under Consultants and list conference attendee travel under Participant support costs. Specify the purpose of the trip and (for travel) the destination, dates of trip or number of days of trip if dates are not known, and expenses per trip. We recommend that you break out costs onto different lines (such as registration fees, lodging, airfare or mileage, per diem, etc.) so that your estimates are clear to reviewers.</i>					
Diya Patel, auto mileage	10 round trips to Experiment Station (South Burlington, VT) to process samples, 6mi round trip using federal mileage rate	mi	60	\$ 0.655	\$ 39.30
Annual Meeting of the Entomological Society of America	Location: Los Angeles, CA. Presentation of project results by Diya Patel. Registration fee student rate	registration	1	\$ 200.000	\$ 200.00
Airfare	Round trip travel for Diya Patel to attend Entomological Society meeting	round trip	1	\$ 300.000	\$ 300.00
Lodging	Lodging for Diya Patel to attend the Entomological Society meeting	night	3	\$ 150.000	\$ 450.00
Subtotal: Travel (rounded to the nearest dollar)					989
Publications/printing.					
<i>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.</i>					
Brochures	Printed brochures for field day at research farm and twilight meeting at Dodge Farm	ea	75	\$ 0.25	\$ 18.75
24-page resource directory	layout and design	hour	15	\$ 30.00	\$ 450.00
Peer reviewed publication	One open-source journal article published in Horticulture, Fruit Science, or similar journal. Cost of submission once accepted is approximately \$1,000	publication	1	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
Subtotal: Publications (rounded to the nearest dollar)					1,469
Other Direct Costs					
		Unit	Quantity	\$ per unit	Quantity x \$ =

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Item name	Narrative justification of expense	Unit	Quantity	\$ per unit	Quantity x \$ =
				Total from separate spreadsheet	
				Total from separate spreadsheet	
				Total from separate spreadsheet	
Subtotal: Subawards					\$ -
Other Direct Costs total (rounded to the nearest dollar)					\$ 1,760
NON-PERSONNEL TOTAL					\$ 5,699
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS					\$ 13,449
Indirect costs.					
Complete the check-off below as to the basis for the amount being requested. Enter total indirect request amount on this line. Farms and other private businesses should leave the indirect cost amount blank or enter \$0 (see below).					\$ 1,491.00
TOTAL SARE REQUEST					\$ 14,940
Acknowledge that indirect has been offered through the application instructions by checking (X) in the appropriate box on the left below.					
X	Indirect is requested, based on having a federally negotiated indirect rate (subject to USDA/NIFA cap of 10% total direct costs). We have entered the amount requested on the Indirect costs line above. Use your own indirect calculations above if your indirect rate is less than 10% of total direct costs or if your negotiated rate is based on Modified Total Direct Costs.				
	Indirect is requested, based on the de minimis rate (our organization does not have a federally negotiated indirect rate). We have entered the amount requested for indirect on the Indirect costs line above. This calculation uses Modified Total Direct Costs.				
	No indirect is requested (farms or other for-profit business ineligible for indirect, as specified below). Overhead expenses that are directly attributable to the project may be itemized in the direct cost budget and do not exceed the USDA/NIFA cap of 10% of total direct costs.				
	No indirect is requested (check if your organization is eligible, but chooses not to request indirect). Overhead expenses that are directly attributable to the project may be itemized in the direct cost budget and do not exceed the USDA/NIFA cap of 10% of total direct costs.				

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