Writing a Successful SARE Grant Proposal

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Farm Bill Definition of Sustainable Agriculture

- an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term:
  - satisfy human food and fiber needs;
  - enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agriculture economy depends;
  - make the most efficient use of non-renewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls;
  - sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and
  - enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

Common Definition of Sustainable Agriculture
North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program

What is SARE?

- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
- SARE created in the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act of 1990 (1990 Farm Bill, Title 16, Subtitle B)
- Competitive grants program
- Funding for research, demonstration, education and extension

NCR SARE’s Mission…

- is to strengthen communities, increase farmer/rancher profitability, and improve the environment by supporting research and education.
NCR SARE’s Core Idealogies

- **Core Value:** The sustainability and well-being of all aspects of agriculture and those communities that support agriculture.
- **Core Purpose:** To preserve resources, to achieve the best environment possible, to produce the highest quality of product, and to maximize quality of life.

NCR SARE Goals

- Foster site-specific, integrated farming systems; satisfy human food and fiber needs; enhance environmental quality, natural resource conservation and the integration of on-farm and biological resources; enhance the quality of life and support owner-operated farms; protect human health and safety; and promote crop, livestock and enterprise diversity and the well-being of animals.

NCR SARE Grant Programs

- Farmer Rancher Grant Program
- Graduate Student Program
- Partnership Grant Program
- Professional Development Program
- Research and Education Grant Program
- Youth Educator Sustainable Agriculture Grants
NCR-SARE Grants Funded 1988-2013

$51,734,651 awarded from 1988-2013

Research & Education 438
Graduate Student 80
Youth 74
Farmer Rancher 56

NCR-SARE Grants Funded 1988-2013

CA $10,000
DC $131,561
IA $5,372,908
IL $2,020,398
IN $1,734,033
KS $2,754,642
KY $1,940
MI $5,347,409
MN $8,438,857
MO $3,306,215
ND $3,808,921
NE $5,042,679
OH $5,066,545
OR $72,168
SD $2,391,808
TN $84,332
WI $6,150,776
WV $10,000

NCR-SARE Grants Projects 1988-2013

CA 1
DC 2
IA 164
IL 104
IN 76
KS 135
KY 1
MI 212
MO 158
MN 252
ND 108
NE 144
OH 187
SD 93
TN 1
TX 1
WI 203
WV 1

1 Source: AASHE (2013)
Farmer Rancher Grant Dollars Funded Per State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Dollars Funded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$496,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-2014</td>
<td>$7,447,355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher Grant Call for Proposals

- What?
- Who and Where?
- When?
- How to Submit a Grant Proposal
- Proposal Requirements - Content
- Characteristics of Successful Proposals
- Review Criteria and Evaluation Process
- What to Expect

What

- NCR-SARE Farmer Rancher Grants provide opportunities for farmers and ranchers to use Sustainable Agriculture practices and their own innovative ideas to solve problems on the farm or ranch, and to share their ideas with others.
- Farmer/Rancher Grants are for sustainable agriculture research, demonstration, and education projects.
### What

- **NOT** for everyday farming expenses
- Identify specific problems and potential solutions
- Whole farm systems and youth projects are encouraged
- Livestock project must comply with reasonable animal care requirements

### What

- Since 1992, 997 grants have been awarded
  - 56 in Illinois
  - Topics include rotational grazing, aquaculture, weed control, marketing and crop production systems, organic farming

### What

- ~$400,000 available in 2015
  - $7,500 (maximum) – Individual grant
  - $15,000 (maximum) – Partner grant (2 or more separate operations)
  - $22,500 for Group grant (3 or more separate operations)
- **Duration**
  - Maximum duration is 22 months
Who

- Any farmer/rancher or group of farmer/ranchers* who farms in the North Central Region
- Grant recipients may participate in one Individual grant and one Partner or Group grant annually.
- Previous producer grant recipients

* Partners and Groups must designate a farmer project leader who will submit and sign the proposal, be responsible for reporting, and assume tax liability associated with the grant, if there is any.

Where

- The North Central Region consists of 12 states:
  - Illinois - Missouri
  - Indiana - Nebraska
  - Iowa - North Dakota
  - Kansas - Ohio
  - Michigan - South Dakota
  - Minnesota - Wisconsin

When

2015 Grant Cycle

- August 2014 Farmer/Rancher grant CFP released
- November 20, 2014 Farmer/Rancher Grant proposals due
- Spring, 2015 Administrative Council recommends Farmer/Rancher grant recipients
- Spring, 2015 Budgets are reviewed by University accountants for compliance with USDA guidelines and grant contracts are sent out
- Early summer 2015 Approximate date of first payment (50%)
- December 30, 2015 Progress report due (grant recipients are eligible for a second grant payment (35%) once their progress reports are approved)
- December 30, 2016 Project end date and deadline for submitting final report. Eligible for final payment (15%) once final report is approved.
How to Submit a Grant Proposal

- Applications must be received by online at http://www.cids.org/ncrsare/fr or in the NCR SARE office by mail or email by 4:00 p.m. (CST) on November 20, 2014. Faxed applications will NOT be reviewed.

Farmer Rancher Grant Program
NCR-SARE
120 Biosystems & Ag Eng Bldg.
University of Minnesota
1390 Eckles Ave
St Paul, MN 55108
E-mail: ncrsare@umn.edu

Proposal Requirements

- Content
  - Project Proposal*
  - Budget with Budget Justification
  - Letter of Support
    - *Livestock projects must also submit an Animal Care form

Project Proposal

- Proposals include 1 title page, 1 category checkoff page, 5 pages of questions, a budget and budget justification, 3 Livestock Care form pages, and 1 or 2 reference letters.
  - Limit answers to word count provided.
  - Mailed proposals should be printed single-sided.
- Applications must be typed using no smaller than a 12-point font, similar to the text in the invitation for proposals, or legibly written in dark ink.
  - You may use 10 or 11 point font on the budget pages only.
  - Do not staple or paper clip your application
Complete the budget form included in the CFP. Along with the amount for each item, briefly explain how each item in your budget will be used in your project. You may use extra pages for budget justification.

Review the Budget Tips and Example Budget on pages 6-12.

Budget Tips

Personnel Costs
Use this category for farmer labor and hired labor. Use the Other Direct Costs category for consultants and service providers.

Budget Justification
Include name, contact information and how they will contribute to the grant project.
Provide an estimate of the amount of labor and the cost for each participant being paid with grant funds.
Include everyone who will participate, even if they are not receiving funds (list $0 for the grant funds request).

Other Direct Costs
In addition to consultants and service providers, use this category for:
- Communications
- Photocopying
- Conference, meetings, workshops
- Speaker/trainer fees
- Honoraria/stipends
- Equipment rental
- Land-use charges
- Fabrication of equipment
**Budget**

- **Budget Item Request**
  - Show the amount of grant funds you intend to spend on each item. Grant recipients are paid for actual project expenses.

- **50% Rule**
  - Grant funds can be used to pay for up to 50% of the cost of equipment, livestock, permanent fencing materials, and perennial seeds and plants.
  
  > *Equipment is defined as items with a cost of $2,500 or more and a useful life of greater than one year.*

- **Food and Drink Expenses**
  - Refreshments/meals are allowed if they support the continuity of the event or the health, safety, and convenience of the attendees.
Budget

- Calculating Costs
  - Use realistic costs – not guesses.
  - Labor, land and equipment, and supplies – calculate on an annual cost-equivalent basis, i.e., operator labor per year @ $15/hour; $75/acre cash rent equivalent; $10/acre rental of tillage equipment
  - Mileage rate - $0.56/mile

- Unallowable Expenses
  - Construction and remodeling of buildings
  - Purchase of motorized vehicles (may be leased or rented), if they are needed for the project.

- Investigate Cost-Sharing
  - Contact state and federal agencies to see if they have funds that may be used to supplement your grant
  - Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food - Grants, Loans & Support
Reference Letter – Letter of Support

- Required; must submit one letter (a second letter is optional) from a community member (NOT a family member)
- Explain why the project is needed and how it will benefit the community
- Contact references early and make sure that they are familiar with your project
- The letter should include any information that will support the proposal; contact info of the reference and on letterhead, if possible.

Characteristics of Successful Applications

- Clearly define a problem
- Involve cooperators
- Involve local or state group
- Emphasize outreach

Review Criteria and Evaluation Process

- Well-identified problem and specific innovative plan to test possible solutions to that problem
- Appropriate timeline
- Best use of existing knowledge on the identified problem
- Effective plan for sharing project information
- Contribution to the growth of sustainable agriculture
- Appropriateness of the budget

Hans Bishop at PrairiErth Farm Field Day
Photo by Deborah Cavanaugh-Grant
What to Expect

- Return signed contract to NCR-SARE
- May receive an on-site visit from the Farmer Rancher Grant Program Coordinator
- Grant recipients must submit a progress report by December 30, 2015

What to Expect

- At the end of the project, must submit:
  - Final report
  - Final budget that shows how funds were spent
  - Photos, when possible, of project activities

What to Expect

- Funds will be disbursed in the following manner:
  - Grant recipients may request and receive 50% of the grant to start their project.
  - They receive an additional 35% after submitting a satisfactory progress report.
  - They may request the remaining 15% upon completion of the project.
Grant Resources

**Know Your Farmer Know Your Food**  

**NCR SARE Grants**  
[http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs](http://www.northcentralsare.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs)

**Illinois SARE Program**  
[http://www.illinoissare.org](http://www.illinoissare.org)

**Michael Fields Agricultural Institute**  
[http://www.michaelfields.org/grant-advising-resources](http://www.michaelfields.org/grant-advising-resources)

**University of Illinois Extension**  
[http://web.extension.illinois.edu/smallfarm/grants.html](http://web.extension.illinois.edu/smallfarm/grants.html)

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For Assistance

**Illinois SARE Coordinator**

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