

April 5, 2005

**2006
Call for Preproposals**

Research and Education Grant Program

**Receipt Deadline
4:30 p.m. CDT, June 15, 2005**

April 5, 2005

NCR-SARE and the 2006 Call for Preproposals

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

The **Research and Education (R&E) Grant Program** is currently one of four NCR-SARE grant programs. The R&E Grant Program provides funds to collaborative teams of scientists, farmers, institutions, organizations, and educators who are exploring sustainable agriculture through in-depth research projects or education/demonstration projects. Project results must benefit NCR agriculture. Most R&E grants go to organizations that are used to handling large grants and that can meet federal auditing requirements.

The funding level for the Research and Education grant program is dependent upon fiscal year 2006 appropriations from Congress and budget decisions by the NCR-SARE Administrative Council, but we anticipate that roughly **\$1.5 million** will be available to fund approximately 12 to 15 grant projects, with individual grants not to exceed \$150,000 total, for projects lasting up to three years (36 months). In March 2005, NCR-SARE selected 13 proposals for funding. The average size of funded grants was about \$112,000 and grant lengths ranged from 24 to 36 months.

It is essential that preproposal authors use the 2006 Call for Preproposals because each year there are some changes to the Call. Preproposals must be received in the NCR-SARE office in Lincoln, Nebraska, by 4:30 pm Central Daylight Time (CDT), Wednesday, June 15, 2005.

Preproposals will be reviewed by the NCR-SARE Administrative Council during the summer. Selected project coordinators will be contacted in about September 2005 and will be invited to develop full proposals that will be due in **November 2005**. The NCR-SARE Technical Committee will review proposals during the winter and funding decisions will be made by the NCR-SARE Administrative Council in early 2006. We anticipate that **project funds will be available by fall 2006**.

Desired Outcomes for 2006 Research and Education Projects

There are no specific priority areas in the 2006 Call for Preproposals, but preproposals must address issues of sustainable agriculture of current and potential importance to the North Central Region. Successful projects should contribute to two or more of the following NCR-SARE broad-based outcomes:

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

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Preproposals should clearly explain:

- Expected outcomes for the project and how they will assist NCR-SARE in working toward the broad-based outcomes listed above,
- How project outcomes will be evaluated, and
- What impact the project will have on farmers/ranchers, rural communities, and society as a whole.

Preproposal Format

Preproposals must be:

- Printed in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font (This sentence is an example of 12-point Times New Roman font.)
- Single-spaced
- Printed on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, with one-inch margins (3,420 characters fitting inside a 6.5-inch wide x 9-inch long text block – except for the Abstract, which must fit into a 6.5-inch wide by 4.5-inch long text block)
- Page numbered starting with the Plan of Work as page one and continuing through the Appendices
- Printed double-sided (both sides of the paper) except for the Cover Page and the Abstract

Preproposal Content

The four main components of your preproposal are **Cover Page, Abstract, Plan of Work, and Appendices.**

I. Cover Page

Limit the Cover Page to one page and print it single-sided (the front side of one sheet of paper with nothing printed on the back). A template for the 2006 Cover Page is included at the end of this call for preproposals. The template is also available in electronic format from NCR-SARE (ncrsare@unl.edu or www.sare.org/ncrsare). Items included on the cover page:

Project Title. Use a Title that is concise and includes keywords that help describe the project activities and expected outcomes. A good Project Title will help others find your project when they do database searches.

Project Coordinator. This is the person who will be NCR-SARE's primary contact for the project. The Project Coordinator is the person who manages the project and provides reports to NCR-SARE. The Project Coordinator must sign the cover page. (Some organizations use the term Principal Investigator instead of Project Coordinator.)

Primary Grantee. This is the organization that will administer the project budget. The Primary Grantee will send invoices to NCR-SARE, receive funds from NCR-SARE, and disburse funds to any Partner Organizations. The Primary Grantee might insist that an official representative of the organization sign the bottom of the preproposal cover page. In most cases, the Primary Grantee Official is different from the Project Coordinator and is an administrator or someone from the organization's contracts and grants office. As far as NCR-SARE is concerned, Primary

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Grantee signatures on preproposals are optional, however, a Primary Grantee Official Representative signature might be required by your organization, so check with administrators at your organization. If you are invited to submit a full proposal, NCR-SARE will require that a Primary Grantee Official Representative sign the proposal cover sheet.

Partner Organizations. List any additional institutions or organizations that will receive project funds through subcontracts with the Primary Grantee.

Continuations. Please indicate whether this is a new project request or a request to continue a line of work that was funded with a previous NCR-SARE grant. If you are requesting continuation of an existing NCR-SARE project, please list the NCR-SARE project number (LNCxx-xxx) for the existing project.

Project Duration. Please indicate the proposed length of your project in years or months up to a maximum of three years (36 months).

Total Budget Request. List the total amount of funds requested from NCR-SARE for each year of the project and the total for all years of the project. The total for all years of the project cannot exceed \$150,000. The Total Budget Request listed on the Cover Page should include any funds that the Primary Grantee plans to subcontract to Partner Organizations. See the instructions for *Appendix 3. Estimated Budget* for more details about budgets.

Type of Project. You must indicate whether your preproposal is for a Research project or for an Education/Demonstration project - **check only one**. All research projects should include some outreach effort, but use your best judgment as to whether your project is primarily Research or primarily Education/Demonstration. Each year, NCR-SARE funds projects in both areas (typically about half are Research and about half are Education projects), so there is no advantage to checking one type of project compared to the other.

Topic Area. Please indicate the topic area that is the best fit for your proposed project. Please **check only one topic area** – checking more than one area will not increase your chances of success. Don't worry too much about selecting the "right" topic area; the topic areas will only be used to group preproposals for review purposes. We may reassign some preproposals to different topic areas to balance reviewer workload. The following are examples of the kinds of projects that might be included in each topic area:

Cropping Systems

Examples include row crops, fruits, vegetables, cover crops, crop breeding, pest management (weeds, insects, diseases, nematodes, etc.), organic crop production, soils, soil quality, soil amendments, tillage, environmental issues related to crop production, and education or demonstration related to cropping systems

Economics, Marketing, Social Sciences, and Rural Development

Examples include marketing, food systems, financial management, financial analyses, business planning, entrepreneurship, farm planning, social sciences, women's issues,

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minority issues, quality of life, community issues, and education or demonstration related to economics or social sciences

Education and Outreach

Examples include curriculum development, farmer networks, learning groups, and education not specifically related to cropping systems, economics, social sciences, or livestock systems

Livestock Systems

Examples include dairy, beef, swine, poultry, grazing, grass-based animal production, pasture systems, forages, organic animal production, manure handling, composting, environmental issues related to livestock production, and education or demonstrations related to livestock systems; if the focus is more on livestock, indicate livestock systems, but if the focus is more on crops or forages, indicate cropping systems

Other - projects that don't fit into the above categories

Examples include food and microbial safety, human health (as related to food and agriculture), alternative crops, alternative animals (including fish), energy, wildlife

II. Abstract

The Abstract is limited to one-half page of text, printed single-sided (the top half of the front side of one sheet of paper with nothing printed on the back). Use 12-point Times or Times New Roman font and one-inch top, left, and right margins and make sure that the Abstract text does not cross the centerline of the page when the sheet of paper is folded in half. The Abstract is a very important part of your proposal that will be used by Administrative Council members to get a quick summary of your project. If you are invited to submit a full proposal, your preproposal Abstract will be used to solicit peer reviewers for your proposal. The Abstract should include the Project Title, an abbreviated version of the Project Outcomes, and very brief summaries of the Context, Approach/Methods, and Evaluation Plan.

III. Plan of Work

The Plan of Work should be no more than two pages of text, printed double-sided (one sheet of paper printed front and back). You don't have very much space to work with, so your writing will need to be very concise. The Plan of Work should include:

Project Title

Project Outcomes.¹ Provide a narrative that lists intermediate-term and short-term outcomes expected from your project activities. Short-term outcomes include changes in the knowledge,

¹ Most NCR-SARE projects are very applied and have specific, predictable outcomes. But we recognize that exploratory research is needed to increase the knowledge base of sustainable agriculture. Often the output of exploratory research is in the form of scientific publications, however, the results may be too preliminary for immediate transfer to a target audience and therefore no direct outcome is predictable. NCR-SARE may choose to support a limited amount of this type of research if a strong case can be made for the need and relevancy of the research to sustainable agriculture.

awareness, skills and attitudes of the target audience. Intermediate outcomes include changes in the behavior or practices of the target audience. Also, please list in your narrative long-term outcomes (systemic changes) to which your short- and intermediate-term outcomes will contribute. It would be difficult to achieve and document long-term outcomes in a one- to three-year project, so your project should primarily focus on intermediate-term and short-term outcomes. Discussion of expected outcomes should specify the audience for your project (population experiencing change) and should be specific, clear, and measurable. Include your expected outcomes in a summary table in *Appendix 1. Summary of Outcomes, Outputs, Activities, Inputs, and Evaluation*. An example format for the table is included in this call for preproposals.

Context, Background, and Rationale. Very briefly, provide information on the background and need for the proposed project, including constraints and opportunities, and indicate why your project outcomes will be important and timely. Include any key assumptions that you are making in the development of your project. How will your project's outcomes contribute to NCR-SARE's broad-based outcomes (listed near the beginning of this call for preproposals) and how will they impact sustainable agriculture in the North Central Region? How is your project different from or complementary to other projects that SARE has funded on this subject? (See the national projects database on the SARE website www.sare.org to search for information on other SARE funded projects.)

Approach, Activities, Methods, and Inputs. Describe project implementation, including special reference to farmer/end-user involvement, multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional partnerships, and systems approaches to be used. List your general approach, activities, methods, and inputs used in carrying out the project. Include key inputs and activities in the summary table in *Appendix 1* in addition to listing them in the narrative.

Outputs. Describe the products (for example, expected research results, papers, or educational materials; completed workshops or field days with expected number of participants; etc.) of your project that will help achieve the expected outcomes. Include outputs in the summary table in *Appendix 1*.

Evaluation Plan. Provide your plans for evaluating the project. Identify evaluation indicators that will be measured or monitored at each stage of project implementation. Include evaluation plans for your activities (process indicators) and for your results (outcome indicators). How will you measure the success of each outcome? What evaluation indicators and methods of measurement will you use? Include a brief summary of evaluation plans in the summary table. Make sure to consider evaluation costs when you develop your budget estimate.

For more information about outcomes and evaluation, see:

University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Program Development and Evaluation homepage: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/>

W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook:
<http://www.wkkf.org/Programming/ResourceOverview.aspx?CID=281&ID=770>

Statement about use of Genetically Modified Organisms. Every preproposal must include a short statement that indicates whether your project will be using Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and/or will be impacted by GMOs used by others. If your project will be using GMOs, indicate how use of GMOs will contribute to your project and/or to making agriculture more sustainable. Use of GMOs in your project is not necessarily a positive or negative factor, but reviewers want to know if GMOs are a part of, or will impact, your project. **NCR-SARE may reject preproposals that do not adequately address this issue.**

IV. Appendices

Use Appendices for your *Summary Table (Appendix 1)*, to list *Past, Current, and Pending SARE Projects (Appendix 2)*, for your *Estimated Budget (Appendix 3)*, and to list the *Project Coordinator, Major Participants, and Individual Collaborators (Appendix 4)*. You may include additional Appendices if necessary, but keep Appendices brief (try to limit each Appendix to a maximum of one side of a sheet of paper) and print the Appendices double-sided (for example, *Appendix 2* can be on the back side of the sheet of paper for *Appendix 1*). Avoid use of lengthy appendices; focus on clarity in presenting your ideas instead of adding materials.

Appendix 1. Summary of Outcomes, Outputs, Activities, Inputs, and Evaluation. Please summarize key information from your Plan of Work in a table that has a format something like the table below. You may print the table in landscape mode (the long way on the paper) if that would be helpful. Please limit the table to one page (one side of one sheet of paper); you may change font size and margins to fit the table on one page. Include both short-term and intermediate-term outcomes in the table. (As mentioned previously, it is unlikely that you will be able to accomplish long-term sustainability outcomes in a project that is three years or less in duration.)

Expected Outcomes	Outputs	Activities	Inputs	Evaluation Plan / Measurement Methods

Appendix 2. Project Coordinator, Major Participants, and Individual Collaborators. Please list individuals who will be involved in your project under separate headings for Project Coordinator, Major Participants, and Collaborators. Indicate the name, organizational affiliation or occupation (such as “farmer” or “rancher”), academic discipline/appointment (research, extension, etc., if applicable), and address for the Project Coordinator and for each Major Participant and Collaborator listed.

The Project Coordinator is the person who will be NCR-SARE's primary contact for the project. He or she manages the project and provides reports to NCR-SARE. The Project Coordinator must sign the cover page.

Major Participants are other individuals within the Primary Grantee institution and/or Partner Organizations who receive or are authorized to spend SARE funds. Keep in mind that the NCR-SARE Conflict of Interest Policy prevents members of the NCR-SARE Administrative Council,

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Technical Committee, staff, and State SARE Coordinators from serving as Project Coordinators or Major Participants on NCR-SARE-funded projects.

Collaborators are individuals who are involved in the project, but who do not receive NCR-SARE funds, except possibly for reimbursement of travel expenses to work on the project.

Include a short paragraph describing the Project Coordinator and each Major Participant, and describe the roles for each person in the project. Reviewers would rather see one-paragraph descriptions of coordinators and participants rather than lengthy resumes or curriculum vitae (so please do not include resumes or curriculum vitae). You should provide some credible evidence that Major Participants and Collaborators are involved in the project in an appropriate and meaningful way, **but support letters are not needed and should not be provided at the preproposal stage.**

Appendix 3. Past, Current, and Pending SARE Projects. Please list the Project Coordinator, project title, project dates, amount, and project number (for past and current projects) for any grants that the Project Coordinator or Major Participants have received from SARE. Also, please list any SARE proposals that are pending (submitted, but you have not been notified about funding) including other preproposals that are being submitted in this year's NCR-SARE Research and Education program. (You may use Federal Form CSREES-2005, "Current and Pending Support," if you like.)

Appendix 4. Estimated Budget. Include a general, abbreviated, estimated budget in this Appendix. Please include general categories like salaries, equipment, supplies, travel, and any other categories that will help reviewers get a feel for how you plan to use NCR-SARE funds. It might be helpful for you to look at the current USDA Budget Guidelines (available on the NCR-SARE website or by contacting the NCR-SARE office in Lincoln) to get information on what kinds of expenses can and can't be included in SARE budgets. Two items that cannot be included in NCR-SARE budgets are tuition and indirect costs (SARE's indirect cost rate = 0%). Also, the SARE program does not have a matching funds requirement.

Reviewers want to see that farmers and/or other participants in your project are appropriately compensated, so it is important to either include budget items showing compensation, or to indicate that participants have declined compensation.

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

Procedure for Submitting Proposals

Thirty (30) stapled paper copies AND one electronic copy of the preproposal must be received in the NCR-SARE office in Lincoln, Nebraska **before 4:30 p.m. CDT on June 15, 2005**. Cover letters are not generally necessary for preproposals, but if you include a cover letter, make sure that the cover letter is attached to each of the 30 copies. The electronic copy of your preproposal can be included with the paper copies on an IBM-compatible diskette or you can attach an

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electronic file containing your preproposal to an e-mail message addressed to ncrsare@unl.edu. Note that the electronic copy is required **in addition** to the 30 paper copies. Send preproposals to:

*North Central Region SARE
13A Activities Bldg.
1734 N. 34th Streets
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, NE 68583-0840*

Preproposals may not be reviewed if they:

- **Are faxed instead of delivered by courier or U.S. mail service**
- **Exceed the space limits for the Abstract or the Plan of Work**
- **Are received after the deadline (4:30 pm CDT, June 15, 2004)**
- **Request more than \$150,000 in SARE funds**
- **Fail to follow other preproposal format requirements**
- **Are submitted by someone who has overdue reports from past SARE projects.**

Preproposal and Proposal Evaluation

Review of preproposals and proposals is a multi-stage process. The Administrative Council provides an initial overall screening of preproposals and solicits full proposals for review by the Technical Committee and by external peer reviewers. The Technical Committee provides a list of technically acceptable proposals to the Council for its consideration.

The Administrative Council will consider the following factors in evaluating preproposals:

- **Farmer and/or other end-user involvement: Preproposals that don't include farmer and/or other end-user involvement are unlikely to make it to the full proposal stage.** Farmers and/or other end-users of the information should be involved in ways that are appropriate for the type of project. For some types of projects, farmers might be involved in all phases from development of the idea through planning, conducting, and/or evaluating the project. For other types of projects, farmers might be heavily involved in identification of the problem and possible solutions, but they might be only minimally involved in conducting the project. Farmers and/or other end-users should be appropriately compensated for their involvement in the project.
- **Expected project outcomes:** Will the stated project outcomes contribute to sustainability of agriculture in the North Central Region? Will the project outcomes contribute to the NCR-SARE program's broad-based outcomes? Does the proposed project attempt to solve a problem and/or address an issue that is significant in the North Central Region?
- **Feasibility of achieving the stated outcomes:** Does the project team include the disciplines and expertise necessary to carry out the project? Are the proposed approach, activities, methods, and inputs likely to lead to the stated outcomes? Is the amount of the budget request appropriate for the scope of work proposed?
- In cases where SARE has previously funded projects in the proposed area of work, reviewers will look for evidence that the preproposal authors are aware of previously funded SARE projects and that they intend to **build on previous work** rather than just repeat it. (See the

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“national projects database” on the national SARE website, www.sare.org.) How is the proposed work different from previous work? How will the project build on information from previous SARE projects? How will the proposed project add to the body of sustainable ag knowledge or the practice of sustainable agriculture?

- **Lasting impact of the project:** For projects that are intended to be on-going, what is the potential for the project to become financially self-sufficient after NCR-SARE funding ends? Can others benefit from the results of this project? What are the outreach and information dissemination plans? How will others learn about project results? Are the results from this project likely to be used by others?
- **Appropriate GMO statement:** The Administrative Council may choose to reject preproposals that provide inadequate or inappropriate GMO statements.
- **Outreach:** Is there a plan to make sure that information generated by the project reaches people who can use the information?
- **Evaluation plan:** Are the expected outcomes measurable and is the proposed evaluation plan suitable for measuring the outcomes?
- **Compliance with program formatting requirements and program guidelines:** Each year a number of preproposals are not reviewed because they do not follow formatting requirements or other program guidelines.
- **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 Preproposals

The **NCR-SARE office** can share information and resources from SARE’s outreach arm, the Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN). Contact: North Central Region SARE, 13A Activities Bldg., P.O. Box 830480, 1734 N. 34th Street, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE 68583-0840, 402-472-7081, 402-472-0280 (fax), ncrsare@unl.edu, www.sare.org, www.sare.org/ncrsare.

The **Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC)** at the National Agricultural Library (partially funded by SARE), specializes in locating, collecting, and providing information about sustainable agriculture. Information specialists can answer questions, conduct literature searches, provide access to appropriate materials, supply linkages to experts and organizations, identify pertinent researchers and projects in the USDA, and furnish free bibliographies and reference briefs. In addition, AFSIC has a number of documents on its website that may be relevant to your proposal. Contact: AFSIC, National Agriculture Library, USDA, 10301 Baltimore Ave., Room 132, Beltsville, MD 20705-2351; Phone: 301-504-6559; Fax: 301-504-6927; e-mail: afsic@nal.usda.gov; web: www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/.

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

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Feel free to contact Bill Wilcke, NCR-SARE Regional Coordinator, with questions about the Research & Education program or to discuss preproposal ideas (wilck001@umn.edu or 612-625-8205).

Special Notes

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact NCR-SARE at 402-472-7081 or ncrsare@unl.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.

Final Checklist

Typewritten in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font

Single-spaced

Double-sided, except Cover Page and Abstract

Printed on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, with one-inch margins (3,420 characters fitting inside a 6.5 x 9 inch text block – except for Abstract which must fit inside a 6.5 x 4.5 inch text block)

Numbered pages starting with Plan of Work

Cover Page with all necessary signatures and all required information (a Cover Page template is included on the next page)

Abstract

Plan of Work

Appendices

30 paper copies AND one electronic copy of the entire proposal received by the NCR-SARE office in Lincoln, Nebraska **before 4:30 p.m. CDT on June 15, 2005**

