

**April 7, 2009**

**2010  
Call for Preproposals  
NCR-SARE  
Research and Education Grant Program**

**ATTENTION**

**Be sure to follow guidelines in this Call for Preproposals.**

**Receipt Deadline  
4:30 p.m. CDT, June 10, 2009**

## North Central Region SARE • 2010 Call for R&E Preproposals

### Who we are

SARE stands for Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education, a competitive grants program funded by USDA-CSREES. 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](http://www.sare.org).

### Eligibility

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. Preproposals from any location are accepted, but the preproposal must convince reviewers that project results will benefit NCR agriculture. Most R&E grants go to organizations that are used to handling federal grants and that can meet federal auditing requirements.

### Amount of Funding Available

The funding level for the Research and Education (R&E) grant program is dependent upon fiscal year 2010 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 nine to 13 grant projects, with individual grants not to exceed \$175,000 total for projects lasting up to three years (36 months). In some cases, no-cost extensions are possible. In March 2009, NCR-SARE selected nine R&E proposals for funding. The average size of funded grants was about \$151,000 and grant lengths ranged from 18 to 36 months.

**It is essential that preproposal authors use the 2010 Call for Preproposals. Preproposals must be received in the NCR-SARE office in St Paul, Minnesota, by 4:30 pm Central Daylight Time (CDT), Wednesday, June 10, 2009.**

**Preproposals will be reviewed** by the NCR-SARE Administrative Council during the summer. All preproposal authors will be notified after the review process is complete. Selected project coordinators will be invited to develop full proposals that will be due in **late 2009**. 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 2010. We anticipate that **project funds will be available during the fall months of 2010**.

### Desired Outcomes for 2010 Research and Education Projects

There are no specific priority areas in the 2010 Call for Preproposals, but preproposals must address issues of sustainable agriculture of current and potential importance to the North Central Region. Successful projects should contribute to the following NCR-SARE broad-based outcomes:

- Improving the profitability of farmers and associated agricultural businesses,
- Sustaining and improving the environmental quality and natural resource base on which agriculture depends, and

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- Enhancing the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, rural communities, and society as a whole.

We are aware that there is currently a great deal of interest in energy and NCR-SARE is interested in preproposals that address the sustainability of various energy alternatives. An NCR-SARE Bioenergy Committee has developed a draft of a position paper to help potential preproposal authors understand the types of energy preproposals that NCR-SARE might support. The paper can be found on the NCR-SARE website ([www.sare.org/ncrsare](http://www.sare.org/ncrsare)).

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

NCR-SARE is especially concerned about format violations that might give an advantage to one preproposal over another. Thus, 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.
- Compliant with space limitations for different sections of the preproposal.
- 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).

In addition, to conserve paper and reduce mailing costs, NCR-SARE would prefer to receive preproposals that have been printed double-sided (both sides of the paper) except for the Cover Page.

The NCR-SARE Administrative Council reserves the right to exclude preproposals that do not comply with formatting requirements.

### Preproposal Content

The three main components of your preproposal are **Cover Page, Project Summary, 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 2010 Cover Page is included at the end of this call for preproposals. The template is also available in electronic format from

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NCR-SARE (see [www.sare.org/ncrsare](http://www.sare.org/ncrsare) or contact the NCR-SARE office in St Paul MN). 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", or "Project Director" instead of "Project Coordinator"; this is the person whose name appears on this line is the person who is considered to be responsible for the project and will receive most of the correspondence from the NCR-SARE office.)

**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 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, a Primary Grantee Official Representative will need to sign the proposal cover sheet.

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

**Project Duration.** Please indicate the proposed length of your project in years or months up to a maximum of three years (36 months) and the proposed start and end dates for your project. Note that project funds are unlikely to be available before the fall months of 2010 and your NCR-SARE project cannot start before NCR-SARE funds are available.

**Total Budget Request.** List the total amount of funds requested from NCR-SARE for each year of the project and the total request from NCR-SARE for all years of the project. The total request from NCR-SARE for all years of the project cannot exceed \$175,000. 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 7. 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, so there shouldn't be any advantage to checking one type of project compared to the other. Note that some reviewers think differently about Education/Demonstration projects than they do

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Research projects, so checking Education/Demonstration versus Research could affect the mindset of some reviewers.

**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; in fact, if you do check more than one category, we will use the first category that we see. Don't worry too much about selecting the "right" topic area; topic areas are used primarily 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 and/or water 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, 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.

### Energy (especially sustainability of bioenergy sources)

Emphasis should be on the sustainability of various energy systems and bioenergy co-products. See the NCR-SARE bioenergy position paper on the NCR-SARE website ([www.sare.org/ncrsare](http://www.sare.org/ncrsare)). Examples of bioenergy projects could include water use for bioenergy production, relative sustainability for various bioenergy systems, environmental impacts of using crop residues for bioenergy, and ways to reduce the need for energy in agriculture and the food system.

### Livestock Systems

Examples include dairy, beef, swine, poultry, grazing, grass-based animal production, pasture systems, forages, organic animal production, manure handling, composting, and environmental issues related to livestock production; 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 appear to fit into the above categories.

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

## II. Project Summary

**The Project Summary 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 clear and concise. The Project Summary should include:

### Project Title

**Project Description.** Provide a brief narrative describing your project's objectives, the general method or approach that will be employed to reach those objectives, and the outputs and intermediate-term and short-term outcomes expected from project activities. The Project Description is like an abstract; it will provide reviewers with an overview of your project. If you are invited to submit a full proposal, your preproposal Project Description will be used to solicit reviewers for your proposal. **The Project Description should not exceed one-half page of text (the top half of the front side of a sheet of paper) and should include the following:**

**Objectives:** Briefly and succinctly state your project's immediate objectives (examples: "This project will examine the use of copper for disease management in tart cherry production"; "This project will test the viability of a cooperative community processing facility for linking local food producers with restaurant and institutional food services.")

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

**Outputs and outcomes:**<sup>1</sup> List your proposed project's outputs (typically tangible products, such as journal articles or conference papers, extension bulletins or other educational materials, completed workshops or field days with expected number of participants; etc.), then describe your project's anticipated short- and intermediate-term outcomes for its audience (those who will change or benefit from the project). Short-term outcomes include changes in the knowledge, awareness, skills and attitudes of your audience; intermediate outcomes include changes in the behavior or practices of that audience. Please specify your project's primary audience, and be sure your project's outcomes are specific, clear, and measurable. 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.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

**Key Project Characteristics:** In three separate statements, use the remaining one and a half pages of text to characterize your project's relevance, impact, and appropriateness as outlined below. Reviewers will use these statements to assess the relative merit of your preproposal. Remember to be concise; your Project Summary (the Project Description and Key Project Characteristics responses) may total no more than two pages (front and back of one sheet of paper).

- A. *Relevance:*** Explain how your project is relevant to NCR-SARE sustainability goals (listed near the beginning of this call for preproposals). Explain how it will contribute to sustainability in the North Central Region.
- B. *Impact:*** Tell who will benefit from your project, and in what ways. Explain who will use the project's outputs, the geographic areas in which they are likely to be used, conditions which may enhance or impede their use, etc.
- C. *Appropriateness:*** Explain why your project's approach or methodology is an appropriate way to reach your objectives. Tell how it is different from or superior to other ways to reach those objectives, as well as how it is different from or complementary to other projects that SARE has funded on this subject. (You can use the national projects database on the SARE website [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org) to search for information on other SARE-funded projects.)

### III. Appendices

The following appendices are required to be part of your preproposal:

- Appendix 1. Outreach Plan
- Appendix 2. Evaluation Plan
- Appendix 3. Farmer/Rancher Involvement and Compensation
- Appendix 4. Statement about use of Genetically Modified Organisms or other Controversial Technologies
- Appendix 5. Project Coordinator, Major Participants, and Individual Collaborators
- Appendix 6. Past, Current, and Pending SARE Projects
- Appendix 7. Estimated Budget
- Appendix 8. Statement Regarding Resubmitted Ideas

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. If an Appendix is less than a full page of text, you may include more than one Appendix on a page. Reviewers will use the information in these appendices to help determine your project's appropriateness for NCR-SARE funding.

#### **Appendix 1. Outreach Plan**

A critical component of a successful NCR-SARE project is a plan for disseminating project findings or other products (outputs) to the audiences expected to use them to accomplish outcomes that contribute to more sustainable agricultural and food systems. Describe your plans

for communicating the new knowledge, practices, or other techniques your project produces to appropriate audiences. Every project – including Research projects – should include an Outreach Plan.

### **Appendix 2: Evaluation Plan**

Describe 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). Tell how you will measure the success of each outcome, including the evaluation indicators and methods of measurement you will use. Also be 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/>

### **Appendix 3. Farmer Rancher Involvement and Compensation**

The relevance and impact of a sustainable agriculture research or education project often are enhanced when farmers, ranchers, local organizations, or others who will use or benefit from the project are involved in its planning, design, and/or implementation. Describe how farmers, ranchers, or others will be involved in your project – for example, in defining the research problem, providing facilities for or conducting on-farm research, etc. – and whether they will be compensated for their time or other contributions to your project. **Reviewers want to see that farmers 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.**

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

### **Appendix 4: Statement about use of Genetically Modified Organisms or other Controversial Technologies**

Include a short statement indicating whether your project will be using Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) 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 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.**

If your project will use other technologies that some consider to be controversial, feel free to use this appendix to state why you feel that use of this technology will contribute to your project and/or to making agriculture more sustainable.

### **Appendix 5. Project Coordinator, Major Participants, and Individual Collaborators**

List individuals who will be involved in your project under separate headings for Project Coordinator, for Major Participants, and for 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 directs 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, staff, and State SARE Coordinators, from serving as Project Coordinators or Major Participants on NCR-SARE-funded projects. Members of review committees for specific grant programs who are not a member of one of the previous groups are also prohibited from serving as Project Coordinators or Major Participants on NCR-SARE-funded projects in the program for which they are reviewing proposals.

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 bio, resume, or CV describing the Project Coordinator and each Major Participant, and **describe the roles for each person involved in the project**. Limit biographical information to a maximum of two pages per person (shorter is better; in some cases, a paragraph might be sufficient). You need to convince reviewers that Major Participants and Collaborators are involved in the project in an appropriate and meaningful way, and have time to be involved, **but support letters are not needed and should not be provided at the preproposal stage**.

### **Appendix 6. Past, Current, and Pending SARE Projects**

List the Project Coordinator, project title, project dates, amount, and project number (if applicable) for any significant grants that the Project Coordinator or Major Participants have received in the last five years. Also, please list any significant 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. (If you have recently completed a “Current and Pending Support” document for other grant programs that provides the information that we are seeking, you may use it in Appendix 6, if you like.)

### **Appendix 7. Estimated Budget**

Include a general, abbreviated, estimated budget in this Appendix. Show projected expenditures for the following general categories: salaries, equipment, supplies, travel, honoraria or other payments to project participants (other than those included in salaries), and any other categories that will help reviewers get a feel for how you plan to use NCR-SARE funds. Be aware that 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.

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Although NCR-SARE does not limit the percentage of project budgets that can be spent on personnel costs, note that reviewers tend to give lower scores to projects that have a high percentage of their budgets devoted to personnel costs (salaries, wages, and consultant fees). Make sure that the role for people whose costs are included in the budget is clear in the preproposal.

**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.**

### **Appendix 8. Statement Regarding Resubmitted Ideas**

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

### **Procedure for Submitting Preproposals**

Ten (10) stapled paper copies (hard copies; we don't need the original at the preproposal stage, but if you choose to send it, send the original plus nine paper copies) AND one electronic copy of the preproposal must be received in the NCR-SARE office in St Paul, Minnesota **before 4:30 p.m. CDT on June 10, 2009**. We request hard copies because a lot of our reviewers require hard copies. We use arrival of the hard copies to determine whether a preproposal has been submitted on time. Send hard copies of preproposals to:

*North Central Region SARE  
120 Biosystems & Ag Eng Bldg  
University of Minnesota  
1390 Eckles Ave  
St Paul MN 55108*

The electronic copy of your preproposal can be included with the paper copies on some type of magnetic storage medium, or you can attach an electronic file containing your preproposal to an e-mail message addressed to [ncrsare@umn.edu](mailto:ncrsare@umn.edu). Electronic copies do not need to include the signatures that are required on the paper copies of the cover page. Note that the electronic copy is required **in addition** to the ten hard copies.

Cover letters are not generally necessary for NCR-SARE preproposals, but if you include a cover letter, make sure that the cover letter is attached to each of the ten hard copies of the preproposal.

### **Preproposals may not be reviewed if they:**

- **Are faxed instead of delivered by courier or U.S. mail service.**
- **Do not include ten hard copies (paper copies).**
- **Exceed the space limits for the Project Description or Project Summary.**
- **Are received after the deadline (4:30 pm CDT, June 10, 2009).**

- **Request more than \$175,000 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 NCR-SARE preproposals and proposals is a multi-stage process. Members of the NCR-SARE Administrative Council (AC) [and possibly a few members of the Technical Committee] provide an initial overall screening of preproposals during the summer. The NCR-SARE AC then solicits full proposals in the fall for review by the Technical Committee and by external reviewers. The Technical Committee provides a list of technically acceptable proposals to the Council for its consideration at its late winter meeting. The AC recommends some projects for funding and all proposed project coordinators are notified. Funds for projects recommended for funding are expected to become available in fall of the decision year.

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

- **Relevance of project outcomes:** Will the stated project outcomes contribute to sustainability of agriculture in the North Central Region? Will the project outcomes contribute to the NCR-SARE program's broad-based outcomes? Does the proposed project attempt to solve a problem and/or address an issue that is significant in the North Central Region?
- **Lasting impact of the project:** For projects that are intended to be on going, what is the potential for the project to become financially self-sufficient after NCR-SARE funding ends? Can others benefit from the results of this project? Are the results from this project likely to be used by others?
- **Appropriateness of proposed methods for achieving stated outcomes:** Are the proposed approach, activities, methods, and inputs likely to lead to the stated outcomes? In what respects are they more appropriate than other strategies for reaching similar outcomes?
- **Outreach:** What are the outreach and information dissemination plans? How will others learn about project results? 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?
- **Farmer or other end-user involvement: Preproposals that don't include farmer or other end-user involvement are unlikely to make it to the full proposal stage.** Farmers and other end-users of the information should be involved in ways that are appropriate for the type of project. For some types of projects, farmers or other end-users might be involved in all phases from development of the idea through planning, conducting, and/or evaluating the project. For other types of projects, farmers or other end-users might be heavily involved in identification of the problem and possible solutions, but they might be only minimally involved in conducting the project. Farmers and/or other end-users should be appropriately compensated for their involvement in the project. It is better to specifically name the individuals who will be involved in the project or at least to list a specific process for identifying them.
- **Appropriate GMO statement:** The Administrative Council may choose to reject preproposals that provide inadequate or inappropriate GMO statements.

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- **Feasibility of achieving the stated outcomes:** Does the project team include the disciplines and expertise necessary to carry out the project? Is achieving the stated outcomes within the scope of the proposed budget?
- In cases where SARE has previously funded projects in the proposed area of work, reviewers will look for evidence that preproposal authors are aware of previously funded SARE projects and that they intend to **build on previous work** rather than just repeat it. (See “project reports” on the national SARE website, [www.sare.org](http://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?
- **Compliance with program formatting requirements and program guidelines:** The Administrative Council may decide not to review preproposals that 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 that it has collected or it can share information and resources from SARE’s outreach arm. Contact: North Central Region SARE, 120 Biosystems & Ag Eng Bldg, University of Minnesota, 1390 Eckles Ave, St Paul MN 55108; phone: 612-626-3113; e-mail: [ncrsare@umn.edu](mailto:ncrsare@umn.edu); or web: [www.sare.org/ncrsare](http://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](mailto:afsic@nal.usda.gov); or web: [www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/](http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/).

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

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](mailto:wilck001@umn.edu) or 612-625-8205).

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### Special Notes

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

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

### Final Checklist

- Typewritten in 12-point Times or Times New Roman font
- Single-spaced
- Double-sided, except Cover Page
- Printed on 8.5 x 11 inch paper, with one-inch margins (3,420 characters fitting inside a 6.5 x 9 inch text)
- Cover Page with all necessary signatures and all required information (a Cover Page template is included on the next page)
- Project Summary, including Project Description and Key Project Characteristics
- Appendices
- Ten hard copies AND one electronic copy of the entire proposal received by the NCR-SARE office in St Paul, Minnesota **before 4:30 p.m. CDT on June 10, 2009**

## NCR-SARE Research & Education Program Frequently Asked Questions

### ***How do I submit a preproposal?***

Send 10 hard copies plus one electronic copy of your preproposal to the St Paul MN office by the deadline. Your submission is not considered to be complete until we receive the 10 hard copies and the electronic copy of your preproposal. NCR-SARE strictly enforces the deadline for submitting preproposals, so make sure that your paper copies and your electronic copy arrive well before 4:30 pm, June 10, 2009. Faxed copies of preproposals are not accepted. (See *Procedure for Submitting Preproposals*.)

### ***When can I start my project?***

Funds for projects that make it through both the preproposal and proposal review processes are not likely to be available until the fall months of 2010. It would be best not to plan on starting your project before fall 2010.

### ***What if I can't finish my project by the end date on the subcontract?***

It is usually possible to request a no-cost extension for projects. Requests for no-cost extensions must be sent on official organizational letterhead and must be signed by an authorized organizational representative. If your project is funded and you find that you need more time to complete the project, contact Bill Wilcke ([wilck001@umn.edu](mailto:wilck001@umn.edu) or 612-625-8205) to discuss a possible no-cost extension.

### ***Is the project coordinator the same as the principal investigator?***

We recognize that different institutions use different terminology, but NCR-SARE uses the term “project coordinator” for the person who is considered to be responsible for the grant. This is the person who is listed in our database and who is our main contact for reporting on the project. If the project coordinator is changed during the preproposal review process, your institution needs to let us know. If the project is funded and there is a need to change the project coordinator, the primary grantee needs to submit a formal request for the change – including a CV for the proposed new project coordinator. Contact Bill Wilcke ([wilck001@umn.edu](mailto:wilck001@umn.edu) or 612-625-8205) to discuss changes in project coordinator.

### ***What are the reporting requirements for NCR-SARE R&E grants?***

For NCR-SARE R&E projects that are funded, the NCR-SARE office sends the person listed as project coordinator requests for both paper and on-line reports. The national SARE program maintains a website that features a reporting template which is used for on-line reporting. The first request for reports asks that the project coordinator paste some information from the project proposal into the on-line SARE template and that the project coordinator complete an initial paper profile for the project. After that, we ask for annual reports that are based on full calendar years; these reports are due within 60 days after the end of the calendar year (by about March 1). In addition, project coordinators are responsible for submitting cumulative final reports that cover the full life of projects, and some forms, within 60 days after the end of the project. The request for reports includes a web address that provides more information and instructions for submitting reports. Failure to submit reports by the deadline can result in the host institution holding up payment of project invoices and can affect the NCR-SARE Administrative Council's decisions about funding future projects.

***What if I'm resubmitting an idea that wasn't selected in previous years?***

NCR-SARE receives more good ideas that can be selected in any given year, so resubmission of ideas often makes sense. NCR-SARE reviewers like to know whether ideas contained in R&E preproposals have been submitted in previous years, or in other NCR-SARE grant programs, and they like to know how you have responded to reviewer comments from previous submissions, so include explicit statements about resubmissions in an Appendix to the preproposal. Keep in mind that although some of the same people review preproposals and proposals in consecutive years and that some of these individuals are likely to remember preproposals and proposals from one year to the next, there is also turnover of reviewers, and that responding to reviewer comments one year does not guarantee success the following year. (See instructions for *Appendix 8*.)

***Will you let me know if you received my preproposal?***

We send a bulk email message, after the preproposal deadline, to people who submit preproposals, but we receive so many preproposals in such a short period of time just before the submission deadline that there usually isn't time to notify each author as preproposals arrive.

***Will you correct minor errors in preproposals or add supplementary material that is sent separate from the preproposal?***

The NCR-SARE Research & Education program is quite competitive and we currently receive too many preproposals (about 135 in recent years) to make adjustments to individual preproposals. Preproposals are generally distributed to reviewers as received.

***What things are likely to keep a preproposal from being selected?***

- Arriving after the deadline for preproposal submission.
- Lack of clarity in writing. At the preproposal stage, some of the reviewers are not likely to be technical experts in your field or to be familiar with your previous work. Make sure that key points are stated clearly – don't assume that reviewers will be experts in the subject matter area or familiar with your previous work. If reviewers are left with too many questions, a preproposal is likely to receive a low score.
- Lack of appropriate farmer involvement in the project.
- Inappropriate compensation for farmers who are involved in the project. It is a good idea to include a line item for farmer compensation in your budget, or include a clear statement about farmer compensation (or refusal of compensation) in the text of your preproposal. (See instructions for **Appendix 3**.)
- Not as relevant for addressing NCR-SARE sustainability goals as competing preproposals.
- Expected impact is not as large as that for competing preproposals. Reviewers know that NCR-SARE won't be able to fund very many projects, so they are likely to select projects that will have the greatest impact.
- Reviewers are not convinced that the method, team, or budget that you propose are completely appropriate for achieving the expected impact. If NCR-SARE is being asked to pay for only part of a project's total cost, make that clear in the preproposal.

Good luck!

**NCR-SARE 2010 R&E Preproposal Cover Page**

**PROJECT TITLE:**

**PROJECT COORDINATOR:**

Name:

Organization:

Address:

City, State Zip:

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

**I have read the Call for Preproposals and consent to the review process.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Project Coordinator*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

**PRIMARY GRANTEE** (Institution or Organization that receives funds from NCR-SARE):

**PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS** (Institutions or Organizations that receive NCR-SARE funds through the Primary Grantee):

**PROJECT DURATION** (36-month maximum): \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed Start Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Proposed End Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL BUDGET REQUEST FROM NCR-SARE** (\$175,000 maximum):

First Year Funding \$

Second Year Funding \$

Third Year Funding \$

Total Funding \$

**TYPE OF PROJECT (check one):** \_\_\_\_\_ Research \_\_\_\_\_ Education/Demonstration

**TOPIC AREA (check one):**

\_\_\_\_\_ Cropping Systems

\_\_\_\_\_ Economics, Marketing, Social Sciences, and Rural Development

\_\_\_\_\_ Education and Outreach

\_\_\_\_\_ Energy (especially sustainability of Bioenergy sources)

\_\_\_\_\_ Livestock Systems

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

**Primary Grantee Official/Title:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Primary Grantee Official (if required by Primary Grantee)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*