

NCR-SARE 2014 Call for Proposals

Graduate Student Grant Program

Make sure that you have the 2014 call for proposals.
We have switched to an online submission system
this year.

To submit, go to <http://www.ciids.org/ncsare/ga>

**Proposals with authorized signatures must be submitted online
by 4:00 p.m. CDT, May 6, 2014.**

You must upload a copy of the application signoff page with required institutional signatures (authorized organization representative and your advisor) with your submitted application. Allow sufficient time to print the draft of your application with the application signoff sheet, and submit it to your grants office for review and signatures; then upload the signed page as the final attachment and submit electronically prior to the deadline.)

Copies of these instructions can be downloaded from the North Central SARE website at www.northcentralsare.org as a PDF file. If you prefer a printed application, call 612.626.3113.

Graduate Student Grant proposals must be submitted online at <http://www.ciids.org/ncsare/ga>.

The online application interface has strict word limits, and we strongly suggest you prepare your proposal using a word processing program, edit each response to comply with the word limits, and then copy and paste your proposal section by section into the online template, saving as you go.

North Central Region SARE 2014 Call for Graduate Student Proposals¹

NCR-SARE and the 2014 Call for Proposals

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

The Graduate Student Grant Program is one of five NCR-SARE grant programs. The Graduate Student Grant Program provides funds to students enrolled in graduate programs or in veterinary medicine residence programs at accredited colleges or universities who are exploring some aspect of sustainable agriculture as part of their educational program. Proposals are to be written by the student who will coordinate and conduct the project, with input from her or his major adviser. It is expected that the project will benefit the North Central Region at least as much as it benefits other parts of the world.

In 2014, \$150,000 will be available to fund about 15 grant projects. Individual grants are for \$10,000 total, and can fund projects lasting up to 36 months. In 2013, 19 projects were selected for funding with an average grant size of \$9,900 and durations ranging from 6 to 36 months.

Qualifications

The student must be officially registered as a graduate student or resident (according to his or her institution's requirements) at the time the project begins.²

A student is allowed to receive only one NCR-SARE Graduate Student grant during her or his student career.

Proposals must be submitted online by 4:00 p.m. CDT Tuesday, May 6, 2014. Proposals will be reviewed by the NCR-SARE Graduate Student Review Committee, which will provide recommendations to the NCR-SARE Administrative Council. The Review Committee's selection criteria are listed toward the end of this Call for Proposals. Funding decisions will be made by the NCR-SARE Administrative Council in July. All applicants will be notified about the status of their proposals in August 2014. **Project funds will be available September 1, 2014.**

¹ This Call for Proposals is available in electronic (word processing) format on the web (<http://www.northcentralsare.org/>) or from the NCR-SARE office. E-mail ncrsare@umn.edu or call 612-626-3113 to ask for an electronic copy.

² Exceptions may be granted on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of NCR-SARE. Contact Beth Nelson at 612-626-4436 or bethnelson@umn.edu to discuss possible exceptions.

Desired Outcomes for 2014 Graduate Student Projects

Proposals need to address sustainable agriculture issues of importance to the North Central region. Successful projects should contribute to all three of the following NCR-SARE broad-based outcomes:

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

Proposals 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 progress toward project outcomes will be monitored and evaluated.
- Expected impact on farmers/ranchers, communities, and society as a whole.

Use of Funds

NCR-SARE funds **MAY** be used for the following purposes:

- Supplies, including software.
- Labor (this includes wages or salary and benefits, other than tuition, for the student or other individuals working on the project).
- Special reference books that are not readily available.
- Farm equipment rental or operating charges.
- Travel and per diem necessary for the project (use your university rules for travel expenses).
- Payments for project participants (especially farmers and ranchers) who aren't drawing salaries or wages from an employer while they're working on your project.
- A small amount of overhead or indirect costs; 10% is the maximum rate that may be used.

NCR-SARE and/or USDA have determined that NCR-SARE funds **MAY NOT** be used for the following purposes:

- Payment of tuition.
- Purchase of books used in the student's courses.
- Printing or copying of a thesis or final project paper.
- Permanent capital improvements (e.g., land, buildings, etc.).
- Purchase of motorized vehicles.
- Equipment (see note in budget section)

How to Prepare Your Proposal

On the following pages you can see all the questions you will be asked on the Online Submission website at <http://www.ciids.org/ncsare/gs>. Once you have read through this call for proposals, go to the submission website, follow the directions and begin your proposal.

Cover:

- **Title of Proposal**
- **Graduate Student.** The primary author of the proposal and the primary coordinator for the research project must be a person who is, or will be by the time NCR-SARE funding is received, a registered graduate student or veterinary medicine resident at an accredited college or university. **The Graduate Student will be NCR-SARE’s primary contact person for the project and in our lingo will be called the “Project Coordinator.”**
- **Faculty Adviser.** A faculty member (often the student’s major professor) should be available to advise the student on research, education, and project budget issues. Also, since many universities only allow regular faculty members to submit external grant proposals, we require the signature and contact information for the student's adviser on the project.
- **Institution Name** This is the organization that will receive NCR-SARE funds and administer the project budget. The institution will send invoices to NCR-SARE, receive funds from NCR-SARE, and disburse funds to any partner organizations.
- **Proposed Project Start and End Dates.** Start date can be as early as September 1, 2014, and may have a maximum duration of 36 months.
- **Systems Category and Commodity Category.** Please indicate the ONE systems category and the ONE crop or animal enterprise category that best fits your proposed project from the drop down list provided.

Body of Proposal

Word limits are meant to be generous, knowing that different proposals will require more elaboration in different areas. Be concise. Don’t feel you have to write to reach the limit in each section.

Abstract (400 word limit)

The Abstract should concisely convey information about your project. 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. State how the outcomes are expected to have relevance to farmers/ranchers.

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Description (100 word limit)

Provide a one or two sentence description of the project. This will be used in press releases if your project is selected for funding.

Outcomes (250 word limit)

Provide a brief narrative that lists learning and action outcomes expected from your project activities. Learning outcomes include changes in the knowledge, awareness, skills, and attitudes of the audience that you are trying to reach. Action outcomes include changes in the behavior or practices of this audience. Discussion of expected outcomes should specify the audience that is likely to experience change as a result of the project. Outcomes should be specific, clear, and measurable. Include your expected outcomes in the Summary of Outcomes, Outputs, Activities, Inputs, and Evaluation Table.

If you are not familiar with outcome planning, refer to the information contained on the University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Program Development and Evaluation homepage (<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/>).

Statement of Problem, Background, Justification (1000 word limit)

Explain the issue being addressed. Provide background information justifying the need for the proposed project. Indicate why your project outcomes will be important and timely. Do not expect reviewers to look up information on websites—include critical supporting information in your proposal. NCR-SARE project proposals are evaluated on their relevance to sustainable agriculture in the North Central region, the potential for impact in our region and the suitability of the approach to the problem. How will your project's outcomes contribute to NCR-SARE's broad-based outcomes? Incorporate in this section a brief review of pertinent literature and of relevant SARE projects. Search the SARE database of project reports for projects that are relevant to your proposal (see <http://mysare.sare.org>) and explain how your project is different from or complementary to other projects that SARE has funded. List literature cited at end.

Approach and Methods (1000 word limit)

List the general approach, activities, methods, and inputs you will use to achieve the proposed outcomes. Describe how you will involve farmers/ranchers or other end-users, any multi-disciplinary or multi-institutional partnerships, and your systems approach. Describe what you will measure and how. Explain how the methods used will address the problem. You may briefly cite references at the end of this section.

Outputs (250 word limit)

Describe the products (e.g. refereed papers, extension publications or other educational materials, completed workshops or field days with expected number of participants, etc.) of your project that will help achieve the expected outcomes. Include phrases describing the outputs in the Summary Table.

Evaluation Plan (250 word limit)

Provide your plans for evaluating the project or monitoring progress toward expected outcomes. Identify evaluation indicators that will be measured or monitored at stages of the project. Include

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a brief summary of evaluation plans in the Summary Table. Include evaluation costs in your budget. For more information about outcomes and evaluation, see: University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension Program Development and Evaluation homepage: www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/

Summary Table of Outcomes, Outputs, Activities, Inputs, and Evaluation

Summarize key information from your project in a table with the following column headings: Expected Outcomes, Outputs, Activities, Inputs and Evaluation/Monitoring Plan. Please limit the table to one page (the front side of one sheet of paper). Attach as a pdf, Word file or Excel spreadsheet (.pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls or .xlsx)

Sample:

Expected Outcomes	Outputs	Activities	Inputs	Evaluation/Monitoring Plan, Measurement Methods
Intermediate-term:				
Short-term:				

Outreach (250 word limit)

Explain how you plan to inform others about the results of your project. Make the case for your project's outreach and publications, describing who will benefit from your project results and why. Describe any anticipated publications that will describe the results of the project other than your thesis.

Experience and roles (1000 word limit)

Briefly describe the role of your advising professor in the project, his or her background and expertise, and then describe your experience relative to the project, your role in the project, and how the project relates to your thesis or dissertation. If there are other sources of funding also supporting this work, you can mention them here, but do not include those funds in your proposal budget. Describe your access to the required resources such as labs, equipment, greenhouses, field plots, etc., to carry out this work. List other individuals or organizations involved in your project, and their roles.

Budget Justification

For each item in your budget, provide justification and show how you computed the expense by giving a unit cost times some quantity. The budget justification entries must add up to be the budget line request. For example if, under materials, you are proposing to buy landscape cloth, your justification budget line should specify how much and cost per unit (“Landscape cloth, 3’ X 250’ @ \$92 each, four rolls, \$368”). Show personnel costs—your time, or the time of any collaborators—either as an hourly rate times anticipated time needed to complete the project or as a percentage of FTE times the relevant salary. Provide narrative explanations for labor needed and for purchases. For travel, specify the purpose of the trip. No word limit. Remember that tuition reimbursement is NOT allowed in the SARE Program. Indirect costs of up to 10% of Total Awarded Funds will be allowed, but total project cost cannot exceed \$10,000.

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NCR-SARE does NOT require matching funds. Equipment that will outlast the project is generally not allowed in this grant program. Equipment rental is allowed.

Budget

Complete the budget using these categories (personnel, supplies and materials, travel, printing and publications, other direct costs, and indirect costs). Please only include funds requested from SARE in this budget. Note that you can enter multiple items for each budget category.

Sample Budget

Personnel	
Graduate student wages: e.g., \$20/hr x 20 hrs/week x 14 weeks (Could also be expressed as FTE with fringe)	\$5600
Materials/Supplies	
Reference materials	100
Laboratory supplies (chemicals, glassware)	1200
Travel	
From campus to research plots: e.g., 10 trips x 50 miles x \$0.50/mi	250
Farmer advisory committee travel to campus: e.g., 4 trips x 200 miles x \$0.50/mi	400
Farmer meals for trips to campus: e.g., 4 days x \$56/day	224
Farmer hotel rooms for trips to campus: e.g., 4 nights x \$100/night	400
Printing and Publications	
Other Direct Costs	
Farmer advisory committee members: e.g., 4 days x \$200/day	800
Total Direct Costs	8974
Indirect Costs	997
Total NCR-SARE Request (enter total on proposal Cover Page)	\$9971

Past, Current, and Pending SARE Projects

Attach a table that lists the principal investigators, titles, project dates, amount, and project number (for past and current SARE projects) for any grants that the student and/or faculty adviser have received from SARE. (Remember that a student is only allowed to receive one Graduate Student Grant in her or his student career.) Also, please list any SARE proposals that are pending (submitted, but you have not been notified about funding), including other proposals that are being submitted in response to this year's NCR-SARE Calls for Proposals. The purpose of this requirement is to let reviewers know what experience the student and/or faculty adviser have with SARE and whether they have time to commit to this project. If the student and/or faculty adviser have a current and pending support form that has been used with other proposals and includes non-SARE projects, then you may submit that form as an attachment.

Statement about use of Genetically Engineered Organisms or Controversial Technologies
(250 word limit)

Include a short statement indicating whether your project will be using genetically engineered organisms or will be impacted by genetically engineered organisms used by others. Indicate how use of genetically engineered organisms will contribute to your project or to making agriculture more sustainable. If your project will use technologies that some consider to be controversial, state why you feel that use of this technology will contribute to your project or to making agriculture more sustainable.

Response to Reviewer Comments (for previously submitted proposals only)
(400 word limit)

Indicate whether this idea has been submitted to NCR-SARE before and if so, when. Respond to reviewer comments from previous preproposal or proposal reviews. Indicate how you changed, or decided not to change, your project in response to reviewer suggestions

Letters Verifying Participation

Include letters from collaborating organizations and from individuals who will be participating in the project that indicate the nature of their participation and their agreement to participate. Letters from participating farmers/ranchers are helpful, but not necessary as long as you have some documentation of their commitment. Letters of support from parties not directly involved in the project are not required. Letters that are not provided as attachments here and are received separately will not be seen by reviewers. Attach any supporting documents (.pdf, .doc, .docx, .xls or .xlsx). You can attach multiple letters to this section, but you will need to return to the section by clicking on the "Letters of Support" section in the menu on the left of the screen.

Animal Care and/or Human Subjects Documentation

If your project involves animals or human subjects and if you needed to have your proposal reviewed by an institutional animal care and use committee (IACUC) or institutional review board (IRB) before you submitted the proposal to NCR-SARE, please attach copies (pdf, doc, docx). Most projects that will need these documents before starting will wait to obtain them until they are awarded the grant. If that is the case, please note in the narrative box as "IRB (or IACUC) pending award notification.

NCR-SARE needs to document to NIFA that all projects that we fund meet USDA animal care and human subject standards, and copies of your institution's approval forms will help us do that. If your proposal is selected for funding and your project would involve animals or human subjects, but your institution doesn't have some type of approval committee, the University of Minnesota's committee may examine your proposed protocol before the University of Minnesota issues a subcontract. Final approval by an IRB or IACUC is needed before a subcontract can be issued.

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Once you have completed all required information and uploaded all necessary attachments, print a draft copy of your proposal and print the Application Signoff Sheet. You and your faculty advisor must sign the Application signoff sheet and submit to your grants office for authorized organization representative's signature. You will need to obtain a pdf of the signed Application signoff sheet to upload to your proposal as the final step prior to submitting your proposal.

Proposal Development Tips

Involve farmers/ranchers or end-users! Farmers/ranchers and/or other end-users of information should be involved in ways that are appropriate for the project. For some types of projects, farmers/ranchers might be involved in all phases of development of the idea through planning, conducting, and/or evaluating the project. For other types of projects, farmers/ranchers might be heavily involved in identification of the problem and possible solutions, but they might be only minimally involved in conducting the project. Farmers/ranchers and/or other end-users should be appropriately compensated for their involvement in the project.

Follow budget guidelines. Make sure that you and/or your university accounting personnel follow NCR-SARE budget guidelines. **NCR-SARE funds cannot be used for tuition** and using funding for equipment that lasts beyond the project requires special approval.

Submit your proposal online by the deadline, 4:00 CDT, May 6, 2014.

Proposal Review

The Graduate Student Review Committee will evaluate proposals for technical merit and relevancy of the project to sustainable agriculture and NCR-SARE criteria. This Committee will make recommendations to the NCR-SARE Administrative Council, which will select projects for funding at their July 2014 meeting. **Applicants will be notified about the status of their proposal in August, 2014. Projects selected for funding will have their budgets reviewed for compliance with federal and host institution guidelines prior to subcontracts being executed.**

Criteria for Proposal Review

The North Central Region SARE program is committed to an ethic of openness, inclusiveness, and diversity in all of its programs, policies, and procedures. The criteria by which proposals will be judged are:

- Suitability of desired outcomes.
- Potential significance to NCR-SARE's broad-based outcomes:
 - ✓ Improving the economic viability of various agricultural operations.
 - ✓ Sustaining the environmental quality and natural resource base on which agriculture depends.
 - ✓ Enhancing the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, rural communities, and society as a whole.
- Soundness of methods and feasibility of obtaining the project outcomes by the methods stated.
- Qualifications of the applicant, major participants, and collaborators.

Receipt of Funds

Grants are awarded **to the student applicant's university or other organization specified on the Cover Page (Primary Grantee)**, with the funds to be dedicated to the student's project.

If you submit your grant proposal to another funder and are funded for the same work as in your Graduate Student proposal, you must notify NCR-SARE.

Funds are transferred from the host institution for the NCR-SARE program to the Primary Grantee on a reimbursement basis. The Primary Grantee sends invoices to the host institution after the project has incurred expenses. Changes in project activities and related budget changes **must** be approved in advance by the NCR-SARE Regional Coordinator. Note that the maximum amount of the budget cannot be changed—only amounts within budget categories can be changed. Finally, the host institution is authorized to withhold payment of invoices for your project until you have submitted all reports and other required documents. Instructions for completing annual and final reports will be sent to the student listed on the proposal cover page.

Publications and Final Report

NCR-SARE requires: 1) posting of initial project information on the national SARE reporting website (the Project Overview or Abstract), 2) an annual report for each full calendar year of a project, 3) a final report within 60 days after the official end date for the project, and 4) one copy of any publications developed as a result of the funded study. Instructions for completing annual and final reports will be provided to the student listed on the proposal cover page.

Please acknowledge NCR-SARE as the funding source in any publication generated from research funded by NCR-SARE. Please acknowledge SARE support and use the [SARE logo](#) in the outreach component of your project. We ask that you use the following language: "This project and all associated reports and support materials were supported by the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture- National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA). Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed within do not necessarily reflect the view of the SARE program or the U.S. Department of Agriculture."

Resources for Background Information for Proposals

Search <http://mysare.sare.org>. If you haven't used the "search" function on the home page of the new NCR-SARE website, you don't know what you're missing! Type in the key words "cover crops" and receive a list of NCR-SARE projects that have addressed cover crop issues, SARE Outreach publications, and even connections to discussion threads on the topic from SARE's Sustainable Ag Listserv, SANET.

The **NCR-SARE office** can share information and resources from SARE Outreach. Contact: North Central Region SARE, 120 BAE, University of Minnesota, 1390 Eckles Ave, St Paul MN 55108, 612-626-3113, 612-626-3132 (fax), ncrsare@umn.edu, www.northcentralsare.org.

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, 301-504-6559, 301-504-6927 (fax), afsic@nal.usda.gov, 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, 800-346-9140 (7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Central Time), 501-442-9842 (fax), www.attra.ncat.org.

Contact Beth Nelson, NCR Regional Coordinator, with questions about the Graduate Student program (bethnelson@umn.edu or 612-626-4436).

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 the USDA North Central Region SARE program at 612-626-3113 or ncrsare@umn.edu.

The North Central Region SARE program considers all funded proposals and subsequent reports and related information to be in the public domain. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers of project coordinators (from funded projects) may be provided to interested news entities, farmers, ranchers, or others for subsequent inquiries. 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.