

NCR-SARE 2024 Call for Proposals

Professional Development Program



We use an online submission system.

To submit, go to projects.sare.org

**Proposals must be submitted on line by 4:00 p.m. CDT,
Wednesday, April 3, 2024**

Professional Development Program grant program proposals must be submitted on line at projects.sare.org. 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.

You must upload an Applicant Signoff Page with required institutional signature(s) with your submitted application. Allow sufficient time to submit the Applicant Signoff Page to your grants office for review and signature; then the PI or grants office should upload the Applicant Signoff Page as the final attachment and submit online prior to the deadline.

NCR-SARE 2024 Professional Development Program Proposal Requirements

The USDA's North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (NCR-SARE) program invites proposals for the Professional Development Program (PDP). Proposals must be targeted to educators within the Cooperative Extension Service (CES), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), other governmental agencies, and/or educators and other relevant personnel in the non-profit and for-profit sectors serving farmers and ranchers. Projects can be for up to 36 months in duration. Involvement of educators from more than one state is appropriate but not required.

The overall desired outcome of NCR-SARE PDP is to have educators (extension, NRCS, NGO, agency staff and other agricultural educators) who are knowledgeable in the general concepts of sustainable agriculture, and who work in partnership with farmers, ranchers, and others on developing programs and activities that enhance the sustainability of communities and the food and agricultural system.

Projects are **capped at \$120,000 in total funding** although applications of lesser amount are welcomed. We expect to fund approximately 10-11 projects in this cycle of PDP competitive grants.

The North Central PDP utilizes an outcome-based approach for funding its educational programs. Each project funded by SARE PDP is asked to identify short, intermediate, and long-term expected outcomes directly associated with their professional development project. In the short-term, PDP projects should result in an increase in the awareness, knowledge and motivation of educators in the area of sustainable agriculture. In the intermediate term, these changes in knowledge and skills should result in changes in the behavior of educators, which includes educators developing and implementing formal and informal educational programs to assist farmers, ranchers, and others in shifting to sustainable agriculture systems. In the long-term, these changes should result in programs and activities that enhance the sustainability of agriculture and food systems (including rural community sustainability).

The NCR-SARE Program is committed to funding PDP projects that utilize participatory and experiential approaches to professional development. As stated above, projects are meant to provide professional development to agricultural educators, but preferably involve diverse groups and organizations (including non-profits, agribusiness, and 1890 and 1994 Land Grant institutions) in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the project. NCR-SARE particularly encourages the use, where appropriate, of farmers and ranchers in developing and delivering training.

NCR-SARE PDP grants are open to all educators working on topics related to farming and ranching. While our primary mission with the PDP programs is train-the-trainer projects that lead to improved sustainability for existing farmers and ranchers, we recognize that reaching young people who will become farmers and ranchers is also important. Therefore, proposals addressing train-the-trainer activities for vo-tech agriculture teachers or other educators who impact youth, specifically youth with an interest in farming or ranching, will be considered for funding. As with other proposals, youth-connected projects need to meet the relevancy test for sustainability and other guidelines for the PDP program.

Applicants are **strongly** encouraged to contact the State Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator(s) in the state(s) where activities are being proposed. State coordinators are listed at: <https://northcentral.sare.org/state-programs/state-coordinators/> State Sustainable Agriculture Coordinators can provide detailed information on training needs, current and past professional development activities, and can help to facilitate participation in the proposed professional development activity. Applicants are also encouraged to review previously funded SARE PDP projects on the national SARE database at <https://projects.sare.org>

I. General Submission Requirements

A) You will need to provide the following items as part of the online proposal application:

- Application signoff page (see online information)
- Project title and brief project description (max of 160 characters)
- Project summary (maximum of 250 words)
- Proposal narrative
- Proposed budget and budget narrative
- Project personnel listing along with curriculum vitas (cv) of PI and co-PI's, limited to 2 pages per cv (note that cvs are not needed for farmer participants or other cooperators unless acting as co-PI); upload the 2-page cvs as PDF files.
- Program logic model (one page - upload as separate pdf file)
- Letter(s) of collaboration should be uploaded as PDF files from the lead cooperator at each organization receiving a financial subcontract on the grant. Note that we do NOT ask for or want general letters of support on these applications.

B) The proposal narrative has several sections, each with word limits (see information below and online for word limits to each section). Proposals including any additional materials not requested in these guidelines will be disqualified. Do not include website links in the proposal (this is to make sure that each applicant is providing the same amount of information and not gaining an advantage through additional website information). For any acronyms please provide a definition.

C) Where to Submit – Proposal application submission is online at the following website projects.sare.org

D) When to Submit – Proposals submitted online after 4:00 PM CDT on Wednesday, April 3, 2024, will not be considered.

II. Detailed Proposal Guidelines

The proposal must include the following sections in the order listed below. Any additional materials submitted as part of the proposal narrative will not be reviewed and may result in proposal disqualification. ***Do not include weblinks in your proposal.***

A. Application signature page – You must complete the Application signature page (linked in online submission site). Both the principal investigator and the authorized institutional

representative (AOR) should sign this page, either electronically or by hand. **A pdf of the Application signature page will need to be uploaded as a required attachment to the application in the attachment section, and it must be done prior to the grant deadline.**

Once your submission is complete, you will be directed to a web page confirming your submission. You can “unsubmit”, make changes, and resubmit up to the deadline.

B. Project summary – The project summary should include the following information: 1) the specific intended target audience for the project; 2) brief listing of outcomes for the project; and 3) brief description of the activities that will be conducted to achieve outcomes. The summary should be written as a clear and concise description of the project and not simply copied from other sections of the proposal. *The summary must not exceed 250 words.*

C. Program logic model – A detailed logic model must be provided on a single page. Although we recommend use of the USDA-NIFA logic model template available at: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/logic-model-planning-process> a similar template may be used provided it includes all the information outlined in the USDA-NIFA example logic model template. Text size in the logic model may be as small as 9 point if necessary, but a larger font size is preferred if space allows. Save your logic model as a pdf file before uploading to the online grant submission website.

D. Proposal narrative – The narrative should include the 8 sections described below. You may wish to type up your proposal in a word processor and then cut and paste the relevant sections into the matching online text boxes for the proposal narrative. The online system will not allow you to enter more than the maximum number of words for each section, but you should run a word count ahead of time to avoid receiving an error message for having too many words in a given section. Text presented in the logic model graphic doesn't need to be duplicated in the narrative.

1. *Background and situation (limited to maximum of 1000 words)* – Provide information on the background and need that led to the development of this project, including previous professional development activities related to the proposed project. This section should include a justification for project, detailed description of target audience, and a specific plan for ensuring the participation of target audience in project activities. Proposals that address historically underserved audiences are encouraged.

2. *Inputs (limited to maximum of 400 words)* – This section should describe the resources that will be used in the project. For PDP projects, personnel and partnerships are often the key inputs, but inputs can also be financial (in-kind or matching), physical (technology, equipment, etc.), or include curriculum or other educational resources.

3. *Activities (limited to maximum of 1000 words)* – This section should specifically describe project activities and deliverables designed to achieve outcomes. Activities can include both formal professional development sessions (workshops, meetings, webinars, etc.) and informal approaches (networking, field days, facilitation, coaching, etc.). This section should explicitly address the logical linkage between outcomes and activities, and explain why proposed activities are expected to achieve outcomes. If appropriate, literature supporting the link between activities, educational approaches, and outcomes should be cited.

4. *Timeline (limited to maximum of 300 words)* – Include an estimated timeline of key project activities. Key project activities might include estimated dates for program planning activities, workshops, field tours, and evaluation surveys. This section is intended to provide reviewers information on when you will perform key activities. An outline format is appropriate for the timeline section.

5. *Outputs (limited to maximum of 500 words)* – Describe products to be developed, which may include educational materials, curriculum, and partnerships. This section should also include specific information on the numbers and types of individuals anticipated to participate in each activity associated with your project. Specific target outputs, in terms of numbers of participants, should be included in this section.

6. *Outcomes (limited to maximum of 750 words)* – This section should list all the expected outcomes for your project and should include some specific outcome targets. All outcomes should be measurable (through either quantitative or qualitative methods). The SARE Program is particularly interested in behavioral change (intermediate and long-term outcomes) evidenced by educators as a result of participating in the proposed project.

7. *Program evaluation (limited to maximum of 300 words)* – Evaluation is a critical part of all SARE PDP projects. The evaluation plan for your project should address both project activities and outcomes. Activity indicators provide information on how a project was implemented, and might include plans to measure level of participation and institutional affiliation of participants in project activities. Outcome indicators should represent changes in awareness, attitudes, knowledge and skills (short-term outcomes) and behavior and practice (intermediate outcomes.) You should identify how (e.g., surveys, case studies, focus groups) short- and intermediate terms outcome will be evaluated for your project. At least some evaluation indicators should be specific, measurable, and achievable.

8. *Key personnel (limited to maximum of 250 words)* — All personnel that have a major role in the project should be listed, along with a brief description of their role within the project. Only list individuals who have agreed to participate in the project. A two-page (maximum) resume/curriculum vitae should be included for the PI and co-PI's. Resumes are NOT requested for support staff, students, or farmers/ranchers. Each resume/cv should be limited to a maximum of 2-pages or the proposal may be disqualified. Save the resumes as pdf files and attach to the online proposal.

Please review the following two documents in the appendix to strengthen your proposal and to understand what will be expected of you and your project team if you are awarded a grant:

* The *PDP Grantee Reporting Expectations Matrix* shows what results you report on during the project and what SARE may assess two to four years after the project's completion.

* The *SARE PDP Logic Model* outlines what SARE hopes its project investments will achieve in terms of who is participating, what are the outputs, what outreach is done and what participants learn, do, or improve -- at least in part -- due to the project.

E. Budget – The online grant submission system includes space for you to type in your budget. A budget should be provided for each year of your project. Additional information for completing the budget justification is found below.

- Total budget request cannot exceed \$120,000 for project duration. Projects can be up to 36 months in duration, which includes planning, implementation and evaluation.
- When multiple institutions are involved, the NCR-SARE Host Institution (University of MN) will write a single contract with the lead institution or organization. The lead institution is then responsible for any subcontracts associated with the project. If you are subcontracting to cooperating organizations, you no longer need to submit a separate budget for that organization. You will enter the subaward amount as a budget line under “other direct costs”, and the justification should include a general description of the work that will be provided under that contract (including personnel FTEs, though amounts not needed.) Under the “Letters” section, you will be required to upload a letter from each subcontracting organization indicating agreement to participate and the dollar amount of the subaward.
- Funds for PDP grants cannot be used to support research, entertainment, construction or remodeling, or tuition reimbursement. Capital expenses for things like land purchases, general farm improvements, and construction of buildings, greenhouses, and laboratories are NOT allowed. Equipment expenditures (defined as single item purchase greater than \$5000) are rarely allowed, and you should check with NCR-SARE office before including it in your budget proposal. Costs for things like cameras, computers, video equipment, and other items that could have a wide range of uses beyond the boundaries of the project must be clearly essential to a particular project, in which case applicants must develop a clear justification and make sure that these requests are reasonable, defensible, and not extravagant.
- Appropriate compensation for project participants who are self-employed farmers or ranchers should be included and specified under “Other Direct Costs”.
- Projects can have a start date of October 1, 2024, or later.

F. Budget narrative (justification) should include the following information. You will fill out a separate field for the budget narrative for each budget line item in the online system. There is no specified word limit for the budget narrative sections.

1) *Salaries* – Provide percent time or number of hours/days for each primary participant and corresponding dollar amount for the time stated. Only persons employed by the organization applying for the grant should be included in this category. Those employed elsewhere would be listed as consultants or within a subcontract in the “All Other Direct Cost” category. Please note that salaries for accounting personnel are not allowed as a direct charge to the grant. In order to charge salaries to the project, an explanation outlining the employee’s responsibilities in the project must be included in the budget justification. Funds requested for an office assistant or administrative assistant must be justified in terms of supporting the proposed project activities. Tuition for students is not an allowable cost for this program. However, pay for graduate or undergraduate students is allowed if relevant to delivery of the proposed professional development programs.

2) *Fringe benefits* – Provide the rate of fringe benefits for each salary category.

3) *Non-expendable equipment* – Includes items of equipment in excess of \$5,000 (or lower depending on your institutional policy on capital equipment) and having a useful life of more than one year. Computer software is not considered equipment and should be listed under “Materials and Supplies”. Equipment costing less than \$5000 can be listed under supplies or “all other direct costs.”

4) *Materials and supplies* – Include office supplies, software, educational or field supplies. The level of detail required would be an itemized list by category and estimated dollar amount (i.e., office supplies such as pens, paper, toner, etc. - \$500). Items such as telephone, postage, fax and express mail directly attributable to project should be listed in “Other Direct Costs” category.

5) *Travel* – Provide description of expected travel, purpose of trips, expected number of travelers, and approximate or typical costs for such trips (e.g., airfare, registration, meals, mileage, parking, and/or lodging). If mileage reimbursement will be requested include anticipated mileage reimbursement rate. Foreign travel is generally not allowed in this grant program.

6) *All Other Direct Costs* – Anticipated direct project charges not included in other categories should be included here. Description and breakdown of “other direct costs” should be detailed in the budget narrative. Examples of “other direct costs” include: a) mailings, postage, telephone, internet access; b) sub-contracts to other organizations participating in the project (provide details on subcontractor budgets in the budget narrative); c) consultants – provide name of consultant and a letter indicating consulting rate and agreement to be a consultant; d) service or maintenance contracts; e) conferences or meetings – direct costs of holding a conference or meeting including rental of facilities, travel for speakers/trainers, travel for participants, etc.; f) speaker-trainer fees; g) compensation of farmers or ranchers participating in the project – list service being provided, name of individual(s), and amount; and h) others/miscellaneous.

Note on meal costs associated with meetings – Meals may not be charged as project costs when individuals decide to go to breakfast, lunch, or dinner together when no need exists for continuity of a meeting. Such activity is considered to be an entertainment cost. In contrast, it is NIFA policy that a formal group meeting being conducted in a business atmosphere may charge meals or refreshments to the project if such activity maintains the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the meeting participants. Breakfast meals are generally not allowable because no continuity of the meeting exists. When paying for the travel of a person to attend a conference or meeting, meals and lodging may be included in the cost without additional justification.

7) ***SARE limits indirect costs to 10 percent of the total direct costs provided under each award.*** Note that this a change from previous years. When preparing budgets, you should limit your request of the recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of your institution’s official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 10 percent of total direct costs awarded.

8) *Expenses that are NOT allowed* include general purpose equipment (furniture, copy machines, etc.), entertainment, awards and certificates of achievement, capital improvements (construction or remodeling), promotional materials, and tuition remission.

G. Letter(s) of collaboration — Letters of collaboration from the primary cooperator with each partner organization receiving funding SHOULD be included with the proposal (upload as pdf files to the appropriate section of the online application). Letter(s) of “support” from relevant organizations or individuals are **NOT** requested and should not be attached. If a collaborating organization is not receiving funding, no letter is needed.

Contact for more information

To clarify questions on items related to the proposal or the overall scope of a proposed project, contact Dr. Rob Myers, NCR-SARE Regional Director of Extension Programs. Email is myersrob@missouri.edu, and phone is 573-882-1547.

Special notes

The NCR-SARE Administrative Council is responsible for ensuring that the selected projects reflect not only scientific merit, but include projects from as many priority areas as possible, from across states, institutions, stakeholder groups and NGOs. In short, the Administrative Council looks to approve a diverse and inclusive set of funded projects each year.

We have a strong commitment to diversity. We encourage projects that either involve minority-serving institutions and non-profits (including 1890 colleges, 1994 colleges, and Hispanic-serving institutions) or in other ways include work with historically-underserved¹ audiences. We also encourage projects that, where feasible, include activities addressing the social dimensions of sustainability.

The North Central SARE program operates under a cooperative agreement between the University of Minnesota (host institution) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The University of Minnesota provides equal access to and opportunity in its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. To learn more about diversity at the University of Minnesota: <http://diversity.umn.edu>

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) recognizes research, education, and extension efforts will have the greatest impacts when programs are grounded in DEIA. NIFA is committed to enhancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility of programs and encourages individuals, institutions, and organizations from underserved communities to apply to funding opportunities as lead, co-lead, or subaward recipient(s), and to engage as leaders in the peer panel review process to support the development of strong networks and collaborations. NIFA encourages applications that engage diverse communities and have broad impacts through research, education, extension, and integrated activities to address current and future challenges.

The North Central Region SARE program considers all funded proposals and subsequent

¹ USDA defines historically-underserved audiences to include socially-disadvantaged producers, limited-resource producers, beginning farmers/ranchers, and veterans. They further define socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers as belonging to the following groups: American Indians or Alaskan Natives, Asians, Blacks or African Americans, Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders, Hispanics, and women.

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._

For Information Only - SARE PDP Grantee Reporting and Evaluation Expectations

The table below explains the SARE reporting and evaluation process and expectations, but you do not need to fill out this table or take any action on reporting until one year after the grant is awarded, assuming your project is funded. However, please note the types of information we like to see in your annual report as outlined below, so you can be gathering that information.

Logic Model Category	Indicators	Who Collects Data	
		Project Report by PI	Post Project by SARE
Participants	Number and type of individuals who received <u>training</u> – Extension, NRCS, Farmer/Rancher, Other (e.g. consultants, non-profits, state agencies)	✓	
	Number and types of individuals who participate in <u>advisory groups</u> (state programs only)	✓	
Activities/Products	Number and type of <u>educational events</u> conducted by PI, (e.g. workshops, tours, webinars, classes, training support)	✓	
	Number of <u>educational products</u> (e.g. fact sheets, hand books, manuals, bulletins, video, web content) and <u>tools</u> (e.g. decision tools, curricula) produced by PI	✓	
Learning Outcomes	Number of participants who gain or increase <u>knowledge, awareness and skills</u> about sustainable ag topics, practices, strategies, approaches	✓	
	Number of participants who <u>intend to use knowledge</u> in existing or new programming	✓	
Primary Action Outcomes (2-3 year projects)	Number of project participants who incorporate information from project into <u>existing programs</u>	✓	✓
	Number of project participants who incorporate information from project into <u>new education programs</u>	✓	✓
	Number of project participants who incorporate information learned into products and educational tools	✓	✓
	Number of project participants who share project materials and other sustainable ag resources with farmers and others	✓	✓
	Number of farmers reached through project programs	✓ or optional	✓
	New <u>professional collaborations</u> by project participants as a result of project	✓ or optional	✓
Secondary Action Outcomes	Number of <u>producers who adopt</u> sustainable systems, approaches, and practices (including what is adopted)		optional
	Number of acres, animals, or other production units affected by adoption (as an <u>indicator of scale of adoption</u>)		optional
Conditions	Increased <u>capacity (resources, staff)</u> of organizations for programs in sustainable agriculture		optional