



# **2012 FARMER GRANT APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

Proposals must be submitted on line by midnight of  
**December 1, 2011**

Go to <http://www.ciids.org/nesare/fq>

Agriculture in the Northeast will be diversified and profitable, providing healthful products to its customers. It will be conducted by farmers who manage resources wisely, who are satisfied with their lifestyles, and have a positive influence on their communities and the environment.

—Northeast SARE outcome statement

### **Note to applicants**

**Electronic copies of this application can be downloaded from the Northeast SARE web site at [www.nesare.org](http://www.nesare.org).** Follow the “get a grant” option at the top of the page, select “Farmer Grant,” and look in the “for applicants” box on the right side of the page. If you prefer a printed application booklet, call 802/656-0471.

**Grant proposals must be submitted on line at <http://www.ciids.org/nesare/fg>.** We strongly recommend that you write and edit your responses using a word processing program first, and then copy and paste the final text into the online submission template. There are strict word count limits for each question, and you will not be able to submit if any portion of the proposal exceeds them.

**Northeast SARE**  
655 Spear Street  
University of Vermont  
Burlington, VT 05405-0107  
802/656-0471  
[nesare@uvm.edu](mailto:nesare@uvm.edu)  
[www.nesare.org](http://www.nesare.org)

## OVERVIEW

The goal of the Farmer Grant program is to help farmers explore sustainable and innovative production and marketing practices, often through an experiment, trial, or on-farm demonstration. SARE defines sustainable practices as those that are profitable, environmentally sound, and beneficial to the wider farm community.

Successful proposals define a problem, offer innovative solutions, and test new ideas. These ideas may come to you as you go about the daily work of managing your farm business and should reflect the concerns and the barriers to sustainability specific to crops or products in your area. There are no set restrictions on content—for example, you can experiment with a new crop, develop a machine or tool that does something new, try out a pest control or grazing technique, explore adding value, test a new way of marketing directly to the public, improve the skills of immigrant workers and those who manage them, or address issues related to farm labor and apprentices. These are just examples—the scope of the program is broad.

Since one of the objectives of SARE funding is get useful information out to farmers, do not apply for funds to develop a secret or proprietary process, procedure, or technique. Information from SARE grants is public and disseminated in reports.

## WHO CAN APPLY

You must be a farm business owner or manager in the Northeast SARE region. You need not be farming full time, but you must run a commercial operation with an established taxable farm income from a crop or animal product that you sell on a regular basis. If you aren't sure you qualify, call the Northeast SARE office at 802/656-0471.

Farms affiliated with an institution or a nonprofit organization may apply, but only if the primary activity of the farm is to produce and sell agricultural products under the kinds of economic constraints that affect commercial farmers. Farms where the primary mission is educational normally do not qualify. Farms affiliated with institutions and organizations should apply using the name that appears on their 501(c)(3).

Farmer Grants are reserved for farmers. Agricultural service providers (consultants, extension staff, or other support personnel) who want to conduct on-farm research should access SARE funds by applying for a Partnership Grant. Go to [www.nesare.org](http://www.nesare.org) to learn how these grants are awarded.

Applicants must farm within the region. The region is made up of Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

There is a limit of one application per farm per year.

## PLANNING YOUR APPLICATION

SARE grants are competitive, and successful grantees report that it generally takes 20 to perhaps 40 hours to develop a proposal. To help you in this process, the SARE program offers a handbook, "How to Write a SARE Farmer Grant Application," which can be downloaded from the SARE web site. You can also get a printed copy by calling the SARE office. We strongly urge all applicants and their technical advisors to read this guide, which is a companion to this application, since key points and common errors are covered in a level of detail that is not possible here. Go to [www.nesare.org](http://www.nesare.org) or call 802/656-0471 to get a copy. You should also read "How to Conduct Research on Your Farm or Ranch," available through a free download from [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org); if you prefer a printed copy, call 301/504-6422.

Before writing anything, it's important for you to talk your project through with your technical advisor. All projects must have a technical advisor such as a county extension agent, NRCS staff, a university research or extension specialist, a private crop management consultant, a veterinarian, or other agricultural service provider. If you apply, you will need to get a letter of support from your technical advisor that describes his or her involvement and confirms the level of commitment—this is uploaded as an attachment to the online application. Although the technical advisor is required, you, the farmer, should be the one actively in charge of the project. If you find that you prefer your technical advisor be in charge, encourage the advisor to apply for a SARE Partnership Grant with you as a participating farmer.

You should also find out what others have done in your project area. Search the SARE projects database on line at [www.sare.org](http://www.sare.org), visit the Organic Farming Research Foundation at [www.ofrf.org](http://www.ofrf.org), the National Agricultural Library at [www.nal.usda.gov](http://www.nal.usda.gov), or contact Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas at [www.attra.org](http://www.attra.org) to get a resource packet in your interest area. Make sure you include this information in your response to question 2 of the application.

Some projects include collaborators. Collaborators are typically other farmers, consumer groups, suppliers, and others who have something specific they can bring to the project. Collaborators can help with replication, marketing, data collection, or any other project activity. Including collaborators makes sense when there is a natural fit between your collaborators and your project design.

Your project must offer an outreach component. Common outreach mechanisms are field days, demonstrations, fact sheets, handouts, or materials made available to other farmers through a producer network. You can plan to present your project at a meeting, develop a flyer, or seek media coverage for your project. Your outreach plan should target people who will benefit from knowing about your project, and should cover as wide a geographic area as possible.

These points and many others—budgeting, presentation, examples, and details about what reviewers are looking for—are covered in “How to Write a SARE Farmer Grant Application.”

You should prepare your proposal first in a word processing program, edit it strenuously to meet the word count requirements, and then copy and paste the text into the online template.

## SIZE OF GRANTS

In 2011, Northeast SARE awarded \$342,803 to 33 farmers. Awards ranged from \$3,318 to \$15,000. The cap on any single grant is **\$15,000**.

## WHAT SARE FUNDS CAN BE USED FOR

- ❖ to pay you for your time and the time your employees work directly on the project
- ❖ to buy materials specific to the project
- ❖ to pay for project-related services like soil testing and consulting
- ❖ to support project-related travel
- ❖ to pay for postage, printing costs, land-line telephone, and other outreach expenses related to the project
- ❖ to compensate technical advisors, collaborators, and other participants

- ❖ to rent equipment needed specifically for the project
- ❖ to pay other direct project costs not explicitly excluded

## THINGS SARE DOES NOT FUND

**Projects where the request for SARE funds is more than \$15,000.** The overall project cost may be higher, but the SARE portion of the budget—the one that you send in with your proposal—is capped at \$15,000.

**Expenses incurred before the grant is awarded or after the contract ends.** SARE can't reimburse expenses from before the award notification date or after the end date on the contract. Please note we also hold 20 percent of the total award until we get a satisfactory final report.

**Projects where grant funds will be used to cover your normal operating expenses.** Do not ask for funds for general overhead costs such as utility bills, general maintenance, general supplies, or any other expenses that would be there in the absence of the project. Cell phone expenses are also excluded, even if you use your cell phone in the course of the project.

**Capital expenses.** SARE funds cannot be used for capital expenses such as the cost of buying land, tractors, livestock, or machinery, or for making long-term improvements like additions, barns, high tunnels, or greenhouses. In the same vein, SARE funds cannot be used to start or expand a farm, establish a herd, orchard, or vineyard, or to fund any comparable major farm fixture. If a small equipment expenditure is truly essential to the project, specific to the project plan, and is not general-use equipment, SARE may fund up to \$1,000, provided you make a substantial contribution and demonstrate the need.

We will not consider proposals from **past grant recipients who are behind in their reporting.** If you have a grant project that has ended or is near completion, finish it up and file your final report; if your project is still in progress, make sure we have your interim report.

## HOW PROPOSALS ARE EVALUATED

Proposals are evaluated using these criteria:

**1. A direct link to agricultural sustainability.** Sustainability is defined as farming practices that are profitable, good for the environment, and beneficial to farm communities, and all projects must have a direct link to at least one of the key themes in sustainable agriculture, and two or more is better. These themes are incorporated into the Northeast SARE outcome statement on page 2 and are listed below:

- ❖ the reduction of environmental and health risks in agriculture
- ❖ the prevention of agricultural pollution
- ❖ improved productivity, the reduction of costs, and the increase of net farm income
- ❖ the conservation of soil, the improvement of water quality, and the protection of natural resources
- ❖ the enhancement of employment in rural areas
- ❖ the improvement of quality of life for farmers, their employees, and the farm community

**2. Understanding of related work.** Your proposal should build on work done by others and avoid merely verifying that an established sustainable practice really works.

**3. Suitability of the farm to the proposal and capacity for success.** Experience is a key element in any project, as is access to the basic tools that will make it work. Proposals should

describe the farm or farms hosting this project and describe the key people—the skill, time, and commitment they will bring to the project to see the work through to conclusion.

**4. Clear objectives and sound methods.** Describe the steps taken, the sequence of events, and who will manage key tasks. These methods should align with the project concept and there should be evidence of thoughtful planning and consultation with advisors and collaborators.

**5. Measurable results.** Data should be gathered and assessed consistently and logically, with controls or other methods that assure that results will be trustworthy.

**6. Benefit to other farmers.** Your proposal should indicate how your results address the aspects of improved sustainability (listed under 1, above), and how the results will have an impact beyond the boundaries of your individual farm.

**7. Outreach.** Describe how other farmers and service providers will learn about the project, continue the inquiry, and perhaps replicate or adopt your findings. Develop a thoughtful plan for sharing project results, including unexpected results, to people who can use the information.

**8. Sensible budget.** Be clear how money will be spent, why the budget items are needed, and make sure that all expenses are allowed by SARE.

## HOW TO APPLY

To apply, go to <http://www.ciids.org/NESARE/fg>. This online application template requires registration via a user name and password—use the “create account” button to create an identity in the system. This only takes a minute and you will be able to log in right away, but note that this registration is *specific to this grant application*—the submission interface won’t recognize SARE reporting passwords, passwords from other grant proposals, or passwords from previous years.

Once you are registered and have logged in, the template will ask for the **project title** to begin a new proposal. (Note that the system will allow you to work on multiple proposals, but you may only submit one of them.) The online system will then ask for the name of the **project leader**—this should be you, the applicant—and some baseline **contact information**.

Next is a **project summary** page; here, you have 250 words to offer a brief outline of the project content. This summary is the first thing reviewers see, so take some time to make it compelling.

**Following the summary are these eight questions:**

1. **What is the problem and why is it important?** Briefly state the problem, explain why it matters, and describe what you propose to do about it. Reviewers are interested in the significance of the issue and the project’s potential contribution to sustainability. *500 words.*
2. **What efforts have been made by others to solve the problem?** Tell us how your project builds on what is currently known and how it is different. Reviewers look for evidence that you are building on past work or research and that what you are doing is innovative. *750 words.*
3. **How will your project fit in with your farm operation?** Tell us about your farm business, its size, what you produce, how you market it, how long you have been farming, whether you farm full- or part-time, and how your project will affect the sustainability of your operation. Reviewers are interested in whether you and your farm have the capacity to carry out the project. *500 words.*

4. **What will your methods be?** Describe what you will do and how. Be specific about the steps you will take, how long they will take, who will do what, and how. For example, if you are trying out a pest control product, describe the quantities used, the application dates or stage of growth, the monitoring method used to determine when applied, how applied, control versus treatment, and other key events. Reviewers will be looking for a plan of work that makes sense and addresses the problem or question. *1000 words.*
5. **How will you measure your results?** Tell us your techniques for gathering results, what data you will collect, and how you will determine what the results might mean. Reviewers need to know the project will have valid, measureable results that others can rely on and as going beyond being anecdotal. *500 words.*
6. **How will the results of your project help farmers in the Northeast?** Identify which aspects of agricultural sustainability, listed on page 5 under “How proposals are evaluated,” pertain to your project, and tell the reviewers how your project results will have wider benefit, beyond the boundaries of your own farm. *500 words.*
7. **What is the outreach plan?** Describe how other farmers or extension personnel will learn about your project results. This is an important step, and reviewers look for a plan that will deliver information widely, letting other farmers know what worked and what did not work. *500 words.*
8. **Build your budget.** Estimate costs for the project in the different budget categories. You may want to look at the sample budget at the end of this booklet or refer to the budget section of “How to Write a SARE Farmer Grant Application.” Remember that all budgets are different and should reflect the activities outlined in the written part of the proposal. *No word limit.*

**Justify your budget.** The justification shows how you arrived at your proposed expenses, and is usually expressed as some per-unit cost times some number of units. For example, if you will need 100 insect traps, you would justify the expense with “Insect traps: 100 @\$4.45 each, \$445.” For mileage, you can use up to the federal rate, which currently is \$0.55/mile. Reviewers look for real-world budgets that offer a close fit with the events and expenses questions 1 through 7. *No word limit.*

**Attachments** (.pdf, .doc, or .xls) can be uploaded as explanatory elements, but should be limited to required items (the letter from your technical advisor) or items that add specificity and clarity—plot plans for field experiments, diagrams, or photographs of project components that are otherwise difficult to explain. Please do not attach general letters of support, brochures, newsletters, resumes, or other nonspecific items, since they will not be used in the review. Limit attachments to documents or images that explain core project ideas and content.

## **SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION**

Applications are submitted on line; to do this, go to <http://www.ciids.org/nesare/fg>. The details on how this submission works are under “How to Apply,” on page 6. If you run into problems with the submission process, first ask your technical advisor for support, then call Carol Delaney at 802/656-0697.

After your technical advisor has seen your proposal and given suggestions, copy and paste your responses into the interface, saving each section as you go. When you are finished, press the “submit” button. This must be done by midnight, December 1, 2011.

Once you have submitted, you will be able to print out the proposal as a .pdf file.

Note again that all proposals must have a technical advisor, and the advisor must send you a letter, preferably already in an electronic format, that describes his or her involvement and willingness to participate. If the letter is not electronic, you will need to scan or otherwise convert the letter before uploading.

### **Proposal outline and checklist**

When your proposal is complete, it will consist of the following components in the following order:

- Cover page with summary (250 words)
- What is the problem and why is it important? (500 words)
- What efforts have been made by others to solve the problem? (750 words)
- How will your project fit in with your farm operation? (500 words)
- What will your methods be? (1000 words)
- How will you measure your results? (500 words)
- How will the results help other farmers in the Northeast? (500 words)
- What is the outreach plan? (500 words)
- Budget (no fixed word limit)
- Budget justification (no fixed word limit)
- Attachments: Required letter from your technical advisor, and other documents as described above if needed

## WHAT NOT TO SUBMIT

We sometimes receive promotional material, news clippings, resumes, videos, or brochures with these proposals. Please do not burden the SARE office with this kind of extraneous material, which cannot be reviewed.

Also note that, although your application is held in confidence, if it is accepted and you are awarded a grant, the proposal and project reports are made available to the public through an online database and on request.

## EVALUATION TIME LINE

Submission deadline..... midnight, December 1, 2011

Project review.....January and February 2012

Final selections.....February 2012

Awards announced..... March 2012

Grant contracts signed .....spring 2012

Contracts begin.....spring 2012 or later

## Sample Budget

Before you prepare your own budget you may want to look at a sample to see how one fits together. Every budget is different; yours should reflect closely what you plan to do.

.....

Mary Greene, project leader	\$ 1,567.50
Jack Smith, farm worker	480.00
<b>Personnel subtotal</b>	<b>2047.50</b>
Seed	480.00
Insect traps	489.50
<b>Materials and supplies subtotal</b>	<b>969.50</b>
Mileage	287.00
<b>Travel subtotal</b>	<b>287.00</b>
Printing and publications	75.00
<b>Printing and publications subtotal</b>	<b>75.00</b>
Lab fees	500.00
Subcontractor	200.00
Consulting	300.00
Collaborator	400.00
Materials	50.00
Postage	132.00
<b>Other direct costs subtotal</b>	<b>1582.00</b>
<b>TOTAL grant funds requested (rounded to nearest dollar)</b>	<b>\$ 4961</b>

## Sample Budget Justification

### Personnel

Mary Greene, 55 hours @ \$28.50/hr., \$1,567.50  
 Jack Smith, 40 hours @ \$12/hr., 480.00

### Materials and supplies

Seed: 120 pounds @ \$4 per pound, 480.00  
 Insect traps: 110 @ \$4.45 each, 489.50

### Travel

Mary Greene, five round trips to cooperating farms: 460 miles @ 55 cents/mile, \$253.00  
 Mary Greene, one round trip to Experiment Station: 62 miles @ 55 cents/mile, \$34.00

### Printing and publications

300 flyers @ .25 each, 75.00

### Other direct costs

Lab tissue analysis: 4 @ \$125 each, \$500.00  
 Jerry Gray, subcontractor, Wonder-Spray: fee for custom treatments, \$200.00  
 Insect specialist/consultant: 10 hrs/ @ \$30/hr, \$300.00  
 Katherine Dodge, collaborator: 20 hrs.@ \$ 20/hr., \$400.00  
 Signage for field day, \$50.00  
 Postage for field day outreach, 300 flyers@ \$ .44 each, \$132.00

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Q:** *How do I print out a hard copy of my proposal for my records?*

**A:** After you submit, you will be able to print out the entire proposal as a PDF file.

**Q:** *Can I preview my proposal before I submit?*

**A:** No—this is why we strongly suggest you write the proposal using word processing software first, then copy and paste the text into the submission template.

**Q:** *Do I have to finish submitting my proposal in one online session?*

**A:** No—each section of the proposal gets saved as you go. You can leave your online session and return to finish up later.

**Q:** *Are the grants competitive?*

**A:** Yes. Last year we had 94 applications and funded 33.

**Q:** *If I am funded, is there a lot of paperwork?*

**A:** Our reporting requirements are straightforward: Be prepared to submit an online project overview when the grant begins, an online annual report in February of each year, and an online final report when the project is over. Also, you will need to track your project-related outlays and save receipts for project expenses.

**Q:** *If I am funded, when will I get the money?*

**A:** SARE pays grant funds as reimbursements. You should plan to invoice us regularly, with receipts and other documentation, as you incur costs and the project progresses. Only expenses incurred during the grant period are eligible for reimbursement; do not spend money prior to the approval of your award. We release funds promptly once your request for reimbursement is received; however, we will always hold 20 percent of the award until a final report has been received and approved.

**Q:** *I had a Farmer Grant in the past. Will this affect how my application is reviewed?*

**A:** No. Each application is judged on its merit.

**Q:** *What happens to the reports I send in and the information I uncover?*

**A:** Northeast SARE makes the information about project outcomes available to other growers, researchers, nonprofits, and consumers. Your application and reports will become part of searchable SARE databases and may be included in publications and informational campaigns.

**Q:** *Can you tell me more about the role of the technical advisor?*

**A:** These are people who bring technical support and offer access to resources; they are agricultural service providers who support aspects like outreach, project concept and design, and general consultation. A useful checklist for advisors is in the writing guide.

**Q:** *What kind of support is available from Northeast SARE?*

**A:** There is a Farmer Grants specialist ([Carol.Delaney@uvm.edu](mailto:Carol.Delaney@uvm.edu) or 802/656-0697), and each state has a SARE coordinator who can help. Go to [www.nesare.org](http://www.nesare.org) and select “state programs” to get contact information for your local coordinator.

