

2020 Corn Research and Education Request for Proposals



Through the generous support of the NY Senate and Assembly, the New York Corn & Soybean Growers Association (NYCSGA) is pleased to announce their 2020 Corn Research and Education grant opportunity. Working in collaboration with New York Farm Viability Institute (NYFVI), the NYCSGA board is requesting proposals for 2020 corn research and education projects.

2020 Corn Research & Education Priorities

The following is a summary of New York's highest priority corn-related research needs identified by the NYCSGA. We encourage you to consider this list as guidance when submitting proposals. All proposals must clearly show benefits for NY corn farmers.

Corn Research & Education Priorities include:

- Tillage, fertilizer placement and effects on corn yield
- Variable rate inputs
- Fungicide application with corn
- Nitrogen fixing corn
- Stabilized vs non-stabilized nitrogen rates and placement
- Micro nutrients at planting
- Soil Health Management
- Management of mycotoxins
- Imagery utilization
- Precision ag technology

This is not an exclusive list. If you have ideas for projects not listed here, that have the potential to benefit New York corn farmers, you are invited to submit a full proposal.

Program Overview

- This is a competitive grant process.
- Awards will be between \$5,000 and \$25,000 per project and NYCSGA/NYFVI reserves the right to negotiate the award amount and scope of work with successful applicants.
- All applications must be submitted on-line using NYFVI's database system at: db.nyfvi.org.
- Applicants must select the Corn Research and Education (CRE) grant offering.
- Proposals must be received no later than midnight on November 17, 2019.
- Funding decisions are expected to be made by early January 2020.

- All funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis with quarterly progress reports and reimbursement claims submitted via NYFVI's on-line system.
- Projects may start as early as January 1, 2020, must be between 6 and 12 months in duration, must be completed May 31, 2021, and final project reports must be submitted by July 31, 2021.
- There are no cost share, in-kind support, or matching funds requirements.
- Funds awarded to successful applicants may be used as matching funds for any non-New York State funded grant application.

Applicant Eligibility

Eligible applicants include faculty from colleges and universities, researchers from agri-businesses, cooperative extension educators, independent consultants, and farmers. Collaboration between academic institutions, non-profit organizations, businesses and farmers is encouraged.

Applicants may represent nonprofit or for-profit sectors. Individuals with ideas are encouraged to partner with existing organizations to ensure project viability and execution. If you need guidance in this regard, please contact NYFVI staff.

Proposal Requirements

Projects awarded funding by NYCSGA must demonstrate a measurable benefit to NY farmers.

Through performance targets and milestones, proposals must explicitly outline the project work plan and the key performance indicators that will be measured to document success of the project. The evaluation section should detail what performance data will be collected, along with how the data will be collected and evaluated.

Proposals need not be designed to produce journal publishable results, but must follow appropriate scientific protocol to result in reliable and meaningful answers to high priority industry questions and concerns. Research proposals should contain enough information about materials and methods in the Performance Targets, Milestones and Activities section so that reviewers can adequately evaluate the research being proposed.

If on farm field trials or other farmer engagement is part of the proposal, then please submit letters of collaboration from participating farmers describing what they will do for the project. These letters should be emailed to cornresearch@nyfvi.org.

Project Duration

While multi-year proposals may be considered, funding awards and contracts will only be made for one year at a time. Future funding for the project will be contingent upon renewed funding from the state, success of the previous research or education efforts, and effectiveness of the project leader and team.

Reporting Requirements

The NYFVI online database is used to manage the initial application as well as all reporting and expenditures. Project leaders are required to submit quarterly reports that must be approved before

reimbursements are made. A final report is due within 60 days of project completion date. 10% of total funds will be withheld until the final report is completed and approved.

Funding Source Acknowledgement

Projects must acknowledge NYCSGA as the funder, or partial funder along with all other funding partners, in all materials and presentations.

Deadlines

All applications must be submitted online through the NYFVI database at db.nyfvi.org. The link, along with the RFP, can also be found at <http://nycornsoy.org/>, or www.nyfvi.org.

Applicants must select the Corn Research and Education (CRE) grant offering.

Applications will be accepted through 11:59 pm November 17, 2019.

Applicants must file all internal organizational paperwork, receive any permissions, approvals, grant office numbers, or other requirements of your employer prior to submitting an application; failure to do so may make applications ineligible for funding consideration.

If you have not used the NYFVI online applications system, you need to apply for system credentials. Do not wait until the last minute, staff is available to activate credentials only during normal business hours.

NYFVI staff is happy to work with you to ensure your proposal meets requirements. Please call 315-453-3823.

Evaluation and Selection Process

Members of the NYCSGA board, and research committee will read, comment and score each proposal.

Reviewers will use the following guidance to score and provide comments on each proposal.

Producer Involvement

- Is there confirmation that the barriers this project addresses were identified by farmers as high priority?
- Is there evidence that sufficient numbers of farmers are involved in at least some of the following activities: proposal development, project advisory committee, project implementation, outreach and information dissemination, and project evaluation?
- Proposal sections where producer involvement information may be found include: Producer Contacts, Producer Involvement, Identification of Barriers

Relevance to NY Agriculture

- Will the project, as presented, effectively address the identified barrier in a significant way for the betterment of NY agriculture?
- Is the project likely to have a significant farm level impact in the agricultural sector concerned?
- Does the project, as described, have a high probability of success?
- Is the target audience for the project first and foremost farmers?

- Is the target audience appropriately specific (not addressing too big an audience) and at the same time broad enough from a crop or geographic perspective to warrant investing in the project?

Work Plan

- Are the performance targets (key performance measures, outcomes, farm level impacts) specific, clearly stated, and measurable at the farm or enterprise level?
- Are the milestones measurable and when they are achieved will they move participating farm businesses toward achieving the stated performance targets?
- Are the activities to be undertaken appropriate for reaching the milestones and achieving the performance targets?
- Is there a clear and effective plan describing how the individual farm or enterprise level impacts will be measured and verified, as well as how overall success of the project will be evaluated?

Outreach Plan

- Is there a specific, practical and well laid out plan for how the information gained from, or materials developed for, this project will be disseminated to the broader agricultural industry?
- Are the activities in the outreach plan likely to be effective in creating change in the agricultural sector across New York?
- Is there an opportunity or a plan to disseminate information from this project to other crop or production areas if it is appropriate to do so?
- Is the outreach plan innovative and creative?

Evaluation Plan

- Will the identified key performance indicators adequately measure and document the success of the project?
- Is there a clear and effective plan describing how the individual farm or enterprise level impacts of the project will be measured and verified?
- Is there a plan to track or estimate changes in the broader agricultural industry that resulted from the project's outreach efforts?

Budget

- Is the total budget appropriate to the size and scope of the project?
- Are the individual budget line amounts reasonable and realistic?
- Are the justifications for each budget line clearly stated, adequate, and acceptable?
- If there are labor charges, do the tasks outlined justify the labor budget?
- Is the budget reasonable and appropriate for the importance and value of this project to the crop it addresses?

Project Team

- Are the descriptions of individuals' roles sufficient to understand what each will be doing in the project?

- Is it clear that the qualifications described for each individual relate to and match their role in the project?
- Are you confident that the combined knowledge, skills, experience, and abilities of the project team members are adequate to successfully complete the project?

General Comments

- Overall, is this a valuable project in which to invest funds?
- Is there likely to be a measurable and acceptable return on investment?

The Online Application: What Goes Where.

Frequently proposal reviewers express frustration over the repetitive nature of statements within some applications. Please read the following information closely to ensure that you are developing a competitive, not repetitive, application.

TITLE, DURATION

Title: Create a title for the project. Keep in mind the title of the project will appear in NYCSGA and NYFVI publications. Generally, a title that is brief but descriptive of the project and its goals, works best.

Duration: Indicate the start and end date for your project. Funded projects must begin between January 1, 2020 and October 1, 2020. Funded projects must last at least two quarters (six months) and may last no more than four quarters (one year). Even though additional end dates will appear, all projects must be completed by May 31, 2021.

RFP: Applicants must select the Corn Research and Education (CRE) grant offering.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION SECTOR

For purposes of this RFP the production sector is Field Crops for Grain or Forage, or both.

EMPHASIS/PORTFOLIO PRIORITIES

Please read the following descriptions closely and choose the priority that most closely aligns with the intent of your project. If necessary a secondary priority may be selected.

Improve Operational Practices. This work will result in direct on-farm changes during the life of the grant, and is often incremental in nature. This could include outreach efforts to share information about best practices, or applied research that demonstrates the effectiveness of a practice to encourage its adoption.

Foster Industry-wide innovation. This type of work typically could result in large-scale changes in an industry. This usually takes the form of applied research with a somewhat longer timeline to on-farm implementation.

Incubate new ideas and methods. This type of work helps to develop a new idea with potential to transform an industry. While direct farm impact may be far off, a successful project in this category will demonstrate that significant impact is possible.

Improve Route to Market and Market Practices. This work will improve a farm's marketing practices, help them find new markets, and develop new business models for getting to market.

Develop Human Capital. This type of work will develop the capacity of individuals in agriculture to effectively manage farms and implement new strategies. This may take the form of improvement of farm business acumen or the support of a skilled agricultural workforce, among others.

ANTICIPATED RESULTS

Please select the outcome(s) you believe your project will deliver.

CONTACTS

Enter names and contact information for all individuals associated with the project. Please read the descriptions below to ensure you are categorizing the participants correctly.

*Note: The producer section and other collaborators section both include a check box where an applicant certifies that **all individuals listed have discussed and agreed to participate in the project.** Do not include the names of any individuals who have not clearly agreed to participate. All names that are provided may be contacted about the proposal at any point.*

Contractor: Provide the name and contact information of the person responsible for grant contracts within your organization. In most cases this is not the same person as the project leader. This is the person who will sign the contract for execution of the project.

Administrative Point of Contact: Provide the name and contact information for the person who will handle invoicing, record keeping, and other related aspects of the project. This is an optional designee, and should be someone familiar with the project leader and proposal who can be consulted when the project leader is unavailable.

Producers: Enter the names and contact information of **farmers**--and only farmers--who are actively providing assistance in the proposed project.

Check the appropriate box or boxes to indicate how the producer is participating. Choices include co-leader, project staff, proposal development, project advisory committee, project implementation, outreach and/or evaluation.

Grant applicants are not required to identify the farms who will be implementing the project during the application phase. However, competitive proposals will clearly demonstrate farm-level support for their efforts, including farmer participation in the project planning process. If a farmer is indicated as participating in "project implementation", it is expected that the farmer will implement project protocols or activities on their farm and data will be collected and reported for that farm.

If your work is focused on applied research, your application will be strengthened by having identified farms for project implementation.

If absolutely necessary, anonymity of farmer participants in tracking project progress may be permitted. For more information, contact NYFVI staff.

Do not include the names of project participants who are not farmers in the producer section. Do not include more than one name entry per farm.

Other Participants & Collaborators: In this section, provide the name and contact information for all other individuals who will be supporting the project. These may include extension educators, consultants and other agribusiness professionals.

Check the appropriate box or boxes to indicate how the individual is participating. Choices include co-leader, project staff, proposal development, project advisory committee, project implementation, outreach and/or evaluation.

PRODUCER INVOLVEMENT

*The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that **farmers** are, or will be, actively involved in each aspect of the project. DO NOT provide your full implementation and outreach plans here, just provide detail about how **farmers** will be, or have been, involved.*

Proposal Development: Describe specifically how, when, and where farmers, including the number of farmers, were involved in developing the proposal.

Project Advisory Committee: Some project leaders use Advisory Committees in their project. These committees may be informal or formal and may be an existing group or sub-group, or a group gathered specifically for the purpose of the project. The committee may be wholly comprised of farmers, or a mix that includes non-farmers. If a Project Advisory Committee is used, describe the committee's makeup, number of participating farmers, purpose, meeting schedule and the role it will have in the project.

Project Implementation: Farmers who will implement the project on their farm are those for whom project leaders will track and report farm level impacts in the quarterly reports and final report. In this section, provide a brief narrative of how farmers will implement the project and the planned measurement of progress.

Project Outreach: Provide a brief description of how farmers will be part of the plan to share information and get project results out to the broader industry.

Project Evaluation: Describe how farmers will participate in evaluating the project. Opportunities include providing farm production or financial data; feedback through testimonials or surveys; assessment of materials developed through the project, such as fact sheets, how-to guides, etc.; assessment of research data or project results; review by project advisory committee; review by local board of directors; and more.

TARGET BENEFICIARIES

Use specifics to describe the target audience for this project. Numbers help build the case for the value of the work proposed and demonstrate a thorough understanding of the audience for outreach. Consider including:

- Enterprises, groups and sub-groups involved,
- Geographical region and reach,
- Farm size,
- Types of production systems.

IDENTIFICATION OF BARRIERS

This section should focus on building an understanding of the specifics and scale of the problem your work will solve, or the economic opportunity your work will help create. Be sure to include specifics on how you know this problem is important to farmers. Do not discuss the solution in this section.

Grant applicants may cite priorities identified by NYCSGA or NYFVI through their efforts. Applicants may also cite other sources.

Other methods of identifying needs and opportunities for your project include, producer groups assembled specifically to develop this project, an agricultural organization's strategic planning or needs assessment document, program councils, producer program committees, focus groups, and program advisory committees.

PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

Describe the overarching, long-range goals or outcomes of this project and the potential impact on New York agriculture, connect it to the problem or opportunity described in the previous section.

Include a synopsis of previous research and outreach efforts at the local, state, national or international level. The synopsis should focus on the level of applicability, awareness or comprehension of earlier work within New York State or its regions. Detail how your proposed project builds on existing knowledge or previous efforts. Reviewers frequently comment, “This has already been done” or, “There is nothing new here”. This is your opportunity to address those potential concerns, document that the effort is new, different, or never been tried before

PERFORMANCE TARGETS, MILESTONES AND ACTIVITIES

This section should provide a detailed work plan for your project. Typically, projects will have numerous measureable milestones and activities all to achieve a relatively small number of performance targets. Research proposals should contain enough information in this section about materials and methods so that reviewers can adequately evaluate the research being proposed.

Performance Targets: The performance target is the primary goal/s or ultimate key performance measures of the project. How will the farm ‘perform’ differently as a result of the project? What will the project achieve, as measured on participating farms? Priority in funding decisions goes to proposals whose performance targets are measurable within the duration of the grant funds. If goals will be achieved after the contract period ends, then what measurements can be made during the period of the project that shows progress toward achieving the desired goal/s? Discuss the process to measure these long-term results in the Evaluation Plan section of the application.

Milestones: For each performance target, list the milestones that you will track, measure and report on during the course of the project. Think of milestones as sub-goals or steps, the means by which you will verify progress toward achieving each performance target.

Activities: For each milestone, list the activities you will engage in that will help achieve the milestone.

Date to Achieve: Commit to a date for achieving each milestone. This helps in monitoring progress and keeping the project on track for timely completion.

OUTREACH PLAN

Describe how the information generated or knowledge gained through this project will be accessible and actionable for the broader agricultural producer audience across New York State. As you develop the outreach plan, consider how you might measure its effectiveness in changing practices on farms that are the target of your outreach efforts, include this information in the Evaluation Plan.

EVALUATION PLAN

Applicant must develop an evaluation plan based on impact at the farm level, relative to project performance targets. The plan should define how you will measure progress toward the achievement of milestones and performance targets.

The primary focus of the evaluation plan must be the measurement of farm level impact resulting from the project. Describe the data you will collect, how the data will be collected, and its proposed analysis. Describe how the data will be turned into useful information that measures the project’s success. Evaluation may include what and why a project, or aspect of the project, worked or failed to work. Think of the evaluation process as an opportunity to provide learning tools to others embarking on their

own similar effort. Funded project leaders will provide an extensive evaluation as part of the Final Report.

PRODUCER IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

There is no requirement for in-kind contributions, however farmer involvement is highly valued and we would like to capture the value of that involvement.

Itemize the various contributions farmers will make to the project and estimate a reasonable dollar value for each. To help with data standardization please use \$50 per hour as a value for producer time contributed to a project. Contributed items may include, but are not limited to:

- Time committed to various aspects of the project; development, implementation, outreach, evaluation.
- Donated supplies, e.g. seed, fertilizer, chemicals, fuel, etc.
- Use of facilities or equipment.
- Use of farmland for research plots or trials.
- Sacrifice or donation of crops or material that would have otherwise been used or sold.

Even though there are no requirements to include Producer In-Kind Contributions, reviewers look for it and these contributions are considered as an indication of farmer support for the project.

BUDGET

Grant applicants will create a budget for each quarter of the grant-funded project. **Applicants are expected to develop budget numbers that reflect the project's work plan and expected spending pattern.**

Plan carefully within each budget category. Without exceeding the total grant amount, project leaders may only overspend a budget line by 15% or \$1,000, whichever is greater. While communication about any budget deviation is appreciated, expenditure deviations beyond these limits require a formal budget modification request.

Salaries and Wages: Expenses for salary, wages and fringe benefits may be paid for new or currently employed staff, for the portion of **time devoted to the funded project**, up to 100% of the employee's time. Employees may not seek reimbursement for the percentage of their time spent working on other projects or paid through other sources.

In the Budget Justification section of the application list the employee's descriptive job title, and the percentage of each employee's time that will be devoted to the proposed project.

Proposals that are heavy in salary expenses may be less competitive during grant selection.

All project applicants seeking reimbursement for salary, wage or fringe benefit expenses must maintain records and may be required to present documentation of the amount of each employee's time devoted to various efforts and funding sources.

Fringe Benefits: Enter fringe benefits at the rate consistent with the applicant's place of employment, for the class of employee being hired. Contact NYFVI staff for more information.

Consulting: Reimbursement may be provided for consultant fees. Project leaders must document daily or hourly rates. Describe specific roles, expected outcomes, and rates for each consultant in the Budget Justification section of the application. A commitment letter from the consultant outlining their specific role in the project must be filed with NYFVI if the proposal is selected for funding.

Subcontracts: Reimbursement may be provided for subcontracted portions of the project completed by persons or organizations other than the primary contracting organization. Describe specific roles and expected outcomes for each subcontractor in the Budget Justification section of the application; itemize the total cost of each subcontract. Submission of subcontracts will be required if the project is approved. Indirect, overhead, or F&A charges cannot be levied twice, i.e. if indirect cost are charged in the subcontract they cannot be charged for the overall project and vice versa.

Travel: Reimbursement may be provided for travel expenses directly related to the project. Reimbursement will be for expenses that are not excessive and similar to “government rates.” Out-of-state travel is discouraged but may be allowed and requires detailed explanation in the Budget Justification portion of the application as well as **prior** written approval. It is incumbent on the applicant to request the required prior approval, without which the expense cannot be reimbursed.

Services and Lab Analysis: Reimbursement may be provided for expenses for services and laboratory fees essential to conducting the project. Reimbursement will be for the percentage of the fees used for purposes of the funded project.

Materials & Supplies: Reimbursement may be provided for expenses for materials and supplies that directly relate to the project. Rates of expenses should not be excessive. Generally, materials and supplies are items whose per unit purchase price is less than \$1,000. Often these items are consumable or have a useful life of one year or less.

Conferences & Seminars: Reimbursement may be provided for expenses associated with *conducting* a conference, workshop, field day, or seminar that benefits NY farmers directly and relates to the project. Costs may include speaker travel, honoraria, meals, site rental, etc. To reduce budgeted cost, charging participants for a portion of the conference, seminar, field day or workshop cost is strongly encouraged. This also helps establish that the information being shared has value to the farm business. Please describe charges participants will pay in the budget justification and how that income will be utilized within the project.

Reimbursement may also be provided for conference expenses for individuals involved in the project **to attend and present** at a conference in New York State and related to the project. If reimbursement is for attendance, provide a detailed explanation of the conference and its importance to the project within the Budget Justification section.

Advertising & Promotions: Reimbursement may be provided for expenses to produce and distribute brochures, flyers, displays or other items to promote project activities or outcomes; paid advertisements.

Rentals: Reimbursement may be provided for expenses of rented equipment that is essential to conducting the project. Reimbursement will be for the percentage of the rental cost of the item directly used for purposes of the funded project.

Equipment: Equipment is generally *not* a reimbursable expense. Equipment refers to items, including machines, tools, electronics, structures and other items with a per unit purchase price of \$1,000 or more and whose useful life is more than one year. This also applies to situations where parts and supplies are purchased separately and assemble into a single piece of equipment and includes both the cost of materials and the labor cost to assemble them. Project leaders that request equipment reimbursement must provide a detailed explanation of why the item is essential to the project; cannot be obtained at lesser cost through rental, lease, borrowing, etc.; who will use the item and for what purpose; what percent of the item will be used in service of this project; and how the item will be disposed of or used after the grant project ends. All equipment purchase requests must be **pre-approved** by NYFVI and New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Other: If you have costs that don't fit elsewhere, please include them here, with a detailed explanation in the budget justification section. In some academic organizations, it is necessary that a student receive tuition reimbursement in order to work on a project. In other organizations, living stipends are considered payment for work. If either of those scenarios is required by your organization, please include those costs here. *Note: if these costs are excessive, they may make your proposal less competitive.*

Indirect Costs: Payment may be provided for indirect expenses at a rate negotiated in advance between the applicant institution and NYFVI. Contact NYFVI before submitting the grant application. Indirect, overhead, or F&A charges cannot be levied twice, i.e. if indirect cost are charged on the project direct cost total then they cannot be charged on subcontracts or consulting agreements and vice versa.

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Project leaders must provide a detailed description for each requested budget category, including all major expenses. Provide detail of the components of each budget line and how they were calculated. Provide explanations of how the items will advance the proposed project.

LEVERAGED FUNDING

Describe all sources of current and/or potential funding for this project proposal. Indicate which sources are current, and which are potential. Note the funding source (e.g. USDA, NE-SARE, Hatch etc.) and the total grant amount. For existing funding describe how additional funds from NYCSGA will expand the scope and/or impact of the existing project. For potential funding sources explain how your budget request will be affected if the potential funding source comes through. If funds awarded to this proposal will be used as matching funds for another grant please provide the details.

PROJECT TEAM

Each individual listed in the CONTACTS section of the application, and indicating 'co-leader' or 'project staff' as the person's role in the project, will automatically be included in this section. For each individual, provide a detailed description of their role in the project as well as their qualifications, experience, knowledge and skills that will allow them to successfully fulfill their role.

ABSTRACT

Although this is the last component of the application as entered online, it is the first section that reviewers see. Be sure to keep it concise, clear, and descriptive of the entire project and its intended impact. Write for the layman- avoid jargon and define acronyms. Edit and edit again, every word is important.

Provide a brief and comprehensive synopsis of the proposal. Include a description of the problem being addressed, the need for the work, farmer participation, goals and expected outcomes, as well as how the project will progress to meet the goals. Major project partners and outreach work may also be part of the abstract. Uses for the abstract include describing the project in print media and online publication to individuals who will not see the full application.