

FY 2026 Request for Pre-Proposals: Product Quality Research

Beef farmer- and rancher-supported research helps fill gaps to ensure the body of beef product quality knowledge continues to grow -- particularly as applied research funding opportunities become more limited. The National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), a contractor to the Beef Checkoff, is soliciting research pre-proposals in the area of Product Quality Research covering these applied and basic science topics for FY 2026:

ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH TOPICS

- Assessment of chilling parameters to optimize quality grade and overall carcass quality
- Audit the landscape of cut availability, current packaging practices, product and labeling claims, and other relevant factors relevant to the retail meat case. Proposals should take into account store demographic, regionality, and other varying factors.

Research ideas should be novel, applicable to industry, and have a high potential impact. Collaboration is strongly encouraged where relevant. Budgets for research trials will be evaluated based on the scope and methodology of the submitted proposal.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR ORIGINAL SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH:

- Pre-proposal Submission Date: **May 30, 2025**
- Funding Notifications: **Late Fall**
- Project Start Date: As early as January 2026
- Project Completion Date: no later than May 2028

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH TOPICS: SHORT-TERM, PILOT PROJECTS, PROOF OF CONCEPT, COMPILATION

- Opportunities to reduce food waste using current packaging solutions *
- Explore strategies to drive significant improvements in beef carcass quality and palatability
- Evolution of pre- or post-harvest practices and their impact on beef carcass quality and palatability
- With the recent emphasis on convenience, versatility, and portion size driving beef demand, how are beef cuts or beef in general being leveraged differently than seen with traditional beef marketing?
- Explore the impact of cattle make-up, industry practices, carcass consist, and product handling over time. Pre-proposals should include progress and challenges the industry has faced. Assessment should include relevant data from 1980's to current, with emphasis placed on the last 10 years.

*This topic is also being considered in the beef sustainability RFP. Proposals can address one or both areas of product quality and sustainability. If proposals address multiple areas, collaboration with expertise across areas is highly encouraged.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR EXPLORATORY RESEARCH ASSESSMENT:

- Pre-Proposal Submission Date: **May 30, 2025**
- Funding Notifications: **Late Fall**
- Project Start Date: As early as January 2026
- Project timeline should be 6 - 8 months or less

EXISTING RESEARCH ASSESSMENT TOPICS: GAP ANALYSIS, LITERATURE REVIEW, OR EXISTING DATA ANALYSIS

- Explore the potential product quality benefits of antimicrobials.
- Assess alternative cut consistency and identification of areas for improvement and industry feasibility.
- Assess the latest research findings and industry practices on freezing and thawing to evaluate their impact on beef product quality and identify key knowledge gaps.

IMPORTANT DATES FOR EXISTING RESEARCH ASSESSMENT:

- Pre-Proposal Submission Date: **May 30, 2025**
- Funding Notifications: **Late Fall**
- Budget limit: \$10,000
- Project timeline should be 12 months or less

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

The Product Quality Research Program follows a two-part application process, including the submission of a pre-proposal. Pre-proposals are intended to be a brief overview of the proposed project. Pre-proposals must meet the submission deadline and follow the guidelines in the RFP to be considered. Pre-proposals should clearly state their relevance to the beef industry. Leveraged funding through collaborations with industry, foundations, government, and other sources with matching funds is encouraged. In addition, collaboration with additional researchers or institutions is encouraged where appropriate. Accepted pre-proposals will then be considered for full proposals. Full proposals accepted are funded (or funded in part) by the Beef Checkoff.

Principal Investigators (PIs) may submit more than one pre-proposal. A CV is not required. If included, CVs will not count against page totals.

PRE-PROPOSALS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY **May 30th** at 11:59 pm EST via the BeefGrants system.

National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff, utilizes an online portal, BeefGrants, to manage the grants process and facilitate the submission and review of grant materials. All portal users will need to set up an account. Please visit https://ncba.BeefGrants.com/s_Login.jsp to register and apply for a grant.

PRE-PROPOSAL OUTLINE:

- Lay Project Title
- Research Project Title
- Timeline
- Budget
- Objectives
- Problem/Research Need
- Abbreviated Materials and Methods
- Industry Impact
- Collaborators/ In-kind Support
- Preliminary Data (optional)

REVIEW CRITERIA:

Pre-proposals will be reviewed by a panel of independent industry experts. Pre-proposals will be evaluated for: clearly defined hypothesis and objectives, research needs within the industry, and convincing evidence that the proposed research will change the concepts, methods, or technologies that drive this field.

All PIs will be notified of pre-proposal outcomes in mid-June. Pre-proposals selected to submit full proposals will receive further instructions and shall be submitted via the BeefGrants system. Full proposals will include a more robust description of the intended project and be evaluated within the same criteria listed above.

PUBLICATION COSTS:

Publication of all research is expected regardless of outcome, however financial support for manuscript publication is considered separate from research contracts. Once your project is completed and final report is submitted, please reach out to NCBA staff to receive more information on the new publishing guidance.

ADDITIONAL DETAILS:

PIs should review completed Product Quality projects to avoid submitting an idea that already has been covered. Completed project summaries are available at <https://www.beefresearch.org/programs/product-quality>.

We understand that PIs do not know the nature of ongoing research projects. However, a list of ongoing projects cannot be made available due to contracting sensitivity. Please understand this limitation and use your best judgment to submit proposals that are both novel and relevant. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES:

Project deliverables will include, at a minimum, a final technical report with a full listing of research results and implications, and an abbreviated executive summary highlighting key points from the full technical report. Final technical reports must follow a standard outline and be thorough and interpretive in nature. Deliverables will also include a final statement outlining all project expenditures from the institution's business office. *Funds cannot be spent beyond the project end date established in the project contract.* Deliverables will be due on or before the project end date established in the contract.

DISCLAIMER:

We are aware that academic institutions have financial obligations for administering the research grants awarded to their faculty members. However, overhead costs, principal investigator salaries, tuition and equipment purchases will not be considered as part of the funds made available for this research. View the full indirect cost statement [here](#).

Fill out this [form](#) to contact us and setup a meeting to answer questions for this RFP.

Please share this RFP with interested colleagues.

Visit www.beefresearch.org for additional information on the Checkoff-funded Product Quality Research program.