

FY 2026 Request for Pre-Proposals: Sustainability Research

Beef farmer- and rancher-supported research helps fill gaps to ensure the body of beef sustainability 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 Beef Sustainability Research covering these applied and basic science topics for FY 2026:

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

- Identify opportunities to reduce water usage in the post-harvest environment, while maintaining food safety and quality standards.
- What practices can be implemented to reduce the risk of foreign object contamination in the pre-harvest environment, and how do these practices impact the pillars (environmental, economic, social) of sustainability? *
- Explore the trade-offs and/or unintended consequences of implementing sustainable practices in the beef industry, particularly concerning (proposals may address a single consideration or multiple considerations):
 - Animal welfare
 - The post-harvest environment
 - Food safety
 - Product quality
- How can packaging solutions be leveraged to enhance environmental sustainability, reduce food waste, and preserve safety, product integrity, and shelf life of fresh beef? **
- Review new technologies to aid animal movement and handling in various production environments.

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

**This topic is also being considered in the product quality 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 SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH:

- Pre-Proposal Submission Date: **May 30, 2025**
- Funding Notifications: **Late Fall**
- Project Start Date: As early as January 2026
- Recommended budget: \$30,000 - \$50,000; Budgets for research trials will be evaluated based on the scope and methodology of the submitted proposal.
- Project Duration: 6 – 12 months
- The RFP question addressed should be noted in the objectives section of the submission.

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

- How can product loss be accurately determined across the beef supply chain? How do these losses impact key sustainability factors and/or components?
- Review advancements in stunning technologies with consideration to animal welfare.
- Review lighting and infrastructure impacts on cattle movement pre-harvest and up to the point of stunning.
- Contrast the impact of cattle grazing on lands versus the impact of wildfires (ungrazed lands).

IMPORTANT DATES FOR EXISTING RESEARCH ASSESSMENT:

- Pre-Proposal Submission Date: **May 30, 2025**
- Funding Notifications: **Late Fall**
- Project Start Date: As early as January 2026
- Budget limit: \$10,000
- Project timeline should be 12 months or less.

SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS:

The Beef Sustainability 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 proposal submission. Accepted full proposals will be 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, for 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 Beef Sustainability projects to avoid submitting an idea that already has been covered. Completed project summaries are available at <https://www.beefresearch.org/programs/beef-sustainability>.

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 Beef Sustainability Research program.