

# FY 2027 Request for Pre-Proposals: Product Quality Research

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*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. These research considerations represent the first stage of a broader five-year roadmap for advancing product quality research. Priorities are expected to evolve over time as knowledge gaps are addressed, technologies advance, and industry needs continue to emerge.*

*Investigators are encouraged to think broadly about how their capabilities, methods, or findings could translate across multiple research solicitations and disciplines, fostering collaboration and strengthening overall impact.*

*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 2027:*

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

- Are there areas of existing knowledge, assumptions, or practices related to beef quality that warrant reevaluation given changes in today's cattle population, supply chain dynamics, and consumer expectations?

### **Other topic ideas of interest include but are not limited to:**

- Patterns of variability in beef products within and across quality grades, and assess factors that contribute to overlap, inconsistency, or differentiation among grades
- Approaches for quantifying non-conforming carcasses in real time within beef harvest operations, including methods to identify, characterize, and measure the frequency and drivers of non-conformance as carcasses move through the system and subsequent downstream impact
- Explore the relationships among carcass maturity indicators and reflection on underlying biological or production differences

- Impact of cattle characteristics, processing systems, and market demand changes on boxed beef size, weight, and product assortment
- Explore new outcomes from existing datasets and samples to provide new or refined insights into beef product quality and its variability within today's cattle population.

#### IMPORTANT DATES FOR EXPLORATORY RESEARCH ASSESSMENT:

- Pre-Proposal Submission Date: **May 31, 2026**
- Funding Notifications: **Late Fall**
- Project Start Date: As early as **January 2027**
- Project timeline should be 12 months or less

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

- Assess alternative cut consistency and identification of areas for improvement and industry feasibility.
- Assess the impact of structural shifts in cattle supply, processing practices, and market demand reshaping boxed beef, carcass utilization, and value realization across the beef supply chain.

#### IMPORTANT DATES FOR EXISTING RESEARCH ASSESSMENT:

- Pre-Proposal Submission Date: **May 31, 2026**
- Funding Notifications: **Late Fall**
- Project Start Date: As early as **January 2027**
- 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 31<sup>st</sup>** at 11:59 pm EDT 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](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](#).

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE:**

Reserve a time to visit about research proposals [here](#).

If you are new to submitting research proposals to our system we recommend [you join a meeting on setting up a profile in the system](#).

**Please share this RFP with interested colleagues.**

Visit [www.beefresearch.org](http://www.beefresearch.org) for additional information on the Checkoff-funded Product Quality Research program.

