

FY 2027 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. These research considerations represent the first stage of a broader five-year roadmap for advancing beef sustainability 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 Beef Sustainability Research covering these applied and basic science topics for FY 2027:

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

All proposals must address at least one pillar of beef sustainability. The tie to sustainability should be clearly identified in the problem statement or objective of the research proposal.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Unintended consequences of the cattle cycle and consist dynamics on sustainability outcomes
- Opportunities to utilize existing datasets to illuminate system-wide impacts and outcomes and/or perspectives, within and/or across the three pillars of sustainability, as well as interactions, trade-offs, or synergies among these dimensions
- Benchmarking sustainability outcomes that affect end product outcomes
- Suitability trade-offs and unintended consequences to other areas (i.e., human nutrition, product quality, safety, etc.)
- Impact of product and by-product downgrades on loss

IMPORTANT DATES FOR EXPLORATORY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH:

- Pre-Proposal Submission Date: **May 31, 2026**
- Funding Notifications: **Late Fall 2026**
- Project Start Date: As early as **January 2027**
- 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.

All proposals must address at least one pillar of beef sustainability. The tie to sustainability should be clearly identified in the problem statement or objective of the research proposal.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to:

- Existing tools, indicators, or data sources are most effective for evaluating animal welfare, and what are the key limitations or gaps
- Factors that most strongly influence animal welfare outcomes in different beef production contexts and changes over time
- Shifts in sustainability approaches and model variation
- Water considerations integrated with other environmental, operational, or economic priorities, and what trade-offs or co-benefits emerge from these interactions
- Regional differences in water availability, use, and risk (water quality, contamination, downstream impacts, etc.). Assess how these complexities influence 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 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 31st 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, for manage the grants process and facilitating 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.

The following fields will be required in BeefGrants (word counts may apply for some fields).

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; financial support for manuscript publication is considered separate from research contracts. Once your project is completed and the 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 has already 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](#).

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 for additional information on the Checkoff-funded Beef Sustainability Research program.