



NITROGEN OPTIMIZATION PILOT PROGRAM GRANTS REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS AWARD YEARS 2027-2028

PART 1: INTENT TO APPLY

DEADLINE: DECEMBER 18, 2026

Access the Intent to Apply on DATCP's website

PART 2: FINAL APPLICATION

Part 1 – Narrative

Part 2 – Budget and Work Plan

DEADLINE: JANUARY 15, 2027

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS ONLY TO: **DATCPNOPP@wisconsin.gov**

QUESTIONS

***COMPLETING THE APPLICATION, BUDGETS, REIMBURSEMENTS, GENERAL
ADMINISTRATION:***

SUSAN MOCKERT, PROGRAM MANAGER
(608) 224-4648, SUSAN.MOCKERT@WISCONSIN.GOV

RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL DESIGN, DATA SUPPORT:
MONICA SCHAUER, RESEARCH DIRECTOR
(920) 296-6170 MONICA.SCHAUER@WISC.EDU

MEGAN BLAUWET, OUTREACH SPECIALIST
(608) 461-9874, MEGAN.BLAUWET@WISC.EDU

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) provides funding to agricultural producers to focus on commercial nitrogen optimization activities through the Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP).

Agricultural producers will collaborate with the Universities of Wisconsin (UW) scientists to conduct research projects that enhance understanding of and refine new methods that optimize commercial nitrogen applied to agricultural fields.

Funding priorities:

Project priorities set by statute include:

- Projects located in different areas of the state to incorporate data from differing soils and geological characteristics
- Innovative projects not currently funded by other state or federal programs
- Multi-year projects (a minimum of two years is required)

What is commercial nitrogen?

A substance containing one or more plant nutrients designed for use in promoting plant growth, except unmanipulated animal or vegetable manures, marl, liming material, sewage sludge other than finished sewage sludge products, and wood ashes. Composted, uncomposted, or liquid manures will only be regulated as fertilizer by DATCP when they are not used as part of normal farming operations, have a business label, and sell the product as a fertilizer.

Overview	4
2027-2028 Project Options	4
NOPP Award Stipulations	5
TABLE OF CONTENTS Universities of Wisconsin NOPP Partnership	5
Collaborators	5
Project Eligibility Requirements	5
Intent to Apply	5
Research Study.....	6
Applicants	6
Contracting	7
DATCP NOPP Application information and guidance	7
PART 1 (Word Document)	7
PART 2 - Budget and Work Plan (Excel Document)	9
Data Collection for All Studies	10
Project Cycle	11
Eligible and Ineligible Costs	11
Grant Administration	12
APPLICATION AND SUPPORT MATERIALS.....	12
Receiving a Grant: Expectations	13
Reporting Requirements	13
Funding Distribution and Reimbursement Information	13
Open Records.....	13
Other Considerations	13
Application Tips.....	15
Applicant Checklist	15
References Sources.....	15
Appendix A: TRIAL OPTION DETAILS.....	20

OVERVIEW

Nitrogen Optimization is a process with the potential to use nitrogen in a manner that will sustain soil fertility and crop production.

The Nitrogen Optimization Pilot Program (NOPP) provides funding to agricultural producers to perform on-farm research relating to commercial nitrogen application. The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) collaborates with the Universities of Wisconsin (UW), with DATCP functioning as program administrator and UW providing technical and data support. This partnership fulfills a statutory requirement, which authorizes up to 20% of each grant award for the UW.

Fine-tuning nitrogen (N) application rates while maximizing yield is one of the things producers can do to address optimization. Understanding the most profitable N application rate under specific management scenarios can result in producer cost-savings and less N leaching into groundwater.

2027-2028 PROJECT OPTIONS

Nitrogen Response Trial Max. award of \$40,000/producer

- Discover the optimum N rate for your field, or how management practices impact optimum N rate
- Example projects: N rate trial, N rate + management, N response in specialty crops
- Effort: High

Zero-Synthetic Nitrogen Test Strip Max. award of \$6,000/producer

- What is your baseline? Learn how much N the soil is supplying, fertilizer use efficiency under your current N management, and opportunities to improve
- Zero-N test strips may include organic N sources (e.g. manure or legume credits)
- Effort: Low/Medium

Reduced Nitrogen Rate Max. award of \$6,000/producer

- Test a reduced N rate compared to current management
- Project includes 3 reduced N rate test strips (20% less than current rate)
- Effort: Low/Medium

Custom Nitrogen Research Max. award of \$10,000/producer

- Investigate other innovative strategies to optimize N use and evaluate performance through on-farm research
- NOPP team can assist in developing projects
- Effort: Medium

NOPP AWARD STIPULATIONS

Each program option has a set of requirements and a maximum budget allowed per agricultural producer. Each project is a standalone study that uses accepted field research statistical approaches to address the study question.

NOPP projects have the following stipulations:

- Multiple agricultural producers may work together to submit a single application. For example: a Nitrogen Response Trial project with two participating agricultural producers may apply for an award up to \$80,000.
- Applicants DO NOT need to factor the UW System award for monitoring and research assistance into their proposed budget. The UW System award will be calculated based on the total of all approved project budgets and will be awarded directly from DATCP to the UW System.
- Funding commitments are not final until a contract is in place that includes all parties' signatures.
- DATCP may retain payments until all required reports, data, and surveys have been submitted.
- Awards will be for a two-year project unless otherwise specified in the contract.

UNIVERSITIES OF WISCONSIN NOPP PARTNERSHIP

On behalf of all grantees, DATCP will enter into an agreement with UW to fulfill the collaboration requirement. This agreement will give authority to UW to provide data management and monitoring support to grant recipients, as required by the statute (s. 92.14(16)(c), Wis. Stats.).

COLLABORATORS

Outside of the DATCP/UW agreement, agricultural producers are encouraged to independently collaborate with other UW researchers, agricultural service providers, county conservation departments, non-profit associations, or producer-led groups. The project budget should include any expenses for these consultants. Responsibilities of the collaborator could include financial management of the grant, field assistance, or design assistance.

PROJECT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must meet all of the following:

INTENT TO APPLY

1. Submit an Intent to Apply Form outlining project basics by December 18, 2026.

- All grant applicants MUST submit an [Intent to Apply](#) form outlining basic project information to [Monica Schauer](#) or [Megan Blauwet](#) by December 18, 2026. This form is intended to provide an initial project outline; project details may be refined or revised before submitting the full application.

RESEARCH STUDY

2. The project design must be for **at least two years**, with priority given to longer-term projects.
3. The project must be **innovative**. This should be a new project for the agricultural producer or the agricultural producer's land. Priority will be given to projects that include current and emerging crop management techniques that are able to be evaluated through simple protocols and contribute to data generated by the network of on-farm trials being conducted through this program.
4. Any change to the pre-approved project design must be discussed with and approved by UW's NOPP Research Director prior to the submission of a final application. The **Intent to Apply document** with any changes must be submitted as part of the final application.
5. For the Nitrogen Response Trial and Zero-Synthetic Nitrogen Test strip, applicants agree to implement a **zero lb-N/acre** treatment. Custom Nitrogen Research projects may include a zero-N test strip, if applicable.
 - The zero lb-N/ac rate is used to determine the soil's natural N-supplying capacity. This provides a more complete understanding of nitrogen cycling in the field, allows us to estimate potentially leachable nitrogen, and improves our ability to identify economic optimum N rate.
 - For these projects, the zero-N treatment can include starter fertilizer (< 40 lb N/ac) and organic N sources, such as manure or legume credits.
 - A stipend for potential yield loss within zero-N test strips may be included in the project budget (see formula in the Budget Worksheet for allowable yield loss stipends).
 - Some valid research projects may not be able to conform to this requirement (i.e. fields with fertigation or perennial crops): contact NOPP's Research Director to discuss variances.

APPLICANTS

6. A producer agrees to voluntarily conduct commercial nitrogen optimization field studies and agrees to plan and manage on-farm research or has chosen to partner with consultants or other farmers to plan and manage the on-farm research.
7. The producer must collaborate with UW as detailed in this RFP and allow both DATCP and UW project personnel access to the trial site throughout the project duration.
8. An agricultural producer may be the grant applicant for one (1) grant project per cycle.

9. Applicants who wish to site a NOPP project on land that they do not own must consult with and obtain permission to conduct the project from the landowner.

CONTRACTING

10. **All grant applicants, agricultural producers, project managers, and financial managers must sign the NOPP Grant Contract.**
11. The agricultural producer must be an individual farmer or a group of farmers
12. The project cannot currently be funded through other state or federal programs.

DATCP NOPP APPLICATION INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE

PART 1 (WORD DOCUMENT)

- General project information
- Requested grant amount (refer to [Project Options](#) above)
- Project title
- Project focus
 - One to two sentences addressing information being sought

Applying individual/organization

- The individual who will be responsible for administration of the project during the life of the grant.
- The applicant can be an agricultural producer, an independent crop consultant, a nonprofit, county conservation department, or other organization or individual working with farmers.
- The applicant can be one of the agricultural producers involved in the project but does not have to be.
- **The applicant cannot be a UW employee.**

Agricultural producer – secures funds for the grant

- An agricultural producer is a farmer and operates a farm. They can apply in the name of their farm, but we will need the name of the individual who is legally eligible to sign a contract on behalf of the farm. Each agricultural producer on the grant is eligible for up to the maximum award based on the project type chosen.
- If an entity is the applicant (for example a county farm), there must be an associated agricultural producer by the definition above.

Financial Manager – entity payments will be made out to

- The entity who will manage the contracting, reimbursement requests, and the receipt and dispersal of funds as necessary.
- This may be the applicant, an agricultural producer, or a third party.
- Include the name and address of the financial manager to receive the grant funds upon reimbursement. If the entity is not already in the State of Wisconsin financial management system, a W-9 will be required during contracting.

Project Manager Qualifications and Contacts

- The project manager is the person/entity who will be managing the on-farm research project on behalf of the applicant.
- This person/entity will be the primary contact regarding all program management, such as submitting soil and yield data, completing field management surveys, and managing reporting.
- The project manager may be the applicant, a researcher, an agricultural producer, or a third party.

Other Organization and Collaborator Roles: If collaborating with multiple producers or entities, outline the roles and responsibilities for each.

Project Location(s): Provide a lat/long center point for each field included in the study. **Field locations may be updated if circumstances change after submittal.**

Research Study

STEP 1: Submit the approved Intent to Apply Study Summary, any approved changes, and answer applicable questions.

STEP 2: Research Study Design and Methods: Thoroughly answer questions 1-6 in the space provided or in a separate document.

Outreach efforts: outreach plans such as field days, meetings, signs, or educational materials

Equipment Purchase Request

- Pre-approval of equipment purchases of over \$2,500 is required from DATCP. Contact Susan Mockert (susan.mockert@wisconsin.gov) for pre-approval.
- If you intend to purchase equipment over \$2,500 as part of the NOPP grant, please answer the Equipment Purchase Request questions on the application form.

Additional Information

Include any additional details about the project to help reviewers assess the full project and impact.

PART 2 - BUDGET AND WORK PLAN (EXCEL DOCUMENT)

REFER TO ASSOCIATED EXCEL SPREADSHEET AND COMPLETE THE PROPOSED PROJECT BUDGET SHEET THAT MATCHES THE SELECTED PROJECT OPTION.

Examples of Eligible Costs for each Category

Category 1 – Incentives and Stipends

Project Type	Producer Stipend (per producer per project)	Zero-N Stipend
Nitrogen Response Trial	\$2,500	Yes, calculated using 0-N CalcSheet in the Application Spreadsheet
Zero-Synthetic N	\$375	Yes, calculated using 0-N CalcSheet in the Application Spreadsheet
Reduced-N Rates	\$600	No
Custom N Research	\$600	As applicable, calculated using 0-N CalcSheet in the Application Spreadsheet

Category 2 – Sampling and Analysis

Labor for plot set-up, N rate implementation, sample collection, and other field activities can be included for whoever is completing those activities, whether hired out or completed by the applicant, farmer, or project manager. UW staff time and mileage are not eligible expenses under this category.

- Field labor and laboratory costs
- Labor time for planting and harvesting
- Field sampling costs (time)
- Lab analysis fees

Category 3 – Equipment Purchase, Lease or Rental, Supplies and Materials

- Must be directly associated with research plots
- Supplies for sampling and field work (soil probe, bags, buckets, flags, Sharpies, etc.)
- Seed
- Inputs (fertilizer, pesticides, additives/biologicals to test, etc.)
- Equipment – purchases over \$2,500 require approval. Review the Equipment Purchase Request section of the NOPP application (DATCP-BLWR-009) for specifics regarding the equipment request.

Category 4 – Management Activities (Fiscal management, Outreach)

- Include collaborator/consultant services for grant administration (capped at 25% of total budget request). This 25% cap does not include payments to those same parties for labor or other time put into field operations of the trial.
- If collaborator is a county conservation employee, time/personnel covered by SWRM staffing grants cannot be reimbursed but materials may be.

Category 5 – Miscellaneous costs may include:

- Mileage (capped at \$0.51 per mile)
- Shipping/delivery of samples to lab
- Land rent
- Outreach activities such as field days (food, advertising, etc.)

Sheet 4 – Work Plan (all Applicants)

Outline activities planned over the course of the project, divided into applicable number of years. Add columns if the project will continue for more than two years. Please include the budget categories impacted by the activity (2-5) and estimated timeline for each activity.

Sheet 5 – Zero-N Calculations (where applicable)

Use this sheet to calculate yield loss for Zero-N treatment based on previous on-farm research conducted across the state. For assistance with this effort, contact Monica Schauer (monica.schauer@wisc.edu).

DATA COLLECTION FOR ALL STUDIES

NOPP priorities include the collection of data to expand knowledge of commercial nitrogen optimization across the state. Data collected from NOPP projects is looked at on an individual project basis and aggregated with other data from across the state to assess trends. The more detailed information we collect, the better we can understand the results from all trials together and provide more robust analysis and subsequent guidance.

A full explanation of data requirements will be included in contracts and during a late winter or early spring 2027 pre-growing season meeting with grant recipients. The information below is **the minimum level of information required** for each applicant to collect and report. If the proposed project cannot conform to one or more of the minimum data requirements, include this information and an explanation in the pre-approval/Intent to Apply.

The following measurements and information will be required for every study (collected and provided by the applicant):

- Routine soil analysis (pH, OM, P, and K) – analysis must be from DATCP [certified](#) lab.
- Pre-plant soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' and 1-2'
- Pre-sidedress soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' IF nitrogen will be going out at sidedress timing
- Yield (measured with calibrated yield monitor or weigh wagon)
- Field history and in-season management data (data collection survey will be provided)

Additional sampling requirements will be dependent on project topic and management system. A list of specific required and optional data collection per each study option is available in [Appendix A](#) below.

PROJECT CYCLE

- Awarded grant (Year 1). Concurrently take soil samples and put cropping practices into place to set up for the upcoming project. Retain receipts and records to submit for reimbursement consideration. Include these activities and expenses in the work plan and budget within the application.
- Implement project as detailed in the approved work plan (Years 1 and 2)
- Upon contracting, the grantee will complete background information data collection (Year 1) for each agricultural producer involved in the project.
- If needed, work with DATCP to extend projects/contracts. Please contact us as soon as possible.
- Submit progress report (Year 1) or final report (Year 2), per contract requirements.

ELIGIBLE AND INELIGIBLE COSTS

Examples of Eligible Costs:

- Soil and plant tissue sampling and analysis
- Groundwater or surface water monitoring and analysis
- Stipend payment for inclusion of zero-N strips into project, per the Application Spreadsheet
- Incentive payments for participation in study rate dependent upon chosen project
- Consultant or producer costs for coordinating project including expenses for contract and consulting services, and mileage. Project management costs are capped at 25% of the total project cost.
- Mileage reimbursement is set by the state and is currently \$0.51/mile.
- Materials and supplies directly associated with the project including inputs ONLY for the test strips/areas. Limited expenses incurred prior to contracting may be eligible for reimbursement if the activity and costs can be directly associated with the early stages of the project.
- County staff time at a rate of \$25/hour is an eligible cost under this grant as long as the county staff position is NOT already funded by DATCP SWRM grants
- Equipment purchases directly associated with the research project. **DATCP preapproval is required for equipment purchases over \$2,500.** Equipment purchase requires a statement of ownership and intended use of the product after the NOPP project is completed.
- Rental costs for equipment directly associated with research projects – must be itemized on grant budget application
- Other costs deemed as consistent with the purpose of this grant program

Examples of Ineligible Costs:

- Real estate purchases
- Repayment of loans or mortgages
- Rent or contract payments for time periods extending beyond the term of the grant contract
- County staff time that is funded by DATCP SWRM grants
- Lobbying activities
- Inputs (e.g. fertilizer, seed) and management costs not associated with the research project area
- Calculated potential yield losses due to lower-than-normal nitrogen application, with the exception of the zero-N plots/strips
- Other costs deemed by DATCP as not consistent with the purpose of this grant program

GRANT ADMINISTRATION

\$1 million is available for grants in this funding cycle. Funding for grant reimbursements will be available once both parties sign the contract and for activities no earlier than January 1, 2027. Contracts will be for a minimum of two years. The grant recipient may submit a written request to DATCP to extend the contract one additional year if they have funds remaining.

APPLICATION AND SUPPORT MATERIALS

1. [Research Protocols](#)
2. [Intent To Apply NOPP.docx](#)
3. [Part 1 of the Application](#) (Word document)
4. [Part 2 of the Application](#) (Excel spreadsheet), referenced as the Application Spreadsheet in the RFP. The Application Spreadsheet has five tabs to be used:
 - a. Budget Form (three options, only complete the one corresponding with the research option chosen)
 - b. Work Plan Form
 - c. Zero-N reimbursement calculations

➡ Submit applications to DATCPNOPP@wisconsin.gov.

➡ Applications must be submitted no later than **January 15, 2027, by 11:59 p.m.**

COMPLIANCE

An agricultural producer and the UW System institution collaborating with the agricultural producer in implementing a project under this subsection may not be held civilly liable and may not be subject to any

remedial action or other administrative or enforcement action from DATCP or the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for any discharge of environmental pollution from the land involved in the project, if the actions were taken in good faith by the agricultural producer and the institution and conformed to the project specifications proposed to the department in the grant application. (s. 92.14(16)(f), Wis. Stats).

RECEIVING A GRANT: EXPECTATIONS

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grant recipients are required to submit an **annual report** for each year the project is in place using the DATCP-provided form, which will be made available on the DATCP NOPP webpage. Content to be included in the report will be outlined in the grant contract between the agricultural producer and DATCP. Annual reports will be due no later than March 1 of the following year. Grant recipients will be required to provide quantitative information detailed in the annual report form as well as provide all required data, in the format requested, to the UW System institute. DATCP staff, in partnership with UW, will complete a program report.

FUNDING DISTRIBUTION AND REIMBURSEMENT INFORMATION

Awards will be distributed through a reimbursement process upon receipt of the reimbursement request(s), required receipts and other supporting documentation. Reimbursement may only be requested for activities completed after the signing of the grant contract, with the following exceptions:

- Soil tests completed in the fall prior to contracting, if approved as part of the application
- Installation of cropping practices one season prior that are demonstrably necessary for the project baseline. Please discuss the necessity of the practice.

A detailed invoice for expenses including **all** receipts, purchases made or services provided will be required at the time reimbursement requests are made. Reimbursement requests must use the DATCP reimbursement request form and submit all receipts and invoices associated with their reimbursement request.

OPEN RECORDS

Applications submitted along with all related contracts and reports are subject to disclosure under public records law. If the grant applicant or recipient requests any information be deemed a trade secret, the document should be labeled using “trade secret” and the requested status should be noted to DATCP when the document is submitted. Such information may be kept confidential by DATCP only as authorized by law (refer to s. 19.36(5), Wis. Stats.).

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

All applications submitted in response to this RFP become the property of DATCP. The agency reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, otherwise use, and to authorize others to use materials produced under this grant agreement. Statistical summaries and general information about the overall project will be used for presenting research findings and in preparing reports with the grantees and other interested parties.

DATCP also reserves the right to:

- Post content from funded applications to the DATCP website.
- Use photos, outreach materials, and publications generated as part of the projects or taken by DATCP staff, project collaborators, or others to promote program successes and activities.
- Reject any or all applications received based on eligibility, funding available, and scoring.
- Waive or modify minor irregularities in applications received, after prior notification and agreement of applicant.
- Amend program specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to potential applicants.
- Require a good faith effort on the part of the applicant to work with DATCP after project completion to develop or implement project results in Wisconsin.
- Withhold any payments if contract conditions are not met.

EXPECTATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

NOPP research projects are designed to last for at least two years. If the timing of the project needs to be adjusted for any reason, a contract amendment must be completed.

If a multi-producer project has a producer who drops out of the project prior to or during the research project, the contract, budget, and work plan will need to be updated to reflect the total available award for the number of remaining producers. Any reimbursements that have already occurred for expenses garnered by the producer while part of the project will not be recalled. Expenses by the producer who is leaving the project will not be reimbursed from the time of the removal.

If for any reason a grantee is unable to fulfill the two-year timeline, the producer will need to work with UW's NOPP Research Director to determine the minimum data required for the time the research project was active. Costs encumbered during Year 1 will remain valid and reimbursable.

If a grantee wishes to continue a project past the two-year timeline, consult with DATCP to determine the scope of remaining budget and goals of research moving forward. In specific cases, an extension of the project may be possible, but no further grant monies will be made available without applying for a new grant award.

Stipends are to be used to incentivize producers to participate in NOPP. Zero-N stipends are only available for acres receiving no commercial nitrogen as part of the research study. Low nitrogen acres are not available for stipends. Plots receiving some N in starter fertilizer are eligible for the reimbursement.

APPLICATION TIPS

Consider the following tips and suggestions while completing the grant application:

- Be clear and concise. Members of the review panel may not work with you directly and will need background information on the project to fully understand the intentions of the project.
- Review the evaluation criteria included at the end of this RFP to make sure the application addresses all applicable criteria in your application.
- Included all the items listed in the Application Checklist (below).
- Include a clear and realistic budget and budget explanation so reviewers can understand what each line item will be used for and how it relates to the overall project.
- Have a partner review your application before you submit.
- Consult with UW on all projects to obtain pre-approval from UW. Keep receipts for approved activities such as soil sampling that may occur prior to the contract start.

APPLICANT CHECKLIST

A complete application includes:

- ☐ UW-approved [Intent to Apply](#)
- ☐ Application Word form with all required fields completed and fully signed
- ☐ Application Excel form with budget sheet and work plan completed
- ☐ Separate documents as needed to describe and document the proposed project
- ☐ Application Spreadsheet with completed budget, work plan, and zero-N calculations
- ☐ Map of project area

[REFERENCES SOURCES](#)

For grant management:

[FAQ for Application](#)

For study project design and data collection:

[Research Protocols](#)

EVALUATION CRITERIA – Nitrogen Response Trial

Completeness of Proposal	
Proposal includes all required documentation and fulfills program goals and priorities.	Required
Proposal meets all program eligibility requirements.	Required
Project demonstrates a plan to incorporate new practices and/or testing methods to analyze nitrogen use.	Required
Project plan	25
Two-year research project design is detailed, complete, and ready to start in 2027.	5
Project demonstrates innovative approach to nitrogen optimization.	5
Project incorporates technology into design.	5
Project includes outreach/education plans.	5
Project plan is clear and accurately represents the proposed research project.	5
Anticipated Results/Metrics Provided	25
Project demonstrates that it will contribute to commercial nitrogen optimization knowledge.	5
Project plan includes collecting more data than baseline requirements.	5
Project contains a zero-N test plot or strip.	5
Applicant acknowledges how project data will be shared with the UW entity and accepts responsibility for this task.	5
Research pertains to a specialty crop with need for improvements in nitrogen management.	5
Organization/Commitment	15
Applicant is associated with a project manager to complete the research project (e.g., Producer-Led group, watershed group, agronomist) or has demonstrated expert level of on-farm research.	5
Efforts by the agricultural producer/group are complementary to other local and state programs rather than duplicative.	5
Grant applicant is clear on the roles and responsibilities of all parties of the project.	5
Budget	15
Justification exists for each budget item. Budget items are clear, specific, and meet the program requirements.	5
UW activities are not included as an expense in the budget.	5
Budget items and work plan tasks are clearly linked.	5
Priorities	20
Project is related to or located in an area with known data gaps related to commercial nitrogen optimization for the commodity type, soils and/or water.	5
Project includes producers new to NOPP.	5
Length of the study is projected to be greater than two growing seasons or is continuation of previous research.	5
Match is provided.	5
Total Points	100

EVALUATION CRITERIA – Zero-N / Reduced N	
Completeness of Proposal	
Proposal includes all required documentation and fulfills program goals and priorities.	Required
Proposal meets all program eligibility requirements.	Required
Project demonstrates a plan to incorporate new practices and/or testing methods to analyze nitrogen use.	Required
Project plan	20
Two-year project design is detailed, complete, and ready to start in 2027.	10
Project includes more than one field in the region.	5
Project includes outreach/education plans.	5
Anticipated Results/Metrics Provided	25
Project demonstrates that it will contribute to nitrogen use knowledge.	5
Project plan includes required data collection.	5
Project contains required zero-N test plot or reduced N strips.	5
Project plan includes collecting more data than baseline requirements.	5
Applicant acknowledges project data will be shared with UW entity and accepts responsibility for this task.	5
Organization/Commitment	20
Applicant is associated with a project manager to complete the research project (e.g., Producer-Led group, LCD, watershed group, agronomist) or has demonstrated expert level of on-farm research.	10
Efforts by the agricultural producer/group are complementary to other local and state programs rather than duplicative.	5
Grant applicant is clear on the roles and responsibilities of all parties of the project.	5
Budget	15
Justification exists for each budget item. Budget items are clear, specific, and meet the program requirements.	5
UW expenses are not included as line items in the budget.	5
Budget items and work plan tasks are clearly linked.	5
Priorities	20
Project is related to or located in an area with known data gaps related to commercial nitrogen optimization for the commodity type, soils and/or water; or in areas of high risk of nitrate leaching.	10
Project includes producers new to NOPP.	5
Match is provided.	5
Total Points	100

EVALUATION CRITERIA – CUSTOM NITROGEN TRIAL		
Completeness of Proposal		
Proposal includes all required documentation and fulfills program goals and priorities.		Required
Proposal meets all program eligibility requirements.		Required
Project demonstrates a plan to incorporate new practices and/or testing methods to analyze nitrogen use.		Required
Project plan		35
Two-year research project design is detailed, complete, and ready to start in 2027.		10
Project has a clear objective and scientifically-sound research design, including replication, control treatment)		10
Project incorporates technology into design.		5
Project includes outreach/education plans.		5
Project plan is clear and accurately represents the proposed research project.		5
Anticipated Results/Metrics Provided		15
Project demonstrates that it will contribute to commercial nitrogen optimization knowledge.		5
Project plan includes collecting more data than baseline requirements.		5
Research pertains to a specialty crop with need for improvements in nitrogen management.		5
Organization/Commitment		25
Applicant is associated with a project manager to complete the research project (e.g., producer-led group, watershed group, agronomist) or has demonstrated expert level of on-farm research.		10
Efforts by the agricultural producer/group are complementary to other local and state programs rather than duplicative.		5
Grant applicant is clear on the roles and responsibilities of all parties of the project.		5
Budget		15
Justification exists for each budget item. Budget items are clear, specific, and meet the program requirements.		5
UW expenses are not included as line items in the budget.		5
Budget items and work plan tasks are clearly linked.		5
Priorities		15
Project is related to or located in an area with known data gaps related to commercial nitrogen optimization for the commodity type, soils, and/or water.		5
Length of the study is projected to be greater than two growing seasons. (3 pts. for two-year project; 5 pts. for more than two years).		5
Match is provided.		5
Total Points		100

Nitrogen Response Trial (*N rate, N rate + management, and specialty crops*)

Nitrogen response trial

- Requirements
 - Minimum six N rates. More nitrogen rates will strengthen application.
 - Rates equally spaced out. Minimum rate of 0, max rate 40% higher than grower standard.
 - Each rate must be replicated four times and randomized.
 - Required data collection
 - Routine soil sample
 - Pre-plant soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' and 1-2'
 - Pre-sidedress soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' IF nitrogen will be going out at sidedress timing
 - Yield (*measured with calibrated yield monitor or weigh wagon*)
 - Field history and management data (*data collection survey will be provided*)
 - Manure sample and analysis (*if field received manure*)
 - Cover crop sample and analysis (*if cover crop grown on that field*)
 - Irrigation nitrogen content (*one sample/field for irrigated fields*)
 - Additional suggested measurements to strengthen application
 - Post-harvest soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' and 1-2'
 - Soil health analysis
 - Corn ear leaf
 - Stalk nitrate
 - Grain %N
- Expected outcomes
 - Yield response curve predicting yield across nitrogen rates within the range of nitrogen applied
 - Economic and agronomic optimum nitrogen rate for the field
 - Predictability/correlation of any sampling to yield by nitrogen rate
 - Contribution to statewide nitrogen recommendations

Nitrogen response trial with additional treatment

- Requirements
 - Minimum four N rates, more nitrogen rates will strengthen application.
 - Four rates: 0, grower “business as usual,” and a rate 25% above and 25% below.
 - 5+ rates: Rates equally spaced out. Minimum rate of 0, max rate <40% higher than grower standard.
 - Each rate and treatment must be replicated four times and randomized.

- Required data collection
 - Routine soil sample
 - Pre-plant soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' and 1-2'
 - Pre-sidedress soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' IF nitrogen will be going out at sidedress timing
 - Yield (*measured with calibrated yield monitor or weigh wagon*)
 - Field history and management data (*data collection survey will be provided*)
 - Manure sample and analysis (*if field received manure*)
 - Cover crop sample and analysis (*if cover crop grown on that field*)
 - Irrigation nitrogen content (*one sample/field for irrigated fields*)
- Additional suggested measurements to strengthen application
 - Post-harvest soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' and 1-2'
 - Soil health analysis
 - Corn ear leaf
 - Stalk nitrate
 - Grain %N
- Expected outcomes
 - If only four N rates
 - Detect differences in yield based on treatment and N rate. Determine nitrogen rate (limited to N rates applied) that led to highest yield and comparison by treatment.
 - Assess whether differences in soil nitrogen and any additional sampling taken were caused by treatment (i.e. cover crop, manure, etc.).
 - Contribution to statewide nitrogen recommendations
 - If more than four N rates
 - Yield response curve predicting yield across nitrogen rates within the range applied for each treatment. Economic and agronomic optimum nitrogen rate for the specific field AND comparison of these values between treatments.
 - Predictability/correlation of any samples to yield by nitrogen rate and treatment
 - Assess treatment differences to soil nitrogen and any additional sampling taken. Contribution to statewide nitrogen recommendations.

Specialty crops

- Requirements
 - Trial design and treatments may vary depending on crop, management system, and research question.
 - Replication and randomization should be included when applicable.
 - Required data collection
 - Routine soil sample
 - Field history and management data (*data collection survey will be provided*)
 - Yield and quality (yield monitor, weigh wagon, or hand harvest)

- Additional suggested measurements if applicable.
 - Pre-plant soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' and 1-2'
 - Pre-sidedress soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' IF nitrogen will be going out at sidedress timing
 - Irrigation nitrogen content (*1 sample/field for irrigated fields*)
 - Post-harvest soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' and 1-2'
 - Soil health analysis
 - Plant tissue

Zero-Synthetic Nitrogen Test Strip

- Requirements
 - Zero-N test strip (strip that does not receive any commercial N aside from that in starter, < 40 lb N/ac)
 - Two fields per year per producer
 - Required data collection:
 - Routine soil test (*one sample/field*)
 - Pre-plant nitrate and ammonium (*one sample at 0-1' and 1-2'*)
 - Pre-sidedress nitrate and ammonium (*or in-season sampling if all N was applied at plant*) (*one sample per zero-N and with-N at 0-1'*)
 - Post-harvest nitrate and ammonium (*one sample per zero-N and with-N at 0-1' and 1-2'*)
 - Grain nitrogen content for corn grain fields (*one sample per zero-N and with-N*)
 - Yield (*measured with calibrated yield monitor or weigh wagon*)
 - Field history and management data (*data collection survey will be provided*)
 - Manure sample and analysis if field received manure this crop year (*one sample per application, if able*)
 - Cover crop sample and analysis if cover crop grown on that field (*one sample per field*)
 - Irrigation nitrogen content (*one sample/field for irrigated fields*)
 - Eligible to explore additional measurements, as long as budget allows: soil health analysis, whole plant N content, cover crop forage quality, leaf tissue samples, additional samples of required data for more accurate results, or other metrics
- Expected outcomes
 - Determine nitrogen fertilizer use efficiency under your current N management, N supplied from the soil (and any organic N sources if applicable), and unused fertilizer N as an indicator of water quality risk.
 - This project provides insights into N dynamics for an individual field and evaluates how efficiently N is being used under current management and growing conditions. This serves as a first step to consider if there are opportunities to improve N use; however, it does not inform optimum N rates for that field.

- Contribution to statewide NUE database

Reduced-Nitrogen Rate

- Requirements
 - Three reduced N rate test strips, where the reduced N rate is 20% less N than the current rate.
 - Required data collection:
 - Routine soil test (*one sample/field*)
 - Pre-plant nitrate and ammonium (*three samples/field at 0-1' and 1-2'*)
 - Pre-sidedress nitrate and ammonium IF nitrogen will be going out at sidedress timing (*three samples/field at 0-1'*)
 - Yield (*measured with calibrated yield monitor or weigh wagon*)
 - Field history and management data (*data collection survey will be provided*)
 - Manure analysis (*one sample per application if manure applied during this crop year*)
 - Cover crop sample and analysis if cover crop grown on that field (*one sample/field*)
 - Irrigation nitrogen content (*one sample/field for irrigated fields*)
 - Additional suggested measurements to strengthen application
 - Post-harvest soil nitrate and ammonium 0-1' and 1-2'
 - Soil health analysis
 - Corn ear leaf
 - Stalk nitrate
 - Grain %N
- Expected outcomes
 - Evaluate yield, water quality risk, and economic return across two N rates to understand if there is opportunity to reduce commercial N applied.
 - Results provide a step into investigating and evaluating nitrogen management for individual fields, but do not inform optimum N rates or management practices for that field.
- **Custom Nitrogen Research** Data collection may differ from standard nitrogen response trials and should be tailored to the objectives of the study. Reach out with any questions on what measurements would address your research question.
 - Examples of data that could be included:
 - Routine soil test
 - Pre-plant nitrate and ammonium 0-1' and 1-2'

- Pre-sidedress nitrate and ammonium (*or in-season sampling if all N was applied at plant*)
 - Post-harvest nitrate and ammonium 0-1' and 1-2'
 - Yield (*measured with calibrated yield monitor or weigh wagon*)
 - Field history and management data (*data collection survey will be provided*)
 - Manure analysis (*if manure applied*)
 - Cover crop approximate height, surface cover, biomass, and nutrient uptake (*if cover crop grown on that field*)
 - Grain nitrogen content
 - Irrigation nitrogen content (*one sample/field for irrigated fields*)
- Eligible to explore additional pieces of data, as long as budget allows (ex: cover crop forage quality, whole plant N content, leaf tissue samples, soil health metrics, etc.)
- Expected outcomes
 - Evaluate the impact of the proposed management practice, technology, or other treatment on agronomic, economic, or environmental outcomes.