



Northern State University Local Roots Grant - Call for applications

Purpose

The South Dakota Board of Regents has generously allocated funds for Northern State University (NSU) to advance research and commercialization, drive economic growth and diversification, and to develop a strategy that aligns with the [South Dakota Science and Technology Plan 2030](#). While acknowledging the South Dakota Governor's Office of Economic Development's priority areas, the NSU proposal will focus on strengthening agriculture and food infrastructure in northeast South Dakota. Towards this goal, the Local Roots grant was developed to support entrepreneurs and local startups and in the following industries:

- Agriculture
- Environmental solutions
- Health, food, and nutrition

The Local Roots grant awards funds of up to \$5,000.00 for small businesses to expand or enhance existing services. Additionally, grant recipients will provide an opportunity for 1-2 undergraduate students to assist with business development or activities during the academic year or early summer, which runs from November 2025 to December 2026. These engagement opportunities allow students to gain real world experience, connect students to their region, and serve as a cornerstone of a NSU education. Guidelines for student involvement are described below.

There are \$15,000.00 of available funds for award applicants.

Eligibility & Requirements

Businesses eligible for Local Roots support must already be in existence (i.e. the business is currently able to provide a service), or be able to communicate a clearly defined business plan for project execution on or before December 31, 2026. Business plans and applications will be reviewed by NSU's Research Advisory Committee.

Recipients who have not yet launched their business must submit a business plan (see below) and are required to participate in the 8-week Idea to Market program offered by the Northern Innovation and Startup Center; this program is designed to help aspiring entrepreneurs develop their business plan. The program is offered in the spring both virtually and in-person, and sessions are recorded in the event of schedule conflicts.

All award recipients are required to schedule at least 1 meeting with the SD Small Business Development Center before funds are released.

Guidelines for Undergraduate Student Involvement

How would you like NSU students to help you? Student assistants can help with marketing, communications, field work, social media management, outreach, etc. If your application is funded we will connect you with at least 1 student when you receive your award notification. This is NOT intended to be a large time burden on business owners. Each student should contribute 15 hours of service by December 1, 2026.

How to apply

Use the application template to complete your proposal. If the business has not yet launched a business plan should be submitted along with the application. Business plan guidelines are available in Appendix I.

Application Submission

Applications should be submitted via email to Dr. Samantha St. Clair at samantha.stclair@northern.edu. Applications should be either in the form of a word document or PDF. For questions pertaining to the application process, please contact Dr. Samantha St. Clair at samantha.stclair@northern.edu.

The application period is now open! Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis, with the first submissions receiving priority consideration. If award monies remain, we will consider additional applications as they are submitted.

Application Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Feasibility – Are plans for the allotted funds realistic? Students must be able to participate within the academic year.
- Clarity – Are plans for the requested money clearly described? If permits or collaborations are required to use funds, what is the status of the situation?
- Public benefits to the Aberdeen area – Does the application describe how receiving funds have a meaningful impact in Northeast South Dakota and strengthen the industries areas defined in the “purpose” section of page 1?
- Quality of business plan (if applicable) – Are ideas and research well thought-out and supported by research or evidence?

Unallowable Costs

The following costs are not allowable and will be removed from the approved budget if an application is funded:

- Salaries, wages, stipends, or other compensation
- Travel insurance

Appendix I (Not applicable if you’ve already launched your business)

Local Roots Award - Business Plan Outline

The following information is provided from the SD SBDC business planning guide, which can be found [here](#). **As stated in the call for applications, if your business has already launched you do NOT need to write a full business plan.** If your business has not yet launched, please develop a plan that addresses the elements below. Every business plan is unique, as is every business. This guide was designed with a general purpose in mind; therefore, some things may not apply to your business. There may be additional topics you want to add specific to your business.

Executive Summary: This portion should be brief; usually one or two paragraphs, but it should give the reader an overview of what you want to accomplish. For example, describe your idea, how much money you need, what you need it for, how much money you will bring (or have put) into the business, and a brief schedule of your goals. Since you won't know some of these facts until you complete your business plan, write this section last (but put it at the beginning of the business plan).

Suggested length: ½ page

Business: (See Details on Page 12) The business portion of the business plan provides an overview of your planned business operation. You should briefly describe your product/service and how you will maintain a sustainable competitive advantage. Include the regulations that apply to your business as well as the facilities and equipment you need to operate the business.

Additional guidance on this section is provided on page 12 of the SDBC business planning guide.

Suggested length: ½ page

Market: (See Details on Pages 14 and 15) The marketing plan includes information on the total market with an emphasis on your target market, competition and how you plan to make and promote your product/service available. Additional guidance on this section is provided on pages 14-15 of the SDBC business planning guide.

Suggested Length: ½ page

Money: (See Details on Page 16) The money section of your business plan will show past, current and projected financial activity. Describe how award money will be used to support the business. Additional guidance on this section is provided on page 16 of the SDBC business planning guide.

Suggest length: 1 page

Exhibits: Include documents needed to support the business plan. Examples include resumes, purchase agreements, bids, contracts, floor plans, etc.

A helpful hint: While the length guidance pertains to text, graphs and images are useful ways to convey information. We encourage the use of visuals where appropriate.