

To: State Board of Agriculture Research and Education

From: Shana Forster, NCREC Director

Re: NCREC SBARE Requests

Thank you for the opportunity to present the funding needs of the NDSU North Central Research Extension Center located near Minot, ND.

Thank you for your previous support of the equipment storage shed projects that were funded during the prior ND Legislative session. This new building will allow for our research field equipment to be properly stored all year. We look forward to completing this project next summer and are currently working with main campus to finalize the specifications.

Our first SBARE request is expanded technical support for the NCREC research agronomy program. In order to expand our current agronomy research projects to address critical issues of farmers and ranchers, a state-funded position is needed. Dr. Leandro Bortolon was hired as the NCREC research agronomist in September of 2023. He has experience in agronomy and soils-based research and the ability to increase our current agronomy-based research footprint significantly. This includes on-farm research to address critical issues such as nutrient use efficiency, soil acidity, biological inputs, cover crops use, and crop management that is crucial to support farmers by providing more local data from across the region. The expanded off-station locations will increase the number of research environments, increasing our ability to make variety recommendations and crop inputs. With these actions, an additional work load is expected and a state-funded position is crucial to support the agronomy program as it expands to meet the stakeholders demands. This request is supported by the NCREC Board of Visitors and ND Crop Improvement and Seed Association. We ask that you support a state-funded research specialist at the NCREC.

Our second request is state-funded support of the NCREC grape research program. Minot was initially determined to be the best location to evaluate winter-hardiness when the program was initiated a decade ago. This program would work with existing vineyards within the NDSU system to continue to identify promising grape lines for release. Currently, there is no FTE within the system that is solely dedicated to grape research at NDSU. The NCREC has supported a grant-funded technician that has been with the program since inception. Ideally, a research scientist trained in enology, lab, field and breeding would collaborate with the current ND industry to identify research needs and priorities, as well as be the project leader for the program. The NCREC has the facilities to complete field and lab evaluations. In a centralized location, a research scientist with funded technical support will move the program forward. The wine industry of ND is the definition of a value-added. This program is supported by the Winery Association of ND and Pointe of View Winery. We ask that you support a state-funded research scientist and technical support position at the NCREC for the grape research project.

Our final request is increased operating support for the NCREC so we can continue to provide the research and Extension programming at the highest levels.

In addition to the ranked SBARE items, we also ask for approval to continue discussions on a potential land purchase from one of our long-term landlords. One parcel is approximately 40 A, near the NCREC. The other parcel could be up to 80 A, which is adjacent to the NCREC.

