



January 5, 2026

The North Dakota State Board of Agricultural Research and Education (SBARE)
NDSU Dept 7520
P.O. Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050

Dear SBARE Leadership,

The NorthHarvest Bean Growers Association (NBGA) represents 2,800 farm families that grow dry edible beans in North Dakota and Minnesota. The mission statement of NBGA is the largest group of dry bean farmers in America, working together to fund research, promote, and produce the finest beans in the world. We appreciate how closely SBARE has worked with our commodity group over the past many years, and we look forward to building on that relationship into the future.

I will be including a proposal that is coming to the SBARE board from the NDSU Department of Agribusiness & Applied Economics (AAE). AAE is requesting program support for the new Center for Agricultural Policy and Trade Studies Program. NBGA had the opportunity to work with Dr. Sandro Steinbach and Dr. Shawn Arita on a rapid response project that helped our farmers identify the cost of production losses and tariff losses pertaining to dry beans to share with USDA in asking for assistance for our farming community. Dr. Steinbach and Dr. Arita contracted with our organization on a late Thursday afternoon and had a publishable report in our hands by the following Monday! This kind of response is exactly why this Center is so critical to our farming community. The data was shared with congressional leadership and the USDA to assist the Agency in identifying the support that was needed to help North Dakota and Minnesota farmers.

You will see in this proposal a request for three FTE employees: 1) Agricultural Policy Analyst, 2) Markets and Trade Analyst, 3) Economic Impact/Contribution Specialist. The proposal seeks support for Graduate and Undergraduate Assistants that will provide support to the Analyst that are under extreme time restraints for rapid response projects critical to the policy environment in Washington D.C. or right here at home with the North Dakota Legislature. There are only a handful of policy centers across the United States, and we are very thankful NDSU houses the policy center for the upper Midwest.

The dry bean industry lacks the needed data to make strong business decisions. We have not received the kind of support that is needed from USDA. We believe the Policy Center can provide us with the needs that lack at USDA. To have this resource in our region will only elevate the agriculture of North Dakota and we support the proposal that is submitted to SBARE.

We sincerely hope you will select this proposal to receive funding.

Regards,

Mitchell Coulter
Executive Director

SBARE

Received for SBARE via online submission 1/5/2026 - Mitchell Coulter

SBARE Proposal: Center for Agricultural Policy and Trade Studies Program in Policy, Markets, and Impact Analysis

Department of Agribusiness & Applied Economics (AAE), North Dakota State University

Summary

The Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics proposes sustained program support for the Center for Agricultural Policy and Trade Studies (CAPTS) to deliver decision-focused analysis on agricultural policy, markets, trade, logistics, and economic impact for North Dakota. The program supports three analyst roles: Agricultural Policy Analyst, Markets and Trade Analyst, and Economic Impact/Contribution Specialist, plus core data, tools, and outreach capacity. Delivery runs through CAPTS in coordination with AAE, NDSU Extension, and the NDAES Research Extension Centers (RECs) so that analysis moves efficiently into producer guidance, stakeholder briefings, and legislative decision support statewide and at the federal level.

Working title: CAPTS Program in Policy, Markets, and Impact Analysis (three analyst FTEs and program support)

Effort distribution: Each analyst role integrates research and extension duties (approximately 70% research and 30% extension), with AAE faculty affiliates contributing to research design and outreach.

Primary collaborators: NDAES, NDSU Extension, CAPTS, RECs, the North Dakota Department of Agriculture, North Dakota Tax Department, commodity and livestock groups, logistics and energy stakeholders, and federal and state agency partners.

Rationale and Need

North Dakota agriculture is large, export-reliant, and closely connected to external markets and policy. Market shifts, transportation disruptions, and evolving legislation can quickly move into local prices, basis, and farm and ranch profitability. A standing program is needed to translate these developments into timely, North Dakota-specific guidance for producers, agribusinesses, and public leaders. Transportation conditions have introduced recurring bottlenecks and cost pressures that affect marketing windows and delivered values. At the same time, fuel and renewable content requirements, conservation and working-lands programs, and other policy actions have measurable effects on crop and livestock markets.

Producers and agencies require consistent, transparent analysis that links these developments to in-state implications.

Farm and ranch finances face mixed conditions, with input costs, interest rates, and revenues varying by sector and region. Livestock supplies and crop yields continue to shift with weather and global demand, raising the value of timely, practical analysis at the state scale. Risk management programs and market tools are updated regularly, and adoption varies across regions and enterprises. Producers, lenders, and local educators need recurring translation of program and market changes, paired with decision tools that reflect North Dakota patterns. North Dakota has invested in this platform through centers, tools, and experiential learning. Programmatic support will secure analyst capacity, data pipelines, and statewide delivery so outputs are timely, consistent, and actionable.

Position Responsibilities

Agricultural Policy Analyst: Provide rapid, decision-ready evaluation of policy options, budget and tax changes, conservation and working-lands programs, renewable fuel interactions, and risk-management

design; translate results into producer guidance, technical notes, and briefings timed to planning and budget calendars.

Markets and Trade Analyst: Monitor export flows, market access, logistics, and competitor actions; assess price, basis, and margin impacts for North Dakota crops and livestock; produce markets and trade briefs, outlook notes, and producer decision sheets; maintain datasets and chart packs for the Commodity Trading Room and public dashboards.

Economic Impact/Contribution Specialist: Conduct contribution and impact studies for agriculture and linked sectors, including biofuels and energy; evaluate returns to proposed investments and policies; maintain the ND Tax and Farm Models and related tools; prepare clear summary reports and presentations for stakeholder groups and agencies.

Deliverables and Outcomes for Years 1–3

Extension and outreach: statewide briefings and workshops through RECs and partner events (at least 18 per year) covering policy updates, market and trade outlooks, logistics developments, and investment and impact results; public dashboards and toolkits for policy metrics, trade indicators, basis and logistics conditions, and county-level economic contributions; technical assistance to agencies and stakeholder groups with documented use in planning and budget processes.

Research and policy: Annually produce 3 to 4 peer-reviewed articles and 10 to 12 CAPTS policy and markets briefs that quantify program costs and benefits, trade exposures, logistics risks, and energy–agriculture linkages; maintain a rapid-response memo format with two-week turnaround for priority topics; publish data notes and methods to support reuse by Extension and RECs.

Teaching and workforce: Integrate CAPTS analysts into AAE graduate and undergraduate experiences via the Commodity Trading Room, methods modules in policy and markets courses, and applied capstones; support approximately 8 to 10 graduate and undergraduate research assistants annually tied to active CAPTS projects.

Infrastructure and partnerships: Maintain and enhance the ND Tax and Farm Models for agency use; sustain market, trade, logistics, and energy data pipelines; formalize an advisory group of producers, agribusiness, logistics, and agency partners meeting twice per year to set an applied agenda and verify utility.

Alignment with SBARE and University Priorities

The program anchors policy, markets, logistics, and impact analysis for SBARE and state leadership, with quarterly CAPTS outputs that translate directly into producer guidance and public decision support. Delivery runs through NDSU Extension and the NDAES RECs, ensuring localized workshops, dashboards, and tools reach stakeholders where they operate. Documented reach, adoption, and evidence of use in agency and legislative processes are reported to SBARE and university leadership to guide priorities and resource allocation and to advance the land-grant mission.

Budget and Resources (annual, 12-month)

Salaries and benefits, three analyst FTEs: \$600,000

Graduate and undergraduate assistants: \$105,000

Data and software, including market, trade, logistics, energy, tax, and farm models, statistical tools, and hosting: \$120,000

Operating and outreach, including travel, workshops, briefs, dashboards, and web, and communications: \$75,000

Faculty affiliates and visiting experts: \$40,000

Student experiential learning, including Trading Room operations and capstone support: \$20,000

Contingency and compliance: \$40,000

Total: \$1,000,000 annual, with similar subsequent costs and planned external fundraising.

Cost-Share and Leverage

The program will seek competitive funding and contracts with agencies, industry and commodity groups, logistics and energy partners, and statewide programs. These resources will extend analyst capacity, underwrite data and dashboards, and support applied research and outreach that deliver measurable value for producers, agribusinesses, and public decision-makers.