Western SARE Competitive Grants
Research & Education
2022 Call for Pre-Proposals
Submission Deadline: May 20, 2021 12:00 pm (noon) MDT

The Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program announces the Call for Pre-proposals for Research & Education grants for 2022. With a Research and Education grant, a researcher and at least three (3) Producers work together to develop a proposal to conduct **both research and education** on a sustainable agriculture topic. Outreach activities may include on-farm/ranch demonstrations, farmer-to-farmer educational activities, and other approaches to assist producer adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. The goal of this program is to achieve results that can be communicated to producers and professionals; sustain and improve the environmental quality and natural resource base on which agriculture depends; improve the profitability of farmers/ranchers and associated agricultural businesses; and enhance the quality of life for farmers/ranchers in their local communities.

The SARE grant program mission is to advance innovations that improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life in American agriculture by investing in groundbreaking research and education. To achieve that, Western SARE believes that our programs must include the involvement of agricultural producers from inception to finish, and therefore we require producer involvement in the planning, design, implementation, and educational outreach of any funded project.

Table of Contents

Submit proposals online at:
https://projects.sare.org
Look under "Western" [region]

Research & Education Schedule

- May 20, 2021 – Pre-proposals are due by 12:00 PM (noon) MDT.
- August 2021 – Applicants are informed about their pre-proposal status
- October 28, 2021 – Full proposals of selected pre-proposals are due.
- January 2022 – A Technical Review Panel reviews and recommends full proposals for funding.
- March 2022 –WSARE Administrative Council selects full proposals for funding.

Western SARE Host Institution

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

207 Linfield Hall
Bozeman, MT 59717-2840
Phone: 406-994-4785
e-mail: wsare@montana.edu

Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Micronesia, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Sustainable Agriculture

Congress has defined sustainable agriculture as an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will over the long-term:

- Satisfy human food and fiber needs;
- Enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends;
- Make the most efficient use of non-renewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls;
- Sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and
- Enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole.

– U.S. Code Title 7, Section 3103

Western SARE Goals

Promote *good stewardship* of the nation's natural resources by providing site-specific, regional and profitable sustainable farming and ranching methods that strengthen agricultural competitiveness; satisfy human food and fiber needs; maintain and enhance the quality and productivity of soil; conserve soil, water, energy, natural resources and fish and wildlife habitat; and maintain and improve the quality of surface and groundwater.

Enhance the *quality of life* of farmers and ranchers and ensure the viability of rural communities, for example, by increasing income and employment, especially profitable self-employment and innovative marketing opportunities in agricultural and rural communities.

Protect the *health and safety* of those involved in food and farm systems by promoting food sovereignty and reducing, where feasible and practical, the use of toxic materials in agricultural production, and by optimizing on-farm resources and integrating, where appropriate, biological cycles and controls.

Promote crop, livestock, and enterprise *diversification*.

Examine the regional, *economic, social and environmental implications* of adopting sustainable agriculture practices and systems.

About Western SARE Research and Education Program

Overview: The Western SARE Administrative Council funds proposals that present creative and innovative research and Extension/educational outreach based on approaches and technologies that advance Western SARE goals (see above). All Western SARE projects *must contain both research and education components*.

Funding: Projects may be one to three years in length. Total funds requested may not exceed $350,000 over the entire budget period.

Eligible Applicants: Principal Investigators need to reside in the Western region of the United States and should have the capability to conduct both research and Extension/outreach activities. Proposed projects should be submitted from organizations that has demonstrated fiscal responsibility and expertise in sustainable agriculture, and are qualified to receive funds from the U.S. Government. Multi-state and multi-agency collaborations within the Western region are encouraged. Cross-region applications will be

considered when the Principal Investigator is in the Western region. Participants and/or cooperators can be from outside the Western region.

Multiple submissions are accepted. Only one application (from any one individual Principal Investigator) can be awarded funding in any of the Western SARE competitive programs in one grant budget cycle. An exception to this rule, are proposals submitted to the Graduate Student program, where more than one project can be awarded to a Principal Investigator (PI) who acts as main advisor of the Graduate student(s). Obtaining Graduate Student awards does not exclude the PI to be awarded an additional WSARE Research and Education or Professional Development award for the same budget cycle.

WSARE requires that agricultural producers be involved from inception to finish in the planning, design, implementation, and educational outreach of any SARE-funded project. Each of the WSARE-funded grant programs, has slightly different requirements for the composition of the project team and eligible applicants. Assemble your project team accordingly, keeping in mind the inherent interdisciplinary nature of sustainable agriculture.

1. **Farmer/Rancher Grants**: The project team must be a minimum of two (2) people and must include: A Producer (Principal Investigator & Applicant) and an Agricultural Professional. The Agricultural Professional must be independent of the Producer and should not submit the application on behalf of the Producer.
2. **Professional + Producer Grants**: The project team must be a minimum of six (6) people and must include: An Agricultural Professional (Principal Investigator, PI) and at least five (5) Producers. One of the producers must be identified as the Advisor Representative.
3. **Research and Education Grants**: The project team must be a minimum of five (5) people and must include: A Researcher (PI or Co-PI), an Extension/Outreach Representative (PI or Co-PI), and at least three (3) Producers. One of the producers must be identified as the Advisor Representative.
4. **Graduate Student Grants**: The project team must be a minimum of three (3) people and must include: A Graduate Student (Applicant), a Researcher (Principal Investigator and typically the student's major professor) and at least one (1) Producer (Advisor Representative).

Long-Term vs. Short-Term: Some research/educational outreach work in sustainable agriculture is complex and may require a collaborative interdisciplinary approach that takes many years to complete. To be effective, these   projects are likely to exceed the time limits of Western SARE's normal one-to-three-year funding cycle. Projects that are long-term (more than three years) should be identified as such by checking the appropriate box in the online pre-proposal application. Short-term projects are those that can be completed within the three-year funding cycle.

Applications for long-term projects should clearly justify the need for a long-term study to achieve **transformative changes** in agricultural sustainability. Clearly indicate the proposed length of the study; short- and long- term objectives, hypotheses, and results;

the core data set that will be gathered as well as the criteria for selecting these measures; the procedures for long-term archiving and analyzing the data; and the knowledge and educational outcomes that otherwise will be gained and why it is essential to the sustainability of agricultural systems. Long-term observational studies are discouraged.

Long-term projects that are funded will receive their funding in three-year increments. Each additional increment (up to three years) of funding will still go through a competitive full proposal process but will bypass the pre-proposal process. Long-term projects will be eligible to submit a full proposal for an additional funding cycle if the following reporting criteria are met and approved:
1. Reports are submitted in a timely manner;
2. Yearly objectives and measurable milestones are reported and met (as listed in the approved proposal).

***Public Domain*:** While pre-proposals, proposals, and reviews will remain confidential, the Western SARE program considers all funded proposals, subsequent reports, and related information to be in the public domain. See details of this stipulation in the Public Access of Research Data section in USDA Grant Policies

Western SARE will disqualify proposals before review if applicants do not follow the instructions of the Call for Proposals or submit incomplete Supporting Documents. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure all sections of the proposal are submitted before the due date.

Writing the Pre-Proposal

Pre-proposals are submitted online at http://projects.sare.org. All information pretraining the pre-proposal including basic information about the project, project summary, narrative, and supporting documents are entered online.

You can write each portion of the proposal in a word processor (e.g., Microsoft Word) and copy and paste it into the fields of the online application (be aware that some formatting features of the word processor might be lost when you paste the text in the online form). In addition to text, you can insert tables and graphs. It is best to insert tables as a table using the online editor (see: "Inserting Tables") and not as an image. Following these instructions makes your text searchable and the text will wrap and display properly when viewed on different devices. More importantly, it makes your submission ADA compliant. Attachments are preferred in pdf format but images in jpg or .png formats are accepted.

Pre-proposal Application

A.   Project Basic Information
This section prompts for general information about the project including:
- *Main* subject matter

- Research and education objectives
- Proposed starting and ending dates
- State(s) where the work of the project will be conducted
- Commodities and practices that will be involved in the project
- Partner institutions
- Budget amount to be requested
- Whether the proposed project is a long-term project
- Whether this submission is a re-submission
- How did you learn about WSARE

Please choose a start date that corresponds with the first-of-the-month. Start dates must be no earlier than April 1, 2022 and no later than October 1, 2022.

B. **Project Summary** (Limited to 300 words)

A clear and concise summary is important for the review process. The summary must include a brief description of the problem or need and a creative approach to solving it. In the summary, include the following:
- Identify a problem and research question(s)
- Describe the research and outreach components and explain how your project will creatively address the identified problem
- Identify the potential significance of the project to produce incremental and/or transformative changes in agricultural sustainability
- Explain how your project will be disseminated among agricultural stakeholders
- Enumerate and describe the expected project outcomes.

C. **Narrative**

The pre-proposal narrative includes the following sections: 1) Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture and Project Value and Benefits, 2) Stakeholder Needs and Support, 3) Project Team, 4) Research Plan, 5) Educational Plan, and 6) Timeline.

Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture, Project Value and Benefits: (15% of review criteria, limited to 500 words)

Explain why this project is necessary and how it addresses a critical need in sustainable agriculture. Identify any limitations in the current system and how your project will address them. Clearly articulate how the project and its measurable outcomes are relevant to the goals of Western SARE (see page 2). Projects should address how they:
- Sustain and improve the environmental quality and natural resource base on which agriculture depends;
- Improve the profitability of farmers/ranchers and associated agricultural businesses; *and*
- Enhance the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, communities, and society as a whole.

Describe the potential benefits and impacts for producers and agriculture in general. Where possible, provide an economic analysis, use specific estimates of impacts – such as dollars

saved per acre, tons of soil protected from erosion, pounds of chemical reduced, number of acres or people affected, markets expanded, jobs created, etc.

Stakeholder Support: (10% of review criteria, limited to 250 words)
Western SARE is committed to addressing the needs of agricultural stakeholders, both on-farm/ranch and off-farm/ranch. Proposals must include evidence that stakeholders identified the needs being addressed, as well as support for the project beyond the project team collaborators. Describing and documenting stakeholders' needs and support demonstrates that the proposed project is relevant and timely. Evidence of stakeholder identified needs and support may include, but are not limited to:

- References and citations to other studies/reports that encourage future research.
- Support letters from neighboring farmers, local co-op, stakeholder groups, such as grower organizations, or commodity commissions.
- Needs assessments that relate to the project topic (s), if they are available.

Project Team Roles (10% of review criteria, 250 words)
The project team must be a minimum of five (5) people and must include: A Researcher (PI or Co-PI), an Extension/Outreach Representative (PI or Co-PI), and at least three (3) independent Producers. One of the producers must be identified as the Advisor Representative. Describe producers' involvement at all stages of the project. For each project objective and activity, indicate who will be responsible and which team members will be involved.

Principal Investigator (PI): This person serves as the principal researcher. The PI (applicant) is responsible for coordinating the project and carrying out its contractual provisions.

Extension/outreach representative, educator, or equivalent: The outreach representative may be an Extension agent, specialist, educator, or equivalent. This person is responsible for all education and outreach activities, and might serve as Co-PI.

Producers: Producer involvement means that each producer is meaningfully involved in some aspect of the research or education activities of the project. One of the producers will be designated as the Advisor Representative. The Advisor Representative must be involved in all aspects of the project from idea inception through project completion. Each producer must be associated to independent operations. Nonprofit farm operations may participate in the project as an optional team member, but do not count as one of the three required producers. A person qualifies as a producer (farmer/rancher) if they have a *for-profit operation and*:

- Their primary occupation is farming or ranching and have a farm/ranch taxpayer identification number (TIN); *or*
- They are a part-time producer with at least $1,000 documented annual income from farming or ranching activities.

Signed and dated producer collaboration letters stating their role in the project *are expected* for each producer. However, if letters are not available at the pre-proposal

submission time, producers' e-mail confirmation of collaboration is acceptable.
Other members: Besides the aforementioned project team of five people, the team may include additional producers, researchers, educators, Co-PIs, and others with appropriate expertise for the project scope.

Research Plan (30% of review criteria, 800 words)
The mission of SARE is to advance "innovations that improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking **research** and education."

Clearly state and define the **research objectives**. Each objective should be a clear statement describing an intended achievement. Objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound. For more details see Successful Objectives.

For each objective, describe what will be done including **methods** and **materials**. What treatments or new technique(s) will be tested? What materials will be used? Describe the project site, research design, data collection, and analysis methods. Include sufficient detail so that reviewers can determine if the approaches are suitable to achieve your objectives. Avoid the use of jargon that may be unfamiliar outside your industry or specialty area and define all acronyms.

Education Plan (30% of review criteria, 800 words)
Clearly state and define the **educational objectives**. Each objective should be a clear statement describing an intended achievement. Objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound. For more details see Successful Objectives.

For each objective, describe the **outreach activities** including **methods** and **materials**. Describe how, when, and where you will conduct outreach activities (e.g., field days, demonstrations, workshops, presentations, websites, etc.). Describe who will you target (e.g., producers, stakeholders, other agricultural professionals, students, etc.). Indicate if the producers or ag professionals you intend to reach through this project are from underserved communities. Underserved communities are those that have difficulties accessing opportunities due to language, culture, location, or lack of resources. Explain how you will communicate your project's findings to producers (specifically) and the general public. Describe plans for any academic publications. Digital outcomes (e.g., podcasts, videos, and social media) are encouraged but should not be the sole outreach approach. Multiple communication materials and multiple communication styles are strongly suggested.

Timeline (5% of review criteria, 200 words)
Provide a timeline, such as a *Gantt chart* for accomplishing each objective of the Research Plan and Education Plan. Identify the major milestones and activities that will be completed, and when each of those milestones/activities will occur.

D. Supporting Documents
All supporting documents should be attached in the online grant application. PDF documents are preferred, but images in jpg and png formats are accepted.

Current Vita: Attach a current 2-page vita for the Principal Investigator and each project team member, except for producers and students.

Letters of Producer Cooperation: ***Each producer who is part of the project team must submit a signed letter of cooperation***. The letter verifies the producer's willingness to participate in the project and outlines their commitment (resources and/or time) and role in it.

Letters of Stakeholder Support: Attach letter(s) of support from stakeholder individuals and/or organizations that support the proposed research and education activities.

Citations: Attach a list of cited sources.

The Review Process

Only complete pre-proposals received by the due date will be evaluated by a review team including agricultural producers, scientists, educators, and agri-business leaders. Reviewers will make recommendations to the Western SARE Administrative Council, that will select the projects to further submit a full proposal to the Research and Education grant program. Selected pre-proposals will be notified and invited to submit full proposals by early August 2021.

Pre-proposals will be reviewed against the following criteria:

Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture	15%
Stakeholder Support	10%
Project Team	10%
Research Plan	30%
Education Plan	30%
Timeline	5%
Total	100%

How to Apply

Go to: projects.sare.org

Look under the funding opportunities of "Western Region"

We strongly encourage applicants read the entire Call for Pre-proposals before beginning to write the pre-proposal.

Pre-Proposals are due by 12 pm (noon) MDT – May 20, 2021

Resources

Check the resources in the WSARE Proposal Preparation Documents section of westernsare.org. If you have further questions, please contact our office at 406-994-4789 or wsare@msu.edu

Information on past projects can be found at https://www.westernsare.org/Projects. We encourage you to visit this website to learn more about sustainable agriculture and the Western SARE program at https://www.westernsare.org. Tips for writing proposals are available here.

The Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC) at the National Agricultural Library specializes in locating, collecting, and providing information about Sustainable Agriculture. Information specialists can answer questions, highlight resources, and share search techniques for literature reviews and background research. AFSIC has a number of resources at http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic that may be relevant to your proposal; or, contact AFSIC at 301-504-6559 or e-mail afsic@nal.usda.gov.

These NRCS Economic Tools are organized by land use and type of conservation planning analysis. Resources for economic analysis can be found here.