



Farmer/Rancher Grant Program 2024 Call for Proposals

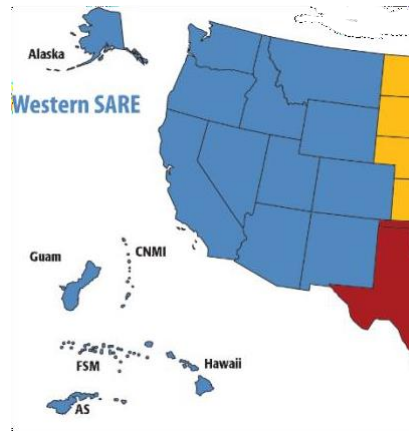
Submission Deadline:
October 25, 2023, 12:00pm (noon) MST
 Submit online at www.projects.sare.org
Required Project Team: Principal Investigator (producer) + Technical Advisor
Funding Limit: Up to \$25,000 for 1-2 producers; Up to \$29,900 for 3 or more producers
Funding decisions announced: April 2024
Contact: wsare-fr@sare.org

About the Farmer/Rancher Program

The Western SARE Farmer/Rancher Grant Program focuses on advancing on-farm sustainability solutions by funding innovative producer-driven research and outreach. With a Farmer/Rancher Grant, an agricultural producer serving as the main applicant and Principal Investigator (PI) works with a Technical Advisor (TA) to develop a project (**1-3 years in scope**) that conducts both *research and outreach* on a sustainable agriculture topic. With the support and guidance of the technical advisor, farmers and ranchers integrate research and education to conduct on-site experiments to address social, environmental, and economic aspects of agricultural sustainability.

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The Western region includes:

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

Western SARE
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Western SARE, one of four regional SARE programs, is hosted by Montana State University and is funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



About Western SARE

The Western SARE Administrative Council funds grant proposals that include creative and innovative on-farm/ranch research and educational outreach to advance Western SARE goals. All Western SARE projects *must contain both research and education components*.

What is 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.

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 ground water.
- 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 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.



Program Overview

Who can apply as Principal Investigator (PI)?

Agricultural producers in the Western region who qualify under the following USDA definition of a producer, may apply for a Farmer/Rancher grant:

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); and/or
- They are a part-time producer with at least \$1,000 (or equivalent) of documented annual income from farming or ranching activities.

Project Team

The project team must be a minimum of two (2) people and must include: A Producer serving as the Principal Investigator (PI) and a Technical Advisor (TA). The Technical Advisor must be independent of the Producer. Project teams may also include additional collaborators, such as researchers, extension agents, educators and outreach representatives, or other specialists

*The role of the **Principal Investigator (PI):***

- An individual producer serves as the project lead and Principal Investigator (PI). This person is responsible for coordinating the project and carrying out its contractual provisions, including leading the on-farm research and submitting project reports. The PI is responsible for all expenditures and for achieving the stated research and educational objectives.

*The role of the **Technical Advisor (TA):***

- A technical advisor is a professional that assists the producer(s) with the technical expertise for accomplishing their research. A technical advisor is commonly someone that supports producers at the local level such as Cooperative Extension educators/agents or specialists, University faculty or researchers, USDA-NRCS field staff, agricultural consultants, nonprofit organization staff members, etc.

What is the project time limit?

Projects may be 1-3 years in length and cannot exceed 36 months. Project start and end dates are chosen by the PI with the earliest start date being April 1, 2024.

What is the funding limit?

Proposals led by one (1) or two (2) producers, qualify as “Independent Farmer.” Three (3) or more producers working together *or* as part of a farmer/rancher-led cooperative or NGO, qualify as a “Farmer Group.”

- Independent Farmer: funding limit of \$25,000
- Farmer Group: funding limit of \$29,900

Proposal Instructions

All proposals must be submitted online at <https://projects.sare.org>. Review the submission checklist on page 12. To strengthen your submission, check the information located in the [Proposal Preparation Documents](#) section of the Western SARE [website](#).

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 online before the due date.

Multiple submissions are accepted. Only one application (from any one applicant) can be awarded for any Western SARE competitive programs in one grant budget cycle. *Multiple simultaneous projects corresponding to different grant cycles may be funded, conditional upon fulfillment of all reporting expectations, including yearly objectives and milestones being met (as listed in the approved proposal or a Project Modification).*

Project Basic Information

This section prompts general information about the project including:

- The ***main*** subject matter of the project
- The commodities and agricultural practices of the proposed project
- A list of research and educational objectives
- Proposed starting and ending dates
- The state(s) where the work will be conducted
- A brief description of your agricultural business/operation

Summary (Limit 300 words)

A clear and concise summary is important for the review process. The summary should include a brief description of the problem or need and the creative approach to solving it. ***This summary will be available to the public should the proposal receive funding.***

In the Summary, include the following:

- Identify a problem and research question(s)
- Describe the project's research and explain how it will solve the identified problem
- Identify the potential significance of the project and expected outcomes to advance sustainable agriculture
- Explain how your project will be disseminated among other agricultural stakeholders

Project Narrative

The project 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, 6) Timeline, and 7) Evaluation and Producer Adoption.

Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture, Project Value and Benefits (15% of review score; word limit: 500)

Explain why this project is necessary and how it addresses a critical need in sustainable agriculture in the Western region. Identify any limitations in the current system(s) or knowledge base and how your project will address them. Cite evidence of need, including results and recommendations from related SARE projects (www.sare.org/Project-Reports) and other studies or reports. ***Your explanation should address the three pillars of sustainability (social, environmental, and economic) described on page 2.***

Describe the potential benefits for producers (local, state, or regional) and sustainable agriculture in general. For example, provide an economic analysis and explain how your project would affect overall agricultural productivity levels, operational profits, soil or water quality or quantity, and rural/agricultural communities. Where possible, 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.

Stakeholders Needs and Support (5% of review score; word limit: 250)

Western SARE is committed to addressing the needs of agricultural stakeholders. Proposals must include evidence that identified needs of stakeholders are being addressed and that support for the project exists beyond the team collaborators. Describing and documenting stakeholder needs and support demonstrates that the proposed project is relevant and timely. Evidence of stakeholder support may be demonstrated through:

- Unique letters of support or recommendations from individuals or relevant stakeholder groups/organizations, such as neighboring farmers, grower cooperatives, commodity commissions, or other agricultural professionals or farmer groups. Please describe any letters of support here and upload them under "Stakeholder Letters of Support" in the "Supporting Documents" section at the end of your proposal.
- References and citations to other studies and reports that encourage future research or identify gaps in the existing knowledge base
- Needs assessments that relate to the project topic(s), if they are available

Project Team Members and Roles (5% of review score; word limit: 200)

The project team must be a minimum of two (2) people and must include: A Producer (Principal Investigator) and a Technical Advisor. The Technical Advisor must be independent of the Producer. If more than one producer is involved, each producer must be an independent and separate operator. ***Farmers and ranchers serve as the lead applicant and both the PI (producer) and Technical Advisor must register in the grant management system to access and manage the project details and reporting requirements.***

For each project objective, indicate who will be responsible and which team member(s) will be involved in the research and dissemination activities.

- Provide a brief description of each team member's background and expertise to demonstrate that they have the appropriate knowledge and skills to complete the proposed project.
- For each project objective and activity, indicate who will be responsible and which team members will be involved.

Detail the specific role of the Principal Investigator, Technical Advisor, and other project team member(s), especially how a **farmer or rancher is the lead** on this project. *The lead producer must be involved at all stages of the project.*

Research Plan (30% of review score; word limit: 1000)

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.

- Clearly describe the project site, research design, data collection, and methods of analysis. Include sufficient detail so that reviewers can determine if the approaches used are suitable to achieve your objectives.
- Demonstrates awareness of previous work and/or alternative approaches to the problem.
- Describe the tools and materials that will be utilized to conduct your research.
- Explain how the successful completion of your objectives will be measured and evaluated.
- If possible, describe how your research will be conducted in an innovative way or provides an innovative approach to solving the problem.

It is helpful to list the objectives and describe the materials and methods you will use for the achievement of each objective. Please define all acronyms and avoid the use of jargon that may be unfamiliar outside your industry or specialty area.

Education Plan (30% of review score; word limit: 1000)

Clearly state and define the educational objectives, emphasizing the diversity of outreach strategies that will be utilized to reach a diverse audience. 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, community presentations, videos, podcasts, social media, etc.), including dates and locations of events.
- Describe who you will target (e.g., producers, stakeholders, students, agricultural professionals, etc.) and 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.
- Provide a list of educational resources (e.g., factsheets, PowerPoint presentations, handouts, brochures, 4-H publications, videos, posters, etc.) you plan to produce.
- Explain how you will communicate your project's findings to producers (specifically) and the general public.
- If possible, explain how your education plan is innovative and engages multiple media outlets for disseminating results.

It is helpful to list the objectives and describe the materials and methods you will use for the achievement of each objective. Multiple communication materials and multiple communication styles are strongly recommended.

Timeline (5% of review score; word limit: 500)

Provide a timeline that outlines the research and educational activities for each month of your project's duration. Identify the major milestones and activities that will be completed, and when each of those milestones/activities will occur, as well as how they relate back to the objective(s). Timelines must be realistic and outcomes should be feasible in the amount of time proposed.

Timelines may be entered as text, tables (using the "[insert table](#)" feature in the toolbar), or by inserting media such as a [Gantt Chart](#).

Example of timeline inserted using the "table" icon in the text box toolbar:

Date	Activities	Team members
April 2023	Soil samples taken for baseline data; pictures taken for educational materials to demonstrate before/after	PI (name), TA (name) supports with soil sampling and analysis
May-June 2023	Establish cover crop plots, seed cover crop, and apply biochar	PI (name)
July-August 2023	Monitor growth and conduct first field day (Aug. 18th)	PI (name), TA (name) organizes and supports field day demonstration
September 2023	Pictures from field day demonstration shared on social media; terminate cover crops using roller crimper and evaluate crop residue	PI (name)

Evaluation and Producer Adoption (5% of review score; word limit: 200)

Explain how the project's research and educational objectives will be evaluated for completion, impact, and relevance to the sustainable agriculture communities in your region and/or the broader Western region. For example, describe how changes in producers' knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and adoption of practices will be measured (e.g., a pre-post survey).

An approved [WSARE Survey](#) is expected to be filled out by participants at each outreach activity. Western SARE requires evaluation results from the WSARE survey as part of the required reports. If using an additional evaluation tool, applicants should describe their survey development process and methods for analysis.

If the evaluation will include additional surveys or forms that obtain social science information (such as personal, demographic, or other identifying information), applicants must include approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or a document indicating that the IRB process has been initiated. This is a USDA-NIFA requirement. See the "Supporting Documents" section on page 8 for more information.

Budget and Budget Justification (5% of review score)

Provide a concise budget and justification for each budget item that is appropriate to the proposed project. Refer to the Farmer/Rancher [Approved Budget Categories & Allowable Costs](#) document for more information.

Up to \$25,000 may be requested if one (1) or two (2) Producers are involved. Proposals with three (3) or more Producers may request up to \$29,900. Funding is paid as a fixed-price contract via a Subaward Service Agreement, with 50% of the award being paid upon execution of the Agreement. The remainder is paid in fixed increments after submission and approval of progress and final reports. Farmer/Rancher grants can be funded for up to three years.

Farmer/Rancher funds are only issued to the PI (producer) or their employer, and cannot be issued to a fiscal sponsor. Matching funds are not required or requested of Western SARE grant recipients. Please do NOT include matching funds in your budget or justification.

Any entity or individual receiving Federal Funds is required by the Federal Government to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) from the System for Award Management (SAM). A UEI can be obtained at no-cost by visiting <https://www.sam.gov>. Should your proposal be awarded, a UEI will be required to establish your award.

Supporting Documents

All supporting documents **must** be attached into the Supporting Documents section of the online application. PDF documents are preferred but images in .jpg and .png formats are accepted. ***Failure to provide all required supporting documents will disqualify the proposal before review.***

Technical Advisor Resume: The applicant must submit a maximum 2-page resume of the Technical Advisor, demonstrating their ability to assist with the technical capacities of this project. A resume is not needed for the Producer(s).

Letters of Cooperation: Each project team member (with exception of the Applicant/PI) **must** submit a signed and dated Letter of Cooperation. At minimum, you should provide one Letter of Cooperation from your project's Technical Advisor. This letter should verify their willingness to participate, explaining their commitment (resources, time, etc.) and their role in the project at the time of submission.

Institutional Review Board Approval or Statement (if applicable): If your project will involve research with humans such as interviews, tasting sessions, or surveys that obtain social science information (such as personal, demographic, or other identifying information), you will need to provide evidence of acceptance or exemption by an Institutional Review Board (IRB). For guidance on what meets the requirements for Human Subject Research, please see [here](#).

At the time of submission, proof that you initiated the IRB process is acceptable. Documentation of IRB approval or exemption must be complete before the start of your project in order to execute a Subaward Agreement, if awarded. If you do not have access to an IRB or need assistance with this requirement, please contact the Farmer/Rancher Program Manager at wsare-fr@sare.org.

Animal Care Plan (if applicable): If your proposal involves vertebrate animals and is selected for funding, review and approval or exemption from an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) must be documented before a Subaward Agreement will be executed. For guidance on what meets the requirements for the care and use of vertebrate animals in research and teaching, please see [here](#).

If you do not have access to institutional IACUC review, please complete the [Animal Care Plan Questionnaire](#), which will be used to evaluate whether IACUC review and approval or exemption is needed to execute a Subaward Agreement, if awarded. MSU’s Office of Research Compliance and IACUC staff will review Animal Care Plans and work with awardees to comply with animal oversight requirements.

Letter(s) of Stakeholder Support (optional): Letter(s) of support from individuals and/or organizations supporting the research/educational activities are not required but are encouraged.

Citations (Optional): Citations should be attached in the Supporting Documents section of the online submission and are not part of the word number limitation. Attach a list of cited sources.

Other Documents (Optional): You may attach other document(s) that strengthen your proposal. These other documents may not be used to lengthen your proposal under the Project Narrative.

Review Process

Eligible proposals received by the due date with all supporting documents will be evaluated by a Technical Review Panel, a diverse group of reviewers from the Western SARE region with broad agricultural production, scientific, and educational expertise. The Technical Review Panel evaluates the proposals based on the review criteria stated below and meets to discuss and appraise the merits of each proposal. Their recommendations are presented to the Western SARE Administrative Council for additional review and final selection. ***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 that all sections of the proposal are submitted before the due date.***

Review Criteria	
Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture, Project Value and Benefits	15%
Stakeholder Needs and Support	5%
Project Team Members and Roles	5%
Research Plan	30%
Education Plan	30%
Timeline	5%
Evaluation and Producer Adoption	5%
Budget Justification	5%
Total	100%

Selected Proposals

If the PI of a new Western SARE grant proposal has an active Western SARE award, funding decisions will be contingent upon fulfillment of reporting requirements of the active award as specified in the Subaward Agreement. If the Western SARE Administrative Council selects your project for funding, you may expect the following:

Grant Management Overview

Learn more about the Western SARE subaward process [here](#).

Public Domain: While proposals and reviews will remain confidential, Western SARE considers all funded projects, subsequent reports, and related information to be in the public domain. See details of this stipulation in the Research Results section in [the NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide](#).

Notification: The Western SARE Administrative Council will select proposals for funding during March of 2024. (The Administrative Council reserves the right to restructure or reduce the budget of any grant proposal before final approval). Western SARE staff will notify applicants of their proposal's status by April 2024.

Contract: If your proposal is selected for funding, the Office of Sponsored Programs at Montana State University (MSU) will initiate a *Subaward Service Agreement* to you. The *Subaward Service Agreement* will identify all Terms and Conditions for the award, including reporting requirements. *Note: All proposals from Micronesia (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, Marshall Islands and Palau) are required to have the College of Micronesia (at Pohnpei) act as their fiscal agent in the disbursement of funds.*

Funds: Upon execution of the *Subaward Service Agreement*, an initial payment of 50% of awarded funds will be released. 30% of awarded funds will be paid incrementally each year upon receipt and approval of progress reports. The amount of these disbursements will depend upon the length of your project. The final 20% of the awarded funds will be retained, until receipt and approval of the final report.

Financial Records: Detailed financial records are required, but do not need to be submitted to Western SARE or MSU. However, MSU may, at any time, request receipts and backup documentation to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the *Subaward Service Agreement* and that project-related expenses correspond with the proposed budget.

Photographs and Videos: Grant recipients are invited to document their project with photographs, which can be useful to them and help us highlight and promote their work on our website and in publications. Digital photographs and videos are preferred. It is expected that the outreach material produced by Western SARE-supported projects be ADA compliant. Including closed captions to visual and audio deliverables is required.

Proper Western SARE Citation: The Western SARE program must be credited as the funding source in any publication or outreach material generated by this project. *Information pertaining to citing Western SARE will be included in the Subaward Service Agreement and can be found [here](#) under “Guidelines for Acknowledging Funds.”*

Site visits: Western SARE recognizes that there are limits to what can be accomplished, measured and reported during the life of your project. As a result, along with your reporting, Western SARE staff may visit ongoing or finalized projects to measure the impact of Western SARE grant programs.

Project Modifications and Changes: Significant changes to the project as originally proposed, such as a change in PI, Co-PI, institution, stated objectives, timeline, budget, etc. should be submitted to the Program Manager via email with a completed [Project Modification Form](#) attached for consideration and approval by Western SAREs Regional Coordinator. Upon approval of the aforementioned changes, Western SARE staff will notify the PI of approval and update the SARE project profile at projects.sare.org.

Reporting Requirements for Awarded Proposals

An annual report will be required for each year that your project is ongoing. Progress and final reports should describe the progress made on the project, detail the observed results, describe the educational outreach events, include materials produced by the project, and document impacts. All educational outreach activities should include an evaluation component that measures changes in knowledge or awareness, attitudes and opinions, and/or the adoption of new practices by producers or other agricultural professionals. If your project is a one-year project only a final report should be submitted. Approved project reports will be publicly accessible and may be viewed and shared with producers, interested policymakers and leaders at community, state, regional and national levels. All educational materials and products must have an electronic version to be included in your reports. ***Annual Reports are due on March 15th of each year of the project. You will have up to 30 days from the Period of Performance end date to submit the Final Report.***

Grantees must maintain up-to-date contact information (e.g., address, phone number, email, etc.) for all project team members in the Grant Management System.

Please review the documents located on the Western SARE website under [Documents for Managing a Grant](#) and [Criteria for Approving Project Reports](#) to understand what will be expected if your project is awarded.

How to Apply

We strongly encourage applicants to read the entire Call for Proposals before beginning to write the proposal and refer to it regularly in proposal development.

Proposals are due by 12 pm (noon) MT – October 25, 2023

Go to <https://projects.sare.org>

Farmer/Rancher Grant Program Schedule

October 25, 2023 – Proposals are due by 12:00 PM (noon) Mountain Time

January 2024 – A Technical Review Panel reviews and recommends proposals for funding

March 2024 – WSARE Administrative Council selects proposals for funding

April 2024 – Proposal status is announced to applicants and funded projects may begin

Submission Checklist

Basic Requirements

- I have read the full CFP
- I am a Farmer or Rancher
- Project Type: Independent Farmer or Farmer Group

Project Basic Information

- Project Subject Matter
- Project Practices
- Project Commodities
- Research and Educational Objectives
- Proposed Start Date
- Proposed End Date
- Primary State
- Description of your agricultural business/operation

Narrative

- Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture, Project Values, and Benefits
- Stakeholder Needs and Support

- Project Team Members and Responsibilities

- Research Plan
- Education Plan
- Timeline

- Evaluation and Producer Adoption

Budget and Justification

- Detailed Budget Expenses
- Budget Justification

Supporting Documents

- Technical Advisor Resume
- Letter(s) of Cooperation
- Animal Care Plan Questionnaire
- IRB Approval or Statement (if applicable)
- Letters of Stakeholder Support (optional)
- Citations (optional)
- Supporting Documents (optional)

Resources

Please review the documents located in the [Documents for Applying](#) section of the Western SARE [website](#) to strengthen your proposal.

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.

Western SARE is committed to diversity. We encourage proposals that involve producers and other stakeholders of socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource, and veteran communities. For more details, please visit this website.

Montana State University and the United States Department of Agriculture are equal opportunity providers and employers.

In compliance with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, any material produced by Western SARE can be made available in other formats upon request.

The mission of SARE is to advance “innovations that improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education.”