

**Request for Applications**  
**Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program**

**Successfully Measuring the Impact of Western SARE: Project Evaluation Tool Development**



**Submission deadline:** July 31, 2026, 12:00pm (noon) Mountain Time

**Submit application online:**

<https://western.sare.org/grants/farmer-rancher/evaluation-tool-application/>

**Project End Date:** No later than April 30, 2029

**Project funding limit:** \$100,000

**Funding Decisions Announced:** September 2026

**Contact Program Manager:** [western-evaluation@sare.org](mailto:western-evaluation@sare.org)

Western SARE is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to advance sustainable agriculture through competitive grant programs. The SARE program mission is to advance innovations that improve profitability, environmental stewardship, and quality of life in American agriculture by investing in groundbreaking research, education and outreach. SARE embraces three broad goals: profit over the long term; stewardship of our nation's land, air, and water; and quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and their communities. The Western SARE program is regionally hosted by Montana State University. More information about Western SARE can be found on its website: [western.sare.org](http://western.sare.org). Applications are encouraged that advance understanding of how Western SARE projects are meeting the goals of environmental, economic, and social sustainability in western agriculture.

**SUMMARY**

Western SARE seeks to fund an individual or group with documented expertise in program evaluation and has the capacity to develop an evaluation tool that can be easily implemented by Western SARE PIs on the ground. Proposals should develop a tool that:

- (1) Is easily accessible and usable by a diversity of WSARE PIs (i.e. state coordinators, farmers/ranchers, researchers, agriculture professionals) for them to directly report on outreach-based projects
- (2) Includes the capability to generate data based on project metrics and goals that can be assessed and analyzed in a straightforward manner.
- (3) Aggregates data across projects/programs to support WSARE staff in identifying program gaps, successes, and future directions
- (4) Provides information on short- and long-term impacts of WSARE projects, including metrics associated with behavior change in agricultural settings.

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One successful award will be funded for a **maximum of \$100,000** which will be awarded as a cost-reimbursable subaward agreement issued by Montana State University.

Western SARE  
Montana State University  
207 Linfield Hall  
Bozeman, MT 59717-2840  
wsare@montana.edu

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.

 National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### REQUESTED SCOPE OF WORK

Proposals should describe the design and implementation of the evaluation tool, specifically as it will be applied to Western SARE projects. Provide an explanation of how the tool will be tailored to the Western SARE organization including interface with Western SARE project reporting, tool implementation testing and support for the program, development of a data management system and training and support to the Western SARE staff and PIs.

Projects may start no earlier than October 1, 2026 and no later than December 1, 2026, on the first of the month. The project, including required reporting and tool delivery, **must be completed by April 30, 2029**. An extension will NOT be possible.

### REPORTING

Annual reports that document project progress will be required. At the completion of the project, Western SARE must be equipped with a functional evaluation tool and data management system that works within the Western SARE program and its information management system and is accessible to a diverse array of PIs (i.e. state coordinators, farmers/ranchers, researchers, and agricultural professionals).

### ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include private individuals and institutions, faculty, institutes of higher education, businesses, commodity organizations, and governmental and non-governmental organizations.

*Please be advised that 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). UEI can be obtained at no-cost by visiting <https://www.sam.gov>. Should your proposal be selected for funding, a UEI will be required to establish your award (note: full registration is not required). To avoid delays in establishing the Subaward Agreement, Western SARE strongly encourages applicants who do not already have a SAM UEI to begin this process after submitting their proposal or immediately upon learning their proposal has been selected for funding. Please note that in some cases, obtaining a SAM UEI can take several weeks. Western SARE is unable to assist with this process.*

### FORMAT, PROPOSAL SUBMISSION and CONTACT INFORMATION

Applications must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, and single spaced. Each 8.5 by 11-inch page must have one-inch margins on all edges. The application should include:

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- 1) **Project Description (limit 4 pages):** Describe the proposed strategy for accomplishing the Requested Scope of Work outlined above.
- 2) **Experience and Qualifications (limit 1 page):** State the qualifications and relevant experience of the applicants to demonstrate their ability to successfully complete this project. A list of links to similar documents prepared by the applicant or to project reports of similar efforts led by the applicant should be provided here.
- 3) **Timeline (limit 1 page):** Describe a timeline for completing the project.
- 4) **Budget and Budget Justification:** Applicants must fill out and include the [budget form posted online](#). Applicants must include a detailed budget justification for each budget line item requested. **The budget justification is limited to 2 pages** and must follow the order of the budget form. Funds may be budgeted in the following categories.
  - **Salaries and Benefits:** Provide base salary, FTEs, fringe benefit rates and salary and benefit amounts requested.
  - **Contracted Services:** Includes paying for professional services and fee-for-service work.
  - **Supplies:** Basic supplies and materials needed to carry out the project.,
  - **Communication:** Includes postage and mailing expenses.
  - **Travel:** Must be directly related to fulfilling the goals and objectives of the project and includes: mileage, economy airfare, lodging, meal per diem, car rentals, taxis, etc.. Travel per diem and mileage need to align with your organization's approved rates. If no rate is available, use the rates listed on the [U.S. General Services Administration \(GSA\) website](#). Lodging may not exceed the GSA rate for the location. International travel is prohibited.
  - **Indirect Costs (Facilities & Administrative Costs):** Please follow the criteria below:
    - Under the SARE program, NIFA stipulates indirect cost recovery is capped at 10% of the Total Direct Costs (TDC) requested.
    - If the applicant entity has a Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), the IDC base should be Total Direct Costs.
    - Some entities may NOT be eligible for IDC recovery or may be limited to the *de minimis* rate (currently up to 15% of Modified Total Direct Costs).
    - Applicants must limit their request for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 10% of Total Direct Costs.
- 5) **Supporting Documents:** Include the following documents with your submission.
  - Signature Page: Signatures of the Principal investigator and Authorized Organizational Representative are required. Please complete and upload this [form](#)
  - Curriculum vitae of the principal investigator and any co-principal investigators. **Each vitae should be no more than 2 pages.**
  - Letters of Support from agencies, organizations or individuals indicating support for and/or participation in the project.
  - One to three recommendation letter(s), and contact information, from professional references that support the program evaluation qualifications of the applicant. References of persons where the entity have done similar work is preferred

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- Letter of Commitment from Partner Agencies (*if applicable*): If your proposal is issuing subawards to partner institutions, attach a letter of commitment from each institution identified. The letter of commitment must be signed by the subaward's PI (listed as a Co-PI of the project) and include the following: period of performance, total funds requested, and a scope of work outlining activities to be performed, the deliverables created and the project timeline.
- Current and Pending support for the PI and Co-PI(s). Please complete and upload this [form](#)
- Institutional Review Board Approval Document for Working with Human Subjects: [Guidance on Human Subjects Research can be found at Human Subject Research](#)
  - If the project meets the definition of Human Subjects Research, the applicant must provide documentation from their Institutional Review Board (IRB) demonstrating you have received approval or exemption for the project, or at a minimum, that the protocol has been submitted for review by an IRB. At the time of submission, proof that the IRB process has been initiated is acceptable. Note: the Subaward Agreement will not be executed until IRB approval/exemption documentation is provided.
  - If the project meets the definition of Human Subjects Research, but the applicant does not have access to an IRB, please complete the [Human Subject Research Determination Worksheet](#) to evaluate whether review and approval or exemption from an Institutional Review Board is needed to complete the project.

#### **REIMBURSEMENT TERMS:**

The successful applicant may submit invoices to Western SARE/MSU no more often than monthly for allowable project-related expenses. Please note that the final 10% of the award budget will be held until the final report and evaluation tool are approved. Reimbursement will require the PI to stay up-to-date on the following milestones:

- Annual progress reports that outline the previous year's progress and objectives to be completed in the following year
- Annual meetings (at time of progress report) with relevant WSARE staff to address challenges, and deliverable timeline
- Tool delivery at the end of the project: Western SARE must be equipped with a functional evaluation tool and data management system that has been tested and proven to work within the Western SARE program and its information management system and is accessible to a diverse array of PIs (i.e. farmers/ranchers, researchers, and agricultural professionals).

The project timeline, reporting and tool delivery deadlines will be outlined in the subaward agreement and based upon what the successful applicant has proposed for project execution.

*Please note that the Subaward Agreement may not be in place prior to the start date; however, it will be backdated to the proposed start date. If the successful applicant wishes to*

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*begin working on the project, obtaining organizational approval is highly recommended. Since the Subaward Agreement from MSU will be cost-reimbursable, project-related costs may be incurred dating back to the approved project start date. However, prior to having a fully executed Subaward Agreement in place, **the entity/organization assumes all risk for project-related expenses incurred** in the unlikely event the terms of the Subaward Agreement cannot be agreed upon; this is very rare, but must be stated, nevertheless.*

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**STATEMENT FROM USDA NIFA**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to the extent permitted by law, will no longer make grants or otherwise fund programs or activities that improperly discriminate on the basis of race or sex, including discrimination in the name of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies. Instead, USDA will prioritize merit and efficiency. USDA recognizes programs and initiatives will have the greatest impact when these programs and initiatives put American farmers, ranchers, and foresters first by:

- solving the most pressing challenges they face;
- protecting America’s food, fuel, and fiber supply to enhance national security;
- supporting production of healthy and safe food for consumers;
- expanding and developing domestic markets;
- training the next generation of agriculturalists; and
- fueling innovation to keep American farmers at the forefront of productivity.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is committed to advancing these principles and encourages applicants to actively engage farmers, ranchers, and foresters when applying for funding opportunities to ensure relevancy and adherence to them. NIFA also encourages agricultural leaders to engage in the peer review panel process to ensure American producers are better served through research, education, and extension activities.

***Please note that awards provided under these Calls are contingent upon USDA-NIFA authorizing the funding to our Host Institution, Montana State University***