Western SARE

Farmer/Rancher Grant Program

FAQs

What makes a Farmer/Rancher proposal competitive?

- Have a clear and concise proposal. Make sure the rationale of doing the proposed research and its beneficial outcomes are well-justified and documented.
- Grant reviewers will check that your proposal has an explicit link to the three pillars of sustainable agriculture (i.e., environmental, economic, and social) and will look for evidence that you have explained this connection.
- 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.
- Include sufficient detail so that reviewers can determine if the approaches are suitable to achieving your objectives. Avoid the use of jargon that may be unfamiliar outside your industry or specialty area and define all acronyms.
- An achievable and comprehensive project timeline and education/outreach plan are also important to the success of your proposal.
- Though not required, letters of stakeholder support for your project are highly sought after in the review and scoring process.
- Please review the documents located in the Documents for Applying section of the Western SARE website to strengthen your proposal.

We recommend reviewing previously-funded SARE projects by searching in the SARE Projects Database.

Eligibility

Who is eligible for a Farmer/Rancher Grant?

- The primary applicant (principal investigator, PI) for a Farmer/Rancher grant must be an agricultural producer - farmer or rancher.
- The PI must also work in collaboration with a technical advisor (TA), who will be required to provide a letter of collaboration and resume at the time of submission with the proposal.
- The project team may also include additional researchers, educators, outreach representatives, and other collaborators with appropriate expertise to complete the project.

Who qualifies as a producer (Farmer or Rancher)?

- By USDA definition, you are a farmer-rancher if:
  - Your primary occupation is farming or ranching, and/or
  - You have a farm/ranch tax number, and/or
  - You have at least $1,000 documented income from an agricultural operation
- If more than one producer is involved, each producer must be an independent and separate operator.

Who is considered a Technical Advisor (TA)?

- A technical advisor (TA) is someone who provides technical support for the research components of your project. They are expected to collaborate in the project activities including, experimental design, data collection, analysis, and synthesis, report writing, education and outreach, or any other activities. The role and involvement of the advisor in project implementation will vary, but their responsibilities towards the success of the project should be clearly defined in your proposal.
- This advisor may be a cooperative extension agent, researcher or educator, USDA-NRCS field staff, agricultural consultant, NGO qualified staff, or other agricultural professional with expertise to advise local producers and facilitate project dissemination.

Is an NGO eligible to apply?

- The PI of a Farmer/Rancher proposal must be a producer (as described above) and award funds can only be issued to an independent producer. However, NGO staff members that lead agricultural operations are eligible to apply as a PI if they meet the USDA definition of a farmer/rancher.
- If you are an organization working in collaboration with farmers, you may consider applying for the Professional + Producer program.

Where can projects take place?

- The primary location of the project work must be in one of the U.S. Western states or territories which include: Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

Proposal Submission

Will I be allowed to attach supplemental materials to my proposal?

- You will have the option to upload additional documents in the last section of the online proposal platform if you believe they will make your proposal more competitive.

Can I include tables, charts, or figures in my proposal?

- Yes. It is best to insert tables using the online platform 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 reviewed on different devices. More importantly, it makes your submission Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliant.

Will I be required to obtain Internal Review Board (IRB) approval?

- An IRB is only required for proposals that engage in social science research that acquires personal, demographic, or other personally identifying information.
- If you believe your project will require an IRB, you may contact Western SARE staff for a letter to submit with your proposal certifying that you have initiated the IRB process. An IRB is not required to be in place before the proposal submission, but IRB approval must be complete before the start of your project.

Can I serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) on two different Western SARE grants?

- No. A PI can only receive one grant per fiscal year but can be a Co-PI of another grant during that period. An applicant can submit multiple proposals in the same proposal cycle, but only one proposal will be funded.

Are letters of stakeholder support required for my proposal?

- Letters of support from stakeholders are not required but are highly encouraged and sought after by reviewers.

What happens after I submit my proposal?

- Eligible proposals received by the due date with all supporting documents will be evaluated by a Technical Review Panel based on the review criteria stated in the Call for Proposal. The Panel recommendations are then forwarded to the Western SARE Administrative Council for additional review and final selection.

When will I learn whether my proposal was selected for funding ?

- Western SARE staff will notify applicants of their proposal's status by late March to mid-April. The notification is sent to the email provided in the proposal and originates from the SARE Grant Management System (be sure to add projects@sare.org to your contacts and/or check your spam folder often so you do not miss email communication from Western SARE).

Budget and Reporting

If selected, what is the timeline for receiving grant funds?

- After notification that your Farmer/Rancher proposal was approved, you will be contacted by Western SAREs Fiscal Manager within a few weeks. Our Fiscal Manager and host institution, Montana State University (MSU), will work with you to finalize a Subaward Service Agreement. You can read more about the Western SARE Subaward Process here.
- Once your Subaward Agreement is fully executed, you will be issued your first payment for 50% of the total approved budget.
- Subsequent payments totaling 30% of the project budget will be disbursed in equal payments upon approval of annual progress reports, due March 15th of each year that the project is ongoing. The number of progress reports and amount disbursed annually will depend upon the length of your project.
- The final 20% of your project budget will be disbursed after the Final Project Report has been submitted and approved.

Will I be required to provide matching funds?

- Matching funds are not required of Western SARE grant recipients. However, if there are additional project-related expenses that are not covered in your proposal budget, you may want to specify for the grant review panel how these costs will be covered.

Will I need to submit receipts and invoices to receive payments?

- No. However, keeping detailed financial records is required. 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.

Will I have to pay taxes on the grant funds?

- Yes. MSU is required to report all payment to the IRS via a 1099 form. Please be sure to consult a tax professional or accountant if you have questions/concerns. Western SARE cannot provide advice or guidance pertaining to tax laws.

If selected, what kind of reporting will be required?

- Annual Progress Reports are required and due by March 15th of each year that the project is ongoing. A Final Report is also required and due no later than 30 days from the project end date as stated in the Subaward Service Agreement.
- Project reports should address the progress made on research objectives, education and outreach, learning outcomes, and project outcomes for the reporting period.
- The Final Report should describe the achievements of the project, detail results, describe events and materials produced by the project, and document impacts as well as recommendations for future research.
- If your project period is for one-year or less, only a Final Report will be required.
- Review this document for more information on reporting guidelines.