Research & Education
2024 Call for Pre-proposals

Submission Deadline: May 23, 2023, 12:00pm (noon) MST
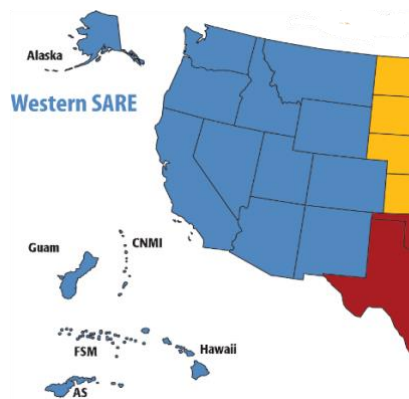Submit online at www.projects.sare.org

Project Team/PI: Researcher, Outreach Representative, and at least three
Producers **Funding Limit:** $350,000
Project Time Limit: Up to 3 years
Pre-proposal status announced: August 2023

If selected, Full Proposals Deadline: November 2nd, 2023
Funding decisions announced: March 2024
Contact: wsare-re@sare.org

Research & Education Grant Program

This program involves scientists, agricultural producers, and others using interdisciplinary approaches to advance sustainable agriculture at local and regional levels. With the collaboration of producers, projects must integrate rigorous research and education aiming to advance the three components of sustainable agriculture- environmental, economic, and social- and use innovative educational outreach to disseminate new knowledge to students, producers, and stakeholders. It is expected that outcomes of funded projects will result in quantifiable benefits for producers, increase the preservation of the natural resources upon which agriculture depends, and be documented in scholarly journals and disseminated through teaching and educational activities with students, producers, and other agricultural stakeholders.

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Western SARE
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wsare@montana.edu

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, 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
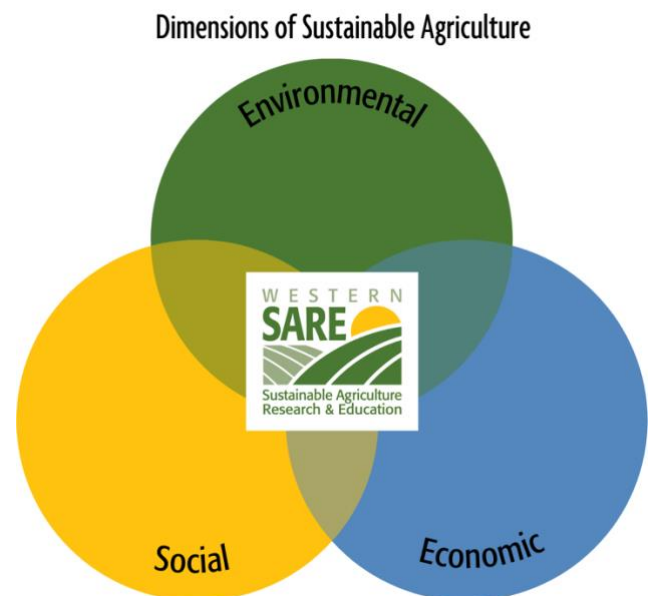
About Western SARE

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.

Dimensions of Sustainable Agriculture

Program Overview

Proposed projects should be submitted from organizations that have 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.

Western SARE requires that agricultural producers be involved from inception to finish in the planning, design, implementation, and educational outreach of any Western SARE-funded project keeping in mind the inherently interdisciplinary nature of sustainable agriculture.

Project Team

Researchers from Western institutions may apply; projects must incorporate research and education, and bring together a team of researchers, students, ag professionals, and producers. *The project team must be a minimum of five (5) people and must include:*
- A Researcher (PI or Co-PI)
- Extension/Outreach Representative (PI or Co-PI)
- A minimum of three (3) Agricultural Producers (one of the producers must be identified as the Advisor Representative)

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. 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.

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.

Agricultural 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 team 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.

Project Funding Limit

Total funds requested may not exceed $350,000 over the entire budget period. A detailed Budget and Budget Justification will be required in the full proposal round.

Project Time Limit

Projects may be 1-3 years in length and cannot exceed 36 months in total. Project start and end dates are chosen by the PI with the earliest start date being April 1, 2024 and the latest start date October 1, 2024. Please choose a start date that corresponds with the first of the month.

Long-Term vs. Short-Term Projects

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

Proposal Instructions

All proposals must be submitted online at https://projects.sare.org. Review the submission checklist on page 9. 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 individual Principal Investigator) can be awarded funding in any of the Western SARE competitive programs in one grant budget cycle.

Project Basic Information

This section prompts general information about the project including:
- The *main* subject matter of the project
- A list of cooperating institutions
- The commodities and agricultural practices of the proposed project
- Budget amount to be requested
- A list of research and educational objectives
- Proposed starting and ending dates
- The state(s) where the work will be conducted

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 and Roles, 4) Research Plan, 5) Educational Plan, and 6) Timeline

**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. Identify any limitations in the current system 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** (10% of review score; word limit: 250)

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 stakeholder support for the project beyond the project 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:

- Recommendations from stakeholder groups such as grower organizations or commodity committees. Please identify stakeholder group(s) or organization(s)
- References and citations to other studies/reports that encourage future research
- Community support letters from neighboring farmers or a local co-op
- Needs assessments that relate to the project topic (s), if they are available

**Project Team Members & Roles** (10% of review score; word limit: 250)

Describe all team members' roles including producers' involvement at all stages of the project. For each project objective, indicate who will be responsible and which team member(s) will be involved in the research and dissemination activities.

**Research Plan** (30% of review score; word limit: 800)

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 score; word limit 800)
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, community presentations, websites, etc.). Describe who your target audience will be (e.g., producers, stakeholders, other agricultural professionals, students, etc.). Indicate if the audience you intend to reach through this project are from historically 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.

__Timeline__ (5% of review score; word limit: 200)
Provide a timeline, such as a [Gantt chart](#) or other detailed breakdown for accomplishing each project objective. Identify the major milestones and activities that will be completed, and when each of those milestones or activities will occur and how they relate back to the objective(s).

Supporting Documents

All supporting documents *must* be attached in 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 the required supporting documents will disqualify the proposal before review***.

__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 dated and 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.

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.

Review Criteria	
Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture, Project Value and Benefits	15%
Stakeholder Needs and Support	10%
Project Team Members and Roles	10%
Research Plan	30%
Education Plan	30%
Timeline	5%
Total	**100%**

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.

How to Apply

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

Pre-proposals are due by 12 pm (noon) MST – May 23, 2023 **Go to https://projects.sare.org**

Research & Education Grant Program Schedule
May 23, 203 – Pre-proposals are due by 12:00 PM (noon) Mountain Time
August 2023 – Applicants are informed of their pre-proposal status
November 2, 2023 – Full proposals (of selected pre-proposals) are due
January 2024 – A Technical Review Panel reviews full proposals
Feb./March 2024 – Western SARE Administrative Council selects full proposals for funding
March 2024 – Proposal status is announced to applicants and funded projects may begin

Submission Checklist

Project Basic Information
- ☐ Project Start Date
- ☐ Project End Date
- ☐ Primary State
- ☐ Project Subject Matter
- ☐ Project Commodities
- ☐ Project Practices
- ☐ Cooperating Institutions
- ☐ Budget Amount to be Requested
- ☐ Research and Educational Objectives

Project Summary
- ☐ Abstract summary (to become public if selected for funding)

Narrative
- ☐ Relevance to Western SARE Goals and Sustainable Agriculture
- ☐ Stakeholder Support
- ☐ Project Team Members & Roles
- ☐ Research Plan
- ☐ Educational Plan
- ☐ Timeline

Supporting Documents
- ☐ Current Vitae(s)
- ☐ Letters of Producer Cooperation Statement
- ☐ Letters of Stakeholder Support
- ☐ Citations

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 resources are accessible at [http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic,](http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic) or contact AFSIC afsic@nal.usda.gov, or 301-504-6559.

> 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."**