



Request for Applications
Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
Sustainable Agriculture Action Plan
Deadline: August 15, 2022, 5 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time

Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (Western SARE) is soliciting applications to lead a consultative process and create a **Sustainable Agriculture Action Plan** to document the research, regulatory, area infrastructure, and educational needs and priorities required to increase sustainable agriculture practices in a specific industry/commodity or a specific area of the West.

Western SARE seeks to fund two proposals: one focused on a specific regionally important agricultural industry or commodity; and a second focused on a specific, limited geographic area in the Western Region that includes multiple crops or production systems. The geographic area must be identifiable and logical, for example, a specific watershed, county or multi-county region, a Soil and Water Conservation District, an island or island system, etc.

Each successful proposal will be funded for a maximum of \$15,000, which will be awarded as a contracted services agreement by Montana State University, the Western SARE Host Institution.

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 mission is to advance innovations that improve profitability, environmental stewardship, and quality of life in American agriculture by investing in groundbreaking research and education. 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. More information about Western SARE can be found on its website: western.sare.org.

SUMMARY

The Sustainable Agriculture Action Plan (SAAP) is a new type of publication designed to document important stakeholder-derived information about the sustainable agriculture needs and priorities of specific industries and specific areas in the Western United States. This information can then be used by university researchers and Extension specialists, regulators, elected officials, the USDA, and other potential funders and partners to address the stakeholder-identified needs.

This concept is based on Pest Management Strategic Plans, in which growers, processors, commodity association representatives, pest managers, researchers and Extension specialists come together to document the current pest-management practices in their industry and identify priorities for research to fill knowledge gaps, regulatory changes, and education or training

programs to support adoption of integrated pest management practices. (Pest Management Strategic Plans can be found at ipmdata.ipmcenters.org/source_list.cfm?sourcetypeid=4.)

Sustainable Agricultural Action Plans will be developed through a similar consultative model but take a more expansive and holistic view of an industry or geographic area to identify top priorities and key needs for research, regulatory changes, infrastructure, and education and training to increase the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices in that industry/commodity or area.

REQUESTED SCOPE OF WORK

Proposals should address each of the following:

Focus of the Project: Identify whether the plan is industry-focused or area-focused and define the industry or area. Area-focused projects must be based in Western SARE's region. For area-based projects, describe the area, the crops, and agricultural systems within it and why the specific area chosen makes sense from a planning perspective. Explain the need for an analysis of that industry or geographic area and describe the potential benefits and impacts.

Stakeholder Identification and Input: Describe a process for identifying and engaging stakeholders and gathering their input. Stakeholders may include producers (farmers or ranchers), processors, commodity organizations, university researchers and Extension educators, government officials, regulatory agencies, conservation districts, consultants, and others. Area-based projects will naturally have a broader stakeholder base than industry-based projects.

Stakeholder input should be gathered through live or virtual meetings (or a series of meetings) and may be supplemented through surveys, phone calls or other means. Applicants should describe their plan for preparing and facilitating this process.

Document Preparation: The goal of this funding is to create written Sustainable Agriculture Action Plans that are useful to producers, commodity organizations, researchers, Extension educators, regulators, and other officials by documenting specific stakeholder-identified needs and priorities. These stakeholder-documented needs can then become the basis for new research or Extension activities, regulatory changes, investment, collaboration, funding proposals, or other activities to increase sustainable agricultural practices in an industry or area.

These documents should clearly define the industry or area, the participants and the consultative process used to gather stakeholder input. The bulk of the document should describe the research needs, regulatory issues or barriers, local-area infrastructure needs, and educational or training needs and priorities identified by stakeholders that limit broad adoption of sustainable agricultural practices. Western SARE will post final Sustainable Agriculture Action Plans on its website.

Best Practices: Because Sustainable Agriculture Action Plans are a new type of document, applicants to this RFA are asked to assist Western SARE staff in the preparation of guidelines and best practices for developing future Sustainable Agriculture Action Plans. Applicants should indicate their willingness to participate in the development of best practices guidelines at the conclusion of their project.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include private individuals and institutions, faculty, and qualified staff of two- and four-year universities, businesses, commodity organizations, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. The applicant must be in the Western Region, which includes the following states and territories: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

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:

Cover page: Include the applicant's name, title, affiliation, and contact information.

Narrative: The proposal narrative is limited to five pages and should include:

Project Summary: A concise summary of the proposed project.

Problem and Justification: Describe the need for the project and the benefits a Sustainable Agriculture Action Plan could bring to the specific industry or area proposed.

Experience and Qualifications: State the qualifications and relevant experience of the applicants to demonstrate their ability to successfully complete this project.

Procedure: Describe the proposed strategy for accomplishing the Requested Scope of Work outlined above.

Timeline: Describe a timeline for completing the project, including stakeholder identification, recruitment, and consultation, SAAP document preparation and submission to Western SARE.

Budget: Applicants may request up to \$15,000 for their proposed project. The budget must be submitted on the [budget form posted online](#) and include a copy with their application package.

Budget Justification: Applicants must include a detailed budget justification for each budget line item requested. The budget justification is limited to two pages and must follow the order of the budget form. The applicant should clearly describe how all proposed costs are necessary and directly related to the project. Funds may be budgeted in the following categories. (Note: Indirect costs are not allowed under this RFA.)

- Salaries and Benefits: Provide base salary, FTEs, fringe benefit rates and salary and benefit amounts requested.
- Contracted Services: Includes paying for professional services.
- Supplies: Basic supplies and materials needed to carry out the project, envelopes, paper, photocopying, shipping costs, etc.
- Communication: Includes postage and mailing expenses.
- Travel: Includes estimated mileage reimbursement, airfare, lodging, meal per diem; car rentals, taxi, shuttle expenses and parking. Please note, travel *per diem*, mileage reimbursement, and meals must follow your organization's approved rates. If no rate is available, please use the Federal Government rate listed on gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates. Additionally, lodging reimbursements for all travel must be limited to the Federal Government rate listed on the [U.S. General Services Administration website](https://www.gsa.gov/US-GENERAL-SERVICES-ADMINISTRATION).
- Rent: Includes fees associated with renting equipment, facilities, etc.

Please note, the funding source for this project is a federally funded program; there are certain limitations for which funds may be used. Western SARE staff will review each applicant's budget for allowability of all proposed costs.

Per USDA-NIFA, funds may not be used to pay for the following (this is not an exhaustive list of unallowable costs):

- entertainment (costs of entertainment, amusement, diversion, and social activities);
- meals/food when there is no demonstrated need and/or meal per diem is to be paid while in travel status;
- incentives/gifts (cash or cash value items, i.e., gift cards);
- promotional items (giveaways, t-shirts, bags, pens, pencils, mugs, bottles, etc.)

Supporting Documents: Include the following documents with your submission.

- Signature Page: Signatures of the applicant and Authorized Organizational Representative (if different from the applicant) are required. (See form below)
- Curriculum vitae of the applicant and any key collaborators.
- Letters of Engagement from any cooperating organizations detailing the scope of their activities and confirming their participation in the project. (If applicable.)
- Notification of application for or possession of IRB approval (Institutional Review Board for Research on Human Subjects - if applicable.)
 - If human subjects are involved in any part of this project, IRB (Human Subjects) exemption or approval must be obtained prior to working with human subjects. Proof of IRB exemption or approval is a requirement of USDA-NIFA and Western SARE and is necessary prior to issuance of the first payment.

Other Supporting Documents: These are allowed but not required.

- Letters of Support from affected agencies, organizations or individuals indicating interest in and support for the project or the qualifications of the applicant.
- A list of links to similar documents prepared by the applicant or to project reports of similar efforts led by the applicant.

An electronic copy in PDF format of the complete application packet must be received by Clayton Marlow and Stacie Clary by email saap@sare.org no later than 5 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time, August 15, 2022.

Questions regarding this Request for Applications can be directed to:

Stacie Clary

Western SARE Communications Manager

(916) 254-0831

saap@sare.org

KEY DATES

August 15, 2022:

Proposals Due

October 5, 2022:

Awards Announced

Early December 2022:

Project period begins

June 30, 2023:

Project completion date

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Preparation (10 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application meets all format requirements and includes all required forms • Information is clearly presented
Problem and Justification (20 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal identifies sustainable agriculture needs in an industry or area • Proposed industry or area has importance in Western agricultural production • Proposal documents local support for the effort
Expertise & Participation (20 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant and team have the expertise needed to successfully complete the project • Project identifies appropriate stakeholders and a process for identifying, recruiting, and involving them
Potential for Success -Procedure -Timeline -Best Practices (40 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal demonstrates an understanding of sustainable agriculture, the project industry or area, and stakeholder consultation processes • Proposal demonstrates that the SAAP document will meet professional standards for stakeholder information collection and summarization • Timeline is reasonable for the work proposed • Applicant has agreed to participate in the documentation of best practices
Budget (10 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget is well-defined, reasonable for the proposed project, and within the project funding limits described in this RFA • Proposed project costs are reasonable, allocable, and allowable per Title 2: 2 CFR Part 200 – Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards <p>Budget narrative follows the order of the budget form and fully justifies budget items</p>

SIGNATURE PAGE
Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program
Sustainable Agriculture Action Plan

Project Title:

Total Funds Requested _____

Applicant/Project Leader

As the Applicant/Project Leader, I affirm I am responsible for all expenditures and achieving the stated research and education objectives of the proposal.

Signature: Applicant/Project Leader *Date*

Printed Name: _____