

Western SARE Graduate Student Grants

This program supports graduate student research on topics specific to sustainable agriculture; improve the environmental quality and sustainability of the natural resource base on which agriculture depends; improve the profitability of agricultural producers; and enhance the quality of life of farmers/ranchers in rural/agricultural communities. The goal of this program is to achieve results that can be communicated to producers and other agricultural professionals. Proposals must be written by the student who will coordinate and conduct the project with the guidance of their major professor/advisor and agricultural producers in the Western U.S.

For detailed information about this program please visit <https://western.sare.org>.

Who can apply?

Any graduate student enrolled at an accredited college or university in the Western region who is proposing to conduct research and education relevant to farmers and ranchers. A student applicant may receive only one Western SARE Graduate Student Grant during their graduate studies.

What is the faculty advisor's role?

Because universities typically do not allow students to manage institutional grant awards, the graduate student major professor/advisor must serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) of the proposed project. Besides supervising the student in the research and education components of the project, the PI bears the fiscal responsibility for the project and ensures compliance with the reporting requirements of the grant.

Is there a disadvantage to submitting a proposal from a university that has previously received many Western SARE grants?

Not at all, each proposal is reviewed by an independent Technical Review Panel, which recommends proposals for funding to the Western SARE Administrative Council.

Can I have collaborators outside the Western region?

Yes, you can collaborate with teams in other regions, but the principal research and education work should be done in the Western U.S.; collaborators will be budgeted as lower-tier subawards (for more information see the Call for Proposal).

Can I apply for or receive funds from Western SARE and other NIFA programs?

Western SARE places no restrictions on applying for and receiving funds from other NIFA programs. Please check with the other programs whether they have restrictions, and make sure that the proposal submitted to Western SARE addresses the priorities of the Graduate Student Grant program.

What is the funding level of a Graduate Student Grant?

The cap on a Western SARE Graduate Student Grant is \$30,000 for up to 3 years. The funds are to be dedicated to the student's graduate research project. Each year, Western SARE awards about 12-14 Graduate Student grants.

What kind of projects the Graduate Student program funds?

This program funds projects that address the three components of sustainable agriculture - environmental, economic, and social. Although your project could **mainly** focus on one of the three components of sustainable agriculture, the other two components should be addressed as well.

When can I begin field activities?

Generally, once you receive notification from Western SARE that your proposal has been selected for funding. However, please keep the following in mind: your institution will enter into a Subaward Agreement with Montana State University, the Western SARE Host Institution. Due to the tight turnaround from funding decisions to notifications, your Subaward Agreement may not be in place prior to your project start date. If you wish to begin working on your project, be sure you have your institution's approval. Since your Subaward from MSU will be cost-reimbursable, you may begin incurring costs related to the project dating back to your project start date. However, prior to having a fully executed Subaward Agreement in place, your institution assumes all risk for project-related expenses in the unlikely event the terms of the Subaward Agreement cannot be agreed upon.

What can I do if I run out of time to have a complete Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for my project prior to the proposal submission deadline?

At the time of submission, evidence that you initiated the IRB process (such as copy of e-mail correspondence with your university IRB office) will suffice. If you do not have access to a Review Board, please complete and submit the questionnaire included in the online submission site to evaluate whether you will need IRB exemption or approval. However, if awarded, IRB approval or exemption status is required before the Subaward Agreement can be fully executed.

What can funds be used for?

Western SARE funds may be used for expenses specific to the student applicant research project, including: salaries and benefits, contracted services, supplies, tools, communication, farm equipment rental, travel, minor equipment that costs less than \$5,000, minor repairs and maintenance, and participant/trainee support. Indirect costs recovery is allowed and capped at 10 percent of the total direct costs requested (please refer to the CFP for complete details).

Are there costs for which grant funds cannot be used for?

Grant funds cannot be used to pay for costs associated with preparing a thesis, tuition and fees, classroom textbooks, capital equipment purchases (see below and the CFP for more info), starting or expanding a farm operation, incentive offers and promotional items, major renovations and repairs, testing commercial products, and food/meal expenses unless necessary to maintain the continuity of a project-related event.

I need to buy a piece of equipment that will cost more than \$5,000, can I use Western SARE funds?

Capital equipment is defined as a single, autonomous piece of equipment that costs \$5,000 or more and has a useful life of more than one year. Capital equipment purchases are generally not allowed under the SARE program. Purchasing non-autonomous components of a piece of capital equipment in an attempt to circumvent the \$5,000 cap is not allowed. If a piece of capital equipment is essential for the completion of the proposed research and activities, you may leverage up to \$4,999 of your Western SARE budget with non-Western SARE funds to purchase the capital equipment.

Am I required to use the provided Western SARE Budget Worksheet?

Yes, please submit your proposal budget on the provided *Western SARE Budget Worksheet*. Similarly, if your project includes any lower-tier subawards, a detailed budget, using the provided *Western SARE Budget Worksheet for Lower-tier Subawards*, must be provided for each one.

Can a table be embedded in the narrative section of online submission?

Yes, please use the Table function of the online the editor.

When I try to complete my registration on projects.sare.org platform, the “Register” key disappears.

Please be aware that to complete the registration in the SARE online submission platform the applicant should provide a valid e-mail.

May I see examples of past projects?

Descriptions of and results of all funded projects can be found on SARE’s national database at projects.sare.org/search-projects. Customize your search by region, project type, commodity, practices, etc. The field “Project Title” can be used to do a keyword search.