

Western SARE Competitive Grants

Research & Education

2021 Call for Pre-Proposals

Submission Deadline: May 22, 2020 12:00 pm (noon) MDT

The Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program announces the Call for Pre-proposals for Research & Education grants for 2021.

Producer Involvement

Congress mandates that the SARE grant program **departs from “business as usual.”** To that end, the Western SARE Administrative Council requires **evidence that agricultural producers are involved from inception to finish in the planning, design, implementation, and educational outreach of any funded project.**

Application Process

Applications are submitted online at <http://projects.sare.org>. The application process for this competitive grant program consists of two stages: 1) submission of a pre-proposal and, 2) after notice of selection, submission of a full proposal at a later date. The pre-proposal step assists the WSARE Administrative Council in selecting projects to cover diverse subject matter, geography, and support original and innovative research that can be readily adopted by producers. Applicants who submitted promising pre-proposals will be invited to develop full proposals.

Requirements for Research & Education Pre-Proposals

- Incorporate both *research and education*.
- Bring together a *team of researchers, ag professionals, and producers to plan and implement* the project.
- Include a minimum of *three producers each associated to independent operations*.
- Outline *educational outreach plans* for producers and agricultural professionals.
- Produce *scholarly and educational materials* for producers and agricultural professionals.
- Address the goals of Western SARE.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Western SARE Goals | 2 |
| About the Pre-proposal | 2 |
| Writing the Pre-proposal | 3 |
| Proposal Application | 4 |
| The Review Process | 6 |
| Reporting Requirements | 7 |
| Selected Proposals | 7 |
| How to Apply | 7 |
| Resources | 8 |

To apply go to:

<https://projects.sare.org>

Research & Education Grant Schedule

- May 22, 2020 – Pre-proposals due at 12:00 pm (noon) MDT.
- August 2020 – Principal Investigators are informed of pre-proposal status. Selected applicants are invited to submit full proposals.
- October 29, 2020 – Full proposals of selected pre-proposal are due.
- January 2021 – A Technical Review Panel reviews and recommends full proposals for funding.
- March 2021 – Western SARE Administrative Council selects full proposals for funding.



Western SARE Host Institution



207 Linfield Hall
Bozeman, MT 59717-2840
Phone: 406-994-4785
e-mail: wsare@montana.edu

Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Micronesia, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Northern Mariana Islands, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming



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.

– U.S. Code Title 7, Section 3103

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 groundwater.

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 promoting food sovereignty and 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.

Western SARE Research and Education Pre-Proposal Applications

Overview: The Western SARE Administrative Council funds proposals that present creative and innovative research and Extension/educational outreach, and technologies that advance Western SARE goals (see above) that are economically viable, protect the environment and are socially responsible. *Western SARE projects must contain research and education components and involve agricultural producers from inception to finish in the project's planning, design, implementation, and educational outreach.*

Eligible Applicants: Applicants need to reside in the Western region of the United States and should have the capability to conduct both research and Extension/outreach activities. Proposed projects can be located at any kind of institution, including nongovernmental organizations that has demonstrated fiscal responsibility and expertise in sustainable agriculture, and is able and 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 within the Western region. Participants and/or cooperators can be from outside the Western region.

Funding: Projects may be one to three years in length. Total funds requested may not exceed \$350,000 over the entire budget period.

Long-Term vs. Short-Term: Some research/Extension work 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 normal one-to-three-year funding cycle. Projects that are long-term (more than 3 years) should identify themselves as a long-term project 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. The applicant must 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 3 years) of funding will still go through a competitive full proposal process but will bypass the pre-proposal process. Long-term projects are eligible for additional increments of funding if the following reporting criteria are met and approved, and funding is available:

- Reports are submitted in a timely manner;
- Yearly objectives measurable milestones are reported and met (as listed in the approved proposal).

Public Domain: While pre-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 [the NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide](#).

Writing the Pre-Proposal

Pre-proposals are submitted online at <http://projects.sare.org>. All information pretraining the pre-proposal including basic information about the project, the project team, project summary, narrative, and supporting documents are entered online.

You can write each portion of the proposal in a word processor (e.g., Microsoft Word) and copy and paste it into the fields of the online application (be aware that some formatting features of the word processor might be lost when you paste the text in the online form). In addition to text, you can insert tables and graphs. Tables and graphs do not count against the word limit. It is best to insert tables as a table using the online 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 viewed on different devices. More importantly, it makes your submission ADA compliant. Attachments are preferred in pdf

format but images in jpg or png formats are accepted.

Pre-proposals that do not follow the following guidelines may be disqualified.

Pre-proposal Application

A. Project Basic Information

This section prompts for general information about the project including:

- **Main** subject matter,
- Proposed starting and ending dates
- State(s) where the work of the project will be conducted
- Cooperating institutions
- Commodities and practices that will be involved in the project
- Budget amount to be requested
- Whether this submission is a long-term project.
- Whether this submission is a re-submission.
- How did you learn about WSARE.

Please choose a start date that corresponds with the first-of-the-month. Start dates must be no earlier than April 1, 2021 and no later than October 1, 2021.

B. Project Team (10% of review criteria)

The project team **must** be a minimum of five (5) people and must include: **A principal investigator (PI), an Extension/outreach representative, and at least three (3) producers.** You may also identify Co-Principal Investigator(s) (Co-PIs), if applicable. (See “Other members” below). ***At the time of full proposal submission, you should include signed letters of each producer/cooperator.***

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.

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.

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.

Other 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.

C. Project Summary (Limited to 300 words)

The summary must include a brief description of the problem or need and the creative approach to solve it. Identify the research question(s). Describe the research methods and outreach activities and explain how your project will address the identified problems. Explain the potential significance of the project and its expected outcomes. A clear and concise description of your pre-proposal is important for the review process.

D. Narrative

Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture: (20% of review criteria, limited to 500 words)

Explain why this project is needed, and how it addresses sustainable agriculture in the Western region. Describe the potential benefits and impacts for producers and agriculture in general. Clearly articulate how the project and its measurable outcomes are relevant to the goals of Western SARE (see page 2). Projects should address how they:

- Sustain and improve the environmental quality and natural resource base on which agriculture depends;
- Improve the profitability of farmers/ranchers and associated agricultural businesses; *and*
- Enhance the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, communities, and society as a whole.

Stakeholder Involvement and Support: (10% of review criteria, limited to 250 words)

Western SARE is committed to addressing the needs of agricultural stakeholders. Pre-proposals must include evidence that stakeholders' identified needs are being addressed, as well as support for the project beyond the project team. Describing and documenting stakeholders' needs and support demonstrates (a) that the proposed project is relevant and timely and (b) that the applicants are engaged with agricultural stakeholders. Evidence of stakeholder identified needs and support may include, but are not limited to:

- Recommendations from stakeholder groups such as grower organizations or commodity commissions. Please identify stakeholder group(s) or organization(s).
- References and citations to previous studies/reports.
- Community support letters from neighboring farmers or local co-op.
- Needs assessments.

Producer Involvement and Collaboration: (10% of review criteria, limited to 250 words)

WSARE requires the involvement of producers throughout the project by actively collaborating in the project. Identify the level of involvement of each producer at all stages – from inception to completion of the project. 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. Attach the producer collaboration letters or e-mail in the Supporting Documents section.

Objectives: (10% of review criteria, limited to 250 words)

Provide a list of the project objectives. Each objective should be a statement describing an intended

achievement. Objectives must be specific, measurable, achievable, and time bound. For more details see [Successful Objectives](#) .

Materials and Methods: (30% of review criteria, limited to 1000 words)

For each objective -including research and education objectives- describe the experimental design (including a survey study if applicable), site (experimental station research plots, private farm/ranch, demonstration farms, greenhouse, etc.) data collection and analysis methods, and materials. Include sufficient information 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 specialty area and define all acronyms.

Innovations and Benefits to Sustainable Agriculture: (10% of review criteria, limited to 250 words)

Explain how this project is novel and creative. Describe the potential benefits and impacts of your project and its findings to other producers (local, state, and regional) or agriculture in general. For example, provide an economic analysis or address how the outcomes of the project would affect: overall farm/ranch productivity levels, operational profits, soil or water quality or quantity, rural communities, society as a whole. Where possible, use specific estimates of benefits – for example, 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.

E. Supporting Documents

All supporting documents should be attached in the online grant application. PDF documents are preferred, but images in jpg and png formats are accepted.

Current Vita: Attach a current 2-page vita for the Principal Investigator and each project team member, *except producers*.

Letters of Producer Cooperation: *Each producer who is part of the project team must submit a signed letter of cooperation.* The letter verifies the producer's willingness to participate in the project and outlines their commitment to (resources and/or time) and role in it. If letters are not available at the pre-proposal submission time, producer e-mail confirmation of collaboration is acceptable.

Letters of Stakeholder Support (Optional): 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.

The Review Process

Complete pre-proposals received by the due date will be evaluated by a review team including agricultural producers, scientists, educators, and agri-business leaders. Reviewers will make recommendations to the Western SARE Administrative Council, that will select the projects to further submit full proposals. Selected pre-proposals will be invited to submit full proposals.

Pre-proposals will be reviewed against the following criteria:

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Project Team | 10% |
| Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture | 20% |
| Stakeholder Support | 10% |
| Producer Collaboration | 10% |
| Objectives | 10% |
| Materials and Methods | 30% |
| Innovations and Contributions to Sustainable Agriculture | 10% |
| Total | 100% |

Priority will be given to projects that:

- Closely coordinate research and extension/outreach activities;
- Indicate how findings will be made ***readily usable*** by farmers/ranchers and other intended audiences;
- Maximize the direct and meaningful involvement of farmers/ranchers;
- Use an interdisciplinary team approach;
- Include cooperation between universities/colleges, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and farmers/ranchers.

Reporting Requirements (for awarded projects)

Please review the documents in the WSARE [Reporting Documents for Grantees](#) to understand what will be expected of awarded (full-proposal) projects:

- The [Research and Education Reporting Expectations](#) list shows the reporting requirements during the project and what Western SARE may assess two to four years after the project's completion. ***Annual progress reports are due on April 15th of each year of the project.*** The final report can be submitted up to 60 days after the project end date.
- The [Survey Instrument](#) is a tool for gathering results from a project's educational outreach activities for measuring changes in participants' (farmer/ranchers, students, public, educators, etc.) knowledge, attitude, skills and awareness.

Selected Pre-Proposals

The reviewers will make recommendations to the Western SARE Administrative Council, which will select the projects eligible for a full proposal submission. Western SARE staff will notify applicants of the status of their pre-proposals by August 2020.

How to Apply

Go to: projects.sare.org

We strongly encourage applicants read the entire Call for Pre-proposals before beginning to write the pre-proposal.

Pre-Proposals are due by 12 pm (noon) MDT – May 22, 2020

In compliance with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, this material can be made available in other formats upon request.

Resources

Information on past projects including summaries, highlights, and reports can be found at [the SARE projects database](#). We encourage you to visit this website to learn more about Sustainable Agriculture and Western SARE.

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 has a number of resources at <http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/> that may be relevant to your proposal; or, contact AFSIC at 301-504-6559 or afsic@nal.usda.gov.

| |
|--|
| The United States Department of Agriculture and Utah State University are equal opportunity providers and employers. |
|--|