

# Western SARE Competitive Grants Graduate Student 2018 Call for Proposals

Submission Deadline: May 17, 2017, 1:00 pm MDT

The Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program announces the Call for Proposals for Graduate Student Grants in Sustainable Agriculture for 2018.

Western SARE funds projects that are relevant to producers and provide readily adaptable technologies and information that advance sustainable agriculture in the western region. Funded projects must contain distinct research and education components and have producer involvement.

**Producer Involvement:** Congress mandates that the SARE grant program depart from “business as usual.” To that end, the Administrative Council requires that agricultural producers (farmers and ranchers) be involved in any SARE-funded Research and Education project.

Western SARE Graduate Student projects should:

- Conduct **research and education**, not research or education. Both elements are required.
- Demonstrate **measurable impacts and outcomes** that can increase the body of knowledge of sustainable agriculture.
- Produce **scholarly works and educational materials** to assist others in acquiring new knowledge.
- **Communicate** the project goals, activities, and findings to producers and other stakeholders.
- **Consult with farmers and ranchers** throughout the life of the project (inception to finish) to help ensure these results.

## Table of Contents:

Western SARE Goals .....	2
About the Proposal .....	2
Writing the Proposal .....	3
Required Supporting Documents .....	6
The Review Process .....	7
Reporting Requirements .....	7
Selected Proposals .....	8
How to Apply .....	9
Resources .....	9

**All applications are submitted  
online at:**

<http://wsaregrants.usu.edu>

## Graduate Student Grant Program Schedule

- **May 17, 2017** – Proposals are due by 1:00 p.m. MDT. Signatures are required.
- July 2017 – Technical review panel reviews and ranks proposals.
- July 2017– Western SARE Administrative Council makes final selections.
- **August 2017** – Coordinators of funded grant applications are informed of proposal status.
- Fall 2017 – Funds for selected projects will be disbursed.



Western SARE  
Room 115, AGRS  
Utah State University  
4865 Old Main Hill  
Logan, UT  
84322-4865

Phone: (435) 797-2257  
Fax: (435) 797-3344  
[wsare@usu.edu](mailto:wsare@usu.edu)  
<http://westernsare.org>

Host Institution:  
**UtahStateUniversity**

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 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.

## Western SARE Graduate Student Grants in Sustainable Agriculture

**Overview:** Western SARE Graduate Student Grants in Sustainable Agriculture proposals must address issues in sustainable agriculture of current and potential importance to the western regions. **Proposals should be written by the student who will coordinate and conduct the project**, with input from his or her major professor/advisor. Because universities typically do not allow students to manage institutional grant awards, the applicant's major professor/advisor will serve as the Principal Investigator if a grant is awarded. Grants provide a maximum of \$25,000 and may last for up to two years.

**Eligible Applicants:** Only graduate students (Master's and Ph.D.) enrolled at accredited colleges or universities in the western region are eligible to apply. The student must be considered full-time, according to his or her institution's requirements, at the time the proposal is submitted. The research must be conducted in the western region. Applicants may receive only one Graduate Student Grant in Sustainable Agriculture during his or her graduate career.

**Funding:** Western SARE Graduate Student Grants provide a maximum of \$25,000 and may last for up to two years. Funds are awarded to the applicant's university, with the funds to be dedicated to the graduate student's project.

**Public Domain:** While 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 special notes in [USDA Grant Policies](#).

**Following Directions:** An important and practical element of the granting process is following directions. Each year, Western SARE disqualifies proposals *before review* because applicants fail to follow directions found in the Call for Proposals as well as those associated with the online application process at [wsaregrants.usu.edu](http://wsaregrants.usu.edu).

## **WRITING THE PROPOSAL**

Proposals are submitted online at <http://wsaregrants.usu.edu> as PDF documents (a 10-page narrative, a one-page summary, and budget justification) as well as other supporting documents. The project participant and budget information is entered on-line.

**Text Limitations:** Text for the narrative portion is limited to ten (10) pages using 1-inch margins and a font size no smaller than 12 point Times New Roman. The narrative portion includes the following sections: Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture; Innovativeness; Impacts & Outcomes; Producer Involvement; Objectives; Materials & Methods; Educational Outreach Plan; Scholarly Publications & Educational Materials; Evaluation & Producer Adoption; and, Timeline. Citations may be included at the end of the narrative portion (not part of page limitation). In addition, a one-page summary of no more than 300 words, and a budget justification should be included. Attach all three files (narrative, summary, budget justification) as PDF files. Proposals that do not follow the guidelines may be disqualified.

## **PROPOSAL APPLICATION**

### **A. Project Team** (Entered online)

The names, addresses, and contact information for the major professor/advisor and any other project collaborators are entered online.

### **B. Summary** (Limit 300 words, PDF)

The summary should include the proposal title and a brief description of the problem or need, the creative approach to solving it, and why this is important. Clearly identify the research question. Describe the research and outreach components of your proposal, and explain how your project will distinctively or creatively address these problems. Identify the potential significance of the project and the expected project outcomes. A clear and concise description of your proposal is important for the review process. The summary is submitted as a one-page PDF.

### **C. Narrative** (Limit 10 pages; PDF)

**Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture:** (10% of review criteria)

Explain why this project is needed and how this project addresses a critical need in sustainable agriculture. Clearly identify any limitations in the current system and how your project will address those limitations. Articulate how the project and its possible outcomes are relevant to the three basic elements of sustainable agriculture, specifically:

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

It is required that you search and document search findings from EACH of the following (3) databases listed below. If there are no findings, give a statement regarding such in your narrative.

- National SARE database ([sare.org/Project-Reports](http://sare.org/Project-Reports))
- National Agricultural Library (<http://www.nal.usda.gov>)
- USDA-NIFA-CRIS Research (<http://cris.csrees.usda.gov>)

In addition to the required database searches and reporting on their findings, the applicant must include the 10 most pertinent citations in the space allowed. These 10 citations do not have to come from the three databases listed above, the applicant may provide citations from other relevant databases searches. There are no specified formats the citations should be in.

***Innovativeness:*** (5% of review criteria)

Explain how this project is novel and innovative. Provide written evidence for the originality of the project and its future contribution to the body of knowledge related to sustainable agriculture.

***Impacts and Outcomes:*** (10% of review criteria)

Provide a numerical list of the measurable impacts and outcomes of the project. What measurable impacts are expected in the future? Describe the potential impacts and outcomes of your project and its findings for producers (at local, state, and regional level) or agriculture in general. For example, how will the project affect overall farm/ranch productivity levels, family farm profits, soil or water quality or quantity, rural communities, and 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.

***Producer Involvement:*** (5% of review criteria)

SARE requires the involvement of producers throughout the project. Clearly identify the level of involvement of each producer at all stages – from inception to completion of the project.

***Objectives:*** (5% of review criteria)

Please provide a numerical list of project objectives. Each objective should be a statement describing what you intend to achieve. Objectives must be specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound (see [Performance Objectives](#)).

***Materials and Methods:*** (30% of review criteria)

For each objective, describe the project experimental design, research methods, materials, and project site (experiment station research plots, private farm/ranch, non-profit demonstration farm, etc.). Include sufficient detail so that reviewers can determine if the approach will achieve the objectives. Avoid the use of jargon that may be unfamiliar outside your industry or specialty area.

***Educational Outreach Plan:*** (10% of review criteria)

Explain how you will communicate your project and its findings to producers (specifically) and others (generally). **Create a yearly plan for outreach to other producers.** This plan should identify

dates, locations and methods, using networking techniques such as field days, workshops, demonstrations or other events. Provide a list of any educational materials that you plan to produce and use in the outreach plan such as factsheets, PowerPoint presentations, handouts, articles, brochures, social media, etc. Will the outreach and products be useful to other producers? How will you disseminate this information to other producers?

***Scholarly Publications and Educational Materials:*** (10% of review criteria)

Both refereed scientific journal publications and targeted extension/outreach publications are required. Include by name specific scientific journals and extension/outreach publications targeted for publication. Identify any other educational products that will be produced such as extension publications, videos, photos, posters, slideshows, brochures, fact sheets (printed or electronic), surveys, program announcements, and web-based materials. Project results need to get into the hands of producers. Proper citation of Western SARE in all materials produced from this proposal is required. Logos and associated information will be included in the contracting packet for funded projects.

***Evaluation and Producer Adoption:*** (5% of review criteria)

Indicate how the project data, outputs, and extension/outreach activities will be evaluated. This section should describe how changes in producers' knowledge, awareness, attitudes, new skills or practices, etc. will be measured such as a pre-post survey. An approved survey (see [Survey Instrument](#)) is expected to be filled out by every participant at each outreach event held. The Evaluation results are required as part of the annual report.

***Timeline:*** (5% of review criteria)

Provide a timeline, such as a [Gantt chart](#), for accomplishing each objective. Identify the major milestones or activities that will be completed, and when each of those milestones/activities will occur.

**D. Budget and Justification** (5% of review criteria; online, PDF)

Provide a concise budget, with proper justification, that is appropriate to the proposed project.

Special Note: Any single item or piece of equipment over \$500 must be listed separately with proper budget justification. The budget numbers are entered in the online budget table. The budget justification is submitted as a PDF. The budget justification should follow the order given in the budget table.

The budget and budget justification should address the following categories (if applicable). This list is not all-inclusive. For a more comprehensive list, and to find what is not allowable, please go to [Required Budgetary Details](#) under the Helpful Documents section.

Senior/Key Personnel: Identify the funding requested, and briefly describe the role and percentage time (FTE) for the PI (major professor), Co-PIs, and any other key personnel that will work on the project.

Graduate Student: Identify the funding requested, and briefly describe the role and percentage time (FTE) for any graduate students involved with the project.

Other Personnel: Identify the funding requested, and briefly describe the role and percentage time (FTE) or hours for any other personnel involved with the project. This includes other professionals, hourly labor, and secretarial-clerical labor (only when specific to the project).



*Fringe Benefits:* For each of the personnel, identify the benefit rate (e.g., percentage, flat fee).

*Travel:* Identify the purpose and costs for any domestic travel. Note: As a general rule, international travel is not allowed on Western SARE grants.

*Materials & Supplies:* List the total funds requested for materials and supplies, and indicate the general categories and amount for each category (e.g., glassware, chemicals, fertilizer, etc.).

*Other Direct Costs:* As applicable, please identify the purpose and costs for any direct costs other than materials and supplies such as publication costs, consultant fees, subawards, communications, copies/postage/printing, conferences/workshops, professional service fees (e.g., graphic design, welding), honoraria/speaker fees, mini-grants, and any other direct expenses.

***Graduate Student Research & Education Grant funds may be used for the following:***

- Compensation for field research and educational activities.
- Cost of field sampling, crop analysis and educational surveys.
- Materials and supplies needed for the project.
- Small tools and equipment. Any one piece of equipment costing less than \$5,000. Describe type of equipment (for example, pH meters, balances, scales, hand tools, etc.), cost and a brief narrative on the intended use of the equipment for project objectives. **NOTE: Any single item or piece of equipment over \$500 must be listed separately with proper budget justification.**
- Outreach expenses such as holding a field day, tours, printing, creating a webpage, etc.
- Out-of-town travel needed for the project. State the purpose, destination, number of travelers and estimated cost per trip. (e.g., St. Louis, MO. to attend the National Conference; two persons @ \$1,000 each). Per diem is limited to your host institution's approved rate, but cannot exceed the Federal allowable rate.
- Local travel (where personal auto is used and reimbursed) needed for project. State purpose and total dollar amount of reimbursement for vehicle use. If any overnight stays are anticipated, include the number of nights and the amount for meals and lodging (e.g., local travel for site visits to farmers in neighboring counties - \$500 for mileage and \$500 for meals and lodging (five days @ \$100/day) = \$1,000.) Maximum mileage allowance cannot exceed the Federal allowable rate.
- Hired labor for things that you cannot do yourself. State whether pay is a flat rate, or if the pay includes benefits. If not flat rate, identify percent of fringe benefits.
- Producer labor for project activities **above and beyond their normal farming activities.**
- Refreshments at field days, e.g. coffee, cold drinks, fruit, pie, cookies, etc. Meals are allowable if they maintain the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the meeting participants. This justification must be provided.
- Services of agricultural professionals can be compensated. Provide the rate in your budget justification.

**E. Required Supporting Documents**

The following supporting documents should be uploaded into the online grant application.

***Signature Page:*** Signatures from all relevant parties (e.g., major professor/advisor, graduate student) are required. Print the signature page(s) from the online application. Have all relevant

parties sign the signature page, scan (as a PDF), and upload into the online application by the deadline (this is in lieu of mailing the original signature page). If you are unable to upload the signature page, hard copies may be mailed into the Western SARE office—however they should be in the Western SARE office by the deadline.

**Current Vita:** Both the major professor/advisor and the graduate student are required to provide a current vita (two-page maximum). All vitae should be assembled into one PDF document and attached under Supporting Documents.

**Current and Pending Support:** Both the major professor/advisor and the graduate student are required to provide a current and pending support form. All current and pending support forms should be assembled into one PDF document and attached.

**Animal Welfare Assurance Statement:** If the project includes warm-blooded vertebrate, the Animal Welfare Assurance statement must be signed by the PI and an IACUC (Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee) representative or attending veterinarian. Attach as a PDF document. Do not submit the form if it is not applicable to your proposal (e.g., no warm-blooded vertebrate animals in project).

**Institutional Review Board Approval:** For projects dealing with human subjects, applicants will need to provide evidence of review and acceptance or exemption by their Institutional Review Board (IRB), or submit the IRB Assurance Statement. Attach as a PDF document.

## **The Review Process**

Eligible proposals received by the due date are reviewed by a panel of agricultural producers, scientists, educators, agricultural professionals, business leaders, and government and nonprofit professionals. As you develop your proposal, keep in mind that funded projects clearly define an opportunity or issue in sustainable agriculture and propose innovative and specific solutions. Proposals are evaluated based on the following criteria:

Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture	10%
Innovativeness	5%
Impacts & Outcomes	10%
Producer Involvement	5%
Objectives	5%
Materials & Methods	30%
Educational Outreach Plan	10%
Scholarly Pubs & Educational Materials	10%
Evaluation & Producer Adoption	5%
Timeline	5%
<u>Budget &amp; Justification</u>	5%
Total	100%

Priority will be given to projects that:

- Deal with a critical need in sustainable agriculture.
- Provide evidence that producers were involved in the development of the proposal.
- Utilize an innovative approach or idea.
- Produce products and outcomes that are useful to producers.
- Have objectives that are tangible and attainable.

## **Reporting Requirements**

Annual and final reports should describe the progress made on the research project, detail the findings observed, and document any outputs and impacts. All educational activities should include an evaluation component that measures changes in knowledge or awareness, attitudes and opinions, and/or the adoption of new practices.

Please review the following documents in the [Helpful Documents](#) section online to strengthen your proposal and to understand what will be expected of you and your project team if you are awarded a grant:

- The [Research and Education Logic Model](#) outlines what SARE hopes its project investments will achieve in terms of who is participating, what are the outputs, what outreach is done and what participants learn, do, or improve -- at least in part -- due to the project.
- The [Graduate Student Reporting Expectations](#) List shows what results you report on during the project and what SARE may assess two to four years after the project's completion.
- The [Survey Instrument](#) is a sample tool of how grantees can gather results from a project's outreach activities. This survey is one important way for collecting required data to measure changes in farmer/rancher knowledge, attitude, skills and awareness.

## **Selected Proposals**

If the Western SARE Administrative Council selects your project for funding, you may expect the following:

**Notification:** The Western SARE Administrative Council will select proposals for funding during its 2017 summer meeting. (The Administrative Council reserves the right to restructure or reduce the budget of any grant proposal before final approval.) Western SARE staff will notify applicants of the status of their proposals in August 2017.

**Contract:** The Sponsored Programs Office or Authorized Representative of the grant recipient will receive a Subcontract Agreement from Utah State University (USU), the contracting institution for Western SARE. This agreement is the award notice for this grant and contains the Terms and Conditions of the grant.

**Funds:** Year 1 funds are released upon receipt of a fully executed subcontract. Year 2 funds are released upon receipt and approval of the annual reports. 10% of the award is held pending receipt and approval of the final report. All expenses are cost-reimbursable. USU shall reimburse grant recipients not more often than monthly for allowable costs. All invoices shall be



submitted using grant recipient's standard invoice, but at a minimum shall include current and cumulative costs. All invoices MUST contain the project number (e.g., EW18-XXX). Detailed financial records are required.

USU may request receipts to meet General Accounting Office requirements. In the event circumstances require alternative payment options, please contact Western SARE after you receive notice of intent to fund your application.

**Photographs:** Grant recipients are required to document their project with photographs, which can be useful to them and help us highlight and promote their work on our website and in publications. Digital photographs and videos are preferred.

**Proper Citation:** The Western SARE program must be credited as the funding source in any publications or outreach materials generated, with the logo included.

**Reports:** A yearly report is required – an annual progress report or final report depending on your project status – each year the project is conducted. Project reports are compiled each year and shared with producers, interested policymakers and leaders at community, state, regional and national levels. All educational materials and products must be constructed in an electronic format. This format will be required in your reports. Evaluations of outreach events, such as the outreach participant surveys ([Survey Instrument](#)) are also required. Our goal is to have all your information available on the Western SARE website once your project's final report is approved.

**Site visits:** SARE recognizes there are limits to what can be accomplished, measured and reported during the life of your project. As a result, along with your reporting, Western SARE staff plan to conduct post-project assessments of representative projects to get a fuller measure of the SARE program's impact in areas such as:

- Who is participating in SARE-funded projects?
- What is being created by the projects (e.g., new knowledge, new approaches)?
- What are people learning from these projects?
- What changes are farmers and ranchers making?
- What economic, environmental, social or productivity benefits are farmers and ranchers seeing as a result of having made a change?

**Changes:** Grantees must report information changes (e.g., address, phone number, change in principal investigator, etc.) for all funded projects to the Western SARE office.

## **How to Apply**

Apply at: [wsaregrants.usu.edu](http://wsaregrants.usu.edu)

We strongly encourage applicants read the entire Call for Proposals before beginning to write the proposal. After writing the proposal, review the call for proposals again to ensure that all requested information is provided.

**Proposals are due by 1 p.m. MST - May 17, 2017**

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**

See the “Helpful Documents” at [wsaregrants.usu.edu](http://wsaregrants.usu.edu). If you have further questions after consulting these documents, please contact our office at 435-797-2257 or [wsare@usu.edu](mailto:wsare@usu.edu)

**Information on past projects** including summaries, highlights and reports can be found at [westernsare.org/projects](http://westernsare.org/projects). We encourage you to visit this website to learn more about sustainable agriculture and the Western SARE program. [wsaregrants.usu.edu](http://wsaregrants.usu.edu) offers proposal writing tips on the Grants page.

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](mailto:afsic@nal.usda.gov).

The United States Department of Agriculture and Utah State University are equal opportunity providers and employer.