

Please note that awards provided under these Calls are contingent upon USDA-NIFA authorizing the funding to our Host Institution, Montana State University.



Professional + Producer Grant Program 2026 Call for Proposals

Submission Deadline:

November 20, 2025, 12:00 pm (noon) MST

Submit online at www.projects.sare.org

Project team: Technical advisor (PI) and at least three producers

Project funding limit: \$85,000

Project time limit: three (3) years

Funding decisions announced: April 2026

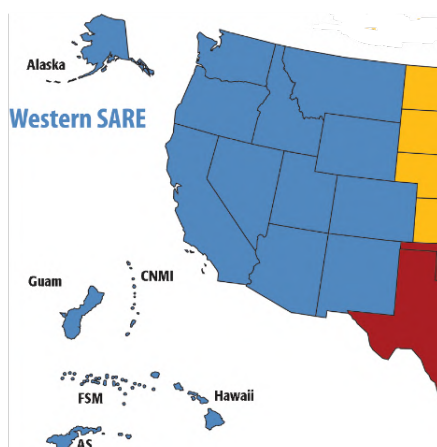
Contact: wsare-partnership@sare.org; 406-994-4309

Professional + Producer Grant Program

Western SARE funds proposals for innovative research and educational outreach to advance sustainable agricultural practices in the Western U.S. An Agricultural Professional and three (3) Producers work together to conduct both research and education activities. The goal of this grant program is to obtain results that are applicable to agricultural production, sustain and improve the environmental quality and natural resources upon which agriculture depends, improve the profitability of farmers/ranchers, and enhance the quality of life of agricultural communities.

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Western Region

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

Western SARE
Montana State University
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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.



About Western SARE

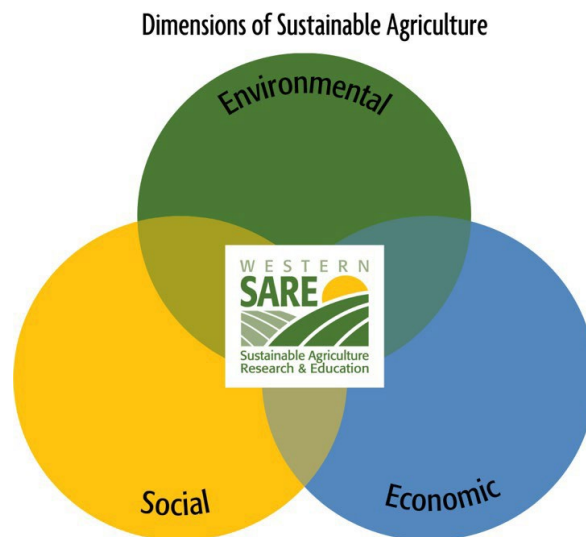
The Western SARE Administrative Council funds grant proposals that include creative and innovative on-farm/ranch research and educational outreach to advance Western SARE goals. All Western SARE projects *must contain both research and education components*.

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 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, 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, 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, the use of toxic materials in agricultural production, by optimizing on-farm resources, and integrating, where appropriate, biological cycles of control.
- Promote crop, livestock, and enterprise *diversification*.
- Examine the regional, economic, social, and environmental implications of adopting sustainable agriculture practices.



Program Overview

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

Professional + Producer projects require a team of at least four (4) people, including an Agricultural Professional (Principal Investigator), and at least three (3) independent Producers.

Agricultural Professional: any professional assisting agricultural producers, such as Cooperative Extension specialists, university faculty or researchers, USDA-NRCS field staff, agricultural consultants, or a nonprofit organization's staff, are eligible to serve as PI. The Principal Investigator is responsible for carrying out the project's contractual provisions and expenditures, and for achieving the stated research and education objectives. The PI must be associated with an organization located in the Western region, and the proposed project must take place in the West.

Producer: A person qualifies as a Producer (farmer/rancher) if he/she has a for-profit operation and:

- Her/his primary occupation is farming or ranching and has a farm/ranch taxpayer identification number (TIN); or
- Is a part-time producer with at least \$1,000 documented annual income from farming or ranching activities. An equivalent of \$1,000 of agricultural production is acceptable under circumstances where food is not sold for profit, such as through cultural/indigenous farming operations.

Project Time Limit: Projects cannot exceed three years (or 36 months). Please choose a start date that corresponds with the first of the month. Start dates must be no earlier than May 1, 2026, and no later than October 1, 2026.

Project Funding Limit: Western SARE Professional + Producer Program provides a maximum of \$85,000 (including Indirect Costs) for up to three years. Funds are awarded to the PI's organization.

Proposal Instructions

Proposals are submitted online at <https://projects.sare.org>. To strengthen your submission, check the information located in the [Proposal Preparation Documents](#) section of the Western SARE [website](#). To ensure your submission is complete, please review the submission checklist at the end of this Call of Proposal, on page 14.

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.

Project Basic Information

This section prompts general information about the project including:

- The *main* subject matter of the project
- The practices and commodities of the proposed project
- Project objectives
- The state(s) where the work will be conducted
- Proposed starting and ending dates
- Brief description of the agricultural business and/or operation of the project's producers
- Whether this project involves more than one institution that will receive financial support
- Whether this is a resubmission of a previous proposal submitted to Western SARE, and an explanation of how the reviewers' comments were addressed.

Summary (Limit 250 words)

A clear and concise summary is important for the review process. The summary must include a brief description of the project. In the summary, include the following:

- Identify a problem and/or research question(s)
- Describe the research activities and explain how your project will creatively address the identified problem(s)
- Describe the outreach activities and explain how results will be disseminated among agricultural stakeholders
- Enumerate the expected project outcomes.

Project Narrative

The project narrative includes the following sections: 1) Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture, Project Value, and Benefits, 2) Stakeholder Needs and Support, 3) Project Team, 4) Research Plan, 5) Educational Plan, 6) Timeline, and 7) Evaluation and Producer Adoption.

Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture, Project Value, and Benefits (15% of review criteria; word limit: 1000)

Explain why this project is necessary and how it addresses a critical need in sustainable agriculture. Identify limitations in the current system and how your project will address them. Cite evidence of need, including results and recommendations from related SARE-funded projects (www.sare.org/Project-Reports) and other studies or reports.

Describe the potential benefits for producers and sustainable agriculture. For example, provide an economic analysis and explain how your project would affect the overall farm/ranch

productivity, operational profits, soil or water quality or usage, and rural communities. Where possible, use specific estimates of impacts –such as dollars saved per acre, tons of soil protected from erosion, pounds of reduced chemical inputs, markets expanded, jobs created, etc.

The proposal must address the three pillars of sustainable agriculture (social, environmental, and economic) defined on page 2 of this Call for Proposals.

Stakeholder Needs and Support (5% of review criteria; word limit: 500)

Western SARE is committed to addressing the needs of agricultural stakeholders. Proposals must include evidence that stakeholders (other than project collaborators) identified the problem(s) being addressed and demonstrate support for the project. Describing and documenting stakeholders' support demonstrates that the proposed project is relevant and timely. Evidence of stakeholder support may include, but is not limited to:

- Recommendations from stakeholder groups such as growers' 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 local co-ops.
- Needs assessments that relate to the project topic, if they are available.

Project Team Members and Roles (5% of the review criteria; word limit: 600)

The project team must be a minimum of four (4) people and must include: an Agricultural Professional (Principal Investigator), and at least three (3) Producers (see definitions of team members on page 3). For each project team member, indicate the activities in which they will be involved and the time and resources committed to the project. The team may also include the following additional collaborators,

- Extension/Outreach Representative: The outreach representative may be an Extension agent, specialist, educator, or equivalent. This person could be involved in implementing the education plan and outreach activities.
- Researchers, educators, and other collaborators with appropriate expertise for the project's scope.
- Additional Producers: Each producer must be an independent and separate operator. Nonprofit farm operations may participate in the project, but do not count as the **required** Producers.

Research Plan (30% of review criteria; word limit: 2000)

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 technique(s) will be tested? What materials will be used? Describe the project

site(s), and for each research objective indicate the 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 and define all acronyms.

If [research with human subjects](#) will be conducted, applicants must seek approval from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) or provide a document indicating that the IRB process has been initiated. For more details about the IRB approval requirement, see the Supporting Documents section below.

If your project involves research with vertebrate animals, you must provide documentation from your Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) demonstrating you have received approval or exemption for your project, or at a minimum, you have submitted your protocol for review by your IACUC. An IACUC approval is not required to be in place for the proposal submission, but if selected for funding, documentation of IACUC approval must be provided before the Subaward Agreement will be executed. For more details about the IACUC approval requirement, see the Supporting Documents section below.

Educational Plan (30% of review criteria; word limit: 2000)

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 each outreach activity (e.g., field days, demonstrations, workshops, presentations, websites, etc.). Describe the target audience (e.g., producers, other agricultural professionals, students, etc.) and how you plan to reach them. Explain how you will communicate your project's findings to producers and the general public.

Provide a list of educational resources you plan to produce (e.g., factsheets, PowerPoint presentations, videoclips, podcasts, handouts, brochures, 4-H publications, posters, etc.). If applicable, describe plans for any scholarly outputs (e.g., academic journals and conferences). Digital outcomes (e.g., podcasts, videos, blogs, web-based materials, and social media) are encouraged but should not be the sole outreach approach. Multiple communication styles and materials are strongly encouraged. For more details see [Conducting Successful Outreach](#).

Timeline (5% of review criteria; word limit: 500)

Provide a timeline, such as a [Gantt Chart](#) for accomplishing each objective of the Research Plan and Education Plan. Identify the major milestones and activities that will be completed, when each of those milestones will occur, and how they relate to the objectives.

Evaluation and Producer Adoption (5% of review criteria; word limit: 500)

Explain how the project's research and educational objectives will be evaluated. For example, describe how changes in producers' knowledge, awareness, attitudes, and adoption of practices will be measured (e.g., a pre-post activity survey). If using a survey or evaluation tool in addition to the Western SARE Survey, applicants should describe their survey selection/development process and methods for analysis.

Western SARE requires evaluation results as part of the required annual progress and final reports. The [Western SARE Survey and Evaluation Tool](#) is expected to be filled out by participants at each outreach activity in addition to any other evaluation form. If the Western SARE Survey is used for program evaluation and reporting only it does not qualify as research with human subjects and does not require the approval of an Institutional Review Board. Check the [Human Subject Research](#) site to learn whether your activities meet the definition of human subject research.

Multiple submissions are accepted, but only one application (from any one individual PI) can be awarded funding in any of the Western SARE competitive programs in one grant funding cycle. An exception to this rule is proposals submitted to the Graduate Student program, where more than one project can be awarded to a PI who acts as the main advisor of the graduate student(s). Additionally, obtaining Graduate Student awards does not exclude the PI from being awarded in other Western SARE Research and Education or Professional Development grant programs for the same funding cycle. Multiple simultaneous projects corresponding to different grant cycles may be funded conditional upon fulfillment of all reporting expectations, including yearly objectives and milestones being met (as listed in the approved proposal or a Project Modification).

Budget and Budget Justification (5% of review criteria)

Provide a detailed budget and budget justification that are appropriate to the proposed project. The budget must be submitted on the [Western SARE Budget Workbook \(MS Excel file\)](#) provided on the proposal site. **Please note that because Western SARE budget requirements change, applicants must use the current [Western SARE Budget Workbook](#).** Previous versions of the workbook will NOT be accepted. For the "Total Budget" field in the online proposal form, enter the total funds requested; this amount must match the total funds resulting from the calculation in the *Western SARE Budget Workbook*. Enter the Budget Justification in the space provided on the proposal site.

If the applicant's institution will be issuing lower-tier subawards to other entities, the applicant must provide a detailed budget and justification for each proposed lower-tier subaward. For each lower-tier subaward, use one of the designated "LT Subaward" *worksheets* found within the *Western SARE Budget Workbook* (navigate to the worksheets tabs found at the bottom). A budget justification must accompany each proposed lower-tier subaward. Upload a budget

justification for each lower-tier subaward as a separate PDF in the section designated for lower-tier subaward budget justification(s) on the online proposal site. A complete application must include the applicant institution's *Western SARE Budget Workbook* and budget justification, and those of any proposed lower-tier subawards to be issued.

Additionally, matching funds are not required for Western SARE grant programs. Please do NOT include matching funds in your budget or justification. However, if there are additional project-related expenses that are not requested in the proposal budget, this may be clarified on the online proposal site.

Professional + Producer funds can be budgeted in the following categories (please also see the *Budget Categories and Guidance* tab found within the [Western SARE Budget Workbook](#))

Salaries and Benefits: the applicant may request compensation for performing work directly related to the project. Salary support for other employees of the applicant's institution working on the project, including students, is acceptable. Provide base salary, FTEs, fringe benefit rates, and salary/benefits amounts requested.

Lower-tier Subawards: for each proposed lower-tier subaward, include brief details, e.g., lower-tier subaward PI, institution and budget amounts, by project year. Additionally, a detailed budget and justification for each proposed lower-tier subaward is required. For each lower-tier subaward, use one of the designated "LT Subaward" *worksheets* found within the *Western SARE Budget Workbook* (navigate to the worksheets tabs found at the bottom). Upload a budget justification for each lower-tier subaward as a separate PDF in the section designated for lower-tier subaward budget justification(s) on the online proposal site.

Contracted Services: includes paying for professional services such as testing and analysis services, survey development and administration, computational services, website development or maintenance, professional production services (e.g., videographer), consultants, honoraria, speaker fees, producer labor, etc. Including commensurate payment to producers involved in the project as a honoraria or stipend payment is encouraged and should be included here.

Supplies: includes paying for basic supplies and materials needed to carry out the project. Examples include agricultural supplies (fencing, seeds, plants, fertilizer), field and lab supplies, minor equipment and tools that cost less than \$5,000 (see note below regarding Capital Equipment), paper/envelopes, in-house photocopying of materials for workshops/meetings, software, books, shipping materials, etc. Any shipping costs associated with the purchase of supplies/materials should be included as supply costs. The purchase of food/refreshments for meetings/field days are only allowed if it is necessary to maintain the continuity of the project activity and is considered a supply cost. Please also include non-capital rental costs as a supply cost, e.g., rental of facilities, meeting space, land, etc.

Note: Capital Equipment purchases are generally not allowed under the SARE program and should be *essential* for the completion of the proposed activities. 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. Equipment expenses over \$5,000 may be leveraged by non-Western SARE funds. *Purchasing multiple components of single equipment that cost under \$5,000 in an attempt to circumvent the \$5,000 cap is not allowed.* Purchases of *minor* equipment under \$5,000 is allowed. Please include minor equipment and/or leveraged capital equipment purchases in the Supplies budget category.

Communication: includes paying for postage and mailing expenses (including shipping samples for analysis), and printed materials (flyers, brochures, posters). This category also includes expenses for publishing articles in scientific journals or other types of publications, or for commercial photocopying (Note: in-house photocopying falls under supplies).

Travel: must be directly related to the project and includes mileage reimbursement, airfare, lodging, meal *per diem*, car rental, taxi, bus, shuttle expenses and parking, conference and registration fees, etc. Please note that travel *per diem* and mileage must comply with your institution's approved rates. If no rate is available, use the Federal Government rate listed on the [U.S General Services Administration \(GSA\) website](#). Additionally, lodging costs/reimbursements must be limited to the Federally approved rate listed on the GSA website for the travel destination.

Note: international travel is typically NOT allowed under the SARE program except in cases where sufficient justification has been provided and requires pre-approval by the Western SARE Regional Coordinator. Pre-approval is not given at the submission stage. If international travel is included, it will be considered as part of the entire proposal. If the proposal is selected for funding, the PI will be informed at that time as to whether the international travel is approved. All international travel must be directly related to the project, must be essential for project completion, and well justified (e.g., explain why this activity cannot be done in the U.S., relevance to sustainable agriculture in the Western U.S., foreign institution's/ colleague's qualifications, etc.). International travel includes any travel outside North America and/or U.S. Possessions. Travel to the Freely Associated States -Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, and Palau- is considered international. USDA-NIFA requires that international travel be done in a U.S. flag air carrier.

Rent: Only includes the rental of capital/major equipment which is capped at \$4,999 for the entire duration of the project. For other rental costs, e.g., facilities, meeting space, land, etc., please budget for those costs under supplies.

Participant / Trainee Support: A participant is defined as a non-employee of the applicant's institution who is the recipient, not the provider, of a service or training opportunity such as

participation in a workshop, conference, seminar, symposium or other short-term instructional or information-sharing activity to be funded by this award. Participant support may be paid to non-employees to help offset the cost of travel/lodging and meeting/training fees and/or as a stipend for participating in a training. Participant/trainee support should NOT be used: to reimburse or pay employees of the applicant's institution; to pay research subjects/participants (unallowable expense under the SARE program); for honoraria/speaker fees (contracted services expense); or, if travel expenses for a non-employee will be directly reimbursed by the institution (travel expense). The applicant's institution must maintain back-up documentation for all participant support costs in accordance with their institution's policy.

Indirect Costs (IDCs) Recovery: The below criteria must be followed by both the primary applicant and any proposed lower-tier subaward recipient(s) for determining IDC recovery:

- Under the SARE program, NIFA stipulates indirect cost recovery is capped at 10% of the Total Direct Costs (TDC) requested.
- The 10% TDC cap should be consistently applied to both the primary applicant and any proposed lower-tier subrecipients.
- Important note: if the applicant's institution has a Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), the IDC base should be Total Direct Costs, including the TOTAL COSTS of any/all proposed lower-tier subrecipient(s). Excluding all or a portion of any proposed lower-tier subaward(s) in the IDC base will result in a re-budget request should the proposal be funded.
- Some institutions may NOT be eligible for IDC recovery or may be limited to the *de minimis* rate. Please note: the Federal de minimis rate has increased to *up to* 15% of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). If the applicant (or a proposed lower-tier subrecipient) is requesting the de minimis, be aware of the following condition: IDC recovery in excess of 10% Total Direct Costs (TDC) is not allowed. Therefore, if using up to 15% of the MTDC will exceed 10% of TDC, applicant should use 10% TDC as their IDC recovery base.
- Applicants must limit their request for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 10% of Total Direct Costs.

Applicants must indicate the IDC rate used on the *Western SARE Budget Workbook*. Detailed information about [IDC](#) recovery and calculations can be found on the Western SARE [website](#) and on the *Western SARE Budget Workbook*.

Program Income: if an applicant wishes to generate program income through activities proposed in their Western SARE project (e.g., charging a conference/meeting registration fee), this must be included in the proposal. Program income must be reported to MSU per federal reporting requirements. When preparing the budget justification, please address the questions provided in the Budget Justification section of the proposal. To learn more about program income, please visit the Western SARE [website](#).

Professional + Producer grant funds may NOT be used for the following purposes:

Note: this list is not exhaustive; budgets/expenses are reviewed for allowability/allocability in relation to the proposed project activities.

- Tuition and fees
- Preparation of thesis/dissertation copy
- Purchase of classroom books
- Capital Equipment purchases – see above for more information.
- Starting or expanding a farm or farm operation.
- Major renovations/permanent improvements to a farm or ranch, such as constructing or remodeling a building.
- Repairs/Maintenance of equipment or buildings/facilities.
- Providing meals during events that are not necessary to maintain the continuity of a scheduled meeting; breakfasts and dinners typically do not qualify.
- Testing of commercial products.
- Incentives: providing cash or cash value items to individuals to incentivize behavior
- The purchase and distribution of gifts, gift cards, etc. for any purpose.
- Promotional items to give away, e.g., swag, mugs, clothes, bags, pens, pencils, etc.

Additionally, matching funds are not required or requested of Western SARE grant recipients. Please do NOT include matching funds in your budget or justification.

Other Funding Sources (optional; word limit: 150)

If other resources are necessary for the success of the project (not requested in SARE budget), how will they be provided? Note: Your proposal will not be scored based on outside funding. This information helps our grant review panel determine the feasibility of proposed project outcomes.

Supporting Documents

All supporting documents must be attached to the Supporting Documents section of the online application site. PDF documents are preferred, but images in .jpg formats are accepted. ***Failure to provide all the required supporting documents will disqualify the proposal before review.***

Signature Page: This form affirms that the PI (Agricultural Professional) is responsible for all expenditures. This form must be signed by the PI and the PI's Authorized Organizational Representative. For a college or university, this person is usually the Director of the Sponsored Programs Office. For non-profits or other organizations, this is typically the Executive Director, CEO, or CFO. This form can be downloaded from the online application site.

Current Vita: The PI and all other project team members who are NOT producers or students must submit a current Vita (maximum 2 pages for each member).

Letters of Cooperation from Producers: Each producer who is part of the project team must send a ***current*** dated and signed letter of cooperation. This letter should verify the producer's Western SARE| Hosted by Montana State University| westernsare.org

willingness to participate, indicate the time and resources committed to this project, and describe their role in the project.

Letters of Commitment from Partner Institutions: If the proposal includes issuing lower-tier subawards to partner institutions, attach a letter of commitment from each institution. The letter of commitment must be dated and signed by the lower-tier subrecipient's PI (usually listed as a Co-PI of the project) and include the following information: period of performance, total funds requested, and a Scope of Work outlining activities to be performed, the deliverables, and the project timeline.

Letters of Support from Stakeholders: Attach letters of support from stakeholder individuals who are not part of your project team and/or organizations but support the proposed project.

Current and Pending Support Form: The PI and other project team members who are NOT producers or students must submit a Current and Pending Support form. This form can be downloaded from the online application site.

Institutional Review Board Approval Document for Working with Human Subjects: For guidance on what meets the requirements for Human Subject Research, please see [here](#).

If your project meets the definition of Human Subjects Research, you will need to provide documentation from your Institutional Review Board (IRB) demonstrating you have received approval or exemption for your project, or at a minimum, you have submitted your protocol for review by your IRB. At the time of submission, proof that you initiated the IRB process is acceptable; however, if awarded, the Subaward Agreement will not be executed until IRB approval/exemption documentation is provided.

If your project meets the definition of Human Subjects Research, but you do not have access to an IRB, please complete the [Human Subject Research Determination Worksheet](#) to evaluate whether review and approval or exemption from an Institutional Review Board is needed to complete your project. At the time of submission, completing and attaching the worksheet will suffice. If your proposal is selected for funding, Western SARE and Montana State University will assist the PI in completing the requirements for research with human subjects.

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Document for Working with Animals: For guidance on what meets the requirements for the care and use of agricultural animals in research and teaching please see [here](#).

If your project involves vertebrate animals, you must provide documentation from your Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) demonstrating you have received approval or exemption for your project, or at a minimum you have submitted your protocol for review by your IACUC. IACUC approval is not required to be in place by the proposal submission, but if selected for funding, documentation of IACUC approval must be complete before the Subaward Agreement will be executed.

If your project involves vertebrate animals and you do not have access to an IACUC, please Western SARE| Hosted by Montana State University| westernsare.org

complete the [Animal Care Plan Questionnaire](#), which will be used to evaluate whether review and approval or exemption from an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee is needed to complete your project. At the time of submission, completing and attaching the questionnaire will suffice. If your proposal is selected for funding, Western SARE and Montana State University will assist the PI in completing the requirements for research with vertebrate animals.

Conflict of Interest: A potential for conflict of interest (CoI) is when project awardees' external activities or personal interests could influence -or appear to influence- the manner or extent to which those individuals carry out their project responsibilities. Such influences could diminish the awardees' ability to accomplish the project objectives and goals and violate state or federal law. Typically, conflicts of interest can be dealt with effectively through disclosure and a plan to manage the conflict. If your proposal is selected for funding, you will be expected to develop and implement a CoI management plan at the time of the subaward execution with Montana State University. Please disclose whether you have a CoI under the following circumstances:

- Does any project investigator(s), including their family members, have any financial interest (income greater than \$5,000 in the last 12 months when aggregated with family members, consulting agreements, management responsibilities, or ownership interest in publicly traded companies of greater than \$5,000 or any ownership interest in a non-publicly traded company, when aggregated with family members) that is related to the proposed project?
- Does any project investigator(s), have a relationship, as defined by the list of [conflicts of interest in the workplace](#), with other individuals listed in the submission, or plan to employ or have a contract with a family member or partner?

Citations: A list of the sources cited in the proposal must be attached in the Supporting Documents section of the online submission and is not part of the word number limitation.

Other Documents: (Optional): Attach any other documents that might strengthen the proposal. These other documents may not be used to lengthen the proposal under the Project Narrative.

Review Process

Eligible proposals received by the due date with all the required sections and supporting documents will be evaluated by a Technical Review Panel, a 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. Their recommendations are forwarded to the Western SARE Administrative Council for additional review and final selection. Reviewers' and Western SARE Administrative Council recommendations are then shared with the applicants.

Proposal evaluation criteria	
Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture, Project Value and Benefits	15%
Stakeholder Needs and Support	5%
Project Team	5%
Research Plan	30%
Educational Plan	30%
Timeline	5%
Evaluation & Producer Adoption	5%
Budget & Justification	5%
Total	100%

Selected Proposals

If the PI of a new Western SARE grant proposal has an active Western SARE award, funding decisions will be contingent upon fulfillment of the reporting requirements of the active award as specified in the Subaward Agreement. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding by the Western SARE Administrative Council may expect the following:

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 Public Access of Research Data section in [USDA Grant Policies](#).

Notification: The Western SARE Administrative Council will select proposals for funding in early March 2026. 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 the proposals by April 2026.

Award: A Subaward Agreement between the applicant's institution and Montana State University will be initiated. The Subaward Agreement will identify all Terms and Conditions for the award, including reporting requirements. Learn more about the Subaward Process [here](#).

Note: All proposals from Micronesia (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, Kosrae, Marshall Islands and Palau) are required to have the College of Micronesia (at Pohnpei) act as their fiscal agent in the disbursement of funds.

Funds: The Subaward Agreement is cost-reimbursable. Subrecipients will be responsible for invoicing Western SARE/MSU for all expenses to be reimbursed. Invoices are to be submitted according to the guidelines in the Subaward Agreement. 10% of the awarded budget will be withheld pending receipt and approval of the final report.

Photographs and Videos: Grant recipients are invited to document their project with photographs and/or videos, which can be useful to highlight and promote projects' outcomes. High-definition digital photographs and videos are preferred. It is expected that the outreach or educational

material produced by Western SARE-supported projects will be ADA-compliant. Closed captions for visual and audio deliverables is strongly encouraged. For details on producing ADA-compliant media, see [here](#).

Proper Citation: The Western SARE program must be credited as the funding source in any publications or outreach materials generated by the project. Refer to the Western SARE [website](#) for complete guidelines for acknowledging funds. Information about citing Western SARE is also included in the Subaward Agreement.

Site visits: Western SARE recognizes there are limits to what can be reported during the life of a project. As a result, along with project reporting, Western SARE staff may visit ongoing or finalized projects to assess the impact on Western SARE grants.

Project Modification and Changes: Requests for changes to the project as originally proposed, such as a change in PI, subrecipient institution, objectives, timeline, budget, etc. should be submitted to the grant program manager via email using the [Project Modification Form](#) for consideration and approval by the Western SARE Regional Coordinator. Upon approval of the requested changes, Western SARE staff will notify the PI. Learn more about managing a Western SARE grant [here](#).

Reporting Requirements for Awarded Proposals

An annual report will be required each year of the project. Progress and final reports should describe the progress made on the project, report results, describe the educational outreach activities and material produced by the project, and document impacts for the period of the report. All outreach activities should include an evaluation component that measures changes in knowledge or awareness, attitudes, and opinions, and/or the adoption of new practices by producers or other agricultural professionals who participated in the project activities. If the project is one year in length, only a final report will be required. Approved project reports will be posted on the national SARE website and shared with producers, interested policymakers, and other agricultural stakeholders. All educational materials and products must have an electronic version and be included in the reports. Please review the documents located in the Western SARE [Reporting Expectations](#) section to understand what will be expected if your project is awarded.

Annual Reports are due on April 1st of each year of the project. The PI will have up to 60 days from the Period of Performance's end date to submit the Final Report.

Grantees must maintain up-to-date contact information (e.g., address, phone number, email, etc.) for all project team members in the online submission portal.

How to Apply

We strongly encourage applicants to read the entire Call for Proposals before beginning to write the proposal and refer to it regularly during proposal development.

Proposals are due by 12 pm (noon) MST – November 20, 2025

Go to <https://projects.sare.org>

Professional + Producer Grant Program Schedule

November 20, 2025 – Proposals are due by 12:00 PM (noon) MST

January 2026 – A Technical Review Panel reviews and recommends proposals for funding

March 2026 – WSARE Administrative Council selects proposals for funding

April 2026 – Proposal status is announced to applicants

May 2026 – Projects may start

Online Submission Checklist

Project Basic Information

- ☐ Project Subject Matter
- ☐ Project Start Date
- ☐ Project End Date
- ☐ Primary State
- ☐ Project Commodities
- ☐ Project Practices
- ☐ Project Objectives
- ☐ How did you learn about this CFP?
- ☐ Usefulness of Western SARE Resources

Summary

- ☐ Summary

Narrative

- ☐ Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture, Project Value and Benefits
- ☐ Stakeholders Needs and Support
- ☐ Project Team Members and Roles
- ☐ Research Plan
- ☐ Education Plan
- ☐ Timeline
- ☐ Evaluation and Producer Adoption

Budget and Budget Justification

- ☐ Total Budget Amount
- ☐ Budget Worksheet for Awarded Institution
- ☐ Budget Justification for Awarded Institution
- ☐ Budget Worksheet for each proposed Lower-tier Subaward
- ☐ Budget Justification for each proposed Lower-tier Subaward

- Authorized Organizational Representative Information
- Supporting Documents
 - Signature Page
 - Curriculum Vitae for all team members except producers
 - Current and Pending for all team members except producers
 - Letter of Commitment from Partner Institution(s) (if applicable)
 - Letters of Cooperation from Producer(s)
 - Letters of Support from Stakeholders
 - IRB Document (if applicable)
 - IACUC Document (if applicable)
 - Citations

Resources

Check the resources in the [Western SARE Proposal Preparation Documents](#) section. If you have further questions, please contact the Professional + Producer Program Manager at wsare-partnership@sare.org or 406-994-4789.

Information on past projects, including summaries and reports, can be found [here](#). We encourage you to visit our [website](#); 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. AFSIC resources are available at <http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/> or contact AFSIC at 301-504-6559 or by e-mail, afsic@nal.usda.gov.

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

The mission of Western SARE is to advance innovations that improve profitability, stewardship of natural resources, and quality of life by investing in groundbreaking research and education.

Please note that awards provided under these Calls are contingent upon USDA-NIFA authorizing the funding to our Host Institution, Montana State University.

Statement from USDA NIFA

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to the extent permitted by law, will no longer make grants or otherwise fund programs or activities that improperly discriminate on the basis of race or sex, including discrimination in the name of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies. Instead, USDA will prioritize merit and efficiency. USDA recognizes programs and initiatives will have the greatest impact when these programs and initiatives put American farmers, ranchers, and foresters first by:

- solving the most pressing challenges they face;
- protecting America's food, fuel, and fiber supply to enhance national security;
- supporting production of healthy and safe food for consumers;
- expanding and developing domestic markets;
- training the next generation of agriculturalists; and
- fueling innovation to keep American farmers at the forefront of productivity.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is committed to advancing these principles and encourages applicants to actively engage farmers, ranchers, and foresters when applying for funding opportunities to ensure relevancy and adherence to them. NIFA also encourages agricultural leaders to engage in the peer review panel process to ensure American producers are better served through research, education, and extension activities.