

Request for Applications
Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
Sustainable Agriculture Action Plan
Deadline: September 6, 2024, 5:00p.m. MST

1. SUMMARY

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

The Sustainable Agriculture Action Plan (SAAP) intends to provide important stakeholder-derived feedback about the sustainable agriculture needs and priorities of specific industries and geographic locations to university researchers, Extension specialists, regulators, non-governmental agencies, elected officials, the USDA, and other potential funders.

Western SARE seeks to fund two applications:

1. An application focused on a specific regionally important agricultural industry or commodity
2. An application focused on a specific, limited geographic area in the Western Region that includes multiple crops or production systems. The geographic area must be limited and logical, for example, a specific watershed, a Soil and Water Conservation District, an island or island system, etc.

Each successful application will be funded for a maximum of \$20,000 which will be awarded as a cost-reimbursable subaward agreement from Montana State University, Western SARE Host Institution.

2. BACKGROUND

Western SARE is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture to advance sustainable agriculture through competitive grant programs. The SARE grant program mission is to advance innovations that improve profitability, environmental stewardship, and quality of life in American agriculture by investing in groundbreaking research, education and outreach. SARE embraces three broad goals: profit over the long term; stewardship of our nation's land, air, and water; and quality of life for farmers, ranchers, and their communities. More information about Western SARE can be found on its website:

western.sare.org

The concept for this application is based on Pest Management Strategic Plans, in which growers, processors, commodity association representatives, pest managers, researchers and Extension specialists come together to document the current pest management practices in their industry and identify priorities for research to fill knowledge gaps, regulatory changes, and education or training programs to support adoption of integrated pest management practices. Pest Management Strategic Plans can be found [here](#).

Sustainable Agricultural Action Plans will be developed through a similar consultative model but take a more expansive and holistic view of an industry or geographic area to identify top priorities and key needs for research, regulatory changes, infrastructure, and education and training to increase the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices in that industry/commodity or area. Previous project reports can be found at <https://western.sare.org/learning-and-resources/special-western-sare-funded-reports/>

3. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants include private individuals and institutions, faculty, and qualified staff of two- and four-year universities, businesses, commodity organizations, and governmental and non-governmental organizations. Please note: any individual or entity receiving federal funds must have or obtain a SAM Unique Entity Identifier (UEI); details can be found on the Western SARE [website](#). The Principal Investigator must be in the Western Region, which includes the following states and territories: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, and the Northern Mariana Islands.

4. REQUESTED SCOPE OF WORK

Applications should address each of the following:

Focus of the Project:

- Identify whether the plan is industry-focused or location-focused
- Define the industry or location
- Explain the need for the project for that industry or location and describe the potential benefits and impacts.
- Projects must be based in the Western SARE region. For location-based projects, describe the area, the agricultural systems within it and why the specific area was chosen

Stakeholder Identification and Input: Describe the process for identifying and engaging stakeholders and gathering their input. Stakeholders may include producers (farmers or ranchers), processors, commodity organizations, non-governmental organizations, university researchers and Extension educators, government officials, regulatory agencies, conservation districts, consultants, and others.

5. APPLICATION FORMAT AND SUBMISSION

Applications can be submitted [here](#) and should include the following information:

- a. Principal Investigator:** Principal Investigator's name, title, affiliation, and contact information.
- b. Project Summary:** A concise summary of the proposed project. Limited to 1,500 characters.
- c. Problem and Justification:** Describe the need for the project and the benefits a Sustainable Agriculture Action Plan could bring to the specific industry or area proposed. Limited to 3,000 characters.
- d. Experience and Qualifications:** State the qualifications and relevant experience of the applicants to demonstrate their ability to successfully complete this project. Limited to 1,500

characters.

- e. **Procedure:** Describe the proposed strategy for accomplishing the Requested Scope of Work outlined above. Limited to 3,000 characters.
- f. **Timeline:** Describe a timeline for completing the project that fits the key dates outlined below including stakeholder identification and recruitment, consultation, SAAP document preparation and submission to Western SARE. Limited to 3,000 characters.
- g. **Budget:** Applicants must fill out and include the [Western SARE SAAP budget form](#). Other budget forms will not be accepted.
- h. **Budget Justification:** Applicants must include a detailed budget justification for each budget line item requested. The budget justification is limited to two pages and must follow the order of the budget form. Funds may be budgeted in the following categories.
 - Salaries and Benefits: Provide base salary, FTEs, fringe benefit rates and salary and benefit amounts requested.
 - Contracted Services: Includes paying for professional services.
 - Supplies: Basic supplies and materials needed to carry out the project, envelopes, paper, photocopying, shipping costs, etc.
 - Communication: Includes postage and mailing expenses.
 - Travel: Mileage reimbursement, airfare, lodging, meal per diem; car rentals, taxi, bus, shuttle expenses for project staff or stakeholder participants. Travel per diem and mileage need to align with your organization's approved rates. If no rate is available, use the [Federal Government](#) rate.
 - Rent: Includes fees associated with renting equipment, facilities, etc.
 - Indirect Costs Recovery:
 - For entities that have a Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate (NICRA), IDCs are calculated at a rate of 10% of Total Direct Costs (TDC). This is the maximum indirect cost recovery (IDC cap) allowed under the SARE program per USDA-NIFA. The 10% TDC IDC cap should be consistently applied to both the primary applicant and proposed lower-tier subrecipients, if applicable; therefore, include the total costs of any/all proposed lower-tier subawards in the IDC recovery base.
 - Non-Federal entities that do NOT have a federally negotiated rate for indirect costs, and never had one previously, or that previously had a NICRA but it is no longer in effect may claim 10% of modified total direct costs (MTDC) as de minimis to cover overhead.
 - If the entity does not have a NICRA and does not want to claim de minimis, IDC recovery is not required.
- i. **Supporting documents:** Include the following documents with your submission.
 - Signatures of the Principal Investigator and Authorized Organizational Representative are required. See form below.
 - Curriculum vitae of the principal investigator and any co-principal investigators.
 - Letters of Engagement from any cooperating organizations detailing the scope of their

activities and confirming their participation in the project. (If applicable.)

- Institutional Review Board Approval Document for Working with Human Subjects: [Guidance on Human Subjects Research can be found at Human Subject Research](#)

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 Determinations Worksheet](#) to evaluate whether review and approval or exemption from an Institutional Review Board is needed to complete your project.

j. Other Supporting Documents: These are allowed but not required.

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

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

The final document shall include a three-page (maximum) executive summary of the Sustainable Agriculture Action Plan. This summary should encompass a project overview, the methodologies employed, key findings, recommendations for the practical application of the insights obtained, and an implementation plan for the gathered information, intended audience and application of the outcomes. Western SARE will post final Sustainable Agriculture Action Plans on its website.

6. KEY DATES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

September 6, 2024: Applications due. The application must be submitted through the [submission portal](#) no later than 5:00p.m. Mountain Standard Time

October 2024: Awards Announced

November 2024: Project period begins

August 2025: Project completion date

Questions regarding this Request for Applications can be directed to:

Sara Trojan

Associate Coordinator

Professional Development Program

Western SARE

strojan@sare.org

7. EVALUATION CRITERIA

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

SIGNATURE PAGE

Project Title: _____

Total Funds Requested: _____

Principal Investigator

USDA defines a Principal Investigator as one who has the authority to write and submit an application and carry out its contractual provisions.

As the project PI, I affirm I am responsible for all expenditures and achieving the stated research and education objectives of the application.

Signature: Principal Investigator

Date

Printed Name: _____

Authorized Organizational Representative

USDA defines the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) as one who has authority to enter into contractual agreements with the Western SARE Host Institution, Montana State University.

As the AOR for the institution/organization project of the PI submitting this application, I affirm that _____ (*enter institution/organization name*) has authority to enter into a contractual agreement with Montana State University.

Signature: Authorized Organizational Representative

Date

Printed Name: _____

Title: _____