



# Fellows Grant Program 2026-2027 Call for Proposals

**Submission Deadline, July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026, 5:00 p.m. Mountain Time**

**Project funding limit: \$10,000**

**Total funding available: \$20,000**

**Project time limit: one (1) year**

**Funding decisions announced: End of August 2026**

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## ***Fellows Grant Program***

The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) invites proposals for innovative research and/or educational outreach that advance rural development in the Western United States.

The Fellows Program is open to **faculty at land-grant institutions in the Western region**. This is an **individual award (solo applicant)** rather than a team-based project. Each Fellow may receive up to **\$10,000** to support project-related expenses over a **one-year** period.

Proposals may focus on **research, extension, or an integration of both**. Projects should address pressing rural development challenges in the Western region, with particular emphasis on: underserved communities, understudied geographic areas, or emerging or underexplored issues. This program aims to build local capacity and generate actionable knowledge to address critical issues facing rural communities.

Fellows are expected to collaborate with WRDC and engage with local stakeholders, community leaders, and relevant partners to ensure that projects are responsive to real-world needs. This collaborative approach strengthens the relevance, impact, and sustainability of project outcomes.

During the award period, Fellows will have access to WRDC resources, including: project planning and implementation support, professional development opportunities, and a network of rural development experts and practitioners. Fellows are strongly encouraged to disseminate findings through WRDC communication channels (e.g., newsletters, webinars, website articles, and conferences) to maximize impact.

## ***About the WRDC***

The Western Rural Development Center (WRDC) is one of four rural development centers established by Congress's Rural Development Act of 1972. It is a collaborative effort between the United States Department of Agriculture and the University of Idaho. The core of its funding comes from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). The WRDC works with public universities in the Western region to conduct research-based studies and educational outreach programs. It also partners with local communities, decision-makers, entrepreneurs, families, farmers, and ranchers to address various rural development issues. The center's objective is to enhance the research and extension capacity of the region's land-grant universities to help rural communities thrive in today's world. The WRDC works with the other three Regional Rural Development Centers in the country to achieve their shared mission.



## Western Land-Grant Institutions:

American Samoa Community College, College of Micronesia, Colorado State University, Montana State University, New Mexico State University, Northern Marianas College, Oregon State University, University of Alaska, University of Arizona, University of California, University of Guam, University of Hawaii, University of Idaho, University of Nevada, University of Wyoming, Utah State University, Washington State University, Blackfoot Community College, Chief Dull Knife College, Dine College, Fort Peck Community College, Institute of American Indian Arts, Little Big Horn College, Navajo Technical College, Northwest Indian College, Salish Kootenai College, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, Stone Child College, Tohono O'odham Community College, Aaniih Nakoda College, and Ilisagvik College.

### ***Proposal Instructions***

All proposals must be submitted through the InfoReady system ([APPLY](#)). Applicants should carefully review the submission checklist (page 4) to ensure completeness. All files must be submitted in PDF format.

**Incomplete or non-compliant proposals will not be reviewed.**

### **Project Team**

The Fellows Program supports individual (solo) applicants. The Fellow serves as the Principal Investigator and is solely responsible for the project. However, Fellows may engage students, community partners, or collaborators to support project activities, and their roles should be clearly described in the proposal.

**Note:** while applicants can submit multiple proposals, only one application per individual is eligible for funding in each WRDC competitive program during a grant-funding cycle. Winning a fellow grant does not prevent the PI from receiving awards in other WRDC grant programs within the same cycle.

### Cover Page

Include:

- Project title, Fellow's name, email, institution and affiliation
- Project summary (max 300 words), clearly addressing:
  - Problem statement and regional relevance
  - Significance and expected impact
  - Approach (research/extension/outreach)
  - Dissemination and scaling plans

### Project Narrative (Max 2 pages)

(12-point Times New Roman, single-spaced, 1-inch margins)

The project narrative must include, but is not limited to, the following sections:

#### Introduction

- Clear articulation of long-term goals.
- Well-defined supporting objectives (research and/or extension).
- Description of the existing body of knowledge that demonstrates the need for the proposed project, including preliminary data if available.

#### Rationale and Significance

- Alignment with Western region priorities ([website](#)).
- Contribution to scholarship, practice, and/or policy insights.
- Why the project is timely and important.

#### Approach

- Description of methods and materials to achieve each objective (research and/or extension)

- Explanation of how data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted
- Expected results
- Evaluation plan for extension and educational activities
- Clear communication and dissemination plan
- Consideration of potential pitfalls or limitations, with strategies to address them.

### Bibliography & References Cited

No page limit. Use a consistent academic format.

### Project Team Members and Roles (Max 1 page)

Clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of each team member throughout the project. In addition, briefly highlight their background and expertise to demonstrate that the team possesses the necessary skills to successfully complete the proposed work.

For each team member, include a **Biographical Sketch** (maximum 2 pages per individual). We recommend following the NSF-approved format available here:

<https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/biosketch.jsp>.

Combine all team members' biographical sketches into a single document, then upload it.

### Letters of Stakeholder Support (Optional)

Attach letter(s) of support from stakeholder individuals and/or organizations that support the proposed research and education activities. Combine all letters of support into a single file, then upload it.

### Budget and Budget Justification (attach as a single file)

Funding is for up to \$10,000 per project. Fellows must spend the \$10,000 budget before the anniversary day.

The WRDC does **NOT** allow indirect costs. Tuition and fees are **NOT** allowable. Budget may include salary support, fringe benefits, travel costs for fieldwork or conferences, and other project-related expenses.

The budget justification detail should follow the same order as the budget. While you should provide information for each item of the budget, you must justify the following budget categories, where applicable: salaries, fringe, equipment, supplies, travel, contractual, and other direct cost categories.

Program Income: (If Applicable)

If an applicant wishes to generate program income through activities proposed in their project, this must be included in the proposal. Specifically, an applicant must address the following questions:

- How will the program income be generated?
- How much program income is anticipated?
- How will generating program income benefit the project?
- How will the program income be utilized?
- When will the program income be generated during the project period, and will there be sufficient time to expend it?

Please include these details in the budget justification section of the proposal so that reviewers and the WRDC staff can objectively evaluate the budget in relation to the proposed activities.

If a current WRDC subrecipient **DID NOT** include program income in their grant proposal, the PI, Authorized Official, or fiscal officer must request **prior approval** from WRDC to generate program income at least 30 days before program income is generated. Full details about program income can be found in the [NIFA Federal Assistance Policy Guide | USDA](#). See section V. Post award Federal Requirements, F. Program Income.

### Timeline

Provide a timeline, such as a Gantt chart or other detailed breakdown for accomplishing each project objective. Identify the major milestones and activities that will be completed, when each of those milestones or activities will occur, and how they relate back to the objective(s). The timeline should cover one year or less, starting on the day of the award (anticipated September 1, 2026) and ending on August 31, 2027. The Office of Sponsored Programs may require additional time to process fund transfers, so plan your work starting from the day you receive the award decision rather than waiting for the funds to be transferred.

### Data Management Plan (Max 1 page)

The data management plan should outline how the data that you collect will be handled throughout the project and after its completion. You should describe how the data will be acquired, managed, analyzed, and stored. It should address how data storage will comply with regulations and how the awardee plans to address sharing and reuse.

**The proposal submission will have two steps. In the first step (pre-proposals) you will only need to submit the documents in the submission checklist below:**

### **Submission Checklist**

- ✓ Cover page
- ✓ Project Narrative
- ✓ Bibliography & References Cited
- ✓ Project Team Members (Fellow, student support, extension staff, etc.) and Roles
- ✓ Biographical Sketches of all team members
- ✓ Letters of Stakeholder Support (optional)
- ✓ Budget and Budget Justification
- ✓ Timeline
- ✓ Data Management Plan

Accepted projects will have to provide the following documents later on:

- ✓ Sub-recipient form
- ✓ Signature page
- ✓ Statement of responsibility
- ✓ Statement of Work (This is the project narrative you submitted)
- ✓ Budget and budget justification
- ✓ Headshot of the faculty fellow
- ✓ IRB if you are collecting primary data