

Washington State Grape and Wine Research Program - WSU

2027-28 Request for Proposals

All applications will be submitted and uploaded through the [Washington Wine Research Portal](#). You will need to create a profile before submitting. The portal will open for submissions on September 15.

All new proposals must go through a pre-proposal process – **deadline is October 23, 2026.**

Continuing project proposals – **deadline is January 29, 2027.**

Contact Research Program Manager, Julie Tarara jtarara@washingtonwine.org with questions.

Washington State Grape and Wine Research Program	
About	- Competitive grant program administered by Washington State University. - Supported by funding from WSU, State taxes collected on all wine sold, Auction of WA Wines, Washington State Wine Commission. - New proposals must apply as Pre-proposal. Pre-proposal deadline: October 23, 2026. Successful pre-proposals will be invited to submit a full proposal. - Continuing and full new proposal deadline: January 29, 2027. - Proposals are reviewed by the Wine Research Advisory Committee, a subcommittee of the Washington State Wine Commission; Committee funding recommendations approved by Washington State Wine Commission Board of Directors. - Principal investigator (or Co-PI) must have connection/collaboration with WSU as funds are administered by WSU.
Eligible Projects	- Grants will be awarded for research relevant to Washington viticulture and enology, with the overall goal of improving Washington wine quality. <i>See the 2027-28 Washington State Viticulture and Enology Research Priorities at the end of this RFP.</i> - Collaborative, multi-disciplinary projects are encouraged. - Proposals will be held confidential in the Research Portal and will not be returned. - No limit to number of proposals submitted by each PI.
Review Process	All proposals (new and continuing) will be presented at annual Research Review on February 24-25, 2027. Teleconferencing available for those unable to attend. Industry members attending the Review will rank proposals for importance; Wine Research Advisory Committee will make funding recommendations for approval by Wine Commission Board. - All proposals will be held confidential. - Funding announcement will be made in April.
Grant Criteria	The Wine Research Advisory Committee will review pre-proposals and invite for full submittal based on the following criteria: - Relevance and importance to Washington wine industry (See Research Priorities at end of RFP). - Budget appropriate to meet objectives. - Potential for success. Consideration of continuing proposals will be contingent on receipt of mid-year and annual reports from investigators funded the previous year(s) and based on progress documented, as well as the continuing merit and promise of accomplishment.
Funding	WSU-Ag Research Center Grants Coordinator is program administrator and handles grant accounting. - Funds are deposited annually in WSU research accounts and are available after July 1. - Availability of future funding is contingent upon receipt of satisfactory progress report and final report.

	Washington State Grape and Wine Research Program
	Funds for multi-year projects are approved year by year, based on progress reports, and can be up to four years in length if a PhD. candidate is justified. Funding support for research vineyard maintenance and research winemaking can be up to five years.
Budget Request	Prepare sufficiently detailed budget that reflects request for first year and projection for entire project. Continuation of projects must be justified annually. Indicate budget allocation (percentage) for each proposed objective. For projects that include winemaking, refer to the Research Winemaking Guidelines at the end of this RFP.
Length	Project length can be from one to five years, depending on project type. A project can be four years if a Ph.D. student is justified. Research Winemaking and Research Vineyard support projects can be five years. Generally, project duration is two to three years.
Budget Limitations	Indirect costs/overhead charges are not paid. Awards cannot be used for: • Tuition for graduate students who qualify for WSU's Flex Waiver. • Travel not pertaining to the project or travel to Research Review. Travel for students to scientific conferences is not covered the first year of the project but can be in later years if student is presenting or displaying a poster. International conference travel for student presentations is negotiable and must be included in budget. • Funds for publication costs may be budgeted in the final year of the project.
Reporting	Wine Research Advisory Committee members assigned as Lead for each funded project will serve as industry liaison for the PI. Share mid-year updates with the WRAC Lead. Key reporting dates are: • Mid-year interim update (paragraph summary of progress) is due October 1. • For continued funding of ongoing projects, annual reports are due January 29, 2027, and must be submitted with the continuing proposal. • Final report due June 30 of the project's last year. The annual progress and final report will include: • Approximately 500-word summary (in lay terms) of the project (overview, key findings, specific accomplishments, how results may be used in the vineyard or winery, etc.). Final summary due at final report deadline. Submit mid-year, continuing, and final reports to the Research Grant Portal.
Outreach	Industry outreach and education plan should include presentation by PI (or designee), conducted in person or remotely, for the Washington wine industry at events including WAVE research seminar and/or WineVit (Washington Winegrowers annual convention). Research posters of projects and student attendance in their second or final year may be required for WAVE events. • Report summaries will be used to communicate progress with stakeholders and may be posted on the Wine Commission's website, newsletters, or WSU newsletters. • Annual or final report must use report template. Final report will be posted on Wine Commission's website.
Publicity	All publicity/media/posters, etc. produced related to this project must acknowledge the funding sources: <i>This research project of the Washington State Grape and Wine Research Program was funded by Washington State University, Auction of Washington Wines, and all Washington State wine grape growers and wineries through the Washington State Wine Commission.</i>
Submissions	Pre-proposal applications must be submitted through the Research Grant Portal by October 23, 2026. Invited full proposals for new projects and continuing proposals must be submitted through the Research Grant Portal by January 29, 2027. No exceptions made for late applications. Questions: jtarara@washingtonwine.org

Enology

- **Winery Sustainability** – Reduce winery energy usage. Develop methods for large and small wineries to recycle, reuse, reduce, repurpose harvest biomass, winery wastewater and winery waste, including glass wine bottles.
- **Fermentation Management** – Yeast and bacteria impacts on fermentation, sensory properties; control of microbiological spoilage; nutrient management practices; management at winery of diseased/disordered fruit; fermentation monitoring practices (cap extraction, process control, real-time monitoring methods), phenolic management, rapid analysis of juice, must, wine chemistries.
- **Wine Aroma and Flavor Compounds** – Optimize sensory compounds in wine; management of environmental issues impacting wine quality (smoke exposure, frost exposure); management of vineyard derived sulfur off aromas.
- **Wine Maturation and Stabilization** – Improve protein and cold stabilization to minimize flavor scalping, color loss and reduce energy usage; microbial stabilization, impact of filtration options on wine sensory qualities, fining methods, calcium instability, sulfur dioxide minimalization and management.

Viticulture

- **Vineyard Sustainability** - Improved vineyard floor management practices; soil fertility and carbon sequestration in vineyard soils, nutrient management, biochar for optimal vine and soil health; grafting and rootstock management and selection.
- **Vineyard Production, Efficiency and Profitability** – Improve water use efficiency/water savings and water quality to optimize wine quality; canopy management for mechanization; management of berry/sour shrivel.
- **Pest Management** – Detect and manage grapevine viruses and vectors; sustainable management strategies for all pests of economic importance (grape mealybug, spider mites, phylloxera, fungal diseases, nematodes, crown gall, weeds, vertebrate); management of trunk diseases.
- **Climate Impacts on Site/Viticulture** – Develop optimum guidelines for light and heat exposure on fruit; understand impact of climate variability on viticulture (phenology, ripening, pest and diseases); winter trunk injury and secondary infections (crown gall); develop decision support system for inversion, frost protection.
- **Mechanization/Precision** – Develop, evaluate mechanized/precision tools that reduce reliance on hand labor in vineyard or winery (crop estimation tool, canopy and crop management, pest management, sorting, MOG removal, cellar tasks).

Emerging Issues

- Unforeseen viticulture and enology threats, problems or research opportunities
- Industry education needs (extension bulletins, etc.)
- Comparative analysis of Washington State viticulture practices to other regions (e.g., sustainable pest and disease management systems)

Research Winemaking and Harvest Guidelines

The Washington wine industry had a major role in helping construct the Ste. Michelle Wine Estates WSU Wine Science Center (WSC) in Richland, a state-of-the-art research facility. The WSC is a catalyst for cooperation, communication, and synergy among all disciplines of research. *All research wines will be made at the Wine Science Center.*

The following guidelines have been developed for research projects with a winemaking component.

Dr. James Harbertson, Professor of Enology, WSU (509) 372-7506, jfharbertson@wsu.edu, supervises the research winemaking project that funds all research winemaking at the WSC in Richland. Please contact Jim to discuss winemaking objectives, volume, costs, coordination, and scheduling.

Winemaking Fees

Costs for making research wine at the WSC should be included as a line item in Jim Harbertson's Research Winemaking project. This will help the review committee understand the total cost of a proposed project, while still being able to keep all winemaking expenditures in Jim Harbertson's account.

Fees are determined based on analytics and type of winemaking requested but generally cost \$500 per lot or replicate

Researcher will receive approximately 2-3 cases of wine from 12 to 18 months after crush for red wine, less than 12 months for white wine.

Data to be provided from winemaking include:

- information on TA (total acidity)
- pH
- EtoH (ethanol)
- RS (residual sugar)
- malic acid

For red wine, color and tannin measurements *can be provided if requested*.

Note: *Sensory analysis is not included in the winemaking fee. Please discuss with Jim Harbertson before commencing the project to explore sensory options and costs, and share discussion outcomes during the Research Review process.*

Data can be provided as they are generated and will be provided prior to the researcher's need for progress or final reporting purposes.

Grape Harvest Protocols:

Industry targets are shared below to encourage harvest and winemaking practices that most closely follow commercial practices. Please use the following as targets when picking

Grapes for winemaking:

- Whites
 - Brix from 21-23, with target of 22.5 (23 for Chardonnay)
 - pH below 3.6
 - Winemaker will water back lots when greater than 22.5-23 Brix.
- Reds
 - Brix from 23-26, with target of 23.5 to 24.5 Brix
 - pH should be below 3.8
 - Winemaker will water back lots when greater than 23.5-24.5 Brix.

Please contact Jim or the Research Winemaker to schedule delivery of grapes to the WSC. Morning delivery—when grapes are cool—is encouraged to avoid having to refrigerate fruit overnight.

Please use bins that are designed for use with a forklift rotator for ease of transferring fruit into crush equipment.

Volume Needed for Winemaking:

Research fermentation tanks at the WSC are designed to handle the equivalent of 300 pounds per lot or replicate. 300 pounds of fruit will produce around 40 liters of wine, which is about 30 liters after racking. Research trials should be designed with that in mind so that enough fruit is generated for winemaking.

It is recognized that not all trials can accommodate such volume. Each project will be considered individually and there may be special circumstances that allow deviation from the 300-pound per replicate requirement. Discussion with Jim to explore other options must take place before the project is approved.

An option for projects that do not need full scale winemaking is analysis of juice for basic grape quality components (Brix, pH, TA, and other) by a commercial laboratory such as ETS.

Please discuss options with the WSU winemaking team prior to designing your proposal and outline your winemaking needs in your research proposal.