



Sustainability, Equity, & Justice Fund

SEJF Grant Application 2024-2025 Academic Year

This SEJF grant application is for all fund requests, regardless of grant size. Please fill out the application completely, utilizing additional space as appropriate. Supplemental documents may be added in the appendix at the end of the document. For questions about the application, reference the SEJF Grant Proposal Toolkit or ask a program representative.

Submit your completed application (including signatures) by emailing it to the SEJF Grant Program Manager, Zinta Lucans. Applications must be signed by your advisor, all project team members, and stakeholders, for them to be reviewed. Email: lucansz@wwu.edu.

During the 2024-2025 academic year, only grant requests between \$500.00-\$35,000.00 will be accepted. Applications will be reviewed by the Associate Director of the Sustainability Engagement Institute for alignment and completeness and then provided to the SEJF Committee. The committee will review the grant application, receive your presentation, and approve or decline the funding request.

Project title	Co-creating a Food Literate Future
Funding amount requested	\$3,000
Deadline you are submitting for (Fall, Winter, Spring)	Winter 2025
SEJF program representative signature (all project teams must work with an SEJF representative prior to submitting the application)	Zinta Lucans

SECTION 1: Project Concept.

a. **Statement of Purpose:**

Summarize your project idea, including a problem statement, in 1-2 sentences.

Co-creating a Food Literate Future is a series of cooking classes aimed at fostering food literacy on Western's campus. By teaching students how to cook quick, cost effective, healthy, culturally appropriate, and climate friendly meals for themselves, I hope to encourage a sense of self-efficacy in the kitchen and beyond. Developing a skill like cooking cultivates agency and sovereignty over your diet and allows students to make choices that reflect personal values about their own health and wellness, and sustainability.

b. **Project description:**

Describe your proposed project in detail, including a description of costs associated with the project.

Food Literacy can be defined as the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions about food. This is different from food insecurity, which is the lack of access to food. While insecurity is a major issue on college campuses (and in the world), literacy is an often-overlooked aspect of the food justice puzzle.

When speaking with students on campus and thinking about our food system at large, it appears food literacy is a gap that needs to be addressed. Gina Ebeling at the Basic Needs Hub identifies a large subset of students that might have access to food through the food pantry or the grocery store, but they don't always know how to cook it or how to shop for it in a cost effective, sustainable or healthy way. Gina identifies cooking as a skill that will last you into adulthood. She shares her observation that in the food pantry there is a whiteboard where students can request food and supplies, and the most frequent need expressed is grab and go foods. This could be due to a busy schedule, but also a lack of understanding of how to cook meals in batches and store them for quick, cost-friendly, and nutritious home-made grab and go meals. There is also a lingering assumption that nutritious food is expensive or out of reach for college students. Increasing food literacy means increasing a sense of agency and sovereignty over your decisions. Food literacy is empowering people with the tools and knowledge necessary to actively participate in their food system. Literacy can foster creativity and a thrifty mindset, rather than being limited to what's available in the pre-prepared aisle at the grocery store.

Learning basic knife skills or low waste/ efficiency practices can open your eyes to new and critical ways of thinking about your food, allowing you to be scrappier and more resilient to the inevitable changes that are going to occur as climate change worsens. At the time of writing this grant, eggs are \$12 a dozen due to bird flu. This is reminiscent of other shortages due to drought or unnatural weather events caused by climate change. If eggs are a staple that you're used to consuming and suddenly they're inaccessible, it may seem daunting to feed yourself something like tofu instead because you don't know how to cook with it. As the climate changes, these kinds of obstacles are inevitably going to arise. The National Institute of Health conducted a study about the untapped potential of food education in schools, citing food related life skills as having "possible generational effects with regard to public health, sustainability and well-being of future citizens in local communities." (Bjørkkjær et al., 2023) The goal of this project is aimed at fostering empowerment through food literacy education. Students will take this knowledge and become ambassadors to share how easy and fun it can be to cook while also gaining a life-skill that will give them an access point to our food system, as well as personal and planetary health.

Western students will be invited to join in four cooking classes held in Western's Multicultural Center, one per week on three consecutive Thursdays in May for the last three of the series. The first event will be held in partnership with the Merriman Financial Literacy Program as a part of their financial literacy month in February. The focus of this event is cooking on a budget and will not be part of the application for this grant, as it is already funded; however, it will be used as a "trial-run" to inform the last three events.

During these classes, students will be able to thoughtfully engage in the creation of a meal that centers around the project tenants: quick, cost effective, healthy, culturally appropriate and climate friendly. I will use the knowledge I've gleaned from my culinary certificate and years of work in the restaurant industry to instruct students on basic cooking principles, while giving tips on how to reduce waste, shop sustainably, and save money. I plan to invite guest speakers to the classes, such as the campus dietitian and Western's Executive Chef, to speak on their expertise and give students a space to ask their burning food related questions. I aim to council with Quacyya Cuaresma of the Multicultural Student Services Center, as well as cultural/ethnic student clubs to aid in choosing culturally appropriate recipes for this series. We have been approved to conduct these cooking classes in the Multicultural Center located in the Viking Union; the perfect place to hold space for a community event.

By the end of the event, we will share a meal that we've co-created, having learned a new skill and built lasting relationships with each other and with our food system. Students will also be provided with a meal kit in a reuseable grocery tote bag to practice what they've learned at their own pace. Included in the meal kit will be a pamphlet of food resources available on campus and in Bellingham, as well as a laminated card detailing the recipe and tips we shared in the classes. For folks who were not able to attend the classes, a few meal kits will be allocated to the food pantry on campus as well.

The costs associated with the cooking class series will include food for the event (enough to feed an estimate of 15-20 people per event), take home meal kits for all students who attend, meal kits for the food pantry, laminated recipe/tips cards, as well as any resources needed to market the project.

c. **Goals:**

What are the goals and desired outcomes of your project?

- Empowerment through food literacy.
- To start a conversation about food literacy and the incredible and lasting potential impact of food education.
- The hope is to institutionalize this project as a repeating series that is built into WWU Dining or the Basic Needs Hub and carried on by Western staff or faculty to account for student turnover, as I am completing this project as part of a senior project and looking for a permanent home for these classes.
- Give students a sense of self-efficacy and agency in the kitchen.
- Increase awareness about climate friendly and low waste practices such as upcycling (think: carrot, zucchini bread) that can have larger implications for food waste on campus and in the world.
- Introduce Western students to basic culinary skills and show them that cooking does not have to be intimidating.
- Show students that you can make a quick and equally delicious and nutritious meal on a budget.
- Connect students to on and off campus food resources.
- Create a space for students to connect over culture through food.

d. **Student impact:**

How does this project directly impact the Western student community?

Food justice is deeply intertwined with sovereignty over our choices. This is, at times, inaccessible due to a lack of knowledge on how to interact with the foods available to us in a sustainable, nutritious and cost-effective way. Through food literacy we can gain a more resilient access point to our food system and therefore our personal and planetary health. These cooking classes aim to impact the lives of younger or culinarily inexperienced students, as well as those who wish to gain a better understanding of their food system through experiential learning. As culturally relevant food is

an integral part of food sovereignty, the aim is also to create a space for students to express their culture through food by inviting the collaboration of cultural/ethnic student clubs. Having cooking and shopping knowledge can help students make informed choices and nourish themselves with nutritional food options.

e. **Education and outreach plan:**

How do you plan on promoting your project on campus? How will the Western community learn about your efforts? Is there an educational component to your project?

I plan to make fliers and hand them out in Red Square, post them in club rooms and study lounges, the bus stops, Residence Halls, as well as many other locations on campus. I also plan to have a digital flier available for sharing via Western associated social media outlets, such as on WWU Dining and the Basic Needs Hub's Instagram accounts. I will also share my project with professors and ask to speak in their classes about participation in my cooking series. I plan to advertise at on campus events such as the Basic Needs Hub's *The Longest Table*, which is an event that gathers students to share a meal in order to create a community. I would really like to focus on getting freshman and other new students to attend these events as a way to get involved in a food system that might be brand new to them. For this, I plan to advertise in the dining and Residence Halls on campus.

The focus of the cooking classes is entirely educational and designed to promote food literacy beyond this limited series. The students will have a take home card of the recipe and skills we practiced that's designed to be magnetized to a fridge for easy access. I also hope to institutionalize this as a class that's intertwined within the university.

f. **Metrics:**

How will the impact of this project be measured? What are quantitative and/or qualitative metrics that can be tracked?

Both quantitative and qualitative metrics can be tracked with this project.

In regard to quantitative metrics, we plan on tracking how many meal kits get picked up in the pantry, as well as how many students attend the events.

For qualitative data collection, I plan to do a brief introductory questionnaire at the start of the classes to gauge the baseline food literacy of the class. After the class, I'll invite the participants to take a survey of how impactful this event was for them, what the key takeaways were, if they would attend another event in the future, and if they wish to see it as a continued resource at Western. Finally, as stated before, the first event that is held in February will be a helpful tool in identifying the need for a food literacy program on campus.

g. **Lasting impact:**

What is the longevity of this project? How will it impact sustainability, in the long-term, on campus?

Learning a life-skill like cooking will impact students' current and future livelihood. Learning to cook is an incredibly useful tool when balancing classes, work, and social lives. Adequately nourishing yourself not only boosts your mood and improves cognitive function, but it's a way to build community over a shared meal. Cooking is a skill that can be passed down through generations in families or through friends, as it was for me.

Food literacy around shopping with a budget and climate friendly mindset has profound generational impacts as well. For example, my stepdad taught me how to soak and cook dry beans at a young age and I'll undoubtedly carry that skill with me for my lifetime. Dried beans are just one example of an incredibly cost effective, climate friendly and nutrient dense source of sustenance that may seem like an intimidating undertaking; but I aim to change that!

While this project is a limited educational series, the goal is to make food literacy classes a staple that is built into Western student life. This could mean an event that's hosted once a month or every few months by the Basic Needs Hub or by WWU Dining services (or potentially a partnership with both).

h. Ownership & post-SEJF-funding plan:

Which individual, office, or department is taking ownership of this project? Identify the post-SEJF-funding plan: if the project is to be continued, how will it be funded?

The Basic Needs Hub has signed on to take ownership of this series. If this is to be continued, one of the goals of this cooking series is to be institutionalized as part of existing programming at Western, such as the aforementioned financial literacy cooking class which has its own source of funding. Interest in cooking classes from various departments such as the Merriman Financial Literacy Program shows that there is a need for increased food literacy in many capacities here on campus. This event is focused on cooking on a budget and could be a yearly, or even monthly recurring event if a desire is expressed. Another potential avenue might be a partnership with WWU Dining and the Basic Needs Hub to further food security efforts on campus.

SECTION 2: Sustainability Impact.

a. How will your project positively support each of the four pillars of sustainability at Western? Explain the connection to at least three of the four pillars.

1. Create economic vitality; 2. Promote well-being; 3. Protect the environment; 4. Uphold social justice.

1. Create economic vitality:

One of the tenants of this project is to ensure students gain an understanding of budget friendly meals. Giving students the knowledge of how to shop for and cook budget-friendly meals can help them combat inflated food prices and become more resilient to inevitable shifts in their staple items. Encouraging students to seek a variety of foods also bolsters economic vitality by allowing them to cook with a variety of cost-effective options that may not have felt approachable in the past.

2. Promote well-being:

A decent percentage of college students struggle to eat nutritious meals on a regular basis, shown by the staggering data on food insecurity conducted by WWU, with a 14% increase of insecurity on college campuses from 2022. (WWU, 2024) Food Literacy fosters a tangible accessibility to foods that may seem intimidating even if they are available. Knowing how to cook and interact with a variety of culturally appropriate foods increases vitality, emotional and physical well-being.

3. Protect the environment:

Teaching students about low waste culinary practices instills a kind of thrifty mindset that has implications to reduce food waste on a larger scale. Teaching students that they can use carrot and zucchini scraps to make yummy bread might seem like a small impact, but it's shifting the way they see a food product as well. It gets them excited to experiment with low waste practices and instills a climate resilient mindset.

4. Uphold social justice:

Food literacy not only gives a more robust access point to foods that are available to students, but it also opens them up to a world beyond their current scope. Food has introduced me to many different cultures and therefore many differing mindsets. It's broadened my understanding of how to eat soulfully (not everyone uses a fork) and has made me curious about what food justice looks like for different people. Food literacy instills a mindset that encourages mutual respect and celebration of one another's cultural expression.

b. **How will your project positively align with Western's Sustainability Action Plan (SAP)?** Please determine how it advances one or more of the ten SAP chapters by connecting it to a specific objective. *For information on the SAP, please refer to the Sustainability Engagement Institute's website (sustain.wvu.edu) or ask a program representative. The ten SAP chapters are:*

1. Built Environment
2. Campus & Community Engagement
3. Curriculum and Research
4. Dining Services
5. Grounds
6. Investments
7. Procurement
8. Student Life
9. Transportation
10. Waste

Primary chapter and objective in alignment:

Dining Services Objective 3.1: Continue educating campus and surrounding community about healthy and sustainable consumption practices.

Explanation: This project will continue Western's goal of educating the campus about healthy and sustainable options through my use of food literacy as a tool to encourage students to shop locally for meals that reflect diverse cultures and encourage learning about the impacts of consumer food choices.

Additional chapter(s) of alignment and explanation, if applicable:

Student Life 2.1 Enhance and increase co-curricular opportunities for student participation in campus-based sustainable practices beginning fall 2017.

Explanation: Cooking classes are the perfect co-curricular to advance student learning about their local food system and the impacts they have on sustainable practices through food. By the end of the class, students will be able to view their food system through a local and global lens and make changes that will impact themselves and their community for their lifetime.

Campus and Community Engagement 2.4 Establish sustainability-related interactive experiences, cooperatively designed and supported by WWU and community partners, to help build relationships among members of Western, and with the broader community by 2019.

Explanation:

One goal of these cooking classes is to create lasting connections between students, their food system and the resources available to them. These classes will be created in partnership with the Basic Needs Hub and the Multicultural Center.


SECTION 3: Project Participants.

Project Advisor (Faculty or Staff) Student proposals must include a staff or faculty advisor. The role of the advisor is to assist the team during the development, implementation, and post-implementation stages of the proposal process.

Project Lead: There must be a team lead designated for the project. This individual is expected to serve as the communication liaison for the project.

Financial Agent: The project must have someone with budget authority to manage funds for all purchases. Should funds require transfer, this individual will have to provide a FAST Index and Activity Code to the SEJF Program Coordinator. Financial agents must be permanent staff and/or faculty members on campus, and cannot be student employees.

*Important note: expenditures become the responsibility of the grantee if not all grant conditions are met. This includes final reporting requirements. If you are unclear what the requirements are, please contact an SEJF representative. Your signature below indicates an understanding of this note.

Role	Name	Department/College: <i>Students provide major/minor and expected graduation quarter/year</i>	Position: <i>faculty/ staff/ student</i>	Western email address	Signature to verify agreement
<i>Team Advisor</i>	<i>Gina Ebbeling</i>	Basic Needs Resource Navigator	Staff	ebbelig@wwu.edu	<i>Gina Ebbeling</i>
<i>Team Advisor</i>	<i>Lindsey MacDonald</i>	Associate Director of the Sustainability Engagement Institute	Faculty and Staff	macdonl6@wwu.edu	
<i>Team Lead</i>	<i>Kristy Matta</i>	Environmental Policy major with a focus in	Student	Mattak@wwu.edu	Kristy Matta
<i>Financial Agent</i>	<i>Gina Ebbeling</i>	Basic Needs Resource Navigator	Staff	ebbelig@wwu.edu	<i>Gina Ebbeling</i>

SECTION 4: Project Timeline.

- a. **Describe how your project will progress, both before and after the approval of your proposal.** Outline all tasks that are required to complete the project, including all the means in which you will promote the project on campus, in the table below. Insert additional rows, as necessary.

Task	Timeframe	Estimated Completion Date
Engage with stakeholders to set a baseline understanding and goals	4 months before event	End of winter quarter
Create fliers and other promotional materials	3 months before event	End of winter quarter
Create curriculum for class	3 months before event	End of winter quarter
Decide on recipes	2 months before event	Start of spring quarter
Advertise to various outlets	1 month before event	Early April
Create laminated card materials with recipes and tips	2 weeks before event	Mid April
Put together meal kits	1 day before each event for freshness of food	April 30 th May 7 th May 14 th
Hold cooking classes	First three weeks of May	May 1 st May 8 th May 15 th
Conduct exit survey	At time of event or day following	May 1 st May 8 th May 15 th
Compile exit survey data and theme for trends	By end of May	May 30 th
Write final report	End of Spring quarter	June 13 th

- b. **When is the planned project completion date?** This is when SEJF staff will be checking in and requesting a Final Report and a Final Expense Report.

End of Spring quarter 2025

SECTION 5: Project Stakeholders.

- a. Does your project involve labor/participation or require permission from organizations, departments, or individuals on campus? Who will be impacted if this proposal is implemented? All stakeholders must provide a signature of approval for this project. *Note: Only stakeholders internal to WWU must be listed.*

Stakeholder Name	University Department and Position	Involvement in Project	Stakeholder signature of approval
Gina Ebbeling	Basic Needs Hub Resource Navigator	Financial agent and partner	<i>Gina Ebbeling</i>
Quacyya Cuaresma	Multicultural Center	Location of cooking classes	<i>Quacyya Cuaresma</i>

- b. Does your project propose a temporary or permanent facility or property modification? If so, is a Project Owner Form attached to the appendix of this application? Please ask a program representative for this form.

No, it does not.

SECTION 6: Project Budget.

Provide an itemized list of the budget items required for this project. Include equipment, construction costs, publicity, labor, and any other costs.

Budget item	Cost per Item	Quantity	Total Cost
Food for event (approx. \$15/person)	\$300 per event	3 events	\$900
Food for meal kits for participants (approx. \$15 /kit)	\$300 for kits per event	3 events	\$900
Food for supplemental meal kits that will go to the food pantry for those who could not attend the event (\$15/ kit, 3 kits)	\$45	3 events	\$135
Meal kit laminated cards	\$2.50	69 cards	\$173
Outreach materials: posters / fliers			\$30
Incidental expenses (such as: more food, cost fluctuations, compostable plates and cutlery, cooking utensils, etc.)			\$862
Total project budget			\$3000

The SEJF program encourages the identification of additional funding sources to augment SEJF funds, though it is not required. List pending, approved, and denied applications for funding from other sources, along with amounts requested from those sources.

Additional funding source(s), if applicable	Status	Amount
Merriman Financial Literacy Program	approved	550
Total of all other funding sources		\$550

Total funding amount requested from SEJF	\$3,000
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If the project is implemented, will there be any ongoing replacement, operational, maintenance or renewal costs? If yes, has a source of funds been identified to cover those costs? This must be communicated to the appropriate stakeholder.

Ongoing cost	Amount/year	Responsible Stakeholder	Signature
n/a			

SECTION 7: Appendices.

Provide any additional documents, references, or information here.

References:

Bjørkkjær, T., Palojoki, P., & Beinert, C. (2023). Harnessing the untapped potential of food education in schools: Nurturing the school subject Food and Health. *Maternal and Child Nutrition*, 20(S2). <https://doi.org/10.1111/mcn.13521>

Western Washington University, & Washington Student Achievement Council. (2024). Reassessing Basic Needs Security Among Washington College Students. <https://wsac.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-WSES-Executive.Summary.pdf>