

Opportunity Title: USDA-ARS Postdoctoral Research Associate

Opportunity Reference Code: USDA-ARS-PWA-2026-0401

Organization U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Reference Code USDA-ARS-PWA-2026-0401

How to Apply *To submit your application, scroll to the bottom of this opportunity and click **APPLY**.*

A complete application consists of:

- An application
- Transcript(s) – For this opportunity, an unofficial transcript or copy of the student academic records printed by the applicant or by academic advisors from internal institution systems may be submitted. Click [here](#) for detailed information about acceptable transcripts.
- A current resume/CV, including academic history, employment history, relevant experiences, and publication list
- Two educational or professional recommendations

All documents must be in English or include an official English translation.

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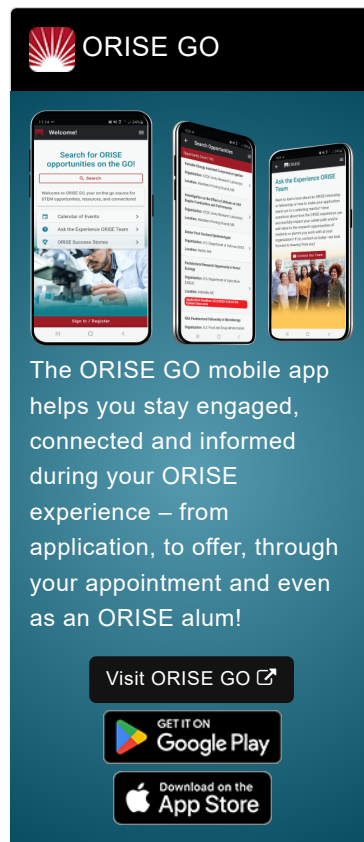
Application Deadline 12/18/2026 3:00:00 PM Eastern Time Zone

Description ***Applications are reviewed on a rolling-basis and applications may close before the deadline.**

ARS Office/Lab and Location: A research opportunity is currently available with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Research Service (ARS), located in Wenatchee, Washington.

The Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's chief scientific in-house research agency with a mission to find solutions to agricultural problems that affect Americans every day from field to table. ARS will deliver cutting-edge, scientific tools and innovative solutions for American farmers, producers, industry, and communities to support the nourishment and well-being of all people; sustain our nation's agroecosystems and natural resources; and ensure the economic competitiveness and excellence of our agriculture. The vision of the agency is to provide global leadership in agricultural discoveries through scientific excellence.

Research Project: You will be mentored by the Research Microbiologist (Lead Scientist) in support of an ongoing research program focused on engineering soil and plant-associated microbiomes to directly benefit fruit tree production systems. Specifically, you will assist with research designed to evaluate how microbial taxa living in the apple root/rhizosphere interact with each other and the surrounding environment over time. Experimental field trials focused on building soil carbon, buffering environmental stress and mitigating replant disease are currently underway



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(washingtonsoilhealthinitiative.com/wenatcheeltare/). To date, up to 4 years of data on root/rhizosphere microbiome composition has been collected from these trials. A time-series approach will be used to model rhizobiome community assembly in apples cultivated under a variety of soil management practices. This will include investigation of associations between microbial community composition, key environmental controls (i.e., moisture and temperature), and physical/chemical soil health metrics (collected at the same site). In addition to collaborating with ARS scientists, the project offers a unique opportunity to collaborate with a biostatistician at the University of Idaho (Moscow campus). During the appointment, you will also enable engagement with other scientists/extension agents which are part of the Washington Soil Health Initiative (<https://washingtonsoilhealthinitiative.com/>). The production of meaningful and relevant long-term data is expected to help growers/stakeholders make informed decisions related to soil health best management practices.

Learning Objectives: Under the guidance of a mentor, you will:

- Develop skills in analyzing multiyear, time-series microbiome data to model changes in the composition of apple rhizosphere communities.
- Explore how physiochemical and environmental factors may be influencing microbial community composition/temporal dynamics in orchard soil
- Gain experience with methods designed to show which organisms interact and how (microbial association networks)
- Learn how microbial community sequence data may be used to inform soil health assessments
- Strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration skills across government, academia, extension and the agricultural (tree fruit) industry.
- Gain experience translating long-term agricultural research into evidence that can support grower decisions on soil-health best management practices.

Mentor(s): The mentor for this opportunity is Tracey Somera (tracey.somera@usda.gov). If you have questions about the nature of the research, please contact the mentor(s).

Anticipated Appointment Start Date: January 4, 2027. Start date is flexible and will depend on a variety of factors.

Appointment Length: The appointment will initially be for one year, but may be renewed upon recommendation of ARS and is contingent on the availability of funds.

Level of Participation: The appointment is full time.

Citizenship Requirements: This opportunity is available to U.S. citizens only.

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ORISE Information: This program, administered by ORAU through its contract with the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) to manage the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE), was established through an interagency agreement between DOE and ARS. Participants do not become employees of USDA, ARS, DOE or the program administrator, and there are no employment-related benefits. Proof of health insurance is required for participation in this program. Health insurance can be obtained through ORISE.

Questions: Please visit our [Program Website](#). After reading, if you have additional questions about the application process, please email ORISE.ARS.PacificWest@orau.org and include the reference code for this opportunity.

Qualifications The qualified candidate should have received or be currently pursuing a doctoral degree in one of the relevant fields (Microbiology, Molecular Biology, Bioinformatics/Computational Biology or a related field of study). Degree must have been received within the past five years, or anticipated to receive by 2/28/2027.

Preferred skills:

- Proficiency in bioinformatic analyses; in particular, experience with high-throughput sequencing data
- Strong background knowledge of microbiome research and host-microbe interactions
- Experience performing standard molecular techniques (DNA extraction, PCR, etc.) is desirable
- Knowledge of the principles of experimental design and analysis
- Ability to maintain detailed records of procedures and data in both written and computerized form

Stipend \$6,474.60 Monthly

Point of Contact [Janeen](#)

Eligibility • **Citizenship:** U.S. Citizen Only

Requirements • **Degree:** Doctoral Degree received within the last 60 months or anticipated to be received by 2/28/2027 11:59:00 PM.

• **Discipline(s):**

◦ **Life Health and Medical Sciences** ([4](#) )

• **Veteran Status:** Veterans Preference, degree received within the last 120 month(s).