Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
2024 On-Farm Research Grant Call for Proposals

Amount Funded: $30,000 for a two-year project
Proposal submission deadline: Dec. 1, 2023 at 12 p.m. (NOON) EST
Online submission link: SARE Grant Management System

Read more about the requirements of On-Farm Research Grants before applying. Questions should be directed to the grant manager, Candace Pollock-Moore at cpollock@uga.edu or call 770-412-4786.

On-Farm Research Grant Schedule

September 2023: Calls for Proposals Released
December 1, 2023: Proposals Due
February 2024: Selected Proposals Funded and Announced

Introduction

Southern SARE recognizes the value and importance of on-farm research in developing solutions to agricultural production problems. On-Farm Research Grants provide opportunities for ag professionals working directly with farmers and ranchers to conduct on-farm research projects in sustainable agriculture. On-Farm Research Grants emphasize relationship building between the researcher and the farmer and help support farmers in their efforts to conduct new and innovative sustainable agriculture production and marketing practices.

Who Can Apply

Farmers and ranchers are not eligible to apply for On-Farm Research Grants. The grants are open to ag professionals who regularly work with farmers and ranchers on farm production and marketing problems. These can include: Cooperative Extension agents, university specialists, governmental organizations such as NRCS, and non-governmental organizations.

On-Farm Research Grants must be developed, coordinated and led by ag professionals who regularly work with farmers and ranchers and who will conduct the on-farm research with at least one farmer or rancher cooperator. Eligible farmers/ranchers have at least $1,000 of documented annual income from their operation. SSARE also considers proposals with indigenous farmer cooperators who produce for community food systems. These enterprises may be an eligible farmer cooperator where the production activity has an annual value of at least $1,000, even if products are not sold due to cultural factors.

Applicants may only submit one proposal per grant cycle.

Applicants must complete a proposal describing their project and explaining how it will help farmers or ranchers understand and adopt sustainable agriculture practices.

Southern SARE accepts proposals from applicants in the Southern region: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

What is Sustainable Agriculture?

Proposed projects must focus on Southern SARE's program objectives in developing sustainable agriculture systems or moving existing farming systems toward sustainability, as defined by the Congress in the 1990 Farm Bill. Under that law, "the term sustainable agriculture means an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term:

- Satisfy human food and fiber needs;
- Enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agricultural economy depends;
- Make the most efficient use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls;
- Sustain the economic viability of farm operations; and
- Enhance the quality of life for farmers and society as a whole."

Applicants should submit proposed projects in one of the following focus areas:

1. **Beneficial Insect Habitat**: Developing cover crops or other plant mixes and locations to provide habitat (refuges) that keep populations of native beneficial insects living on the farm ready to attack crop pests as they occur.
2. **Alternative Crops/Animals**: Developing alternative crops, animals or products that help a producer's operation become more economically sustainable. These projects must be at least as environmentally sustainable as the existing crops, animals or products they supplement or replace.
3. **Organic Agriculture**: Projects that address the production, distribution, marketing and consumption of organic farm products. This includes farmers adding value to organic products. Research into farming systems and practices

that make use of on-farm biological cycles for soil, plant and pest management are accepted.

4. **Sustainable Agriculture Marketing Projects**: Developing markets for existing or alternative crops, animals or products.
5. **Sustainable Grazing Systems**: Use of native grass species and/or plant or animal management systems to make grazing systems more sustainable.
6. **Soil Organic Matter Building/Protection/Management**: Projects that increase the sustainability of farming systems by developing soil organic matter and soil biota.
7. **Increasing Sustainability of Existing Farming Practices**: Any practice or system that increases the sustainability of an existing farming practice. The results should be able to be used by other farmers.
8. **Appropriate Technology**: Projects that develop a device or piece of machinery that promotes sustainable agriculture and can't be purchased off the shelf. The device or machinery must have application for farmers/ranchers, be able to be built by them and enable them to operate more sustainably.
9. **Agroforestry**: Projects that demonstrate and quantify the feasibility of establishing agroforestry in the region.

Preparing Your Proposal

Before beginning your proposal, it is recommended that you review the following SARE technical bulletin, "How to Conduct Research on Your Farm or Ranch." The publication provides detailed instruction on how to develop good scientific methods by providing the basics of experimental design, on-farm analysis, data collection and evaluation of results. While the publication is targeted to farmers, it is also ideal for early career professionals or researchers new to the process of conducting on-farm research, or for those seasoned specialists looking for a refresher.

Refer to the following template when preparing your proposal. The information provided here is required for submitting your proposal online. When you are ready to submit your proposal, apply in the SARE Grant Management System. **Be sure to submit your proposal prior to the application deadline. Once the Dec. 1, 2023 deadline passes, the online systems will close and late proposals will not be accepted.**

A. Basic Information

Project Title

The title of the proposed project.

Principal Investigator (PI) or Project Coordinator

List the principal investigator or project coordinator, the lead institution/organization, full address, telephone, and e-mail. Include the role of the principal investigator or project

coordinator in the project. The institution/organization the PI is associated with is considered the leading institution and will receive the grant funding.

Institutional Administrative Contact

List the name of the administrative contact, including institution name, full address, telephone, and e-mail. The administrative contact is the person who handles grant contracts and has signature authority.

Institutional Financial Contact

List the name of the financial contact, including institution name, full address, telephone, and e-mail. The financial contact is the person who submits invoices and answers questions concerning invoicing and payments.

Project Cooperators

List at least one (1) farmer cooperator involved in the project. A farmer cooperator is required. Other major cooperators involved in the project may also be listed, but are not required. Include the role of each cooperator on the project in the "Additional Info" box in the online system. Do not list more than six cooperators. Maximum of 500 words.

Type of Institution

Indicate the type of the main institution applying for the grant. This can include 1862 land-grant university, 1890 land-grant university, other college/university, NGO, or government.

Primary State

Indicate the state where the research will be conducted.

Proposed Start Date

The project start date for the SSARE 2024 On-Farm Research Grant will be April 1, 2024. This date is firm.

Proposed End Date

Project duration is two (2) years. The ending date will be 03/31/2026.

B. Proposal

Statement of Problem

Provide a statement of the problem being addressed and how it is related to, or affects, the sustainability of agriculture. Begin the statement of the problem as: "The purpose of this project is to…" Limited to 1,000 words.

Statement of Proposed Solution

Provide a statement of the proposed solution to the problem. Limited to 1,000 words.

Approaches and Methods

Provide a brief description of the methods, demonstrating how your solution works in addressing the problem. What is the methodology? There must be a direct relationship between the approaches and methods and the project relevance to sustainable agriculture. Limited to 1,000 words.

Project Relevance to Sustainable Agriculture

You must demonstrate how your project is relevant to sustainable agriculture. State how the project and the expected results contribute to agricultural sustainability. Don't simply tell us that your project addresses an element of sustainable agriculture, tell us how your project will address it and make it more sustainable. Make sure that your work, even though it is making a part of a system more sustainable, does not make the whole system or another part of it, less sustainable. Does your project use genetically engineered varieties or organisms? If so, state how their use will contribute to your project and make agriculture more sustainable.

How will this project improve quality of life for producers, communities and consumers in the Southern region? See Southern SARE's working document on what quality of life means for sustainable agriculture research grants.

Limited to 1,000 words.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Will this project support underserved producers and/or increase equity in Southern agricultural systems? If yes, how? Limited to 1,000 words.

SSARE defines underserved communities as those populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civil life.

Timetable

Provide a timetable of the work to be completed. Limited to 500 words.

Literature Cited

List cited literature that supports the justification of the research project being proposed. Limited to 500 words.

C. Outreach Plan

Southern SARE requires an outreach component to research grants to ensure that project results are shared with farmers and ranchers and have the widest possible benefits for the community in furthering sustainable agriculture across the Southern region.

Indicate your outreach or educational plan for your project. Outreach plans may include workshops, field days, on-farm demonstrations, farmer training, online training efforts, curriculum development, videos and webinars, educational publications, journal articles or presentations at meetings or conferences.

Limited to 1,000 words.

D. Budget and Budget Narrative

Fill in a budget and provide a justification in the budget narrative for each allowable item listed on the budget. **Refer to the budget checklist attached to this Call for Proposal.** SARE allows indirect costs. SARE does not require matching funds/cost-shares. Do not breakout your budget by year.

Allowable Expenses

- o Costs of sampling and sample analysis. This can include in-field data collection or lab data analysis.
- o Renting equipment needed for the project. The rental must not extend beyond the project's timetable.
- o Temporary irrigation and electric fences.
- o Materials and supplies needed for the project. The materials and supplies must remain within the scope of the project and be a reasonable request relative to the research being conducted. An example would be the amount of seed needed relative to the size of the research plots.
- o Travel needed for the project, which can include lodging, mileage and meals. The travel must relate to the project's goals/activities.
- o Salary of the PI conducting the project. The amount requested must remain within the scope of the project and be a reasonable salary request.
- o Hiring labor needed to effectively conduct and complete the project within the proposed timetable. This can include hiring farmer/rancher labor beyond normal farming duties. Hired labor must remain within the scope of the project and be a reasonable salary request.
- o Expenses related to the project's outreach plan. This can include holding a field day, workshop, farm tour or demonstration program; the printing of educational materials, such as fact sheets, manuals or curriculum; or the development of other resources such as apps, webinars or videos. The

educational materials developed for the outreach plan must remain within the scope of the work and be a reasonable request. An example would be the amount requested for the printing of educational materials relative to the size of the audience the resource is intended to reach during the life of the project.

- o Refreshments at educational events, such as workshops or field days. You must demonstrate that providing refreshments is necessary to effectively execute your outreach plan and provide educational continuation of the outreach efforts (Encouraging participation, fellowship or gathering as a justification does not meet the guidelines).

Non-allowable Expenses

- o Starting a farm, NGO, business or other community organization, or expanding an existing farm, NGO, business or other community organization. Providing any kind of financial support relative to the operation of the farm, NGO, business of community organization.
- o Providing support of any kind for capital expenses or permanent farm improvements, including purchasing equipment; purchasing permanent greenhouses, high tunnels or other buildings; purchasing permanent irrigation; purchasing permanent fencing; planting an orchard; purchasing bee hives; or purchasing crops or crop seed for use beyond the research plots and timetable of the project. Generally, any item that has permanent use beyond the life of the grant project is not allowed.
- o Breakfasts, lunches or other full meals for the project's outreach plan, or educational/resource event or program.
- o Testing of commercial products.
- o Any costs incurred for producing grant-required project annual and final reports.
- o Participant incentives (payment must be related to work performed on the project).
- o International travel.
- o Tuition.

Indirect Costs

USDA-NIFA will allow recovery of indirect costs. Indirect cost rates are limited to 10 percent of total direct costs. When preparing budgets, applicants should limit their requests for recovery of indirect costs to the lesser of their institution's official negotiated indirect cost rate or the equivalent of 10 percent of total direct costs. The Indirect Cost of 10 percent Total Direct Costs is the maximum allowable.

If your institution has never had a federally negotiated indirect rate agreement (NICRA), you may include indirect costs as a line item in your budget at a maximum rate of 10% modified total direct costs. This is the de minimus rate approved under Uniform

Guidance (2 CFR 200.414). The calculation of the modified total direct cost base must adhere to the definition of modified total direct costs in 2 CFR 200.68.

Modified Total Direct Cost (MTDC) Definition

MTDC means all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each subaward (regardless of the period of performance of the subawards under the award). MTDC excludes equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs and the portion of each subaward in excess of $25,000. Other items may only be excluded when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

The maximum amount allowed for funding an On-Farm Research Grant, even if indirect costs are entered, is still $30,000.

E. Signature Sheet

Before you submit your proposal as final, print a copy of the proposal signature sheet from the online system. It should be signed by both the Principal Investigator and the Organizational Administrative Representative (a representative at your institution who has authority to sign contracts). After scanning your signed signature sheet, the system will allow you to upload it and submit it along with your proposal up to the proposal deadline. Signature sheets can be signed electronically. You may also send in your signature sheet after the proposal deadline. After the proposal deadline, please send the signed signature sheet as an e-mail attachment to Sandra Blackwell at sblackwell@uga.edu Call 770-229-3212 with any questions regarding your signature sheet.

F. Applicant Demographic Data

SSARE has a continuing commitment to monitor the operation of its review and award processes to identify and address any inequities based on gender or race. To gather information needed for this important task, applicants are asked to voluntarily submit the requested information with the proposal. This information will not be part of the review process, will be confidential and will not appear on any copy of the submitted proposal including the applicant's copy.

Gender: Male, Female

Race: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White/Caucasian, Other

Are you of Hispanic/Latino background? Yes, No

How Your Proposal Will Be Reviewed

All funding of On-Farm Research Grants is awarded competitively and more proposals may be submitted than receive funding. Your proposal will be less competitive, or may not be funded at all, if it doesn't conform to the requirements in the Call for Proposal.

Proposals are first reviewed by a Technical Review Committee made up of Cooperative Extension agents and specialists, researchers, farmers and other ag professionals.

The Technical Review Committee evaluates proposals based on the following questions:

1. Is the project relevant to sustainable agriculture? Does the proposed project promote the understanding and adoption of sustainable agriculture practices to the farming community?
2. Is it clear in the proposal that the applicant regularly works directly with farmers or ranchers?
3. Is at least one farmer or rancher cooperator identified in the proposed project?
4. Are the funds requested in the proposal allowable items?
5. Is an outreach component outlined in the proposal?

Once these questions have been answered, the Technical Review Committee continues to evaluate the proposal focusing on the following criteria:

1. Determining whether the proposed project focuses on one or more of the proposed focus areas in addressing a problem or issue for agriculture in the South.
2. Reviewing the approaches and methods for a direct relationship between the methodology and the project relevance to sustainable agriculture.
3. Reviewing the timetable to determine if the project can be effectively completed in the time provided based on the goals and objectives proposed.
4. Reviewing the outreach plan to determine whether it benefits its intended audience and is the most effective way of reaching farmers and ranchers.
5. Evaluating the project's budget to determine if the requested amount is reasonable and realistic, and is clear on what the funds will be spent on.

The evaluations of the Technical Review Committee are given to the Producer Grant/On-Farm Research Grant Committee of the Southern SARE Administrative Council for funding recommendations. The Producer Grant/On-Farm Research Grant Committee reviews proposals that scored high for fundability by the Technical Review Committee, and makes final project selections. The selected projects for funding are presented to and voted on by the full Administrative Council during the Winter Administrative Council meeting.

By late February or early March, you will be contacted by e-mail regarding the status of your proposal, and review comments on your proposal will be made available to you. If awarded an On-Farm Research Grant, your institution/organization will be asked to sign a contract prior to receiving any funds, at which time you may be asked to revise your

budget. Once the contract is signed, you agree to conduct the activities outlined in your proposal. Any changes in budget or activities must receive prior approval from Southern SARE. The award funding will be paid through reimbursement of allowable project expenses.

Other Information

The Alternative Farming Systems Information Center (AFSIC) at the National Agricultural Library specializes in locating, collecting, and providing information about sustainable agriculture. Information specialists can answer questions, highlight resources, and share search techniques for literature reviews, background research, and identifying experts in the field and pertinent USDA researchers and projects. AFSIC has a number of resources on its website that may be relevant to your proposal. Contact: AFSIC, National Agriculture Library, USDA, 10301 Baltimore Ave., Beltsville MD 20705-2351, phone: 301-504-6559, fax: 301-504-6927, e-mail: afsic@nal.usda.gov, web: http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/.

If you are submitting a proposal on organic agriculture, you may want to consult the National Organic Standards Board research priorities.

Budget Narrative Checklist for 2024 On-Farm Research Grant Proposals
(form updated 07/2023)

****In the Budget Narrative, you must explain why each cost in the budget is needed to complete your Project. ****

PERSONNEL (LABOR): Your Institution Personnel
(non-employee payments are other direct costs)
- ☐ Position or Name
- ☐ Salary & basis for this salary (i.e. FTE; Hourly rate; etc.)
- ☐ Length of time expected to work
- ☐ What will they be doing?
  Secretarial / clerical must be exceptional in nature and justified as it relates to the project.

FRINGE BENEFITS (if applicable)
- ☐ Provide Total allowable fringe benefits
  Salary x % Rate = Benefits

TRAVEL
All travel expenses associated with this request must be shown in budget narrative.
- ☐ How does this travel relate to your project goals/ activities (**required**)
- ☐ Destination – if known
- ☐ Mileage – Maximum rate is $0.655/mi.
- ☐ Lodging - # of nights, # of people, Lodging cost
- ☐ Daily Per Diem-Rate for Meals; for current rate see: www.gsa.gov/perdiem
- ☐ *International Travel is NOT ALLOWED*

MATERIALS & SUPPLIES
- ☐ State how each Material/Supply relates to the project.
- ☐ List Items and Cost
  * **Items normally covered under F&A**, such as office supplies, must be justified as being required by the scope of the work, can be easily identified to your specific project, and are above and beyond what would normally be covered under F&A.

OUTREACH
- ☐ Field Days, Workshops, Educational Brochures, Fact Sheets and other outreach activities.
  **Lunches or other full meals at field days or large gatherings are not allowed On-Farm Research Grants. No Breakfast is allowed on any Grant. **

Field Days & Workshops – includes costs of holding a field day or workshop. (e.g. Rental of facilities, cost of refreshments, equipment or supplies needed for the field day or workshop, and any other expenses associated with the preparation and execution of educational field days or workshops.) **Provide full details** in the budget narrative. Any purchases of refreshments must be itemized and justified in the budget, the cost must be reasonable, and the justification must explain the estimated cost per person and why these items are necessary for the project. **Also, must show expense is for the continuity of the meeting; that meeting will be held at a remote location; and includes non-UGA employee participants.**

PRINTING OF BROCHURES
☐   List each Item and Cost
   - o   Includes costs associated with printing and distribution of educational fact sheets or brochures relating to the project and sustainable agriculture. **Any costs incurred for producing grant-required project annual and final reports are not reimbursable expenses.**

MISCELLANEOUS ALL OTHER DIRECT COSTS
☐   Direct project charges not included in other categories. Description and cost must be included in budget narrative for each item.

Some examples of direct charges include:

Communications – mailings, postage, faxes, telephone *(These items are also considered direct costs and if placed in budget should be exceptional in nature and justified as it relates to the project).*

Photocopying – in-house copying (not commercial printing) for materials associated to the program**.**

Service Maintenance – Maintenance contracts in direct correlation to use of equipment for the project (e.g. 50% use of equipment for project, 50% of service contract applied to budget costs).

Honorariums – Provide recipient information (if known) or number expected, reason for need, and fee associated with the honorarium.

Fee for Services -- A fee for services is the cost of professional services by nonemployees of the lead institution/organization required for a project that is beyond the scope of the work the grant recipient can perform or provide. Fee for services covers work that is needed for the project, but the professional performing the work or skill is not actually working on the project.

Examples of fee for services include: lab/data analysis, survey development, graphic design, videography/photography, transcription.

When listing fee for services in the budget narrative:
- Determine the cost of the service (per hour, flat rate, etc.);
- Provide the nature and scope of the service in relation to the project;
- Provide the qualifications of the individual/group rendering the service;
- Provide the fees charged by the individual/group for the service to be performed.

A fee for service is not the same as a consultation.

Consultants: Persons or Entities who provide advice for the project – Provide the name & organization of the consultant, a statement of work, funds being charged to the project. Also provide a copy of the resume or vita.

INDIRECT COSTS

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If your institution has never had a federally negotiated indirect rate agreement (NICRA), you may include indirect costs as a line item in your budget at a maximum rate of 10% modified total direct costs. This is the de minimus rate approved under Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200.414). The calculation of the modified total direct cost base must adhere to the definition of modified total direct costs in 2 CFR 200.68.

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If your institution is waiving indirect costs, this must be noted in the budget narrative.

TUITION IS NOT ALLOWED

MATCHING FUNDS / COST SHARE
Are not required by SARE

*Note: If there is something you wish to budget but have concerns regarding budget placement please contact Jami Sealey for assistance at 770-467-6083 or by email at jsealey@uga.edu