



Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SSARE) 2027 Producer Grant Call for Proposals

Amount Funded: Individual Farmers, \$20,000; Farmer Groups, \$25,000

Project Duration: Two (2) years

Proposal submission deadline: November 06, 2026 at 12 p.m. (NOON) EST

Online submission link: [SARE Grant Management System](#)

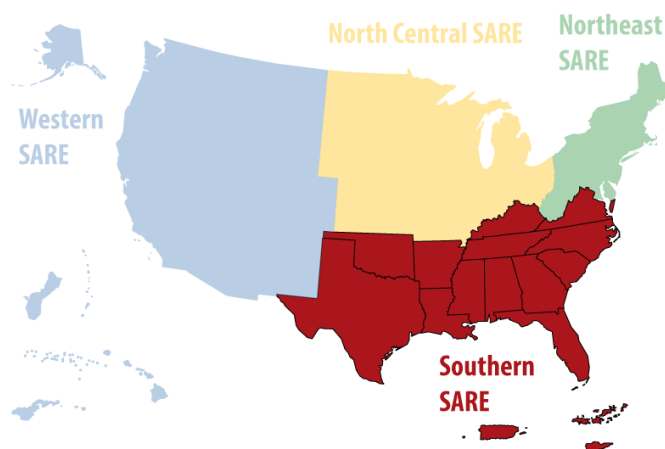
Read more about the requirements for [Producer Grants](#) before applying. Questions should be directed to Sandra Blackwell at southern-producer@sare.org or call 770-229-3212.

About SARE

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grants and outreach program.

Competitive research grants, offered annually, are the primary tools of the SARE program. SARE seeks out innovations in sustainable agriculture, and rewards grant applicants who offer interesting and potentially workable ideas. SARE also emphasizes outreach and the dissemination of project results so the grant programs will have the widest possible benefits.

Southern SARE is one of four regional SARE programs, hosted by University of Georgia, Fort Valley State University and the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture. 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.



This work is supported by the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, project award no. 2026-38640-47189, from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and should not be construed to represent any official USDA or U.S. Government determination or policy. The Southern region SARE program is hosted by University of Georgia, Fort Valley State University and the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Oklahoma.



National Institute of Food and Agriculture
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



Griffin Campus
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Southern SARE Producer Grants

Overview

Southern SARE recognizes the value and importance of authentic, producer experiences in understanding and developing solutions to agricultural production problems. Producer Grants give farmers and ranchers the opportunity to conduct their own research projects to develop sustainable production and marketing practices.

The goal of the Producer Grant Program is simple: help farmers test, on a small scale, a practice or technology to a production or marketing problem (either as an individual or as a group), evaluate whether the results sustainably address the problem, and share how those efforts can benefit other farmers. Successful projects can then be applied by the farmer applicant or by others on a larger scale.

Producer Grant Schedule

September 2026: Calls for Proposals Released

November 06, 2026: Proposals Due

February 2027: Selected Proposals Funded and Announced



IMPORTANT! Producer Grants are research grants. Grant funds cannot be used to pay a farmer to farm, fund operating expenses, or conduct any kind of farm business.

Eligibility Requirements

- Applicants must be a full time or part-time commercial farm business owner, or be part of a farmer organization, such as a cooperative. Farmer organizations must be comprised primarily of farmers/ranchers and must have majority farmer representation on their governing boards.
- Applicants must be located in the Southern SARE region.
- There is no restriction on farm size or the length of time an individual has been farming.
- Farmers must have at least \$1,000 in documented annual income from the operation.
- Farm workers are eligible to apply as long as the production activity meets the minimum annual value of \$1,000.
- Applicants may only submit one Producer Grant proposal per farm per year.
- Previous grant recipients are eligible to apply.



IMPORTANT! Producer Grant funds are paid by reimbursement of allowable project expenses. Before applying, make sure you have the legal structure and financial capacity to receive and execute a Southern SARE grant. Advance payments are not possible.

What is Sustainable Agriculture?

Proposed projects must focus on Southern SARE's program objectives in developing regenerative agriculture systems or moving existing farming systems toward sustainability, as defined by [Congress in the 1990 Farm Bill](#). Applicants specifically should be aware of this definition, as proposals will be reviewed with this legal definition in mind.

A simple way to think about sustainable agriculture is that it involves producing enough food and fiber to satisfy today's needs without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. Sustainability as defined by the SARE program embraces three common goals (or pillars of sustainability):

- Profit over the long term;
- Stewardship of our nation's land, air and water;
- Quality of life for farmers, ranchers, farm employees and our communities.

There are almost as many ways to reach these goals as there are farms and ranches in America. Learn more about how some of the most common practices can enhance sustainability for all farms through the SARE sampler of proven practices: "[What is Sustainable Agriculture?](#)"

USDA-NIFA Statement

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), to the extent permitted by law, will no longer make grants or otherwise fund programs or activities that improperly discriminate on the basis of race or sex, including discrimination in the name of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion policies. Instead, USDA will prioritize merit and efficiency. USDA recognizes programs and initiatives will have the greatest impact when these programs and initiatives put American farmers, ranchers, and foresters first by:

- Solving the most pressing challenges they face;
- Protecting America's food, fuel, and fiber supply to enhance national security;
- Supporting production of healthy and safe food for consumers;
- Expanding and developing domestic markets;
- Training the next generation of agriculturalists; and
- Fueling innovation to keep American farmers at the forefront of productivity.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) is committed to advancing these principles and encourages applicants to actively engage farmers, ranchers, and foresters when applying for funding opportunities to ensure relevancy and adherence to them. NIFA also encourages agricultural leaders to engage in the peer review panel process to ensure American producers are better served through research, education, and extension activities.

Consider these research areas as a sustainable agriculture topic in your proposal:

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.

Alternative Crops/Animals: Developing alternative crops, animals or products that help a producer's operation become more economically sustainable.

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.

Sustainable Agriculture Marketing Projects: Developing markets for existing or alternative crops, animals or products.

Sustainable Grazing Systems: Use of native grass species and/or plant or animal management systems to make grazing systems more sustainable.

Soil Organic Matter Building /Protection / Management: Projects that increase the sustainability of farming systems by developing soil organic matter and soil biota.

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.

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.

Agroforestry: The use of trees in farm systems to promote regenerative agriculture, including water quality and quantity.



Looking for more sustainable agriculture research ideas?

Visit SARE's national projects database to learn more about funded projects. Over 9,000 research and education projects have been funded nationally.

<https://projects.sare.org/search-projects/>

Preparing Your Proposal



Before beginning your proposal, we highly recommend that you review the following SARE technical bulletin, [“How to Conduct Research on Your Farm or Ranch.”](#) This publication provides detailed instruction on how to conduct research at the farm level, providing the basics of experimental design, on-farm analysis, data collection and evaluation of results. Developing strong scientific research in your approaches and methods will help strengthen your proposal.



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 you submit your proposal prior to the deadline. Once the November 06, 2026 application deadline passes, the online system will close and late proposals will not be accepted.**

A. Basic Information

Project Title

The title of the proposed project.

Farmer/Rancher or Farmer Organization Conducting the Project (Weighted score: 5)

Provide the name, full address, telephone, and email of the farmer/rancher or farmer organization conducting the project. Tell us more about your farm operation. Letters of support are not required. The qualifications of the applicant to effectively conduct the project are a consideration in the review process. Limited to 150 words.

Review Criteria:

Applicant is qualified and has the experience, skills, knowledge, and resources to complete the project.

Principal Investigator (PI) CV:

Attach a CV for the PI using the USDA-designated Biographical Sketch form in SciENCv. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv/>.

Project Cooperators

List at least one (1) cooperator involved in the project. Cooperators can be other farmers, researchers, extension agents, governmental or non-governmental organizations, or others who are involved in the project planning, data collection and outreach of results. Include the role of each cooperator on the project. Do not list more than six cooperators. Limited to 250 words.

State

Indicate the state where the research will be conducted.

Project Start Date

The project start date for the SSARE 2027 Producer Grant will be April 1, 2027.

Project End Date

Project duration is two (2) years. The ending date will be March 31, 2029.

B. Body of Proposal

Statement of the Problem (Weighted score: 10)

Provide a statement of the problem. What is the problem, why does it need to be addressed, and how is it related to, or affects, the sustainability of agriculture. Your explanation should address one or more of the three pillars of sustainability: farmer profitability, environmental conservation, and community quality of life. Feel free to cite results from other studies, including related SARE projects, as evidence of problem if needed.

Review Criteria: The project clearly addresses a problem or issue for agriculture in the South. Identify a need to find a more sustainable solution. Address one or more of the [three pillars of sustainability](#).

Begin the statement of the problem as: **“The purpose of this project is to...”** Limited to 500 words.

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?

Statement of Proposed Solution (Weighted score: 15)

Provide a statement of the proposed solution to the problem. Describe how the solution will lead to a more sustainable outcome. Your solution should be specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic. Limited to 500 words.

Review Criteria: The proposed solution is clear, specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic leading to a new, innovative outcome or building on existing knowledge.

Approaches and Methods (Weighted score: 20)

Provide a description of the research methods, demonstrating how your solution works in addressing the statement of the problem. What are you measuring? What materials will you use? How will you collect and analyze your data? Be specific in describing project activities.

Review Criteria:

Effectively demonstrate how the solution would work in solving the stated problem. Potential results are practical and useful.

Describe the project site, research design, data collection and methods of analysis.

Describe the tools and materials that will be used to conduct your research. Indicate what will be measured and how results will be evaluated. Limited to 1,000 words.



The Approaches and Methods section is where you will test your expected outcome through a research experiment. In this section, you should outline:

- **The site where you will conduct your research;**
- **Your experimental design if your research calls for one;**
- **What you are measuring and the ways you will be measuring it;**
- **The materials and supplies you will be using to conduct your research;**
- **How you will collect your data, how often you will collect it, and what tools you will use;**
- **How you will analyze your data, and what tools you will use;**
- **How you will interpret your data and draw conclusions.**

Remember you can refer to the SARE bulletin, “[How to Conduct Research on Your Farm or Ranch](#),” for assistance.

Timeline (Weighted score: 10)

Provide a timeline of the work to be completed from project start date to project end date. Outline project activities in a chronological timeline that states where, what, when, and how long it will take for you to perform your project activities. Include your outreach plan in your timeline. Limited to 200 words. See the timeline example for reference.

Review Criteria: *The project can be effectively completed in the time provided based on the goals and proposed solution.*

SAMPLE TIMELINE (For Illustrative Purposes Only)

May-June 2026: Evaluation and preparation of livestock herd and plot size for rotational grazing. Establishment of portable electric fencing.

July 2026: Soil testing and forage nutrient analysis for baseline.

August 2026: Field trial preparations and cover crop planting of cool-season cover crops. Initial livestock weight recorded.

October 2026-February 2027: Livestock rotation, forage collection and nutrient analysis, livestock weight recorded. Results analyzed.

April 2027: Warm-season cover crops planted.

May-August 2027: Soil testing. Pollinator

species collected and identified. Results analyzed.

August 2027: Field trial preparations and cover crop planting of cool-season cover crops. Livestock weight recorded.

September 2027: Farm field day No. 1 on warm-season cover crops and pollinators.

October 2027-February 2028: Livestock rotation, forage collection and nutrient analysis, livestock weight recorded. Results analyzed.

March 2028: Farm field day No. 2 on livestock grazing and cool-season cover crops.

Farmer Impacts (Weighted score: 15)

Explain the proposed project's anticipated results or applicability in one or more of the following categories (Limited to 500 words):

Review Criteria: *The project's anticipated results have applicability in one or more of the listed categories.*

- **Adoptability:** How does the proposed project and its outcomes benefit other farmers?
- **Economic Benefits:** How does the proposed project align with farmer profitability, one of the three pillars of sustainable agriculture in the SARE program? How does the proposed project or its outcomes demonstrate efficiency, economic growth or savings, improved productivity, resource management, labor analysis, inputs vs. outputs, or return on investment?
- **Longevity:** Does the proposed project impact overall farm or farm longevity? Does the project have implications for generational land transfer, farm transition, farm stability, or viability under changing management or conditions?
- **Quality of Life:** How does the project align with quality of life, one of the three pillars of sustainable agriculture in the SARE program? Quality of life indicators can include, but are not limited to community vitality, physical health, mental well-being, economic security, or work/life balance.
- **Impacts on Other Farmers:** In general, how might the proposed project or its outcomes benefit other farmers or broader farming communities?

C. Outreach Plan (Weighted Score: 10)

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.

Review Criteria:

The project includes a clear, well thought out outreach plan that will reach a large number of audiences who could benefit from the project and its results.

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.

Include your outreach plan in your timeline.

Limited to 750 words.

D. Budget and Budget Justification (Weighted score: 15)

Fill in a budget and provide a justification for each allowable item listed in your budget. Refer to the budget checklist attached to this Call for Proposal, as well as the sample budget and budget justification as a guideline.

Review Criteria:

Clear budget with allowable and realistic requests. Items are itemized and justified with clear descriptions of how they will be used in the project.



BUDGET TIPS

- **Do not breakout your budget by year; create your budget for the lifespan of the project.**
- **Make sure your expenses are reasonable for the project you are proposing. For example, trials to test ideas and solutions for crop varieties, or evaluate soil health using cover crops do not require seeding 50 acres.**
- **Make sure that you value farmer labor (yours or hired) for what it is worth. Labor can be charged at the going rate in your area for the skills involved.**
- **Round to whole dollars.**
- **Be detailed in your budget justification, clearly explain why they are necessary. Reviewers look for strong justification for all project expenses (see the budget sample in this Call as an example).**

Allowable Expenses	Non-allowable Expenses
Costs of sampling and sample analysis. This can include in-field data collection or lab data analysis. Renting equipment needed for the project. The rental must not extend beyond the project's timetable. 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. Travel needed for the project, which can include lodging, mileage and meals. The travel must relate to the project's goals/activities. 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. Your own labor for project activities above and beyond your normal farming duties. 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. Refreshments at educational events, such as workshops or field days.	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 general operation of the farm, NGO, business or community organization. Providing support of any kind for capital investments or permanent farm improvements, including: purchasing equipment; purchasing permanent greenhouses, high tunnels or other buildings; purchasing permanent irrigation; building a pond; purchasing and installing water containment tanks; purchasing permanent fencing; planting an orchard; purchasing livestock or 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. Breakfasts, lunches or other full meals for the project's outreach plan, or educational/resource event or program. Any costs incurred for producing grant-required annual and final project reports. Testing of commercial products.

SAMPLE BUDGET (For Illustration Purposes Only)

Category	Description	Amount
Personnel Labor	Principal Investigator labor for field trials	\$6,000
Personnel Labor	Farmer assistant help for field trials and data collection	\$1,500
Travel	Mileage for travel to field sites	\$420
Travel	Travel to organics workshop to present findings	\$905
Materials and Supplies	Cover crop seed from ABC Seed-O-Rama	\$640
Materials and Supplies	Equipment rental for no-till seed drill	\$280
Materials and Supplies	Soil testing kits	\$960
Materials and Supplies	Portable electric netting for live-stock rotation	\$1,296
Outreach	Refreshments for field days	\$124
Outreach	Port-o-johns for field days	\$200
Outreach	Tent rental for field days	\$1,500
Miscellaneous (Other Direct Costs)	Fee for services for forage nutrient analysis	\$480
Miscellaneous (Other Direct Costs)	Videos	\$500
Miscellaneous (Other Direct Costs)	Project consultant	\$2,000
		Total: \$16,805

SAMPLE BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (For Illustration Purposes Only)

Budget Description	Details/Justification
PI farmer labor	Labor for the lead farmer on the project for project design, trial set-up, project observation and overall field management (ex. Moving temporary fencing). 10 hrs/wk X 6 wks @\$50/hr X 2 years = \$6,000.
Farmer assistant	Labor for farmer assistant to conduct data collection and assist in overall project maintenance. 5 hrs/wk X 6 wks @\$25/hr X 2 years = \$1,500.
Mileage to travel to field sites	Mileage rate per federal per diem rate of .70/cents mile for weekly travel to and from field sites. 50 miles/wk X 6 wks @.70/mile X 2 years = \$420.
Travel to Start Right Organics Workshop in Knoxville, TN Sept. 12-15 to present project findings. This includes roundtrip airfare, hotel, meals per diem and registration.	Roundtrip airfare from Fredericksburg, VA to Knoxville, TN: \$325 Hotel for 2 nights: \$330 Meals per diem: \$150 Registration: \$100
Organic cover crop seed from ABC Seed-O-Rama	Crimson clover, hairy vetch and winter rye cover crop seed to seed 4 X 1/4 acre plots, 30-inch spacing, for 2 years. Crimson clover: 5 lbs (\$17/lb) X 2 years = \$170 Hairy vetch: 10 lbs (\$11.32/lb) X 2 years = \$226.40 Winter rye: 15 lbs (\$8.12/lb) X 2 years = \$243.60
Rental of no-till seed drill to plant cover crops	Flat rate of \$140 rental X 2 years = \$280
Soil testing kits	Haney soil testing kits to test soil health and microbial activity. 4 kits @ \$120/kit X 2 years = \$960
Portable electric netting starter kit for goats	Two portable electric netting starter kits to separate 1/4 acre plots for grazing. One kit for each season, and a backup starter kit in case of damage or malfunction. Starter kit comes with netting, posts, and solar-powered box. \$432 X 3 kits = \$1,296
Snack and water for field days. To provide snacks and water for participants attending the on-farm field days. The field days will be held at a remote location. Field days will take place from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m.	Snacks and water for participants at 2 on-farm field days. 4 cases of 24 bottles of water (2 cases per field day): \$24 Assortment of snacks: \$50 per field day. Estimated number of attendees: 15 people per field day.

SAMPLE BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (For Illustration Purposes Only)

Budget Description	Details/Justification
Port-o-john rental	Rental for 2 Port-o-johns @\$50 each for each field day = \$200. The Port-o-johns are required since this is a remote location and there are no accessible bathroom facilities.
Tent rental for field day speaker sessions	\$1,500 flat fee for 2 field days. Educational sessions will be held under the tent.
Forage nutrient analysis. To be conducted 3 times each season for each plot location. Tests are needed to determine nutrient content for optimal grazing.	Fee for analyzing forage nutrients, provided by the local Cooperative Extension office. \$20 a test X 3 times each season X 4 plots X 2 years = \$480.
Video series development of the project research and results to share on Youtube and farm website.	Flat rate fee for videographer to record, edit and post videos for the length of the project. \$500
Project consultant	Cooperative Extension service consultant on the project to assist in making sure objectives align with approaches and methods. Flat rate of \$2,000 for the life of the project.

Funding Restrictions

NIFA awards may not be used to support the procurement of unmanned aircraft systems to process, store, or transmit Federal information (as defined in OMB Circular A-130) unless the grant is specifically available for procurement of such equipment and grantees describe in their application how they will comply with the information security requirements outlined in Appendix B of M-26-02 Ensuring Government Use of Secure Unmanned Aircraft Systems and Supporting United States Producers and develop a risk-based approach to applying those requirements to procurement solicitations to potential vendors under the resulting Federal award. This information, if provided, will be evaluated by NIFA as part of its evaluation process. If such procurement is approved, specific information security requirements may be included in the terms and conditions of the grant to ensure that the grantees will incorporate those requirements in procurement solicitations of unmanned aircraft systems under the Federal award. Additionally, projects must ensure that they are in adherence to [Secretary's Memorandum \(SM\) 1078-014](#) and are not using unallowable 3-D printers which can be found at National Security and Unallowable Costs.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) In Review Process

PROHIBITED USE OF GENERATIVE AI TECHNOLOGY IN NIFA PEER REVIEW PROCESS

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a broad field that has been maturing over the past few decades. The field of “Generative AI” has rapidly evolved with the creation of various tools such as ChatGPT, Dall-E, Google Bard, Bing AI, Apple Intelligence, and others that are able to produce text, images, and audio. While NIFA recognizes the potential of generative AI systems to promote both scientific advancement and the enhancement of Agency processes through streamlining and increased productivity, the Agency must also consider the potential risks posed by its use. To safeguard the integrity of NIFA’s extensive peer review process, NIFA prohibits the use of generative AI tools during the application evaluation process. USDA issued interim guidance to all its Agencies’ staff and contractors prohibiting the use of public third-party Generative AI tools until further governance can be put in place. NIFA is abiding by that guidance to maintain security and confidentiality which is crucial for safeguarding personal and scientific information that is exchanged with NIFA. NIFA cannot protect non-public information disclosed to a third-party generative AI system from being accessed by undisclosed third parties. If information from the peer review process is disclosed without authorization through generative AI or otherwise, NIFA loses the ability to protect it from further release. This loss of control creates a significant risk to researchers and their ideas. As a result, NIFA cannot adequately preserve the confidentiality of the information included in funding applications submitted to the Agency. The potential disclosure of proprietary or privileged information may result in legal liability for and erode trust in the Agency. NIFA ensures the public that it safeguards scientific ideas, non-public data, and personal information that stem from applications, review information, and related records in the merit review process.

<https://www.usda.gov/guidance-documents/peer-review/nifa/nifa-peer-review-process-competitive-grant-applications>

How Your Proposal Will Be Reviewed

All funding of Producer 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.

Upon closure of the grant deadline, proposals receive a technical review by the Producer Grant Committee of Southern SARE's Administrative Council, the program's governing body.

The Producer Grant Committee evaluates the proposal using the following criteria:

Review Criteria	Points
Qualifications of the Applicant	5
Statement of the Problem	10
Statement of the Proposed Solution	15
Approaches and Methods	20
Farmer Impacts	15
Timeline	10
Outreach Plan	10
Budget	15
Total Points	100

- Reviewing the qualifications of the applicant. Is the applicant eligible and have the experience, skills, knowledge and resources to complete the project? Does the applicant describe the farm operation and the role on the farm?
- Reviewing the Statement of the Problem to ensure that the applicant clearly describes the problem and why the problem needs to be addressed.
- Reviewing the Statement of the Proposed Solution for relevance to sustainable agriculture and how it's an improvement over the current problem. Does the solution contribute to the growth of sustainable agriculture by building on and/or adding to existing knowledge? Is it a band-aid to conventional agriculture or does it move the needle in more sustainable farming practices?
- Reviewing the Approaches and Methods to determine if the project experiment is clear, well designed and thought out so that useful and applicable results can be obtained.
- Reviewing Farmer Impacts as proposed project and anticipated project results apply to one or more of the following categories: Adoptability, Economic Benefits, Longevity, Quality of Life, and Impact on Other Farmers.
- Reviewing the timeline to determine if the project can be effectively completed in the time provided based on the research proposed.

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- Determining the effectiveness of the outreach plan. Is the outreach plan well thought out and a benefit to its intended audience? Are the methods for implementing the outreach plan the most effective way of reaching farmers and ranchers?
 - 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. Are the requested funds allowable? Are budget items itemized with clear descriptions on how they will be used in the project?

Each proposal is scored as described:

90-100 = High priority: Proposal meets the mission/vision of the SARE program, addresses SARE's pillars of sustainability, and fulfills the review criteria. Proposal requirements are met and addresses a topic of need with a unique, innovative, sustainable ag solution. Depending on funding levels, not all high priority proposals may be funded.

70-89 = Fundable: Proposal meets the mission/vision of the SARE program, pertains to sustainable agriculture, and fulfills the review criteria. Proposal requirements are met, but could be improved. While fundable, the proposal may not receive funding due to competition from other proposals.

51-69 = Revise and resubmit: Proposal meets the mission/vision of the SARE program and pertains to sustainable agriculture, but there are sections of the proposal that don't fulfill review criteria or not all requirements of Call for Proposals have been met. Author is encouraged to revise and resubmit for the next year's competition per the reviewer's comments to strengthen the proposal.

0-50 = Not fundable: Proposal does not fit into the grant program applied for; proposal does not meet the mission/vision of the SARE program, does not pertain to sustainable agriculture, and/or does not meet the requirements of the Call for Proposals. The applicant may have applied to the wrong grant program.

Once the Producer Grant Committee completes its technical review, it meets by conference call to discuss fundable proposals, and then again at the February Administrative Council (AC) meeting to select fundable projects. Those are then presented to the full Administrative Council for funding.

By March you will be contacted regarding the status of your proposal, and a summary of the review comments for your proposal will be provided to you. If awarded a Producer Grant, you will be asked to sign a contract prior to receiving any funds. A budget review will also be conducted in which you may be asked to revise your budget. If you sign the contract, you agree to conduct the activities outlined in your proposal. Any changes in budget or activities must receive prior Southern SARE approval. Grant funds are paid by reimbursement of allowable project expenses. Awardees must keep receipts of their expenditures for three (3) years after project completion.

Expectations for Funded Proposals

If the Southern SARE Administrative Council selects your project for funding, you can expect the following:

Notification: Southern SARE selects Producer Grant proposals during its winter Administrative Council meeting February of each year. Applicants will be notified via email soon after regarding the status of their project. All funded projects officially start April 1.

Budget Reviews and Contracting: Proposals selected for funding will undergo a budget review by Southern SARE. Any revisions or changes will be made prior to the proposal sent to University of Georgia (Southern SARE's host institution) for contracting. Applicants will receive a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by University of Georgia via email for signature, signifying the project is officially executed.

Invoicing: All project expenses are paid on a reimbursement basis. Applicants will receive an invoice template and be required to submit receipts and invoices during the course of their grant project to be reimbursed for their expenses.

Required Reporting: Producer Grant recipients are required to submit an annual report each year their project is active, detailing the progress of their research. In the year the project ends, recipients are required to submit a final report, documenting their findings, outreach, and project impacts. Reports are submitted online to the SARE Grant Management System. Southern SARE will hold the final invoice submitted for reimbursement until the final report is submitted and approved. Read more about [Southern SARE's Reporting Requirements](#).

Grant Management Support: Southern SARE staff is available throughout the life of the project to assist recipients on questions or issues related to their grant project. Management guidelines are available for PI changes, budget modifications, and no-cost extensions. Read more about [Southern SARE's accounting and management guidelines](#).

Acknowledging Funding: As Southern SARE grantees work on their outreach plans and develop project products related to their grant, they are required by USDA-NIFA to acknowledge SARE funding in the materials that are developed. Read more about [Southern SARE's guidelines for acknowledging funding](#).

Resources

Learn more about [Southern SARE Producer Grants](#), with information on grant writing tips.

Read more about managing a Producer Grant project through the [Southern SARE Producer Grant Award and Management Process guide](#).

Contact your local [SARE state ag coordinator](#) for information on SARE and potential grant writing resources in your state.

Learn more about conducting on-farm research with SARE's [How to Conduct Research on Your Farm or Ranch bulletin](#) and the [Organic Farming Research Foundation Farmers Guide to Conducting On-Farm Research](#).

Reach out to [ATTRA](#) (Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas) for practical sustainable agriculture resources.

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.



Producer Grants Budget Checklist

The following are **allowable** budget items as a guide when putting together your budget. Justification of each budget item is required. Explain why each budget item and its cost are needed to conduct your project.

Personnel Labor of Farmer/Rancher

Farmers/ranchers may pay themselves for the work being conducted on a Producer Grant. The labor must be directly related to project activities, such as research and outreach activities. Farmers/ranchers are encouraged to pay themselves a fair wage for their area per the work, time and skills invested in the project. **Do not list non-employee payments in this section. Those fall under Other Direct Costs.**

- ☐ Job Title
- ☐ Salary (FTE; part-time; hourly rate; etc.)
- ☐ Length of time expected to work
- ☐ Description of the work to be conducted

Personnel Labor Farmer/Rancher Support

Farmers/ranchers may pay support staff (employees of their operation) to assist them on the Producer Grant project. Farmers/ranchers are encouraged to pay a fair wage for their area per the work, time and skills invested in the project. **Do not list non-employee payments in this section. Those fall under Other Direct Costs.**

- ☐ Job Title
- ☐ Salary (FTE; part-time; hourly rate; etc.)
- ☐ Length of time expected to work
- ☐ Description of the work to be conducted

Fringe Benefits

Provide the total allowable fringe benefits.

- ☐ Salary X %Rate = Fringe Benefits

Personnel Labor of Cooperators

Though not required, farmers/ranchers may pay cooperators involved in the project. Cooperators are those individuals who may be involved in the project planning, data collection and outreach of results.

- ☐ Job Title
- ☐ Salary (FTE; part-time; hourly rate; etc.)
- ☐ Length of time expected to work
- ☐ Description of the work to be conducted

Materials, Supplies, and Technical Equipment

Materials and supplies and technical equipment are items directly related to the project activities and are needed for carrying out the objectives of the project. **Non-project items, such as office supplies, must be justified as being required for the project per the scope of the work outlined, and can be easily identified to the specific project.**

- ☐ Type/description of each item
- ☐ Cost
- ☐ Demonstrate how item(s) relate to project and are needed for the project

Publication Charges

Commercial printing or field-related publication charges for brochures, program materials, manuals, or other educational resources relating to the project. **Costs incurred for producing grant-required annual and final project reports are not reimbursable expenses.**

- ☐ Type/description of each item
- ☐ Cost
- ☐ Demonstrate how item(s) relate to project and are needed for the project

Outreach

Expenses related to the project's outreach plan and outreach activities. This can include the costs of holding an event, such as a field day or workshop; snacks and refreshments, educational resources; and marketing and advertisement.

Allowable items include:

- Event facilities/planning spaces (such as community center, hotel meeting room, tents for educational programming)
- Technical equipment (such as audio/visual technologies)
- Materials and supplies needed for the event
- Marketing and advertisement; communications
- Travel for speakers and presenters only.
- Snacks refreshments (**Full meals including lunches and dinners, as well as breakfasts of any kind are not allowed**).

Justification for snacks and refreshments include the support of the continuity of the event; or the event is being held at a remote location and food is not easily accessible. **UGA employee participants cannot be included.**

-  Type/description of each item
-  Cost, including an itemization for each item
-  Demonstrate how the item(s) relate to the project and are needed for the project

Travel

Travel expenses can be associated with the project needed for the farmer/rancher to conduct the research. For example, farmers may claim mileage to and from their farm to research plots. Travel can also be associated with the project outreach plan, such as travel, lodging and registration associated with presenting project results at a training or workshop.

-  Origin/destination
-  Mileage per federal per diem rates
-  Airfare
-  Lodging (include cost per person per night)
-  Meals per federal per diem rate
-  Description of how the travel relates to project/outreach and why it's needed

Other Direct Costs

Direct project charges not included in other categories. Other direct costs can include:

- **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 and organization of the consultant, a statement of work, and funds being charged to the project. Also provide a copy of the resume/vita.
- **Service Maintenance:** Maintenance contracts in direct correlation to use of equipment for the project (e.g. 50% use of equip for project, 50% of svc contract applied to budget costs).
- **Photocopying:** In-house copying (not commercial printing) for materials associated to the project.
- **Communications:** Mailings, postal faxes, telephone. They must be justified as relating to the project.

-  Type/description of each item
-  Cost
-  Demonstrate how item(s) relate to project and are needed for the project

Federal Per Diem Rates Website: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>

Questions about your budget? Contact: Denise Quick at denise.quick@uga.edu or call (770) 229-3420

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Southern SARE Producer Grant Committee Review Rubric

Section	Exact question in application in grants management system	Quoted from "How this proposal will be reviewed"	What are reviewers ultimately looking for?	Points
Qualifications of the Applicant	Describe your qualification and experience, skills, knowledge and resources to complete the project. Make sure to describe the farm operation and your role on the farm. Include any Internet links for your farming business (website, social media, etc.)	Is the farmer qualified to conduct the project? Does the farmer have the skills, knowledge and resources to complete the project? Is there a dedicated resource link on the Internet that gives more information about the farming operation?	The applicant is qualified and has the experience, skills, knowledge and resources to complete the project. Have they applied to the right grant program?	5
Statement of the Problem	Provide a clear description of the production/marketing problem you and/or other farmers are facing. Indicate how the problem is related to, or affects, sustainable agriculture and discuss why the problem needs to be addressed. Your explanation should address one or more of the three pillars of sustainability. Feel free to cite results from other studies, including SARE-related projects, as evidence of the need to address the problem.	Does the proposal clearly address a problem and effectively identify the need for finding a more sustainable solution?	Determine whether the project clearly addresses a problem or issue for agriculture in the South, and identifies a need to finding a more sustainable solution. Addresses one or more of the three pillars of sustainability	10
Statement of the Proposed Solution	The Statement of the Proposed Solution is the identification of your research question and objectives. It is the opportunity to identify whether the new approach is an improvement over the current problem. Your solution should be specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic. The Statement of the Proposed Solution is a clear statement of what you expect the outcome of your research project to be. In this section, provide a description of the proposed solution to the problem and its relevance to sustainable agriculture. Your solution should lead to a more sustainable outcome.	Is the goal of the project clear based on the expected outcomes? Is it relevant to sustainable agriculture? Does it move the needle in more sustainable farming practices?	Proposed solution should be clear, specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic. The solution is a new and creative innovation or leads to a more sustainable outcome by building on and/or adding to existing knowledge.	15

Approaches and Methods	The Approaches and Methods section is where you will test your expected outcome through a research experiment or observational study. In this section you should outline: • The site where you will conduct your research; • Your experimental design if your research calls for one; • What you are measuring and the ways you will be measuring it; • The materials and supplies you will be using to conduct your research; • How you will collect your data, how often you will collect it, and what tools you will use; • How you will analyze your data, and what tools you will use; • How you will interpret your data and draw conclusions. The Approaches and Methods should demonstrate how your solution works in addressing the Statement of the Problem. Be specific in describing project activities.	Is the Approaches and Methods clearly thought out and well designed so that useful and applicable results can be obtained? Does the Approaches and Methods align with the budget request?	Approaches and Methods effectively demonstrate how the solution would work in solving the stated problem. Potential results are practical and useful. Approaches and Methods outline what is needed in the budget. 20
Famer Impacts	Explain the proposed project's anticipated results or applicability in one or more of the following categories: • Adoptability: How does the proposed project and its outcomes benefit other farmers? • Economic Benefits: How does the proposed project must align with farmer profitability, one of the three pillars of sustainable agriculture in the SARE program? How does the proposed project or its outcomes demonstrate efficiency, economic growth or savings, improved productivity, resource management, labor analysis, inputs vs. outputs, or return on investment? • Longevity: Does the proposed project impact overall farm or farm longevity? Does the project have implications for generational land transfer, farm transition, farm stability, or viability under changing management or conditions? • Quality of Life: How does the project align with quality of life, one of the three pillars of sustainable agriculture in the SARE program? Quality of life indicators can include, but are not limited to community vitality, physical health, mental well-being, economic security, or work/life balance.	Proposal and anticipated results should have applicability to one or more of the following categories.	Applicant adequately explains the project's proposed outcome has applicability in one or more the categories listed. 15

- Impacts on Other Farmers: In general, how might the proposed project or its outcomes benefit other farmers or broader farming communities?

Timeline

The timeline is an outline of project activities in a chronological timeline that states where, what, when and how long it will take for you to perform your research. Provide a timetable of the work to be completed from project start date to project end date. Be specific in describing project activities, including any recordkeeping throughout the research. Include your outreach plan in your timetable.

Does the timeline demonstrate that the project can be effectively completed in the time provided based on the goals and the proposed solution?

Determine if the project can be effectively completed in the time provided based on the goals proposed.

10

Outreach Plan

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.

Does the outreach plan benefit its intended audience? Are the methods the most effective way of reaching farmers and ranchers?

A clear, well thought out outreach plan that will reach a large number of audiences who could benefit from the project.

10

Budget

The budget is a list of allowable expenses required to conduct your project. The items in your budget should align with the your Approaches and Methods. Fill in a budget and provide a justification for each allowable item listed in your budget. Refer to the budget checklist attached to this Call for Proposal, as well as the sample budget and budget justification as a guideline.

Is it clear what the funds requested will be spent on? Are the budget items realistic, reasonable, and allowable? Does the budget align with the Approaches and Methods?

Allowable budget items. Clear budget with reasonable and realistic budget requests. Budget items are itemized and justified with clear descriptions of how they will be used in the project.

15