



# Southern SARE:

## The role of Administrative Council members

*This information is available in the AC Handbook*

## What is SARE?

- Authorized in the 1985 Farm Bill
- Supports farmers, researchers, educators who seek innovations in sustainable ag
- Three pillars of sustainability
- USDA grants programs and educational resources





# SSARE Grants

- Research & Education (Research Only); known as R&E
  - Young Scholar Enhancement Grants
- Education
- Professional Development Program; known as PDP
- Graduate Student
- On-Farm Research
- Producer





# SSARE Structure

SARE's grassroots success leans on knowledge and contributions of a cross-section of ag stakeholders

These stakeholders make up SARE's governing body, known as the Administrative Council (AC).

- Drives funding of grant projects
- Oversees general budget
- Guides program goals
- Keeps program on point with mission, vision and objectives

Comprised of 26 members, appointed by partner agencies, or selected through a nomination process

1862/1890 research and extension

State Departments of Ag

USDA-ARS

USDA Forestry

USDA NRCS

EPA

US Geological Survey

Producers

NGOs

Agribusiness

Quality of Life

Urban Ag

Equity, Justice, Food and

Sovereignty

Veterans

National SARE

AC members serve three-year terms with the opportunity to renew for a 2<sup>nd</sup> three-year term; can serve a 3<sup>rd</sup> 3-year term in a leadership position (Ex. Subcommittee chair).

# Subcommittees

AC conducts its business through a structure of subcommittees:

- **Operations/Nominating:** develops/recommends budgets and policies.
- **Project Review** (*grant review committee*): establishes goals for evaluation of proposals and funding of R&E, Education, and Graduate Student Grant projects.
- **Producer Grant** (*grant review committee*): establishes goals for evaluation of proposals and funding of Producer Grant and On-Farm Research grant projects.
- **Professional Development Program** (*grant review committee*): establishes goals for the evaluation of proposals and funding of PDP grants; manages model state plans for state ag coordinators.
- **Equity and Prosperity (EPC):** establishes goals to support historically underserved farmers and ranchers and supports programming for 1890 land-grants.
- **Communications:** helps promote SARE and sustainable ag in the region.

Every AC member serves on one of the 3 grant review committees, as well as one of the other committees. Some producer members serve on two review committees.

Each committee has a chair and vice chair.



# AC Meetings

The AC holds two meetings a year (All AC members attend):

Winter meeting, held every February in Atlanta

*Generally, all business meeting*

Summer meeting, held late July/early August in a selected location in the Southern region.

*Business meeting*

*Farm tours*

## Executive Committee (EC) Meetings

EC made up of AC Chair and Vice Chair, and chairs of each subcommittee

Held virtually once a month

For business matters that take place between the AC meetings



# AC Member Duties

- ❖ Attend AC meetings and conduct subcommittee business
- ❖ Review and select grant proposals for funding
- ❖ Subcommittee chairs attend EC meetings
- ❖ Serve as SARE representatives in their community



# Compensation

- ❑ AC members are compensated travel, meals, and lodging expenses to attend AC meetings
- ❑ AC members pay travel expenses upfront and then are reimbursed
- ❑ Producer/NGO members receive:
  - ❖ For Winter and Summer AC meetings: **\$300 per day per meeting** (including travel days) plus expenses;
  - ❖ For General AC support: **\$300** twice a year, paid in conjunction with AC meeting reimbursement;
  - ❖ Grant Committee support: **\$300** per year for each grant committee served;
  - ❖ Zoom meetings (including Executive Committee calls): **\$100** for calls lasting up to 2 hours; **\$200** for calls over 2 hours and under 4 hours.
- ❑ SARE pays for travel, meals, lodging when AC members conduct other SARE business (conference, workshop, etc.) throughout the year; expenses are reimbursed

# Grant Review Process

AC members read, comment on, and score grant applications each year in the online system called SARE Grant Management System.

- ❖ **R&E Grants**  
Pre-proposals are reviewed by the full AC; top submissions are invited to submit full proposals.  
  
Full proposals are first reviewed and scored by the Technical Review Committee (TRC); then evaluated by the Project Review Committee (PRC).
  - ❖ Young Scholar Enhancement Grants: Grants for open R&E projects. Reviewed by PRC.
  
- ❖ **Education Grants**  
Reviewed and scored by the PRC.
  
- ❖ **PDP Grants**  
Pre-proposals are reviewed by the PDP Committee; top submissions are invited to submit full proposals.  
  
Full proposals are first reviewed and scored by TRC; then evaluated by the PDP Committee.
  
- ❖ **Graduate Student Grants**  
First reviewed and scored by TRC; then evaluated by PRC.
  
- ❖ **OFRG**  
First reviewed and scored by TRC; then evaluated by Producer Grant Committee.
  
- ❖ **Producer Grant**  
No TRC. Reviewed, commented and scored by Producer Grant Committee.

All Grants are voted on by the full AC for approval during AC meetings.



# Conflict of Interest

AC must recuse themselves from project review/discussion to avoid conflicts of interest under certain circumstances.

Members cannot:

- ❖ Be from that member's home institution/org.
- ❖ Serve as a paid consultant or board member from institution/org.
- ❖ Serve as thesis/postdoctoral advisor within past 5 years
- ❖ Serve as collaborator on proposal or pub. within past 5 years.
- ❖ Serve as a project participant during current grant cycle
- ❖ Serve other funding requests under consideration where gain monetary benefits to themselves or program they represent.
- ❖ Must resign their memberships if they wish to submit a grant proposal.

# AC Member Testimonials

“Being on the SSARE Administrative Council is a great experience. I appreciate the impact of sustainable research and education even more than before joining the Council. Very inclusive group and open to new ideas. Loved the breath of scientific expertise as well as the collegiality. Highly recommend this to anyone with a passion for sustainable ag.” – **Annie Donoghue, USDA-ARS**

“Serving on the Southern SARE AC was one of the best experiences of my life. The volunteers that serve on the AC are committed to transformative changes in US agriculture. We bring a diversity of views and experiences to the table and work together to do just that. The regional autonomy of the AC lets us vision, design, and implement sustainable agriculture grants programs tailored to the needs of the southern United States, including our island partners. I made lifelong friends of the AC; we made a difference that we can be proud of.” – **Doug Constance, former Quality of Life representative and AC Chair**

“Being on the AC gave me an opportunity to stand up for small farmers throughout the Southern region. I learned about the grant decision process, the many varied topics of interest to farmers and academic professionals, and the dedication of both groups to preserving and enhancing the long-standing traditions of agriculture. Best of all I made dear friends and I had fun.” – **Martha Mewbourne, former AC Producer representative**

# Glossary of Terms:

## SARE Specific Abbreviations

- ❖ **AC Administrative Council** – The governing body of each regional SARE program. The AC drives the funding of grant projects, oversees the general budget, guides programming and policy, and makes sure that the program stays on point with its mission, vision and sustainable agriculture objectives.
- ❖ **CFP Call for Proposal** – The term used for a grant application. Also known as RFA (Request for Application) or RFP (Request for Proposal).
- ❖ **EC Executive Committee** – The Executive Committee meets monthly by conference call and discusses on-going SSARE business, making decisions on topics that arise between each AC meeting.
- ❖ **EPC Equity and Prosperity Committee** – One of SSARE’s Administrative Council subcommittees.
- ❖ **NGO Non-governmental Organization** – A non-profit organization that operates independently of any government.
- ❖ **OFRG On-Farm Research Grants** – A grant program for ag professionals who work directly with farmers to conduct on-farm production and marketing sustainable ag research.
- ❖ **Ops Operations Committee** – The national group that has representatives from each of the SARE regions and allocates funding to SARE Outreach or other national initiatives before dividing remaining funds among the four regions.
- ❖ **PDP Professional Development Program** – A program that supports sustainable agriculture at the state level through designated sustainable ag coordinators. The designation is also used to refer to one of SSARE’s Administrative Council subcommittees, as well as a grant program, whose funding trains extension educators and service providers who work directly with farmers on sustainable ag techniques.
- ❖ **PGC Producer Grant Committee** – One of SSARE’s Administrative Council subcommittees.
- ❖ **PI Principal Investigator** – The primary researcher on a grant project. Also known as the “grantee” or “project coordinator”.
- ❖ **PRC Project Review Committee** – One of SSARE’s Administrative Council subcommittees.
- ❖ **R&E Research and Education** – SSARE’s flagship grant program focuses on a systems approach to sustainable agriculture.
- ❖ **SARE Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education** – The name of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s sustainable agriculture grants program.
- ❖ **TRC Technical Review Committee** – Outside professionals recruited to review grant proposals. Based on their area of expertise, technical reviewers offer skill and support to the grant reviewing process.



## SSARE Resources:

<https://southern.sare.org/about/southern-sare-documents/>

**Includes:**

**AC Handbook**

**How it Works**

**SSARE Bylaws**

**Archived CFPs**