



Southern SARE Graduate Student Grant Award and Management Process:

A guide to managing your Graduate Student Grant project



Congratulations on receiving a Southern SARE Graduate Student Grant. The following document provides guidelines on the grant award and grant management processes to assist you as you conduct your SARE-funded sustainable agriculture project.

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Grant Award Process

Once an Applicant is Awarded a Grant

With Graduate Student Grants, communications with SSARE is made through the Principal Investigator (PI)/major professor on the grant project.

The PI receives initial notification via email of the award, which includes reviewers' comments for reference. A follow-up official award letter is sent outlining signing the grant subaward contract, submitting invoices for reimbursement and fulfilling reporting requirements.

Budget Reviews

After the PI is notified of the award, Southern SARE reviews the project budget. If revisions are required, the budget is sent back to the PI's institution/organization for correction. Southern SARE budget reviews can range anywhere from one (1) to three (3) weeks, or longer depending on the time it takes to correct a budget that needs revisions.

If no revisions are required or once revisions have been made, the budget is sent forward to the University of Georgia College of Agriculture Business Office for additional reviews. Any budget found with errors is sent back to Southern SARE for correction. Once corrections are made or if no errors are found, the budget is then sent to University of Georgia Sponsored Projects for approval.

Subaward Agreement

The UGA Sponsored Projects review process goes through several levels. Once UGA Sponsored Projects reviews the proposal, the department sends an email to the PI with a copy of the subaward agreement. The subaward agreement is the PI's grant subaward contract. It describes the rights and responsibilities as a SSARE Graduate Student Grant recipient. The subaward agreement must be signed and returned to UGA Sponsored Projects.

Once the subaward agreement is signed and returned, there is one more final review before the subaward agreement is signed by the Assistant Director of Sponsored Projects at UGA. The subaward agreement won't be executed until it has been entered into the procurement (PO) system. A signed, fully executed copy of the subaward agreement is then sent to the PI for record keeping.

It is at this time that the grant project is officially executed. From the time a project is awarded to the time it is executed can take anywhere from **two (2) to four (4) months**.

Grant Management Process

Southern SARE provides guidelines for managing the financial requirements of a Graduate Student Grant.

The following are some common categories that PIs may have to make changes to regarding their grant project.

Changing the PI

Sometimes researchers on a grant project can no longer be a principal investigator (PI) for a host of reasons, and changing the PI is required.

To learn what is required to process a PI change, see the guidelines on the Southern SARE website at: <https://southern.sare.org/grants/manage-a-grant/financial-requirements/>

Once the request has been received, approval processing begins at the SSARE office and then forwarded to the UGA Sponsored Projects for approval. A formal modification to the award is issued by UGA Sponsored Projects and emailed to the PI's institution/organization/agency administrative contact on file. Once received, it should be signed and returned to UGA for finalization.

It may take up to **eight (8) weeks** for changes in PI requests to be processed once approved.

The Graduate Student Grant can only be used by the graduate student who submitted the proposal. If a graduate student transfers to another institution, the grant award does not follow the student. If the graduate student cannot complete the project, the PI can request a transfer of the grant to another graduate student, but the request must be approved by SSARE. If another graduate student is not identified to continue the project, the project is terminated due to non-compliance.

Changing A Graduate Student

A Southern SARE Graduate Student Grant is conducted by the student who was awarded the project.

If the awarded graduate student is unable to complete the Graduate Student Grant project within the grant project start and end date, a new graduate student may compete the project with Southern SARE approval.

To request a change to the graduate student, the Principal Investigator/Major Professor of the project must provide a letter or email with the following content:

- Provide justification for the need to change the graduate student;
- Provide the name and contact information of the new graduate student;
- Provide a brief statement that demonstrates the new graduate student is qualified to conduct the grant project;
- Provide a statement confirming the new graduate student's acceptance of conducting the grant project;
- Include your SARE subaward number or project number.

Once the request has been received and approved, processing begins at the SSARE office and then forwarded to the UGA Sponsored Projects unit in Athens. A formal modification to the award will be issued by Sponsored Projects at UGA. This modification will be emailed to the PI's institution contact on file. Once received by the institution, it should be signed and returned to UGA for finalization.

- It may take up to **eight (8)** weeks for the change in Graduate Student requests to be processed once approved.
- Only one graduate student change request is allowed during the life of the Graduate Student Grant project.
- A graduate student grant request cannot be made within **six (6)** months from the end date of the grant project.
- A graduate student is required to conduct a graduate student grant project. If a graduate student cannot be identified to complete the Graduate Student Grant project, the project award will be immediately terminated.

Budget Revisions

Sometimes a budget revision is needed to move monies from one spending category to another. Southern SARE must approve any revisions to a budget.

To learn what is required to process a budget revision, see the guidelines on the Southern SARE website at: <https://southern.sare.org/grants/manage-a-grant/financial-requirements/>

Once the request has been received and approved, processing begins at the SSARE office and then forwarded to UGA Sponsored Projects. An approval notification email is then sent by either the SSARE accountant or UGA Sponsored Projects to the PI's institution/organization/agency administrative contact on file.

It may take up to **eight (8) weeks** for revisions in budget requests to be processed.

No-Cost Extensions

Weather events, changes to labor or personnel, illness, broken equipment, delays in data collection and analysis, and other circumstances can impact the completion of a grant project. If a PI/Graduate Student still has funds available in the project account and needs more time to complete a project beyond the original end date, a no-cost extension can be requested. No-cost extensions are only given for project-related activities. **Extensions cannot be requested for the purpose of using up remaining funds.**

Southern SARE must approve any no-cost extension requests. To learn what is required to file a no-cost extension, see the guidelines on the Southern SARE website at: <https://southern.sare.org/grants/manage-a-grant/financial-requirements/>

No-cost extensions cannot be requested any sooner than 90 days from the end date of the project. No-cost extensions can be requested for a minimum of 6 months to a maximum of 12 months beyond the original end date of the project. Southern SARE does not fulfill a no-cost extension for longer than 12 months. No-cost extensions must be completed 12 months before SSARE's main USDA Cooperative Agreement expires.

If more time is needed after the 12-month period, an additional extension can be requested, if eligible. USDA requires that projects be up-to-date on annual reports before approving additional no-cost extensions.

Once the request has been received, it goes through several layers of approval within the SSARE office. The no-cost extension is then sent to the University of Georgia College of Agriculture Business Office for approval. Once approved, the no-cost extension request is then sent to University of Georgia Sponsored Projects for approval. A formal modification to the award will be issued by Sponsored Projects. This modification will be emailed to the PI's institution/organization/agency administrative contact on file. Counter signature from the PI's institution/organization/agency is not required for no-cost extensions.

It may take up to **eight (8) weeks** for a no-cost extension to be executed from submission to approval.

Changing the Project Scope or Objectives

Modifying budgets or filing for no-cost extensions can sometimes alter the scope or objectives of a project. Other instances during the life of a grant project can also occur that may cause a need to change the scope or objectives of a project from its originally intended purpose.

Southern SARE must approve any requests to change the scope or objectives of a project. To learn what is required to file a request to change the project scope or objectives, see the guidelines on the Southern SARE website at:

<https://southern.sare.org/grants/manage-a-grant/financial-requirements/>

Once the request has been received, approval processing begins at the SSARE office and then forwarded to the UGA Sponsored Projects for approval. A formal modification to the award is issued by UGA Sponsored Projects and emailed to the PI's institution/organization/agency administrative contract on file. Once received, it should be signed and returned to UGA for finalization.

It may take up to **eight (8) weeks** for the process, from request to approval to final modification of the award, to be completed.

Submitting Invoices for Reimbursement

Southern SARE grant awards operate as reimbursement. That is, the PI/Graduate Student conducts the work, then submits invoices to Southern SARE to be reimbursed for project expenses.

A standard invoice form from the PI's institution/agency/organization may be used to invoice for allowable reimbursed expenses.

Learn more about the details of what is required for reimbursement on Southern SARE's website at: <https://southern.sare.org/grants/manage-a-grant/financial-requirements/>

Some things to keep in mind:

- The official start date of Graduate Student Grant projects is September 1 of any given year. No invoices can be submitted for work done prior to September 1.

- Even though the project start date is September 1, no reimbursements can occur until the project subaward agreement is fully executed.
- No more than one invoice is allowed per expenditure month.
- A cumulative total is required on expenses from one expenditure date to the next on invoices.
- SSARE will reimburse up to 90 percent of the award and hold the remaining balance until the final report is submitted and approved.

Provided there are no revisions needed on submitted invoices, it normally takes **four (4) weeks** to process reimbursements.

Closing Out Your Grant

Before your grant project can be closed out, the following items must be received within **45 days** of the project end date:

- Final report – The final report is prepared by the PI/Graduate Student and submitted in the SARE Grant Management System.
- Final invoice – This document comes from the financial department of PI's institution, agency or organization. It is to the PI's advantage to let the institution know when he/she has submitted all of the expenditures so a final invoice for SSARE can be prepared, or if the PI plans to request a no-cost extension. The period covered by the invoice must not go past the end date of the project. The final invoice should be clearly marked as FINAL to notify the SSARE accountant to close the project.
- Completed and signed SF425 form -- This form is prepared by the financial department of the PI's institution/agency/organization, and submitted to the SSARE accountant. It is to the PI's advantage to make sure his/her institution knows about this requirement for all federal grants.
- Equipment listing that describes any equipment purchases and the cost of each item. If no equipment was purchased, indicate "No Equipment Purchased" on line 12 of the SF425 form.

All required closeout documentation must be received within 45 days of the subaward ending date to be compliant with the terms and conditions of the subaward agreement. The final invoice will be held without payment until all close-out documents are received. **Subawards with non-compliance status are subject to closure and forfeiture of any remaining funds.**

Grant Project Reporting Requirements

SARE Grant Management System

Once a PI is awarded a Southern SARE Graduate Student Grant, the grant project is managed in the SARE Grant Management System (<http://projects.sare.org>) including the annual report, final report, and any project products. The SARE Grant Management System is a progressive style of reporting, which means the PI can log into the project at any point during the duration of the grant to update project information.

Annual Report

An Annual Report summarizes the progress of the SARE Graduate Student Grant project.

An Annual Report is required each year a grant project is active, except for the final year. SSARE requests that Annual Reports be submitted by **April 1** each year. Late annual reports will result in subaward invoices being held for payment until the delinquent report is received and approved.

Final Report

The Final Report, a culmination of the results of the Graduate Student Grant project, is due **45 days** after the project end date, if the PI is not filing a no-cost extension. If the PI is filing a no-cost extension and it is approved, the submission of an annual report on the progress of the grant project for that given year is required.

Processing of the final invoice and paperwork associated with closing out the grant cannot be processed until the final report is submitted to the SARE Grant Management System and approved. Failure to submit the final report within the required timeline can result in the termination of the grant project and the forfeiture of any unpaid invoices.

Project Products

Although an outreach plan is not required of Graduate Student Grant projects, it is encouraged. An outreach plan documents how project results are shared with other producers and ag professionals in the sustainable ag community. Outreach activities can include workshops, publications, trainings, field demonstrations, videos, fact sheets, podcasts, webinars, virtual efforts, or other activities.

Any project products that are developed as a result of the Graduate Student Grant should be uploaded to the SARE Grant Management System. This enables audiences to access useful tools and resources for their own sustainable agriculture interests.

Annual Reports, Final Reports and Project Products are available for public search via the SARE Projects Database at: <https://projects.sare.org/search-projects/>

Guidelines for 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.

The following guidelines are intended to assist grantees as they develop grant-related materials, such as posters, presentations, published journal articles, fact sheets, bulletins, videos, webinars and other products.

The use of the [SARE logo](#) is required.

The following acknowledgement is required for all initiatives supported by NIFA and funded by SARE: **“This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number XXX-XXXXXX-XXXXXX through the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number LS21-XXX. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider.”** Grantees must reference the prime award under which they originally received the grant, adding reference to the Southern region and the SARE project number.

In addition to the acknowledgement statement, whenever practical, grantees are required to include [NIFA’s official identifier](#) in publications, posters, websites, presentations and other materials resulting from their award.

Grantees must include the following disclaimer on all publications and materials, except for scientific articles or papers published in scientific journals: **“Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.”**

Accompany a [photo release form](#) with project products that have been developed granting SARE rights and permissions to use the images, videos and/or figures in current and all future information projects. Uses may include (but are not limited to) the internet, news releases and print publications.

Quick Links

SARE Grant Management System: <http://projects.sare.org>

Financial Requirements: <https://southern.sare.org/grants/manage-a-grant/financial-requirements/>

Reporting Requirements: <https://southern.sare.org/grants/manage-a-grant/reporting-requirements/>

Guidelines for Acknowledging Funding: <https://southern.sare.org/grants/manage-a-grant/guidelines-for-acknowledging-funding/>

Published by the Southern Region of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. Funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Southern SARE operates under cooperative agreements with the University of Georgia, Fort Valley State University, and the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture to offer competitive grants to advance sustainable agriculture in America's Southern region. This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, through Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

