



How it works: 2008-2009

Southern SARE's handy guide to proposal submission, review
and grant administration

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**Get Southern SARE Calls for Proposals at
www.southernsare.uga.edu/callpage.htm
All proposals must be submitted online.**

(This document is current as of February 4, 2008. It may be updated again after AC meeting in mid-February 2008 at which time the 2008-2009 calendar may be changed.)

Grant funds are a boon to researchers, farmers, educators and communities, but the paperwork can be intimidating.

At Southern SARE we continually look for ways to make our grant programs easier to navigate. This guide will answer questions you may never have thought to ask about how a grant program works.

The mission of Southern SARE is to expand knowledge and adoption of sustainable agriculture practices that are

- economically viable,
- environmentally sound
- good for all members of the community.

Research and Education Grants

Proposal Process

Southern SARE uses an online preproposal/proposal submission system for Research and Education grants. Each year input is solicited from the Administrative Council (AC) on changes needed for the next year's call, including changes in priority areas. The Director incorporates these changes into a new call that is approved by the AC Executive Committee.

Distribution of Call

A Southern SARE calendar showing the release date of all CFPs is maintained on the Southern SARE website and also appears in every issue of Common Ground, the Annual Index and How It Works. Distribution includes announcements sent by email to Southern Region AC members, state sustainable ag coordinators and current project investigators. The release of each CFP is also announced on sanet-mg (sustainable ag network message group), SAED (sustainable ag education discussion group) and the PDP discussion list. Each one is also sent to ATTRA for inclusion in Weekly Harvest, an email service to more than 300 print and online agriculture publications. For more specialized audiences, some non-public email lists including USDA-ARS and NRCS offices are used when appropriate. The national SARE Outreach Specialist has a master distribution list that goes to dozens of lists for specific academic disciplines, RC&Ds, non-profit groups and media outlets. The regional Communication Specialist and the national Outreach Specialist coordinate which lists are most appropriate for each CFP.

Contents of Call

The process begins by clicking on the R&E call at the Southern SARE website: www.southernsare/callpage.html. The CFP provides a description of the USDA SARE program including the definition of sustainable agriculture found in the SARE authorizing legislation, the program objectives and instructions for online submission.

The CFP notes that all projects must meet the two following criteria:

- Project outcomes must focus on developing sustainable agriculture systems or moving existing systems toward sustainable agriculture as defined in the 1990 Farm Bill.
- The project's central purpose should be research-based with an educational/outreach component to extend the project findings to the public.

The S-SARE uses seven priority areas to point applicants to the research topics desired by the AC.

The current priority areas include:

- limited resource farmers;
- organic farming systems;
- environmentally sound practices/agricultural ecosystems;
- marketing/economic development;
- policy, program evaluation and quality of life;
- component research; and
- women in sustainable agriculture

Priority areas are defined in the CFP. In all priority areas, special consideration is given to proposals that address issues surrounding small farm survival.

The CFP also notes that reviewers will pay attention to the outcomes of the research project and how they meet the mission of the SARE program.

The CFP provides a discussion of the review process that stresses that projects should be research-based, that farmers and end-user involvement are critical, and an outreach component is required. The CFP provides information about the number of preproposals received in the last year, how many were finally funded and the average budget size and range of the award.

The CFP includes "Ten Tips for Writing a Stronger SARE Proposal".

Review Process

In general, the S-SARE review process meets the criteria for evaluation of projects as specified in the Operational Guidelines of the SARE program as authorized by legislation. These include:

Priority for funding projects under Chapter 1 will be based on needs and opportunities identified by the Regional Administrative Councils (AC). In general, selection should be on the basis of:

- relevance of the project to the goals of the program;
- appropriateness of the design of the project;
- national or regional adaptability of the findings and outcomes of the project [7 USC 5811(c)(1)].

Priority should be given to projects that:

- closely coordinate research and extension activities;
- indicate how findings will be made readily usable by farmers/ranchers and other intended audiences;
- maximize the direct and meaningful involvement of farmer/ranchers;
- involve cooperation between farmers/ranchers, non-profit organizations, colleges and universities, and government agencies [7 USC 5811(c)(2)].

The review process incorporates three entities within S-SARE: the Administrative Council (AC), the Project Review Committee of the AC (made up of AC members only), and a Technical Review Committee (TRC) made up of external evaluators. The Project Review Committee is constituted to reflect the composition of the AC. Specifically, the members are made up of three farmers, one NGO representative, one from 1890 and one from 1862 institutions, one from the PDP Leadership Committee, one government agency representative, one Quality of Life or Agribusiness representative, and one reviewer from the national SARE office.

The members of the Project Review Committee focus their evaluation of each preproposal on the following:

1. Statement of problem, rationale and significance
2. Project relevance to sustainable agriculture
3. Objectives
4. Approach and methods
5. Literature cited
6. Budget

At the summer AC meeting, the Project Review Committee selects approximately 30 preproposals to be submitted as full proposals. PI's will not be given a full review of their proposal at the preproposal stage. The Project Review Committee votes "yes" or "no" on invitations to full proposals. No other information is available for PI's. Comprehensive reviews are undertaken at the full proposal stage. For those submissions invited to the full proposal stage, instructions for online submission will be provided.

The invited full proposals are submitted in November and a Technical Review Committee is constituted. The TRC nominees are solicited at the summer AC meeting on a yearly basis. Attention is paid to selecting these members from as many different institutions, disciplines and backgrounds as possible. A breadth of reviewers is desired.

Each proposal will be reviewed by three or four members of the Technical Review Committee. They will provide a written detailed evaluation of the proposal which focuses on the approach and methods, the outreach and the evaluation plan. The TRC reviewers will be asked to rate each proposal as High Priority, Fundable, Revise/Re-submit (with specific suggestions) or Not Fundable.

The strengths and weaknesses of each proposal are clearly stated and each receives consideration in the AC review process. These reviews will be sent back to the PI's after the final awards are decided. The reviewer will include any information added as part of the Project Review Committee's deliberations at the winter AC meeting.

At the winter AC meeting, the Project Review Committee recommends to the full AC those projects to be funded from the list of proposals. At this stage, budgets are examined. The AC is responsible for ensuring that the selected projects reflect not only scientific merit but include projects from as many priority areas as possible, from across states, institutions, stakeholder groups and NGOs. In short, the AC looks to approve a diverse and inclusive set of funded projects each year. The comments given to PI's are constructive and explicit. It is important that the review comments be of

adequate substance to assist an author in meaningful revision.

The time from submission of a preproposal to announcement of awards is from June to February.

Award Process

Award letters are sent to each new project investigator along with the project review committee comments and any budget alterations requested by the AC. The project investigator revises the project design and budget to reflect the comments and submits this along with a letter of acceptance. All new grantees are given contact information regarding SARE-sponsored projects within their state, state coordinator contacts and other information to facilitate communication among all grant programs.

The S-SARE office checks the approved proposal budgets for any mathematical errors and required budgetary detail. Once reviewed, the awarded proposal is sent to the College of Agriculture Business Office where they are reviewed and forwarded to the University of Georgia Sponsored Programs Office. The Sponsored Programs office verifies the grant recipient has an audit on file at the University. A sub-award agreement and a Federal Form 1048 (USDA Certification regarding Debarment) are sent to the grant recipients to be signed. If the project involves animals, the PI must send verification that the project has been reviewed and approved by their university's animal care committee (or the University of Georgia animal care committee if the PI's institution or agency is not affiliated with a university). The verification does not require a site visit by the university animal care committee but is simply a form they complete based on details provided in the proposal. Upon receipt of all necessary completed and signed forms, Sponsored Programs issues the original purchase order to encumber the awarded funds. These forms, along with the sub-award, are forwarded to the UGA Agricultural Business Office.

The Agricultural Business Office verifies the awarded amount and that it was part of the S-SARE prime cooperative agreement with USDA and forwards the sub-award to the Contracts and Grants Office. It is here that all sub-award information is entered into the UGA accounting system (i.e., sub-recipient name, address, amount, and period of award). This process may take approximately three months from the time the grant proposal is approved to be funded by S-SARE. Grant recipients can begin to expend funds from the date of the award. However, invoices for reimbursements can not be accepted and processed until the finalized award process is complete.

Once the award process is finalized, the sub-recipients must submit invoices for reimbursement. Upon receipt of an invoice, the S-SARE accountant will review the invoice for details and allowable charges, update the balance to be paid on the grant, and initiate the process for payment. Grant recipients can expect to receive payment within four weeks. This time period may fluctuate if an invoice is held due to missing information.

Reporting Requirements: New, Progress, Final

A New Project Report must be filed as soon as the contract is signed. S-SARE staff will create a spot in the national data base for each new project and then send new Project Investigators instructions for filing their online report. Annual Progress Reports are due in April each year until project activities are completed, at which time a final report is due. The project's final invoice cannot be paid until the report is submitted and approved.

Progress/final report requests emailed in February and reports must be filed by April 1. As soon as the communication specialist approves the electronic submission the report is available worldwide on the internet. However, until the technology allows charts, tables and other supporting data to be submitted electronically, hard copies of the supporting information will have to be submitted by mail to the S-SARE office.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Upon award, each project is assigned to a member of the Administrative Council for monitoring and evaluation. When the first-year progress report is submitted, the AC member will evaluate the progress of the project using a checklist. The AC member will sumite the entire AC on the progress of the project. If concerns develop, the Regional Coordinator will contact the project investigator and will work with them to address those concerns. The same process will occur each year. At the end of the project, the AC member will update the AC regarding the project.

Graduate Student Grants

Proposal Process

Distribution of Call

A Southern SARE calendar showing the release date of all CFPs is maintained on the Southern SARE website and also appears in every issue of Common Ground, the Annual Index and How It Works. Distribution includes announcements sent by email to Southern Region AC members, state sustainable ag coordinators and current project investigators. The release of each CFP is also announced on sanet-mg (sustainable ag network message group), SAED (sustainable ag education discussion group) and the PDP discussion list. Each one is also sent to ATTRA for inclusion in Weekly Harvest, an email service to more than 300 print and online agriculture publications. For more specialized audiences, some non-public email lists including USDA-ARS and NRCS offices are used when appropriate. The national SARE Outreach Specialist has a master distribution list that goes to dozens of lists for specific academic disciplines, RC&Ds, non-profit groups and media outlets. The regional Communication Specialist and the national Outreach Specialist coordinate which lists are most appropriate for each CFP.

Contents of Call

The Graduate Student Grant CFP is designed to solicit proposals from Ph.D. and Master's students to conduct research projects that promote sustainable agriculture. Because graduate student research projects are, by nature, relatively small-focused research projects there are no requirements on cooperators other than the student's major professor, who is a co-applicant on the proposal.

The CFP provides the USDA definition of sustainable agriculture and a format for proposal submission. It also informs applicants what things are and are not fundable with a Graduate Student Grant. The CFP provides the criteria for proposal review.

The CFP is released in March and completed proposals are due in June. The early release date and consequent long release period are to make students and their major professors aware of the CFP prior to summer recess.

The CFP is revised, to some extent, each year based upon the input of the AC project review committee. Once the committee's input has been incorporated into the new CFP, it is brought before the whole AC for comment, amendment if needed, and approval at the February AC meeting.

Review Process

Proposals received by the deadline date are sent to the Graduate Student Grants Technical Advisory Committee (GSGTAC) comprised of five researchers and two members of the AC. A request is sent to the AC for suggestions of names of reviewers, and a pool of reviewer names is maintained. Each reviewer is assigned as a primary and secondary reviewer on about five proposals. The technical review is held by conference call. Review summaries are prepared by each reviewer for those proposals they were assigned as primary reviewer.

The GSGTAC rates the proposals as High Priority, Fundable, Marginal or Not Fundable. These results, along with the review summaries, are sent to the Project Review Committee of the AC to decide which proposals to fund. Each applicant receives a copy of their proposal's review summary.

The time from submission of a proposal to announcement of awards is from March to September.

Award Process

Award letters are sent to each new project investigator along with the project review committee comments and any budget alterations requested by the AC. The project investigator revises the project design and budget to reflect the comments and submits this along with a letter of acceptance. All new grantees are given contact information regarding SARE-sponsored projects within their state, state coordinator contacts and other information to facilitate communication among all grant programs.

The S-SARE office checks the approved proposal budgets for any mathematical errors and required budgetary detail. Once reviewed, the awarded proposal is sent to the College of Agriculture Business Office where they are reviewed and forwarded to the University of Georgia Sponsored Programs Office. The Sponsored Programs office verifies the grant recipient has an audit on file at the University. A sub-award agreement and a Federal Form 1048 (USDA Certification

regarding Debarment) are sent to the grant recipients to be signed. If the project involves animals, the PI must send verification that the project has been reviewed and approved by their university's animal care committee (or the University of Georgia animal care committee if the PI's institution or agency is not affiliated with a university). The verification does not require a site visit by the university animal care committee but is simply a form they complete based on details provided in the proposal. Upon receipt of all necessary completed and signed forms, Sponsored Programs issues the original purchase order to encumber the awarded funds. These forms, along with the sub-award, are forwarded to the UGA Agricultural Business Office.

The Agricultural Business Office verifies the awarded amount and that it was part of the S-SARE prime cooperative agreement with USDA and forwards the sub-award to the Contracts and Grants Office. It is here that all sub-award information is entered into the UGA accounting system (i.e., sub-recipient name, address, amount, and period of award). This process may take approximately three months from the time the grant proposal is approved to be funded by S-SARE. Grant recipients can begin to expend funds from the date of the award. However, invoices for reimbursements can not be accepted and processed until the finalized award process is complete.

Once the award process is finalized, the sub-recipients must submit invoices for reimbursement. Upon receipt of an invoice, the S-SARE accountant will review the invoice for details and allowable charges, update the balance to be paid on the grant, and initiate the process for payment. Grant recipients can expect to receive payment within four weeks. This time period may fluctuate if an invoice is held due to missing information.

Reporting Requirements: New, Progress, Final

A New Project Report must be filed as soon as the contract is signed. A SARE staff person will create a spot in the national data base for each new project and then send new Project Investigators instructions for filing their online report. Annual Progress Reports are due in April each year until project activities are completed, at which time a final report is due. The project's final invoice cannot be paid until the report is submitted and approved.

Progress/final report requests are emailed in February and reports must be filed by April 1. As soon as the communication specialist approves the electronic submission the report is available worldwide on the internet. However, until the technology allows charts, tables and other supporting data to be submitted electronically, hard copies of the supporting information will have to be submitted by mail to the S-SARE office.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Management of Graduate Student Grant-funded projects is accomplished through telephone and email communication and, if needed, budget evaluations and/or adjustments. These methods are used to help Graduate Student grant recipients, as best as is practicable, successfully carry out the objectives of their projects.

Professional Development Program Grants

Proposal Process

The PDP program also uses the preproposal/proposal format and adheres to a similar timetable as the R&E program. As of 2005 submission and review at the full proposals stage have been conducted online. Instructions will be mailed to successful preproposal applicants.

Distribution of Call

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Contents of Call

The CFP uses a pass/fail criteria for considering projects:

- Project outcomes must address economic, environmental, and social issues in agriculture, focusing on developing sustainable agriculture systems or moving existing systems toward sustainability as defined in the 1990 Farm Bill.
- A project's central purpose must be to provide or enable training to Cooperative Extension Service agents; USDA field personnel from the Natural Resources Conservation Services, the Farm Services Agency, and other agencies; and other educators, including farmers who will themselves serve as trainers. *Research projects and farmer-outreach or education projects do not qualify for this funding.*

The call provides 9 scoring criteria to include:

- 1 Farmer participation
- 2 Collaboration of diverse groups
- 3 Uses behavior-based objectives
- 4 A coherent evaluation plan
- 5 Makes a case for relevancy to agriculture and Southern agriculture; project uses systems approaches that consider broad impacts.
- 6 Leverage other inputs and sustain outcomes in the future.
- 7 Appropriate educational methodology.
- 8 Realistic timelines and cost effective budget.
- 9 Develop linkages to other SARE proposals.

The CFP details the preproposal format and outline and provides directions for submission (with cover page and budget page templates).

Review Process

The PDP review process is similar to the R&E process in function. The process incorporates three entities within S-SARE: the Administrative Council (AC), the PDP Committee of the AC, and an outside review team.

The PDP Committee and the outside review team review preproposals. The PDP Review Committee completes a conceptual review that addresses the following criteria:

- 1 Does the proposal address all components of sustainable agriculture?
- 2 Is the proposal for training of agricultural professionals?
- 3 Does the proposal reflect a collaborative model with significant players?
- 4 Are the objectives clear?
- 5 Is there linkage to other SARE projects?

At the culmination of the review, the AC selects the preproposals to submit full proposals. The full proposals are then reviewed by the outside review team made up of farmers as well as people who are trained and experienced in developing educational programs for agricultural professionals. Two members of the AC attend the review meetings as observers and representatives of the AC.

All outside Review Team members review all proposals. Two members of the AC also serve on the review team. Each member is assigned as primary reviewer or secondary reviewer for selected proposals. The Review Team convenes for a one-day meeting prior to the winter AC meeting. The role of the Review Team is to focus on the theoretical approach of the program design, review the objectives, methods, approaches, design, timeline, and evaluation plan.

The Review Team provides a written review that concentrates on:

- Methods and appropriateness of project design (including objectives and timeline)
- Evaluation and impact design
- Ability of project director and major participants

The Review Team provides the AC a YES (the theoretical approach to planning design, implementation and evaluation of the educational program is sound) or NO (the theoretical approach to planning design, implementation and evaluation of the educational program is *not* sound) based on how each proposal measures up to the nine criteria. Proposals are rated High Priority, Fundable, Revisions Required or Non-Fundable. The strength and weakness of each proposal is clearly stated.

Feedback is restricted to written comments agreed upon by Review Team and the AC-PDP Committee. Review feedback is provided to authors only. The AC-PDP Committee recommends to the full AC the projects to be funded. The AC makes the final decision on funding.

The time from submission of a preproposal to announcement of awards is from June to February.

Award Process

Award letters are sent to each new project investigator along with the project review committee comments and any budget alterations requested by the AC. The project investigator revises the project design and budget to reflect the comments and submits this along with a letter of acceptance. All new grantees are given contact information regarding SARE-sponsored projects within their state, state coordinator contacts and other information to facilitate communication among all grant programs.

The PDP Coordinator reviews the budgets and then the S-SARE office checks the approved proposal budgets for any mathematical errors and required budgetary detail. Once reviewed, the awarded proposal is sent to the College of Agriculture Business Office where they are reviewed and forwarded to the University of Georgia Sponsored Programs Office. The Sponsored Programs office verifies the grant recipient has an audit on file at the University. A sub-award agreement and a Federal Form 1048 (USDA Certification regarding Debarment) are sent to the grant recipients to be signed. If the project involves animals, the PI must send verification that the project has been reviewed and approved by their university's animal care committee (or the University of Georgia animal care committee if the PI's institution or agency is not affiliated with a university). The verification does not require a site visit by the university animal care committee but is simply a form they complete based on details provided in the proposal. Upon receipt of all necessary completed and signed forms, Sponsored Programs issues the original purchase order to encumber the awarded funds. These forms, along with the sub-award, are forwarded to the UGA Agricultural Business Office.

The Agricultural Business Office verifies the awarded amount and that it was part of the S-SARE prime cooperative agreement with USDA and forwards the sub-award to the Contracts and Grants Office. It is here that all sub-award information is entered into the UGA accounting system (i.e., sub-recipient name, address, amount, and period of award). This process may take approximately three months from the time the grant proposal is approved to be funded by S-SARE. Grant recipients can begin to expend funds from the date of the award. However, invoices for reimbursements can not be accepted and processed until the finalized award process is complete.

Once the award process is finalized, the sub-recipients must submit invoices for reimbursement. Upon receipt of an invoice, the S-SARE accountant will review the invoice for details and allowable charges, update the balance to be paid on the grant, and initiate the process for payment. Grant recipients can expect to receive payment within four weeks. This time period may fluctuate if an invoice is held due to missing information.

Reporting Requirements: New, Progress, Final

A New Project Report must be filed as soon as the contract is signed. A staff person will create a spot in the national data base for each new project and then send new Project Investigators instructions for filing their online report. Annual Progress Reports are due in April each year until project activities are completed, at which time a final report is due. The project's final invoice cannot be paid until the report is submitted and approved.

Progress/final report requests emailed in February and reports must be filed by April 1. As soon as the the electronic submission is approved the report is available worldwide on the internet. However, until the technology allows charts, tables and other supporting data to be submitted electronically, hard copies of the supporting information will have to be submitted by mail to the S-SARE office.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Upon award, each project is assigned to a member of the Administrative Council for monitoring and evaluation. When the first-year report is submitted, the AC member will evaluate the progress of the project using a checklist. At the summer AC meeting an AC member will submit a written report and make an oral report to the entire AC on the progress of the project. If concerns develop, the PDP Coordinator will contact the project investigator and will work with them to address those concerns. The same process will occur at the end of each year. At the end of the project, the AC member will provide a final report to the AC regarding the project.

Producer Grant Program

Proposal Process

Distribution of Call

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All Southern SARE proposals must be submitted through the online template.

Contents of Call

The Producer Grant program call for proposals (CFP) poses a series of questions and then informs the proposal writer of the allowable amount of space they have in which to answer each question. The Producer Grant CFP includes information about selected successful-funded projects, a proposal check list for applicants, a help sheet to aid in preparing a proposal, a sample budget, the guidelines of allowable expenses and a copy of the scoresheet the reviewers use to evaluate each proposal so that the applicants are aware of the criteria upon which their proposals are being reviewed.

The CFP is revised each year based upon the input of the Administrative Council (AC) Producer Grant Committee. Once the CFP is prepared, it is sent to the committee for comments and ultimately, approval. Once the Producer Grant Committee has approved the call, it is presented to the Administrative Council for approval at the spring AC meeting.

Review Process

As soon as possible after they are received, Producer Grant proposals are sent to the Producer Grant/On-Farm Research Grant (PG/OFRG) Technical Advisory Committee (TRC) for a technical review. PG/OFRG TRC members are selected by the SSARE Assistant Director with the aid of the AC and State Coordinators who submit the names of potential reviewers. Two AC members also serve on the TRC. The names of additional prospective reviewers are put into a reviewer pool to be contacted the next year. The PG/OFRG TRC is made up of review panels each consisting of at least one farmer, extension personnel and researcher. All of the reviewers have experience working with farmers in on-farm trials.

The proposals are mailed to the PG/OFRG TRC reviewers with each reviewer assigned as a primary, secondary and tertiary reviewer for the proposals in their panel. They also fill out an evaluation worksheet—which includes written comments—for each proposal assigned and fax or email their scores to the SARE office. These scores are used as a preliminary starting point for discussion at the review meeting.

The PG/OFRG TRC reviewers meet to review and discuss the proposals. Reviewers meet in their panels to discuss the proposals they were assigned. Because of the time required to review a producer grant proposal, an attempt is always made to have each PG/OFRG TRC reviewer responsible for reviewing no more than 20 to 25 proposals. The PG/OFRG TRC rates the proposals as High Priority, Fundable, Marginal or Not Fundable. A list of all the proposals and their ratings, along with the amount requested and state is sent to the Producer Grant committee of the AC.

Each PG/OFRG TRC reviewer is assigned to write summaries of their panel's discussions of the proposals on which they were the primary reviewer. A summary of all reviewer comments for each proposal is sent to the Producer Grant committee to aid in their review. Each applicant receives a copy of their proposal's review summary.

The Producer Grant committee meets in person at the winter AC meeting. The Producer Grant committee, informed by the PG/OFRG TRC review results and summaries, but not bound by them, makes decisions on the projects to be funded. The Producer Grant committee presents its slate of funding recommendations to the full AC at the winter meeting, exactly as the project review committee does for R & E proposals, and the AC votes on the slate.

The time from submission of a proposal to announcement of awards is from November to February.

Award Process

Award letters are sent to each new project investigator along with the project review committee comments and any

Producer Grant Program

budget alterations requested by the AC. The project investigator revises the project design and budget to reflect the comments and submits this along with a letter of acceptance. All new grantees are given contact information regarding SARE-sponsored projects within their state, state coordinator contacts and other information to facilitate communication among all grant programs.

The S-SARE office checks the approved proposal budgets for any mathematical errors and required budgetary detail. Once reviewed, the awarded proposal is sent to the College of Agriculture Business Office where they are reviewed and forwarded to the University of Georgia Sponsored Programs Office. The Sponsored Programs office verifies the grant recipient has an audit on file at the University. A sub-award agreement and a Federal Form 1048 (USDA Certification regarding Debarment) are sent to the grant recipients to be signed. If the project involves animals, the PI must send verification that the project has been reviewed and approved by their university's animal care committee (or the University of Georgia animal care committee if the PI's institution or agency is not affiliated with a university). The verification does not require a site visit by the university animal care committee but is simply a form they complete based on details provided in the proposal. Upon receipt of all necessary completed and signed forms, Sponsored Programs issues the original purchase order to encumber the awarded funds. These forms, along with the sub-award, are forwarded to the UGA Agricultural Business Office.

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Reporting Requirements

For all new producer grants, the assistant director writes a one-half page summary of the work to be accomplished in the proposal. These are submitted to the communications specialist who has them posted in the national data base along with the project investigator's contact information. When a final report is submitted, the assistant director writes a one-half-to-one-page summary of the project results and submits them to the communications specialist who has them posted online in place of the initial project summary. A 100-word final summary of each project for the Southern SARE Index is also prepared. The final 25 percent of a project's budget cannot be paid until the final report has been submitted. The initial and final report summaries are available worldwide on the internet, and people who want further project information are encouraged to contact the project investigators directly.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Management of Producer Grant-funded projects is accomplished through a combination of three strategies: telephone and email communication, oversight of spending patterns and timing and, if needed, project site visits. These three strategies are used to help producer grant recipients, as best as is practicable, carry out the objectives of their projects.

The majority of communication with grant recipients is accomplished by telephone and email. Those grantees with the most problems tend to receive the most attention. Spending amounts and patterns of expenditures are examined and are useful in determining if there may be problems with the project. If something raises a question, this is followed up with phone calls, and, if needed, a project site visit.

On-Farm Research Grants

Online Submission Proposal Process

Distribution of Call

A Southern SARE calendar showing the release date of all CFPs is maintained on the Southern SARE website and also appears in every issue of Common Ground, the Annual Index and How It Works. Distribution includes announcements sent by email to Southern Region AC members, state sustainable ag coordinators and current project investigators. The release of each CFP is also announced on sanet-mg (sustainable ag network message group), SAED (sustainable ag education discussion group) and the PDP discussion list. Each one is also sent to ATTRA for inclusion in Weekly Harvest, an email service to more than 300 print and online agriculture publications. For more specialized audiences, some non-public email lists including USDA-ARS and NRCS offices are used when appropriate. The national SARE Outreach Specialist has a master distribution list that goes to dozens of lists for specific academic disciplines, RC&Ds, non-profit groups and media outlets. The regional Communication Specialist and the national Outreach Specialist coordinate which lists are most appropriate for each CFP.

Most potential applicants get the CFPs from the web. The S-SARE clerk mails hard copies by request, but such requests are rare.

Contents of Call

The On-farm Research Grant call for proposals (CFP) is identical to the Producer Grant CFP with two exceptions: On-Farm PI's are expected to be Extension, NRCS or NGO personnel who work with producers and the CFP is submitted online. Further, they are required to work with at least one producer on their project. The On-farm Research grant CFP is released with the Producer Grant CFP, the proposals are due on the same date as the Producer Grant proposals, and are reviewed with the Producer Grants by the Producer Grant committee and the Producer Grant Technical Advisory committee (PGTAC). The CFP poses a series of questions and then informs the proposal writer of the allowable amount of space they have in which to answer each question. The On-Farm Research Grant CFP includes a proposal check list for applicants, a help sheet to aid in preparing a proposal, the guidelines of allowable expenses, and a copy of the score sheet the reviewers use to evaluate each proposal so that the applicants are aware of the criteria upon which their proposals are being reviewed. The CFP is revised each year based upon the input of the Administrative Council (AC) Producer Grant Committee. Once the CFP is prepared, it is sent to the committee for comments and ultimately, approval. Once the Producer Grant Committee has approved the call, it is presented to the Administrative Council for approval at the spring AC meeting.

Review Process

The On-Farm Research Grant Proposals are reviewed by the PG/OFRG TAC at the same review meeting as the Producer Grant proposals. They do not compete with the Producer Grant proposals, however, because of the different target audience and because the two grant programs are funded from separate sources. As soon as possible after they are received, OFRG proposals are sent to the Producer Grant/On-Farm Research Grant (PG/OFRG) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for a technical review. PG/OFRG TAC members are selected by the S-SARE Assistant Director with the aid of the AC and State Coordinators who submit the names of potential reviewers. The names of additional prospective reviewers are put into a reviewer pool to be contacted the next year. Two AC members also serve on the TAC. The PG/OFRG TAC is made up of review panels each consisting of at least one farmer, extension personnel and researcher. All of the reviewers have experience working with farmers in on-farm trials.

The proposals are mailed to the PG/OFRG TAC reviewers, with each reviewer assigned as a primary, secondary and tertiary reviewer for the proposals in their panel. They also fill out an evaluation worksheet—which includes written comments—for each proposal assigned and fax or email their scores to the SARE office. These scores are used as a preliminary starting point for discussion at the review meeting. The PG/OFRG TAC reviewers meet to review and discuss the proposals. Reviewers meet in their panels to discuss the proposals they were assigned. Because of the time required to review an OFRG proposal, an attempt is always made to have each PG/OFRG TAC reviewer responsible for reviewing no more than 20 to 25 proposals. The PG/OFRG TAC rates the proposals as High Priority, Fundable, Marginal or Not Fundable. A list of all the proposals and their ratings, along with the amount requested and state is sent to the Producer Grant committee of the AC.

Each PG/OFRG TAC reviewer is assigned to write summaries of their panel's discussions of the proposals on which they were the primary reviewer. A summary of all reviewer comments for each proposal is sent to the Producer Grant committee to aid in their review. Each applicant receives a copy of their proposal's review summary. The Producer Grant committee meets in person at the winter AC meeting. The Producer Grant committee, informed by the PG/OFRG TAC review results and summaries, but not bound by them, makes decisions on the projects to be funded. The Producer Grant

On-Farm Research Grants

committee presents its slate of funding recommendations to the full AC at the winter meeting, exactly as the project review committee does for R & E proposals, and the AC votes on the slate.

The time from submission of a proposal to announcement of awards is from November to February.

Award Process

Award letters are sent to each new project investigator along with the project review committee comments and any budget alterations requested by the AC. The project investigator revises the project design and budget to reflect the comments and submits this along with a letter of acceptance. All new grantees are given contact information regarding SARE-sponsored projects within their state, state coordinator contacts and other information to facilitate communication among all grant programs.

The S-SARE office checks the approved proposal budgets for any mathematical errors and required budgetary detail. Once reviewed, the awarded proposal is sent to the College of Agriculture Business Office where they are reviewed and forwarded to the University of Georgia Sponsored Programs Office. The Sponsored Programs office verifies the grant recipient has an audit on file at the University. A sub-award agreement and a Federal Form 1048 (USDA Certification regarding Debarment) are sent to the grant recipients to be signed. If the project involves animals, the PI must send verification that the project has been reviewed and approved by their university's animal care committee (or the University of Georgia animal care committee if the PI's institution or agency is not affiliated with a university). The verification does not require a site visit by the university animal care committee but is simply a form they complete based on details provided in the proposal. Upon receipt of all necessary completed and signed forms, Sponsored Programs issues the original purchase order to encumber the awarded funds. These forms, along with the sub-award, are forwarded to the UGA Agricultural Business Office.

The Agricultural Business Office verifies the awarded amount and that it was part of the S-SARE prime cooperative agreement with USDA and forwards the sub-award to the Contracts and Grants Office. It is here that all sub-award information is entered into the UGA accounting system (i.e., sub-recipient name, address, amount, and period of award). This process may take approximately three months from the time the grant proposal is approved to be funded by S-SARE. Grant recipients can begin to expend funds from the date of the award. However, invoices for reimbursements can not be accepted and processed until the finalized award process is complete.

Once the award process is finalized, the sub-recipients must submit invoices for reimbursement. Upon receipt of an invoice, the S-SARE accountant will review the invoice for details and allowable charges, update the balance to be paid on the grant, and initiate the process for payment. Grant recipients can expect to receive payment within four weeks. This time period may fluctuate if an invoice is held due to missing information.

Reporting Requirements: New, Progress, Final

A New Project Report must be filed as soon as the MOU is signed. S-SARE staff will create a spot in the national data base for each new project and then send new Project Investigators instructions for filing their online report. Annual Progress Reports are due in April each year until project activities are completed, at which time a final report is due. The project's final invoice cannot be paid until the report is submitted and approved.

Progress/final report requests emailed in February and reports must be filed by April 1. As soon as the communication specialist approves the electronic submission the report is available worldwide on the internet. However, until the technology allows charts, tables and other supporting data to be submitted electronically, hard copies of the supporting information will have to be submitted by mail to the S-SARE office.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Management of On-Farm Research Grant-funded projects is accomplished through a combination of three strategies: telephone and email communication, oversight of spending patterns and timing and, if needed, project site visits. These three strategies are used to help on-farm research grant recipients, as best as is practicable, carry out the objectives of their projects.

The majority of communication with grant recipients is accomplished by telephone and email. Those grantees with the most problems tend to receive the most attention. Spending amounts and patterns of expenditures are examined and are useful in determining if there may be problems with the project. If something raises a question, this is followed up with phone calls, and, if needed, a project site visit.

Sustainable Community Innovation Grants

Proposal Process

Distribution of Call

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Most potential applicants get the CFPs from the web. The S-SARE clerk mails hard copies by request, but such requests are rare.

Contents of Call

S-SARE and the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) support a joint grants program through their Sustainable Community Innovations Grants Call for Proposals (CFP). The CFP is designed to solicit proposals that will invest in projects that strengthen both agriculture and Southern communities through explicit linkages between sustainable agriculture and community development, and improve understanding of the mutual benefits of such linkages.

The Sustainable Community Innovation Grants Program funds projects that pursue local strategies that link sound farm and nonfarm economic development with agricultural and natural resource management. Applications are encouraged that increase knowledge, build capacity and make connections between on- and off-farm sustainable agriculture activities, economic and community development, civic engagement, nutrition and health and local government policy.

Such projects involve partnerships among relevant stakeholders such as farmers, ranchers, researchers, community organizations, environmentalists, agricultural and community development professionals, entrepreneurs, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and will bring together those working in different areas toward the common goal of sustaining rural life. The projects should enhance the ability of farmers, ranchers and communities to protect the area's ecosystems, provide avenues for expanding civic dialogue, promote the nutritional well-being and health of individuals and families, and facilitate the development of viable local public policy.

S-SARE Sustainable Community Innovation Grants aim to blend sustainable agriculture practices with new community development strategies to increase our ability to build resilient farms, businesses, families and communities in the South. These grants will also support research into ways that link farms, businesses, families and communities in collaborative problem solving and the application of innovative new tools to aid sustainable community development. They will further fund research into innovative strategies that utilize sustainable agriculture concepts and practices to create and apply new knowledge that supports and promotes community development.

Review Process

The proposals received by the deadline date in both the S-SARE office and the SRDC office are sent to the review committee for these grants. The review committee is made up of four members of the SARE Administrative Council (or their designees) and four members of the SRDC Board of Directors (or their designees). This committee provides both the technical review and conceptual review for this program. The review proceeds similar to the R&E Technical review except conceptual issues also are included. The committee selects the projects to be funded with approval given by the Executive Committee of each organization.

The time from submission of a proposal to announcement of awards is from September to November.

Sustainable Community Innovation Grants

Award Process

Award letters are sent to each new project investigator along with the project review committee comments and any budget alterations requested by the AC. The project investigator revises the project design and budget to reflect the comments and submits this along with a letter of acceptance. All new grantees are given contact information regarding SARE-sponsored projects within their state, state coordinator contacts and other information to facilitate communication among all grant programs.

The S-SARE office checks the approved proposal budgets for any mathematical errors and required budgetary detail. Once reviewed, the awarded proposal is sent to the College of Agriculture Business Office where they are reviewed and forwarded to the University of Georgia Sponsored Programs Office. The Sponsored Programs office verifies the grant recipient has an audit on file at the University. A sub-award agreement and a Federal Form 1048 (USDA Certification regarding Debarment) are sent to the grant recipients to be signed. If the project involves animals, the PI must send verification that the project has been reviewed and approved by their university's animal care committee (or the University of Georgia animal care committee if the PI's institution or agency is not affiliated with a university). The verification does not require a site visit by the university animal care committee but is simply a form they complete based on details provided in the proposal. Upon receipt of all necessary completed and signed forms, Sponsored Programs issues the original purchase order to encumber the awarded funds. These forms, along with the sub-award, are forwarded to the UGA Agricultural Business Office.

The Agricultural Business Office verifies the awarded amount and that it was part of the S-SARE prime cooperative agreement with USDA and forwards the sub-award to the Contracts and Grants Office. It is here that all sub-award information is entered into the UGA accounting system (i.e., sub-recipient name, address, amount, and period of award). This process may take approximately three months from the time the grant proposal is approved to be funded by S-SARE. Grant recipients can begin to expend funds from the date of the award. However, invoices for reimbursements can not be accepted and processed until the finalized award process is complete.

Once the award process is finalized, the sub-recipients must submit invoices for reimbursement. Upon receipt of an invoice, the S-SARE accountant will review the invoice for details and allowable charges, update the balance to be paid on the grant, and initiate the process for payment. Grant recipients can expect to receive payment within four weeks. This time period may fluctuate if an invoice is held due to missing information.

Reporting Requirements: New, Progress, Final

A New Project Report must be filed as soon as the contract is signed. SARE staff will make a spot in the national data base for each new project and then send new Project Investigators instructions for filing their online report. Annual Progress Reports are due in April each year until project activities are completed, at which time a final report is due. The project's final invoice cannot be paid until the report is submitted and approved.

Progress/final report requests emailed in February and reports must be filed by April 1. As soon as the communication specialist approves the electronic submission the report is available worldwide on the internet. However, until the technology allows charts, tables and other supporting data to be submitted electronically, hard copies of the supporting information will have to be submitted by mail to the S-SARE office.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All Sustainable Community Innovation Grants are monitored by the directors of S-SARE and the SRDC.

Conflict Of Interest Policy

As Adopted November 22, 2002

According to the legislation, a member of an AC or technical committee may not participate in the discussion or recommendation of proposed projects if the member has, or had, a professional or business interest in the organization whose grant application is under review. (7USC 5812(c). This language is interpreted and operationalized as follows.

To avoid any conflict of interest, a member of the Administrative Council (AC), Technical Committee, or any AC-appointed committees or panels, or staff may not review or participate in the discussion or recommendation regarding any competitive grant proposal with any of the following characteristics:

1. From that member's home institution or organization;
2. From institutions or organizations for which he/she acts as a paid consultant, or board member;
3. From applicants for whom he/she has served as a thesis advisor (or advisee) or a postdoctoral advisor (or advisee) within the past five years;
4. From applicants with whom he/she has served as a collaborator on a research proposal or publication within the past five years;
5. From applicants for whom he/she has acted as a paid consultant within the past five years;
6. From applicants for whom he/she will be a project participant during the current grant cycle;
7. That Administrative Council, Technical Committee members, any AC- appointed committees or panels, or staff may not be listed as participants on competitive grant proposals (including producer grants and PDP proposals) under consideration by the committee or panel on which the person serves where they could potentially gain monetary benefits to themselves or other program (benefits do not mean compensation for travel or per diem);
8. The statement applies to current members. Those wanting to submit proposals must resign their memberships.
9. During the discussion or recommendations of proposed projects, any members with a conflict of interest must leave the room. This applies to the regional coordinators and senior staff.
10. Discussion and recommendation should involve individual projects. When a large slate of projects (for example, the farmer grants) is being voted upon – and individual projects are not being discussed – members with a conflict of interest do not need to leave the room.

2008-2009 Southern SARE Grants Schedule

Research and Education Grants generally are conducted by teams coordinated by a principal investigator from a non-governmental organization, university or governmental agency. These projects include farmers as participants.

2008

March Call for R&E preproposals released

June R&E Preproposals due

September Full R&E proposals requested

November Full R&E proposals due

2009

February Administrative Council announces grant awards.

Graduate Student Grants are intended for full-time graduate students (masters or Ph.D.) enrolled at accredited colleges and universities in the Southern Region. Up to \$10,000 will be awarded to each successful applicant for up to three years of project activities. The funds are paid directly to the university for use on the graduate student's project.

2008

March Call for proposal released

June Proposals due

September Administrative Council announces awards

Professional Development Program Projects train agricultural information providers in sustainable agriculture techniques and concepts.

2008

March Call for preproposals released

June Preproposals due

September Full proposals requested

November Full proposals due

2009

February Administrative Council announces grant awards

Sustainable Community Innovation Projects link sound farm and nonfarm economic development with agricultural and natural resource management. Applicants may be farmers, ranchers, researchers, community organizations, environmentalists, ag and community development professionals, entrepreneurs, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Funded for a project maximum of \$10,000 for up to two years of activities.

2008
August Call for proposals released
October Proposals due
December Administrative Council announces awards

Producer Grant Projects are developed, coordinated and conducted by producers or producer organizations. These projects are generally located in one state, often on one farm. There is a \$10,000 limit for funding proposals submitted by an individual producer and a \$15,000-limit on proposals submitted by producer organizations.

2008
September Call for proposals released
November Proposals due
2009
February Administrative Council announces grant awards

On-Farm Research Projects are conducted by agricultural professionals such as extension agents, NRCS and/or NGO personnel who currently work with farmers and ranchers. Cooperators must include at least one producer at all stages of the project. Funded for a maximum of \$15,000 for up to two years of activities.

2008
September Call for proposals released
November Proposals due
2009
February Administrative Council announces grant awards

For more information about Southern Region SARE's grants,
free publications, research results or educational opportunities:

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