



Southern SARE State Coordinator Guide 2012-2013

Featuring:

- Your role as a SARE State Coordinator
- Calendar of critical reporting dates
- How your state and institution can benefit from SARE

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www.southernsare.org

Welcome

Dear SARE State Coordinator:

You are reading this because you have been tapped to be a SARE State Coordinator. You may have been delighted about this appointment or you may be dismayed at finding yourself the head of something you know very little about. The odds are excellent that you think you don't have time to do a good job at it. But you can do a good job. There are a lot of resources and a staff of committed people who are willing to work with you.

This guide will help answer some of your questions and stimulate you to ask new questions that will help us further shape the SARE program to meet the needs of the researchers, farmers, rural communities and consumers in your state.

Our job as the management team for SARE PDP is to support you in your position as a SARE State Coordinator. The SARE program has been built on cooperation and sharing, and you will find that there are a lot of resources available to you.

Feel free to drop us a line with input, questions or suggestions. Direct your input to program manager David Redhage at 918-647-9123 or dredhage@kerrcenter.com. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Jim Horne
Regional Coordinator
Southern Region SARE Professional Development Program

SARE PDP—Part of a bigger picture

History of SARE

Since 1988, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program has helped advance farming systems that are profitable, environmentally sound and good for communities through a nationwide research and education grants program. The program, part of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), funds projects and conducts outreach designed to improve agricultural systems.

History of PDP

Begun in 1994, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Professional Development Program provides sustainable agriculture education and outreach strategies for Cooperative Extension System and Natural Resources Conservation Service staff and other agricultural educators who work directly with farmers and ranchers. Administered and funded by SARE, the Professional Development Program receives annual congressional allocations of about \$4.5 million.

SARE's Professional Development Program funds activities that educate ag professionals in up-to-date strategies and technologies to help farmers and ranchers increase profits and lessen environmental impacts. Funded through a competitive process in SARE's four regions, PDP grants sponsor such activities as producing workshops, creating educational manuals and videos, and conducting on-farm tours and demonstrations. In addition to the competitive grants, each state has responsibilities to conduct sustainable ag training through the SARE state coordinator.

Organizational Structure In the Southern Region

Southern Region SARE is administered by a host consortium consisting of the University of Georgia and Fort Valley State University with staff located at the University of Georgia-Griffin Campus and Fort Valley State University. The Professional Development Program is located at the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Oklahoma with land-grant and minority liaisons located at the University of Kentucky and Fort Valley State University.

The Southern Region includes: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

State Structure

SARE State Coordinators are vital for expanding sustainable agriculture training for Extension, NRCS, and other agricultural professionals, who will then help producers transition to a more sustainable agriculture. The SARE PDP program is a “train the trainer” program. As a result, farmers are not the focus of the training, but are the ultimate beneficiaries. Due to the diversity of the Southern region, each state develops its own methods for disseminating SARE program opportunities, as well as the results of research and education grants. The SARE State Coordinator is a 25 percent minimum position within the 1862 or 1890 colleges in the state.

SARE State Coordinators

Selecting State Coordinators

The position of the State Extension Professional Development Coordinator (now known as SARE state coordinators) is a result of Public Law 101-624 (Nov. 28, 1990), or the 1990 Farm Bill. As part of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program (Subtitle B, 7 USC 1619), a National Training Program was established (Sec. 1629). The Secretary of Agriculture was directed to designate an individual from the Cooperative Extension Service in each state to coordinate the National Training Program. Recognizing that the 1890 and 1862 institutions in a state may have different research or information needs, SARE has a coordinator stationed at each one. State coordinators will also be stationed at 1994 land-grant institutions as they are established in the Southern region.

SARE state coordinators in the Southern region provide information for the entire SARE program, not just the Professional Development Program.

Qualities of a State Coordinator

Most SARE state coordinators will have a minimum of a MS degree in Agriculture, Education, or a related field of study.

In addition, the SARE state coordinator will:

- Be familiar with both the background and philosophy of sustainable agriculture.
- Demonstrate strong leadership, outreach and communications skills.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the entire spectrum of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE).
- Demonstrate the ability to disseminate educational information to Extension and other appropriate personnel within their state.
- Demonstrate an ability and willingness to be an enthusiastic ambassador for sustainable agriculture.

Role of State Coordinators

According to the 1990 Farm Bill legislation the SARE state coordinator is responsible for developing and implementing a statewide training program for field office personnel including employees of the Extension Service, NRCS and other educators who provide information to producers about agricultural production and conservation. In working toward this broad goal, day-to-day activities would likely include these main areas:

1) Training program development and delivery appropriate for both new and current personnel making use of SARE grantees, particularly producer cooperators, and partnering with NGOs and farmer organizations for activities such as farm tours and field days. Training topics are open to anything that will help farmers transition to a more sustainable agriculture and can include technical assistance in areas such as water quality, nutrient management, whole-farm systems, marketing or understanding farm policy.

2) Promotion, networking and coordination of SARE grant opportunities and training activities, as well as materials and opportunities provided by SARE Outreach, Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (ATTRA), the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG) and other NGOs. SARE coordinators will solicit input from field staff and other educators about

their sustainable ag training needs and shared program opportunities.

3) Communication, reporting and evaluation. SARE PDP strives for a minimum of paper-work but annual reports are due to the regional PDP office to document training efforts in your state.

While still leaving plenty of room for individual creativity within each state, the SARE program has defined a set of responsibilities for all state coordinators. They include:

- Attending an annual meeting of state coordinators.
- Establishing a state advisory council and meeting at least once each year to develop strategies for sustainable agriculture outreach and education in the state.
- Submitting an annual report and budget on the Model State Program or State Plan of Work. An annual report should include minutes of meetings, all sustainable agriculture training activities, and activities designed to raise the visibility of SARE in the state.
- Leading the effort to bring sustainable agriculture training to every county agent.
- Raising the visibility of SARE in the state
- Sponsoring sustainable agriculture conferences and/or training in the state.
- Moving your existing state program to a model state program (see guidelines on page 6)
- Submitting a PDP competitive enhancement grant when a Model State Program is in place.
- Encouraging Extension, NRCS, NGO's, CBO's and other appropriate organizations to submit proposals to all SARE competitive grants programs.
- Reaching out to mainstream agriculture and creating new networks including farm organizations, state and federal agencies, and NGO's.
- Building and maintaining strong ties between 1862, 1890 and 1994 institutions in the state.
- Seeking broader participation by limited resource and minority farmers.
- Incorporating the National and Southern Core Curriculum teaching modules into the training for extension and other agricultural professionals in the state.

All that seems like an ambitious list even for such outstanding people as our state coordinators so there are SARE resources to help. PDP staff, communication staff, SARE Outreach and other resources are at your disposal. Funding is available through competitive grants and also in the form of state coordinator funds.

SARE Funds for Your State

State Coordinator Funds

Historically, SARE funds have been made available to each state and territory based on an acceptable State Plan of Work. Each state sets its own priorities and approaches to sustainable agricultural training. Institutions have had considerable flexibility in developing training programs and in the level of collaboration between 1862 and 1890 land grants. Various activities funded include statewide training sessions, on-farm workshops, travel to out-of-state workshops, and purchase of educational materials.

New Options

Starting in 2005-2006, the Southern Region SARE Professional Development Program allowed each state to choose one of two levels of participation.

Level 1: State Plan of Work— \$20,000 per year

Level 2: Model State Program (MSP)— up to \$40,000 per year plus the opportunity to compete for additional funds through a Model State Program enhancement grant.

Level 1 funding requires that an advisory team and an active training program be in place. Each state submits a plan of work, and if acceptable, is funded. The Southern Region Administrative Council encourages states to move Level 1 programs to Level 2 programs.

Level 2: The Model State Program (MSP) differs from the traditional State Plan of Work in that more is expected, but more resources are provided. States qualifying for MSP status receive funds to hire a program assistant to actively manage the program. With such a support staff position, SARE outreach programming can expand beyond the requirements of the traditional State Plan of Work. States approved for MSP status are also eligible to apply for additional funding from a special pool of competitive funds only available to SARE State Coordinators.

How to Submit for State Coordinator Funding

By January each year SARE State Coordinators should have submitted a State Plan of Work or Model State Program proposal. Upon approval, year one funds of \$20,000 are released for planned training in a state. Those states approved as a MSP will receive the base \$20,000 and up to \$20,000 to fund a support staff position.

Each year SARE State Coordinator(s) will be required to submit an annual report of outcomes. Pending approval, funds will be available the following year. States with a State Plan of Work may upgrade to Model State Program status at selected intervals during the three-year term.

Funds for the upcoming year can't be released until a state's balance falls below \$15,000 or \$7,500 per land grant university. For example, funding for 2012 would depend on the balance remaining from funding prior to 2011.

To sum up, funding depends on three requirements being met:

- Approved State Plan of Work or Model State Program proposal
- Approved annual report of previous year's training activities

Competitive Grants

One responsibility of SARE state coordinators is to encourage appropriate applicants to apply for SARE grants. State coordinators are also eligible to submit proposals themselves. Your job as a SARE state coordinator is to assist potential applicants to understand the philosophy behind SARE grants and direct them to the appropriate calls for proposals.

What kinds of grants does SARE fund?

The regions vary in the kinds of grants they fund with the Southern Region having the most variety--seven different categories.

- **Professional Development Program Projects** train agricultural information providers (including farmers who will serve as trainers) in sustainable agriculture techniques and concepts. State coordinators would most likely be interested in this grant opportunity.

- **Research and Education Projects** generally are conducted by interdisciplinary, multi-institutional, and often, multi-state research teams coordinated by a principal investigator from a non-governmental organization, university or governmental agency. These projects include farmers as participants.

- **Large Systems Research Grants** are similar to Research and Education Projects in that they generally are conducted by interdisciplinary, multi-institutional, and often, multi-state research teams coordinated by a principal investigator from a non-governmental organization, university or governmental agency. However, Large Systems Research Grants are for teams who already have successful ag systems research in place, but need support to accomplish long-term research goals.

- **Graduate Student Awards** 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.

- **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.

- **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. Projects are limited to \$10,000 if submitted by an individual producer or \$15,000 if submitted by producer organizations for up to two years of activities.

- **Sustainable Community Innovation Projects** link sound farm and nonfarm economic development with agricultural and natural resource management. Applicants may be farmers, researchers, community groups, environmentalists, government agencies, NGOs or ag educators.

What else does SARE do besides funding competitive projects?

SARE publishes materials about sustainable agriculture, most often from SARE-funded research. *(See more about SARE Outreach on page 12)*

SARE also promotes sustainable agriculture by staging both regional and national conferences, providing speakers and presentations for non-SARE meetings, providing scholarships for farmers and agents to attend sustainable agriculture gatherings. People from the national SARE office and the regions serve on committees that affect national policy concerning agriculture.

Working with a State Advisory Committee

To share the load of planning responsibility, state coordinators are expected to assemble and work with a state sustainable agriculture advisory committee to plan training activities in each state. Ideally, the state coordinators from the 1890 and 1862 institutions will work together to form the committee. The committee should mirror the agriculture in the state and include as many stakeholders as possible.

Often included are members representing sustainable agriculture farmers, commercial farmers, agribusiness, NRCS, non-profits, lenders, and rural community leaders. Some committees include individuals from farmers markets, environmental groups and farm organizations.

The advisory committee will assist the SARE state coordinators in identifying training needs in the state and help design programs to meet their needs. The group should meet at least once a year or have effective communication. Meetings should be well structured and have appropriate agendas to ensure that a comprehensive strategy is accomplished. SARE state advisory committees can be very helpful if their input is respected and used. See examples on the following page for more ideas of how some states establish and work with their advisory committees.

The SARE state advisory committee should establish training priorities for each state. Training programs should increase both proficiency and competency in areas related to sustainable agriculture. Most SARE coordinators find hands-on training in the field as the gold standard. Training may cover such diverse topics as making compost to developing cell grazing. Training modules are currently being developed ranging from the theoretical and philosophical aspects of sustainable agriculture to the more practical aspects such as sustainable pest management. Advisory committees, along with SARE state coordinators, should be utilizing resource guides that have been developed by organizations such as SARE Outreach, USDA Risk Management, Kerr Center, and similar organizations.

How some state coordinators work with their advisory committees

Tennessee

Clark Garland (University of Tennessee) and Roy Bullock (Tennessee State University) had been working with a loosely knit unofficial committee for years, so when the two colleagues became state sustainable ag coordinators it made sense to maintain the relationships. Their committee represents a cross section of Tennessee agriculture including an organic grower, a dairy producer, a vegetable producer, a university water quality specialist, an NRCS state program leader, the head of the Farm Service Agency Farm Loan Program, a Tennessee Farm Bureau director of commodity activities, a representative of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and someone from a hunger relief NGO. The organic grower and the dairy producer also represent two additional NGOs: the Tennessee Organic Growers Association and the Tennessee Valley Region Association of Demonstration Farm Families.

Being flexible enough to accommodate the schedules of very busy people has been a key part of the committee's effectiveness. This often means substituting one-on-one phone conversations for group meetings.

"For example the man in charge of the Farm Bureau's commodity activities is often on the road 10-14 hours a day," says Clark. "If we insisted on meetings where we all sit around the same table once a month, he wouldn't be able to serve, but the fact that he travels all over the state is what makes his input so valuable so I talk to him on his cell phone while he's traveling. I can give him a topic to think about and he gets back to me later with his input."

In choosing representatives from different segments of the ag population, Clark looks below the top position in an organization for someone farther down the line of command who is out in the field more, and therefore, more involved in the practical application of any program or procedure.

Garland and Bullock don't limit the input to the committee. "Once we think we have identified a training need we call some farmers not on the committee to verify that need and also to tell us what practical information the training should include."

As for the trainings they deliver, at least 80-percent of every program is designed as hands-on practice, and no more than 20 percent is classroom work. Because of the hands-on element, one-day events don't provide enough time for adequate practice. They have found that participants get overloaded in a four-day activity. Three-day events have proved to be just right, and they also allow for flexibility in adjusting the program to suit recommendations that come from daily evaluations.

Since the trainings involve actual physical work they usually take place on an experiment station for liability purposes. Planning for each event starts about a year in advance. Approximately 12-15 trainers are used instead of the two or three that would be needed for classroom teaching. There must be enough equipment so that everyone can participate at once.

One such training involved designing a frost protection system for strawberries. After the classroom session, participants divided into teams. Each team designed a system, installed pipe, made connections and then tested the protection their systems provided. The multiple-day format gave the teams opportunity to address problems in their designs and installations.

To make sure the next tier of learners get quality instruction, participants are given high-quality cds and printed materials to take back to their counties.

Improvements the coordinators would like to make include setting term limits for committee

members and bringing new people into the circle. They would also like to get into the habit of having at least one face-to-face meeting of the committee each year.

South Carolina

Currently 18 people serve on the South Carolina state advisory committee, representing farmers, 1890 and 1862 extension, South Carolina Department of Agriculture, NGO groups, South Carolina NRCS, South Carolina Department of Natural Resources and the USDA Farm Service Agency. The committee meets formally once a year in January for state strategic planning. The meeting is also open to other stakeholders, according to Geoff Zehnder state coordinator from Clemson.

“The purpose of this meeting is to identify and rank priority needs for sustainable ag training and to develop a list of potential training events for the year with dates,” he says. “If something comes up during the year where I need input from the group I will send an email.”

Currently South Carolina’s committee organizes a series of training events throughout the year at different locations. These trainings focus on the priority areas identified at the strategic planning meeting. The events are designed for agents and ag professionals, but they are open to the public as long as space allows. The committee is always ready to adapt their plans when they find something else will work better, according to Zehnder.

“We have organized a South Carolina Organic Growers School in the past as our one big event for the year,” he says, “But we have found that the smaller focused, regional workshops reach more people and are in greater demand. With SARE funding it is usually possible to provide complimentary lunch at our training events. We can serve locally-grown foods so the lunch in itself can be an educational experience and really helps with attendance. The workshops are usually one day but we have organized two-day workshops depending on the topic.”

In addition to these events, the committee budgets funds to support extension agents who want to organize their own training events. For example they recently helped an agent bring in a USDA expert on management of livestock parasites for a training session at a local farm. They also provide travel funds to agents to attend sustainable ag conferences and workshops, mostly in North and South Carolina.

Resources

The U.S. Department of Agriculture supports three major programs (SARE along with its publishing subsidiary SARE Outreach; AFSIC and ATTRA) that offer sustainable agriculture information and assistance. Farmers, educators and researchers can find information about sustainable agriculture in general, about a specific crop, or help with a specific problem.

SARE--As a state coordinator you are part of the SARE resource base. Become familiar with the national website (<http://www.sare.org>) and the regional website: <http://www.southernsare.org>, especially the project data base and SAN.

SARE Outreach--The publishing arm of SARE with its own budget and staff in Washington D.C. separate from the national SARE office. SARE Outreach publishes free high quality informational bulletins and inexpensive practical books based on SARE research. Browse or order at any time from <http://www.sare.org/publications/index.htm>

AFSIC--Alternative Farming Systems Information Center--Collects, organizes and distributes information on alternative agriculture and provides high-level searching and reference services from the National Agricultural Library's vast collection and world-wide databases.

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic> email: afsic@nal.usda.gov Ph: (301) 504-6559

ATTRA--Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas--National sustainable agriculture information service answers questions about specific farming practices and innovative marketing approaches, including organic production. More than 200 free publications on farming and marketing Features: Features a website with daily brief updates, specialized responses to sustainable agriculture questions, toll-free phone service in English (800) 346-9140 and Spanish (800) 411-3222, speakers for workshops and conferences, free bi-monthly newsletter and weekly e-newsletter.

<http://www.attra.ncat.org> Ph: (800) 346-9140.

www.southernsare.org

The Southern SARE website has the answer to just about any question that you or your clients will ask. You will benefit from browsing the site and getting familiar with the links.

For example, you will be asked questions by SARE project investigators. Some of the most common ones are answered on the Southern SARE website under the GRANTS link. They include:

How Do I.....?

- Invoice UGA for allowable reimbursable expenses
- File a No-Cost Extension
- Change the principle investigator
- Change the project scope or objectives
- Modify the original project budget
- Close out my project

What are the reporting requirements for a SARE grant?

What activities require prior written approval?

Another example: When someone wants to know what SARE has funded in their state they can get State Annual Reports under the PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT link. When you can't find the answer you need on the website, call a staff person with your question.

About Those Acronyms

SARE is known as a user-friendly program where we keep the paperwork and jargon to a minimum. However some of the terms we use most frequently are quite wordy. So to make talking about our program easier, we resort to using a few acronyms.

AC: Administrative Council- regional boards that guide SARE through administrative and funding decisions.

ARS: USDA's Agricultural Research Service

Chapter 1: Section of the 1985 Farm bill that governs the research and education part of SARE which have been funded since 1988.

Chapter 3: Section of the 1985 Farm Bill that governs the Professional Development Program, first funded in 1994.

ECS: Economic and Community Systems, the home unit of SARE within CSREES

EPA: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

NACAA: National Association of County Ag Agents. SARE contributes financial support and has a presence at their annual meeting and professional development conference.

NIFA: USDA's National Institute for Food and Agriculture, the administrative home of SARE

NRCS: USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service

Southern SAWG: Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group, one of the regional non-profit groups made up mostly of producers and producer organizations for the purpose of promoting sustainable agriculture through education, technical assistance, research and policy change.

SAC: Sustainable Agriculture Coalition

TAC: Technical Advisory Committee that reviews proposals submitted to Southern SARE

Who to contact

You can email any of these people plus all of your fellow state coordinators from our web site www.southernsare.org. Just click on Contact Us under the ABOUT US link.

Questions about PDP calls for proposals--David Redhage

Questions about any other SARE calls for proposals except PDP--John Mayne

No-cost extensions: State coordinators often get questions from SARE project investigators requesting a No-cost Extension. Refer requests related to PDP to David Redhage. All other requests, refer to Jeff Jordan.

Budget questions for administering state plans or other expenses related to the business of the state coordinator--Gail Patton

SARE displays and handouts for meetings-- Sue Blum or Candace Pollock

If you have good news from your state that might make a success story-- Candace Pollock

Reporting questions. First check the website under the GRANTS link. If that doesn't answer your question, contact:

PDP grants or state annual reports--David Redhage

All grants except PDP--Sue Blum

SARE travel--See Travel Guidelines under ABOUT US on the website for regulations about how much you can spend on meals, what receipts are needed, etc.

Contact Information

Southern SARE Professional Development Program

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Contact fellow state coordinators by e-mail from our web page:
<http://www.southernshare.org/Professional-Development/State-Ag-Coordinators>

Stay in touch with all SARE PDP state coordinators, staff and project
investigators by joining the electronic mail group
<sare-pdp@nal.usda.gov>

Annual SARE PDP Calendar

Model State Programs/State Plans of Work

Submit Model State Programs(MSP)/State Plans of Work (SPW) <i>This is submitted every 3 years unless you are upgrading to MSP</i>	January <i>(upgrades only)</i>
Submit new one-year budgets and narratives for MSP or SPW	January
Submit Annual Reports for previous year Jan – Dec	January
Subcontract balances below required amount *	January
MSP Enhanced Grants due (only for approved states with MSP)	April

General State Coordinator Meetings

State Coordinators/AC meeting and tour	mid-August
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SARE Competitive Grants

Release PDP Competitive Grant Pre-proposal Call	March
PDP Competitive Grants – Annual Reports Due	April
PDP Competitive Grants Pre-proposals due	June
PDP Competitive Grants Full Proposals Requested	August
PDP Competitive Grants Full Proposals Due	November

* Each state's total balance on all active subcontracts (not including the current year's contract) is below \$15,000 for the state or \$7,500 per university.