



Administrative Council Handbook

A quick guide to Southern SARE's

- Process,
- Roles and
- Responsibilities

www.southernsare.org

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Welcome

You are reading this handbook because you have just committed (or are considering committing) to serving the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program as a member of the administrative council, the technical committee or staff or simply because you have called the office and asked how the SARE program is managed and structured. This little handbook is designed to give you a feel for the SARE program process, goals, daily operations, and the general expectations of people who assume leadership positions within SARE.

But don't get us wrong this handbook is not designed to answer all your questions. Rather, quite the opposite. The goal is to help you ask *more* questions, and to explore how your individual contributions to SARE can have the greatest impact. Because of the big-tent structure of the program we make an effort to recruit people from many different sectors of the agricultural community each person comes to the SARE program with a different perspective, but also varying degrees of puzzlement about how the program actually works.

You may farm for a living, work for extension, conduct research, run a nonprofit, work for Fish and Wildlife or the EPA, represent a national entity like the Farm Bureau, or be involved in agribusiness or a state department of agriculture. You may be very familiar with the SARE program or know nothing much at all about it.

Here we will lay out the basic structure, grant cycles, reviewer requirements, and other key aspects of participation, with the goal of putting everyone who participates on an equal footing. We do this to bring many different voices to the discussion, and to encourage all our committee members to speak knowledgeably and freely about their understanding of agriculture in the South.

The Big Picture

The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program, or SARE, was authorized as part of the 1985 Farm Bill and first funded in 1988 as LISA, or the Low-Input Sustainable Agriculture program. The name was changed to Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education in the early 1990s to reflect the broader scope of the principles of sustainable agriculture and to express the dual mission of research and education. From its inception the program's goal has been to support farmers, researchers, and educators as they explore practices that improve stewardship, profitability, and the social and economic health of farm communities.

The primary tools of the SARE program are grants, which are offered annually to farmers, researchers, educators, non-profits, community based organizations and community activists in the agricultural community. Grants are not the only tools, but grant funds are understood to be the chief lubricant in the development of new approaches and new ideas. SARE seeks out innovation in sustainable agriculture, and rewards grant applicants who offer up interesting, potentially workable ideas. The SARE program also emphasizes outreach and the dissemination of project results so that the grant program will have the widest possible benefit.

The SARE program is part of USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), formerly CSREES, and serves the entire United States, including its protectorates. In the Southern region those are Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. There is a national SARE office in Washington that coordinates overall direction, but program grants and services are actually delivered through four regional offices in the South, North Central, Northeast, and West. These regional offices enjoy remarkable autonomy in terms of grant-making priorities and program content, and each region is actively encouraged to address the different agricultural challenges within its boundaries.

SARE funds are subject to Congressional approval. In 2014, the total national SARE budget was \$20 million. From this, a certain amount of money is set aside for the national office and for SARE Outreach, which publishes books and bulletins of interest to farmers and Extension. SARE Outreach also runs an online discussion group (SANET-MG) that supports dialogue about sustainable agriculture issues.

The rest of the funding is then divided equally among the regions. The bulk of the regional allocation is then offered as competitive grants to the various SARE constituencies.

In order to help reach that goal **the Southern SARE mission** is to expand knowledge and adoption of sustainable agriculture practices that are economically viable, environmentally sound and good for all members of the community.

These statements guide the grant process, and grants are the primary expenditure. For example, the 2014 regional budget was more than \$5 million. From that, the Southern region allocated more than \$1.5 million in Research and Education grants and \$535,000 in Professional Development Grants. The balance was spent on four smaller grant programs, program delivery, outreach, publications, staff, and administration.

Southern Region Leadership Structure

Southern SARE has a leadership structure intended to encourage each member to contribute fully, while at the same time allowing tasks to be distributed as appropriately as possible. Three distinct groups operate within the region the administrative council, the technical committee and the state sustainable ag coordinators. Each group serves a different purpose.

The Administrative Council

The Administrative Council, which is often called the AC, is the governing body for the Southern SARE region. The AC appoints the host institution and coordinator, oversees the general budget and guides programming. A large part of this responsibility revolves around establishing all Call for Proposals, and overseeing the review of proposals and evaluation of projects. The entire process is detailed in the Southern SARE document, *How It Works*.

The term of membership on the AC is normally three years, with the opportunity to serve two terms. Memberships are staggered to assure continuity. Producers and NGO representatives are allowed \$200 per day plus expenses when attending AC meetings or participating in the program at a PDP workshop or other SARE meetings.

Who we are

The Southern SARE AC is composed of 22 members: 12 are selected by the AC through an open nomination process serving 3-year terms (renewable for a second term), and 10 members are appointed by our partner agencies. These agencies include 1890 Extension Institutions, 1890 Research Institutions, 1862 Extension Institutions, 1862 Research Institutions, State Departments of Agriculture, USDA-

planning and preliminary R&E grant proposals) do not have prepropos-als. They are reviewed at staggered times during the year. Reviewers read and score proposals, then meet by conference call to discuss them. These applications are brief and uncomplicated.

A closer look at other program tasks

The AC is also responsible for setting program policy, suggesting program improvements, reviewing the allocation of funds, and guiding overall program direction. Each member is expected to serve on at least two standing committees, and he or she may be asked to join a working or ad hoc subcommittee as program needs dictate. The work of all committees is supported by regional staff, although at times individual members have volunteered to do a great deal of work on projects that interest them.

AC members are also assigned grant projects to oversee. Tracking a project usually means reviewing annual and final reports as they are sent in and referring problems that arise to the regional director. Some AC members have even visited projects that particularly interested them, but that is not required.

The Technical Review Committee

The Technical Review Committee, known as the TRC, is a group made up of researchers, farmers, extension, consultants, NRCS personnel, nonprofit representatives, and a wide variety of other agricultural professionals. As the name implies, members are recruited for their specific expertise, and the membership of the group tends to be large and fluid. TRC members are not required to come to the two yearly AC meetings. Instead, they tend to offer skill and support chiefly by reviewing and scoring grant proposals. Because of the very large volume of proposals the SARE program receives, the TRC acts as an important knowledge pool that the SARE program can draw on.

TRC members don't have a scheduled term of service, and it is not unusual for a member of the committee to act first as a reviewer and then fill a vacancy on the AC.

The State Sustainable Agriculture Coordinators

Each land grant institution in the region names a representative to serve as the State Sustainable Ag Coordinator. The role of the state coordinators is critical, since they are responsible for the integration of the concepts of sustainable agriculture into daily outreach and exten-

Agricultural Research Service, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Environmental Protection Agency, US Geological Survey, and a representative from the SARE National office. Of the 12 members selected from open nominations, seven are producers, three represent non-governmental organizations, one represents agribusiness, and one reflects quality of life issues for the AC.

The Southern SARE AC is recruited to reflect the diversity of the Southern agricultural community. Our AC is notable for its wide range of interests and ideas, and for a collaborative working style. The Southern SARE AC is known for its willingness to be innovative and explore new ways to promote sustainable agriculture.

One of the most vital roles played by each AC member is that of liaison to groups he or she represents. Each AC member not only represents SARE to his or her group, but more importantly, brings to Southern SARE the information, goals, and ideas from our partners. AC members should be alert to the needs of our constituent groups; what research is needed, and what training programs would be most useful.

The role of the AC includes guiding the vision of the program, setting goals, providing feedback from groups and being ambassadors from the program to the region. Each AC member should also be active in SARE-related and sustainable agriculture-related activities in his or her state.

A closer look at the grants process

AC members are expected to read, comment on, and score a portion of the grant applications each year, and to also attend two yearly meetings in February and August to make grant award decisions and conduct other business.

Grant review for the two big grant programs begins in June with preproposals overviews of project concepts and outcomes that are submitted by potential applicants. The AC assumes responsibility for screening these preproposals. The top submissions will be invited to submit full proposals after the August AC meeting.

Full proposals for these big grants are due in November and are evaluated by both AC members and Technical Review Committee members. Based on the reviewers' rankings and remarks, the AC Project Review Committee will recommend a slate of proposals for funding at the February AC meeting.

The smaller grant programs for farmers, professionals who work with them, graduate students and community activists, (and occasionally

The national SARE office has representation on the regional governing bodies—the Administrative Councils. In turn, the regional Administrative Councils send representatives to the national governing body—the Operations Committee. Each region also sends a representative to the annual SARE Outreach meeting to discuss publishing and outreach priorities.

How SARE Works in the Southern Region

The Southern region is made up of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Southern SARE funds several different competitive grant programs, and each type of grant benefits a different constituency. These grants can be divided into two broad categories.

First, there are the “big-grant” programs for research and education (usually referred to as R&E programs and designated by project numbers beginning with LS) and for professional development (usually referred to as PDP programs and designated by project numbers beginning with ES). These projects may be funded for up to three years and have budgets to accommodate system-scale projects. We will go into more detail later about the differences between these two grant offerings, but their chief similarity is that they both have a two-step application process that involves a screening of preproposals before submission of full proposals. The funding selection process is guided by specific, outcome-driven criteria.

Then there are smaller grants for farmers and the professionals who work directly with them, as well as funding opportunities for graduate students, communities and states. These smaller grants have no preproposal requirement, nor are applicants asked to demonstrate specific outcomes in an intensive way. Results are expected, but on a different scale. By comparison to the big grants, these proposals are easy to write and, if funded, straightforward to manage, with simpler reporting requirements. These smaller grants are capped at \$10,000 or \$15,000 depending on the category.

The **Southern SARE vision statement**, or overarching goal, says that agriculture in the Southern Region will be diversified, profitable and fully integrated into the community providing healthy food and fiber by farmers who preserve and restore our natural resources.

sion practices. SARE offers an annual appropriation to each land grant for developing sustainable agriculture curricula for their extension staff. SARE state ag coordinators oversee the professional development plan within their state and the SARE money that is attached to it.

State ag coordinators normally attend a regional meeting in conjunction with the August AC meeting and educational tour. This tour is normally planned by the state coordinator or AC member where the meeting is held. The goal of the tour is to highlight successful farm practices, educate both the AC and the state coordinators, and open up new avenues of discussion.

Rewards and Commitment

Rewards

The most obvious reward for people who join the SARE leadership is the satisfaction of having a say in how our agricultural tax dollars are spent; it must be added, a little immodestly, that even though SARE is a small program, it has consistently had an impact out of proportion to its budget. This is because the emphasis is on applied agriculture projects with measurable results that translate quickly into practical support for farmers and on projects that test new ideas.

Another reward comes from the program structure itself. The SARE mandate requires that people with many different skills and backgrounds farmers, conservationists, lenders, university faculty, extension, people from the nonprofit sector, and a surprising range of others converge around the SARE mission and have interesting, at times urgent, conversations about the funding opportunities on the table. These discussions tend to be productive because they are project-driven and specific, and a great deal of knowledge is exchanged. Outgoing council members almost always cite the synergy of the SARE program as its primary strength. As one farmer recently put it, “I got to be heard, but I also got to listen, and I’m amazed at how much I’ve learned.”

AC members and State Sustainable Ag Coordinators are also invited to attend the bi-annual national SARE conference at SARE’s expense, and there may be other professional development opportunities offered during a normal three-year tenure.

One final aspect of SARE that committee members tell us they find satisfying is that SARE places a high value on innovation, which translates into proposals and projects that are intrinsically interesting. This means that, even if a project does not turn out as planned, it still retains its value. Participating in the selection process and following up on the results often brings with it new insight into barriers and opportunities.

Time Commitment

Southern SARE works hard to keep the time commitment manageable for busy professionals. The heaviest work load occurs in June (preproposals) and November (full proposals) when the R&E and PDP applications must be reviewed, scored, and commented on. Most people report that they do this work in the evenings. The number of submissions to be scored varies somewhat from person to person, but a normal assignment load of about 20 preproposals and 6 full proposals will generally translate into about 20 hours of reading, scoring, commenting, and review per year.

Review of the smaller grant applications is spread out among different committees and requires less time due to the simple nature of the applications as compared to the big grants.

The two meetings per year February and August are normally two and a half days. These meetings also involve travel time and preparation. The meetings follow a detailed, timed agenda. Every effort is made to keep meetings on point and on track, and it is not unusual for meetings to adjourn a few hours early.

Staff Support for SARE Leadership

Southern SARE pays travel, lodging, meals, phone, and mail expenses for AC members and State Sustainable Ag Coordinators as they discharge their duties. Farmers on the AC are also paid a per-diem for their time to allow them to hire replacement help on the farm or to make up for lost income.

The staff in the regional office also provides support by managing meeting logistics, travel, mailings, conference calls, and general communications, and by supporting the work of committees and subcommittees. Other staff functions include report and project monitoring, contracts, outreach, publications, coordination with the national office, record keeping, and administrative support. The staff in Griffin, Georgia, currently includes a regional coordinator, an administrative secretary, a communications specialist, an accountant, a clerk and a communications assistant dedicated to project report collection. A minority and limited-resource outreach staff person is located at Fort Valley State University. Staff for the Professional Development Program is based at the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Oklahoma. The regional assistant director is in North Carolina.

By-Laws

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization shall be “Southern Region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Administrative Council.” The organization shall also be known as “Southern Region SARE Administrative Council.”

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE

The purpose of the Administrative Council is to promote, encourage and assist in the development of sustainable agriculture in the Southern Region by fulfilling the responsibilities outlined in Title XVI, Subtitle A, Sec. 1621. Sustainable agriculture, as defined by Title XVI, Subtitle A, Sec. 1603, is “ an integrated system of plant and animal production practices having a site-specific application that will, over the long term: satisfy human food and fiber needs; enhance environmental quality and the natural resource base upon which the agriculture economy depends; make the most use of nonrenewable resources and on-farm resources, and integrate, where appropriate, natural biological cycles and controls; sustain the economic viability of farm/ranch operations; and enhance the quality of life for farmers/ranchers, and society as a whole.”

ARTICLE III - RESPONSIBILITIES

Specific responsibilities of the Administrative Council are:

1. Appoint a Host Institution and Coordinator, subject to the approval of the USDA;
2. Appoint Professional Development Program management team, subject to the approval of the USDA;
3. Make recommendations to the USDA concerning research and education projects, PDP projects, producer projects, graduate student awards, and all other grant programs that merit funding;
4. Promote Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Programs in the Southern Region;
5. Establish goals and criteria for the selection of projects within the Southern Region;
6. Appoint a Technical Advisory Committee for the evaluation of

proposals for projects to be considered for funding.

7. Review and act upon the recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee and coordination of its activities with the Host Institution, review and act upon the recommendation of the PDP Committee and coordination of its activities with the Management Team; and

8. Prepare and make available an annual report concerning Southern Region activities in sustainable agriculture.

The Host Institution and Coordinator are responsible for the management of the SARE Program, on behalf of the Administrative Council, and in conjunction with the USDA.

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

The Administrative Council membership and appointing authority shall be the following:

-- Seven (7) farmers/ranchers using systems and practices of sustainable agriculture. Appointments should include farmers/ranchers representing Best Utilization of Biological Applications and representing Integrated Management Systems. Members shall be elected by the Council.

-- Three (3) nonprofit organizations with demonstrable expertise in sustainable agriculture. Appointments should include organizations representing Best Utilization of Biological Applications and organizations representing Integrated Management Systems. Members shall be elected by the Council.

-- One (1) agribusiness person with demonstrable expertise in sustainable agriculture. Member shall be elected by the Council.

-- One (1) member knowledgeable about sustainable agriculture and its impact on the environment and rural communities possessing quality of life expertise. Member shall be elected by the Council.

-- One member each from the following federal or state agencies. Members are appointed by the following respective agency or agency association:

- USDA Agricultural Research Service
- USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- State Agency representing sustainable agriculture
- State Agricultural Experiment Stations-1862 Institutions
- State Agricultural Experiment Stations-1890 Institutions
- State Cooperative Extension Services-1862 Institutions
- State Cooperative Extension Services-1890 Institutions
- U.S. Geological Survey

Total membership of the Administrative Council shall be twenty-two (22). Other members may be appointed as deemed appropriate by the Council.

The Administrative Council shall solicit nominations for vacancies on the Council for which the Council has appointing authority from the appropriate groups, organizations or public which are represented on the Council and shall elect members from those who are nominated.

The Administrative Council shall also notify each federal and state agency appointing authority when a vacancy occurs or term expires and solicit the appointment or reappointment of their respective agency representative on the Council.

ARTICLE V - TERM OF OFFICE

The Administrative Council member's terms shall be three years. A member can be reappointed to additional three-year terms.

If a member of the Administrative Council is unable to complete his or her term of appointment, or misses more than two consecutive meetings, the appointing authority will be asked to designate a successor to complete that member's unexpired term. Members elected by the Council and members appointed by the appropriate federal or state agency shall be elected in the same manner as the original appointment for the unexpired term.

The terms of office shall be established by the Administrative Council on a three year rotational basis to ensure approximately one-third of the terms expire each year.

ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS

Section 1. Officers. The officers of the Administrative Council shall be a Chairperson and one Vice-Chairperson. The officers shall be members of the Administrative Council.

Section 2. Election and Term of Office. The officers shall be elected at the winter meeting of the Administrative Council for the year then commencing, to serve for a one-year term and until their successors shall have been elected. A member of the Administrative Council shall not be limited in the number of terms for which he or she may serve as an officer, provided that he or she remains a member of the Council during his or her term as an officer.

Section 3. Removal and Vacancies. Any officer elected by the Administrative Council may be removed by the Council whenever in its judgment the best interests of the organization would be served thereby. A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification or otherwise, may be filled by the Administrative Council for the unexpired portion of the term.

Section 4. Duties of the Chairperson. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Administrative Council and also serve as Chair of the Executive Committee. The Chairperson shall have general supervision of the affairs of the Administrative Council and perform all acts and duties usually incident to and required of an executive and presiding officer, as well as such other duties as may be required of the Council. The Chairperson may sign any contracts or other documents the Administrative Council have authorized to be executed, except in cases where the signing and execution thereof shall be expressly delegated by the Council, such as to the host institution, or by these bylaws; and in general shall perform all duties as may be prescribed by the Council from time to time.

Section 5. Duties of the Vice-Chairperson. In the absence of the Chairperson or in the event of his or her inability or refusal to act, the Vice-Chairperson shall have all the powers of and be subject to all the restrictions upon the Chairperson. The Vice-Chairperson shall perform such other duties as from time to time may be assigned to him or her by the Chairperson or the Administrative Council.

ARTICLE VII - EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Administrative Council shall have an Executive Committee composed of the following members:

- Chair, Administrative Council
- Vice-Chair, Administrative Council
- Chair, Communications Committee
- Chair, Operations Committee
- Chair, Project Review Committee
- Chair, Limited Resource Farmer/Minority Outreach Committee
- Chair, Producer Grant Review Committee
- Chair, PDP Committee
- Chair, Evaluation Committee

The Chairperson of the Administrative Council shall serve as Chair and presiding officer of the Executive Committee.

The function of the Executive Committee is to handle matters that arise between regularly scheduled Administrative Council meetings, and more particularly to include:

1. Dealing with emergency situations that arise when it would be impractical to present the issue(s) to the full Administrative Council.
2. Provide leadership to the Host Institution on important matters between Administrative Council meetings.
3. Perform fine tuning of mandate of the full Administrative Council. The Executive Committee and the Council may call upon others to provide information on issues before the Council. In the case of external consultation, the person who is providing the needed information will not be considered as an ad hoc member of the Council unless voted upon by the entire Council.

The Administrative Council will be given reasonable notice of Executive Committee meetings or conference calls and will be provided, in a timely fashion, minutes of Executive Committee meetings or conference calls.

ARTICLE VIII - COMMITTEES

The Chairperson is authorized to appoint from members of the Administrative Council, or others, such committees as the Chairperson may deem necessary or as the Council deems necessary for the expeditious handling of the affairs of the Council. These committees shall be in addition to the Standing Committees approved by the Council. No committee, nor any member thereof, shall have authority to commit the Council, except as been duly authorized by the Council.

ARTICLE IX - STANDING COMMITTEES

The Administrative Council shall have seven (7) standing committees, whose membership shall be composed only of Council members. The committees and their general responsibilities are:

1. Communications Committee. Facilitate the promotion and communication of sustainable Agriculture Research, Education and Training programs and outreach success stories so as to promote Sustainable Agriculture and SARE in the Southern Region and link with other regions to inform the national dialogue about sustainable issues.
2. Operations Committee. Develop and recommend policies for the Administrative Council. The Operations Committee shall also serve as the Nominations Committee to recommend a list of candidates to serve as Officers and Standing Committee Chairs of the Council, as well as the solicitation of new members.
3. Project Review Committee. Establish goals and criteria for the evaluation of proposals and the review of projects.
4. Limited Resource Farmer & Minority Outreach Committee. Establish goals and programs to support Limited Resource & Minority Farmers.
5. Producer Grant Committee. Establish goals and criteria for the evaluation of proposals and the review of producer and on-farm projects.
6. PDP Committee. Establish goals and criteria for evaluation of proposals, review PDP projects, and make recommendations to the Administrative Council, conduct yearly PDP workshop and all other PDP activities.
7. Evaluation Committee. Establish methods and approaches to evaluate the effectiveness and accountability of all parts of the S-SARE program.

Each standing committee shall have a Chair and Vice-Chair elected annually by the Council at the same meeting as the election of officers. Committee membership shall be equally divided, as much as possible, among the members based upon their expressed interest.

Specific responsibilities of each standing committee shall be determined by the Council.

ARTICLE X - TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Administrative Council shall appoint a Technical Advisory Committee for the evaluation of proposals for projects to be considered for funding. The Technical Advisory Committee shall be subject to oversight by the Project Review Committee.

Technical Advisory Committee membership shall consist of researchers, extensionists, producers and others who have demonstrable experience and expertise in the area of sustainable agriculture.

Responsibilities of the Technical Advisory Committee are determined by the Administrative Council, however, the primary role of the committee is to provide guidance concerning the technical merit of proposals and projects to the SARE program and provide recommendations for funding through the Project Review Committee to the Administrative Council based upon technical merit. Specific responsibilities shall include, as a minimum, the following:

1. Evaluate pre-proposals and full proposals submitted to the SARE program.
2. Participate in project and program reviews.
3. Work with the Project Review Committee and Host Institution on developing appropriate proposal and project evaluation procedures and guidelines.

ARTICLE XI - CONDUCT OF BUSINESS

Section 1. Meetings. The Administrative Council shall have two regularly scheduled meetings each year. The date and location of each meeting shall be determined by the Council. Administrative Council meetings shall be open to the public.

Public notice of regularly scheduled Council meetings shall be included in the SARE Newsletter. Council members will keep the agenda briefs as part of the minutes.

Section 2. Attendance & Voting. Attendance of two-thirds (2/3) of the Administrative Council membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. Once a quorum is declared present for the transaction of business, it will be considered in place for the remainder of the scheduled meeting dates. All official actions of the Council shall require the affirmative vote of a majority of the members present and voting. All votes by roll call and secret ballot shall be announced and recorded in the minutes.

Section 3. Proxies. The Administrative Council shall not allow an alternate or proxy to serve on the Council and vote on behalf of a member who is absent.

Section 4. Reimbursement. For all AC members who are self-employed a \$200 per day honorarium will be paid for time spent at AC meetings (including travel time) and for conference calls that last over two hours.

Section 5. Funding Requests. Any request for funds must be made through the appropriate committee and must have its budget and its justification prepared at least six weeks in advance of the Summer or Winter AC meeting so that it is included in the agenda briefs, and all members of the Administrative Council have had the opportunity to review the request.

Section 6. Conflict of Interest. 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.

Section 6. Parliamentary Procedure. The Administrative Council, Executive Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and Standing Committees when in session, shall be governed in their deliberations and in the transaction of their business by these Bylaws. Any matter of procedure not so covered in the Bylaws shall be governed by the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order.

ARTICLE XII - AMENDMENTS¹

The Administrative Council may amend these Bylaws at any meeting

at which there exists a quorum, upon two-thirds vote of the Council. Provided, however, at least ten (10) days notice shall be given to all members, and the intent of such amendments to be considered shall be made a part of the meeting notice.

1Bylaws Adopted 2/13/96. Amended 4/3/97; 3/33/2000; 8/19/2011; 8/20/2014

Conflict of Interest Policy

If you are considering serving on the SARE AC or TRC, it's likely you already have ties to a group that submits proposals to SARE, and you may be wondering if that disqualifies you from serving. Southern SARE realizes that disqualifying such individuals would prevent the most knowledgeable segment of our audience from serving, so the AC drafted a Conflict of Interest Policy to channel ethical participation and input from such individuals.

The 10-point Conflict of Interest Policy protects the process in two ways: it prohibits members of the AC /TRC/Staff from participating in a grant proposal that, if funded, would benefit them financially, and it excuses an AC/TRC /Staff member from the discussion of any proposal submitted by an organization, institution or individual that they have collaborated with in the past five years.

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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 Review 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);
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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.
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Introduction to Committees

Since 1994, the Southern SARE Administrative Council has conducted its business through a structure of committees. All AC agenda items originate with one of the seven current standing committees.

Communications
Operations/Nominating
Project Review (reviews R&E/Grad/SCI proposals)
Limited-Resource Farmer/Minority Outreach
Producer Grant (reviews Producer and On-farm proposals)
Professional Development Program (reviews PDP proposals)
Evaluation Committee

All AC members are members of at least two of the above committees: everyone is on one of the three review committees as well as one of the others. Each committee elects its own chair and vice-chair. In addition, the AC has authorized an Executive Committee, which is made up of the AC Chair and Vice Chair as well as the chairs of each committee. The Executive Committee meets monthly by telephone conference to discuss on-going Southern SARE business. If AC decisions are required between the two meeting dates, the Executive Committee is authorized to make those decisions. The Executive Committee is primarily the place where new issues facing the AC are first discussed prior to the full AC meetings.

At each semi-annual AC meeting, the committees meet the day before (or half-day before) the full AC. It is the responsibility of each committee chair, in coordination with the Southern SARE director, to establish an agenda for the committee meetings. For each agenda item to be discussed, the chair (or vice chair) is required to submit to the Southern SARE director an “agenda brief” to be sent to the committee members before the AC meeting. The agenda brief provides information on the issue to be discussed, who will present the issue, a summary of the issue and the desired action to be taken by the full AC. This includes either an information only item to bring to the AC or a request for a motion and vote to be taken by the AC.

The chair of each committee will conduct the meeting and report to the AC the above information. Following the AC vote (if applicable), the committee chair will, in coordination with the Southern SARE director's office, follow through with the task assigned.

For this structure to be effective, all chairs and members must participate fully in the affairs of the committee. An efficient committee structure improves the work of the whole Administrative Council and furthers the goal of the Southern SARE program to make agriculture in the South more sustainable.

Communications Committee

Staff liaison: Candace Pollock

Phone: (770) 412-4786

Email: cpollock@uga.edu

This committee facilitates the communication of SARE projects and outreach success stories to promote sustainable agriculture and SARE in the Southern region. It is also a link to other regions and the national office to inform the dialogue about sustainable issues. Membership is on volunteer basis.

Usual business to be conducted:

1. Represent AC on SARE Outreach Steering Committee. Each region appoints a representative to sit on the steering committee. The Southern SARE Outreach representative is to report to the Communications Committee on any issues related to SARE Outreach and other national communication issues. They also report from SARE Outreach to the AC.
2. Prepare information and/or handbooks. The Communications Committee will consider types of resources or handbooks that need to be produced by Southern SARE. For example, they consider when to update, reprint, or discontinue any materials.
3. Examine new communications techniques. The committee will evaluate new methods for communication and whether to change or discontinue current techniques. In the past the committee has considered the use of a speaker's bureau. The committee has also dealt with new publications to replace printed annual reports.
4. Review the yearly list of staff communications activities for information and discussion.
5. Items for the communications budget are discussed by the committee for approval by the AC for inclusion in the annual Cooperative Agreement.
6. Assist in issues related to the publication of annual reports and final reports.
7. Produce any new brochures and communication media, including web-based material.
8. Consider ways to best market and communicate issues relating to all annual Calls for Proposals.
9. Assist in preparing materials for new member orientation.

Operations/Nominating Committee

Staff liaison: Jeff Jordan
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The role of the Operations/Nominations Committee is to develop and recommend budgets and policies for the AC. The committee recommends a list of candidates to serve as officers of the AC. The committee also solicits and recommends new members of the AC as vacancies occur. Membership on this committee is on a volunteer basis.

Usual business to be conducted:

1. The committee considers each year's budget to be submitted as part of the Cooperative Agreement. The committee recommends to the AC each fiscal year budget for both Chapter 1 and Chapter 3 funds.

2. The committee reviews and recommends revisions to the by-laws of the AC, including changes in the Conflict of Interest Policy.

3. The committee monitors memberships and recommends to the AC committee chairs and vice chairs based upon the vote within each committee.

4. The committee reviews and recommends changes to the National SARE Operations Guidelines.

5. The committee solicits new members for the AC and for the TRC.

Project Review Committee

Staff liaison: Jeff Jordan
Phone: (770) 412-4787
Email: jjordan@uga.edu

The Project Review Committee's task is to establish goals and criteria for the evaluation of proposals and the funding of projects. The PRC is constituted to reflect the composition of the AC. As outlined in *How It Works*, the Project Review Committee has the following responsibilities:

Usual business to be conducted:

1. Review, change, and recommend to the AC the yearly Calls for Proposals for all Southern SARE grants programs. If the Calls are revised after an AC meeting, the Project Review Committee (PRC) makes its recommendation to the Executive Committee.

2. The PRC first reviews all preproposals submitted under the R&E grants program. The members recommend approximately 30 preproposals to be submitted as full proposals.

3. The 30 full proposals are then sent to the Technical Review Committee (TRC) for scientific review. After the outside

Technical Review Committee has provided the PRC with their review of the full proposals, the Project Review Committee recommends to the full AC those projects to be funded from the entire list of proposals.

4. The PRC is responsible for providing project investigators a constructive and explicit review of their proposal. The PRC is also responsible for the Graduate Student Awards and recommends to the AC those to be funded based on input from the Graduate Student Grant Technical Advisory Committee. Also, the PRC monitors the work of the joint SSARE/Southern Rural Development Center Sustainable Community Innovation Grants program.

related jobs:

1. Review and recommend to the AC any new grants program to be added to the Southern SARE portfolio.
2. Establish and conduct public workshops, as needed, for grant preparation.
3. Review and recommend to the AC any National Initiative Project brought to the Southern SARE by the national office.
4. Consider new methods to evaluate projects and report assessments.
5. Set the grant-cycle calendar each year.
6. Recommend changes and updates to *How It Works*.
7. Assist in solicitation of Technical Advisory Committee members.

Limited-Resource Farmers and Minority Outreach Committee

Staff liaison: James Hill
Phone: (478) 825-6263
Email: hillj@fvsu.edu

The purpose of the Limited-Resource Farmers and Minority Outreach Committee (LRF/MO) is to establish goals and programs to support limited-resource and minority farmers. Membership is on a volunteer basis.

In pursuing its goals, the LRF/MO committee has conducted workshops addressing the needs of limited resource farmers in the South and supported workshops and conferences organized by other groups through scholarships for minority farmers.

The LRF/MO committee has also discussed ways to increase participation by limited-resource farmers in the SARE Producer Grant program and in national conferences.

The committee also recommends to the AC ways to increase the participation of 1890 land grant institutions in the Southern SARE program.

Producer Grant Committee

Staff liaison: John Mayne
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Email: jmayne@uga.edu

The Producer Grant Committee's (PGC) task is to establish goals and criteria for the evaluation of proposals and the review of producer grants. In addition, the PGC is also responsible for the On-Farm Grants program. Membership on the PGC includes the seven farmer members of the AC. As outlined in *How It Works*, the PGC has the following responsibilities:

Usual business to be conducted:

1. Review, change and recommend to the AC the yearly Call for Proposals for both the Producer and On-Farm grant programs.
2. After an outside review by a Technical Review Committee, the PGC meets in person to consider the grant proposals. The committee presents its slate of funding recommendations to the fall AC.

In addition, the PGC is responsible for all activities, new grants programs, and issues related directly to farmer participation in the Southern SARE program.

Professional Development Program (PDP) Committee

Staff liaison: David Redhage
Phone: (918) 647-9123
Email: dredhage@kerrcenter.com

The work of the Professional Development Program (PDP Committee) is to establish goals and criteria for the evaluation of proposals, the review of PDP projects, and to make recommendations to the AC regarding grant funding. In addition, the PDP Committee is responsible for conducting the yearly PDP workshop and all other PDP activities. Membership on this committee includes two AC members, the Extension director, and Extension administrator on the AC.

In addition to having the responsibility of reviewing and recommending PDP grants and the yearly workshop, the PDP Committee is also charged with the following:

1. Produce the yearly PDP Call for Proposals.
2. Develop and enhance the Model State Program.
3. Oversee and strengthen the State Coordinators program, as well as the review and approval of the State Plan of Work.
4. Conduct grant writing workshops as needed.
5. Develop any special call sfor Proposal as needed.

Evaluation Committee

Staff liaison: Jeff Jordan
Phone: (770) 412-4787
Email: jjordan@uga.edu

With the growing emphasis on evaluation methodologies for the SARE program, the Evaluation Committee was established to review the evaluation process.

The mission of the Evaluation Committee is to:

1. Recommend to the full AC how best Southern SARE should evaluate each of our grants programs in terms of the grants process to maintain transparency and fairness.
2. Guide the continuing project evaluation process.
3. Recommend to the AC any special calls for proposals.
4. Explore how best to conduct evaluations of the outcomes of our projects.
5. Coordinate with the other regions and the national office on participation in the logic model evaluation process.

AC Members Quick Contact List

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Southern Region SARE Administrative Council Membership Rotation

Elected representatives:		1 st term	2 nd term	3 rd term
Producer 1	Martha Mewbourne		2015	2018
Producer 2	Don Halcomb	2017		
Producer 3	Carey Robertson	2013	2016	
Producer 4	Vacant			
Producer 5	Nancy Roe		2014	2017
Producer 6	Pauline Thiessen	2014	2017	
Producer 7	Ronald Young	2013	2016	
NGO 1	Brennan Washinton	2014	2017	
NGO 2	Vacant			
NGO 3	Jim Ewing	2016		
Quality of Life	Doug Constance			2016
Agribusiness	Sandi Kronick	2013	2016	

Appointed representatives:

1890 Extension	Ray McKinnie			2016
1890 Research	Adell Brown Jr.	2014	2017	
1862 Extension	Jim Henning	2017		
1862 Research	Saied Mostaghimi		2016	
State Dept. of Ag	Carrie Castille	2018		
EPA	Vacant			
USDA-ARS	Annie Donoghue		2017	
USDA-NRCS	Scott Edwards	2017		
USGS	Ana Garcia		2015	
USDA-NIFA	Kim Kroll/ Rod Hedberg			

2015 Committees

Executive Committee

Doug Constance, Chair
Nancy Roe, Vice Chair
Saied Mostaghimi
Martha Mewbourne
Ray McKinnie
Brennan Washington
Ron Young

Communications

Chair, Vacant
Annie Donoghue
Scott Edwards
Jim Ewing
Rob Hedberg/Kim Kroll
Jimmy Henning
Carey Roberston

Operations/Nominating

Said Mostaghimi, Chair
Doug Constance
Don Halcomb
Sandi Kronick
Ray McKinnie
Ron Young

Project Review

Ron Young, Chair
Adell Brown Jr.
Carrie Castille
Doug Constance
Annie Donoghue
Ana Garcia
Rob Hedberg/Kim Kroll
Sandi Kronick
Martha Mewbourne
Saied Mostaghimi
Nancy Roe

Limited-Resource Farmer/ Minority Outreach

Brennan Washington, Chair
Sandi Kronick
Ray McKinnie
Pauline Thiessen

Producer Grant

Nancy Roe, Chair
Jim Ewing
Don Halcomb
Martha Mewbourne
Carey Robertson
Pauline Thiessen
Ron Young

PDP

Ray McKinnie, Chair
Scott Edwards
Don Halcomb
Rob Hedberg/Kim Kroll
Jimmy Henning
Carey Robertson
Brennan Washington
NGO Representative, Vacant

Evaluation

Martha Mewbourne, Chair
Doug Constance
Anna Garcia
Rob Hedberg/Kim Kroll
Nancy Roe