



**University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program**

**2025/2026 Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems
Competitive Small Grants Program**

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

PROPOSALS DUE: Tuesday, January 14th, 2025, 5:00pm PST.

The UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (UC SAREP) is a statewide program of University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR). UC SAREP envisions a farming and food system that:

- supports resilience through diversified production, marketing, and distribution systems,
- values all food system workers and supports their physical, economic, and social wellbeing,
- contributes to the health and vitality of urban, rural, and Tribal communities,
- is environmentally regenerative, using resources for production and distribution in a way that protects the environment in trust for future generations, including under changing climate conditions, and
- is culturally responsive and reflects the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity of California.

Program Priority Areas

We are interested in projects that build the capacity of farming and food systems businesses and organizations to become reflective, adaptive learning organizations that can respond effectively to ecological, economic, and social change and disruption.

UC SAREP will fund projects that fall within two priority areas:

Priority Area 1: Support California's farmers, ranchers, and Tribal and non-Tribal land stewards of all scales in piloting, evaluating, and transitioning to:

- environmentally regenerative approaches to producing crops and livestock (including but not limited to soil health, organic and agroecological practices, integrated pest management, crop diversification);

- pathways for realizing economic return from ecologically-sound crop management practices and fair labor practices;
- marketing and distribution strategies that support diversified, decentralized, and locally-based supply chains;
- strategies that promote producer-to-producer networking and/or producer-to-supply chain networking.

Priority Area 2: Support California’s rural, urban, and Tribal communities in identifying, implementing, and evaluating strategies to:

- expand access to healthy, sustainably produced, culturally appropriate foods;
- ensure worker wellbeing across the food chain;
- minimize the community and environmental costs of food production and distribution;
- strengthen connections between consumers and producers;
- establish and strengthen producer-to-producer connections and producer-to-supply chain connections.

Priority will be given to projects that directly benefit and involve ANY of the following priority groups:

- SB535 Disadvantaged Communities
 - *A map of disadvantaged communities in California for the purposes of SB535 can be found at <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/sb535>.*
- Tribal communities, and/or
- socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, and land stewards
 - *A “socially disadvantaged group” means a group whose members have been subjected to racial, ethnic, or gender discrimination. These groups include the following: African Americans, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, Female farmers and ranchers (2020 Report to the California Legislature on the Farmer Equity Act).*

Who May Apply

Eligible applicants include:

- farm or food system businesses operating in California (business applicants must demonstrate benefit beyond the immediate recipients),
- non-profit, tax-exempt organizations operating in California,
- state and local government agencies, Tribal governments, and
- California public and private institutions of higher education

UC SAREP Eligibility:

- **UC SAREP statewide staff are NOT eligible to apply for or participate on the team of any project.** County-based staff or academics working for the UC Organic Agriculture Institute, UC Master Food Preservers, and UC Small Farms Network are eligible to apply.

Applicants must demonstrate meaningful collaboration and involvement of stakeholders in the design and execution of the project. Priority is also given to projects that foster cross-collaborations between multiple types of applicants, contributing to a unified approach in addressing core areas of concern. For example, partnerships may involve farmers/ranchers or

Indigenous land managers working with agricultural or food system professionals. These professionals can include staff of community groups and/or non-profit organizations, public agencies, and Tribal governments, as well as UC Cooperative Extension specialists and advisors, and researchers at community colleges or other institutions of higher education. Any of these partners can be the lead applicant organization.

Previous grantees are eligible to apply after they have submitted a final report for their previously funded project.

Please contact us if you have any questions regarding eligibility.

Funding Available

Individual grants will be limited to a maximum of \$10,000, with *one* Applied Research Grant awarded up to \$20,000. In the past three years, we have funded approximately 20-40% of submitted proposals. Grants are cost-reimbursable on a quarterly basis. Invoices are required to be submitted for expenses incurred based on the approved budget. We expect that grantees will be notified by mid-March 2025. Due to the limited funds available, only one-year projects will be considered. **Projects may begin as soon as May 1, 2025 and must be completed by April 30, 2026.**

Please note: we are unable to offer no-cost extensions. Any funds that are not expended by the end of the grant cycle, April 30, 2026, and not invoiced by the deadline, June 15, 2026, will be forfeited.

Proposal Categories

Proposals are requested for three types of projects:

- ***Planning Grants***
- ***Education and Outreach Grants***
- ***Applied Research Grants***

Each proposal must address one of the Program Priority Areas listed above.

Category 1: Planning Grants

Planning grants are intended to support processes that bring together diverse stakeholders to plan for larger, more complex research and outreach projects for which larger funds are being sought. Grantees may apply for up to \$10,000.

Examples of previously funded Planning projects:

- the creation of a new food policy council;
- exploring how green jobs for women farmworkers can improve their working conditions and the well-being of their communities;
- building a research team and developing plans for conducting a life cycle analysis of California's beef production system;
- supporting and stewarding coastal San Mateo County producers to collaboratively identify opportunities to overcome common challenges related to expanding markets.

Category 2: Education and Outreach Grants

Education and outreach grants include educational events, technical assistance, development and dissemination of materials, and outreach components of research results that support the Program Priority Areas above. Grantees may apply for up to \$10,000.

Examples of previously funded Education and Outreach projects:

- providing legal guidance to low-income entrepreneurs interested in urban and suburban farming, home-based food businesses and cooperatively owned agricultural companies in the San Francisco Bay Area;
- helping Southeast Asian and other small farmers in Sacramento connect with processors and buyers;
- implementing a bilingual educational campaign to communicate the importance of locally and sustainably grown produce from farmers of diverse backgrounds in Napa County;
- providing training and practice workshops on low-cost agricultural technologies and techniques for new and aspiring minority farmers in the Monterey Bay Region.

Category 3: Applied Research Grants

These projects are intended to fund original, applied research in the above Program Priority Areas. Research projects should include an outreach component.

Applied Research Grant I: Grantees may apply for up to \$10,000.

Applied Research Grant II: Grantees may apply for up to \$20,000. *Only one Applied Research Grant II will be awarded.* The project must clearly demonstrate the need for funding at a higher level, such as a requirement for specific equipment or specialized expertise without which the project would not be feasible at all.

Examples of previously funded research projects:

- quantifying the effectiveness of different planting times and termination dates for cover crops for scavenging excess nitrogen in the soil and reducing nitrate leaching;
- developing an initial understanding of current livestock-crop integration economics, describing the spectrum of practices and economic arrangements in California;
- demonstrating the effect of regenerative grazing and conservation grazing on Blue oak populations;
- examining how the growing trend toward online sales and marketing is affecting farmers who normally sell through direct-to-consumer market channels in California.

For a full list of previously funded projects by this program, go to [UC SAREP Grants Program](#).

Proposal Requirements

Proposal Narrative (sections A-F)

All proposal narratives should address the following points. These will also serve as criteria against which proposals will be judged on a 100-point scale. The proposal narrative (sections A-F) must not exceed 5 single-spaced pages, 12-point font, including tables, figures, and photos. Figure and table legends cannot be smaller than 10-point font.

A. Relevance to Priority Area (15 points)

- State which category (Planning, Education and Outreach, or Applied Research) your proposal falls under.
- State which Program Priority Area (listed above) your project relates to and describe how your project helps address the issues outlined for that priority.
- Describe how your project is helping to create or strengthen organizations or systems that can respond or adapt effectively to ecological, economic, and social change or disruption.

B. Relevance to Target Audience (Justification) (15 points)

- Define the target audience(s)/community for the project. If the primary applicant is a business, it is essential to describe the stakeholders beyond your operation who will be involved with and benefit from the project.
- Describe the importance (need and/or demand) of the proposed project to this audience.
- Describe how the target audience/community is engaged in the development and implementation of the project. Provide evidence (letters of support or current/previous needs assessments) that the community is interested in the proposed project. Details in a letter of support may include the number of stakeholders the letter of support represents and how the project will benefit a specific stakeholder group.
- **PRIORITY POINTS (5 additional points):** If applicable, describe how the project will engage socially disadvantaged communities, Tribal communities, and/or socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, or land stewards. Please detail their involvement in the project conception, design, implementation, and impacts.

C. Goals and Objectives (20 points)

- Based on the needs of your target audience, state the goal(s) for the project. Goals are purpose statements about what you want the project to accomplish, or what specific changes you aim to achieve in the world. (They are not activities.)
- Under each goal, state measurable, outcome-oriented objectives necessary to reach that goal. Objectives are the specific actions you will undertake to achieve your stated goals.
- Goals and objectives of the project should be new or significantly expand a previous effort.
- For projects seeking SAREP funding for a component of a larger project, only describe the goals and objectives for the SAREP funding, and make it clear how the SAREP funding adds a distinct component to the larger project that might not otherwise be possible.

D. Methods/Activities/Timetable (15 points)

- Describe and justify your methods or activities.

- Methods or activities must be related to goals and objectives stated above.
- Include a timetable linked to the various activities and phases of the project. *Funding is available for one-year projects only. The grant period is May 1, 2025 through April 30, 2026.*

E. Products (10 points)

- Describe the products that will result from this project. Projects should include tangible products (for example, publications, web pages, social media posts, videos, radio shows, public art, decision support tools, reports, workshops and related materials, etc.). Innovative use of media is encouraged.
- Describe how information and results from this project will be extended to the target audience/community, and beyond to other potential statewide audiences.
- Planning Grant projects should articulate benefits and provide evidence that the planning will be used for a future research/education proposal.
- Projects that include equipment purchases and/or infrastructure improvement must also include an education component. This educational component should extend beyond the direct recipient(s) of the equipment or infrastructure, especially when those recipients are individual business enterprises.

F. Evaluation/Lessons Learned (10 points)

- Describe how you plan to evaluate and measure whether your stated objectives were met.
- Describe your plans for maintaining or expanding your project in the future (if relevant).

G. Capabilities of Project Team (10 points; not part of 5-page limit)

- The Project Team is composed of the Project Director, any other key personnel from the applicant's organization who will be overseeing or implementing the project, and key personnel from external project partners.
- Provide a list of team members. Describe their specific roles on this project and their relevant experience as it relates to the proposed project.
- Attach an abbreviated CV or resume (2-page limit) only for the Project Director.
- Attach a letter of support from each collaborating organization, agency, or business. Letters should state how the organization will participate in the project.
- Do NOT include photos of the project team.
- PRIORITY POINTS (5 additional points): If applicable, describe the organization's and/or project team's relationship, collaboration history and engagement with socially disadvantaged communities, Tribal communities, and/or socially disadvantaged farmers, ranchers, or land stewards.

H. Budget Requirements (5 points; not part of 5-page limit)

- Complete the [Budget Form](#).
- Include a **budget summary** in your proposal package a list of totals for each budget category and the total budget request.
- Provide a separate **budget justification** that describes project costs in detail for each category in which you are requesting funds, such as type and duration of personnel salaries and benefits, materials and supplies, purpose and location of travel.
- The budget should only describe funds requested from SAREP.
- Applicants who have additional funds to support the same project outlined in the

proposal, must:

- disclose the other funding (list the source, amount and effective dates);
- clearly describe how the SAREP grant feeds into the larger project and how the work funded by SAREP is distinct;
- describe the impact these funds would have if the proposed project is funded.
- Small* non-governmental organizations, Tribal governments, and farm or food businesses may include indirect (overhead) costs up to 10% of total direct costs in their project budget. Indirect costs are not allowed for institutions of higher education and governmental entities.
- Additional compensation or academic salary cost recovery for UC and other university academics or staff is prohibited.
- While equipment purchases and/or infrastructure improvement are allowable expenses, grants will not be awarded for the sole purpose of purchasing equipment or making infrastructure improvements at individual farms or businesses. Equipment purchases not to exceed \$5,000 for an individual item.

** Small businesses are defined as entities that meet the same requirements as California Small Business Certification requirements (actual certification is not required):*

<https://www.dgs.ca.gov/PD/Services/Page-Content/Procurement-Division-Services-List-Folder/Certify-or-Re-apply-as-Small-Business-Disabled-Veteran-Business-Enterprise>

Format and Submission Requirements

Applications for the SAREP Small Grants program must be submitted via [Google Forms](#). Applicants must sign into Google in order to complete the form. Applicants must complete the required questions in each section before advancing to the next section. Applicants may go back to review and make changes to previous sections before submitting the form. Once submitted, applications cannot be changed. It is recommended to have all application materials compiled before beginning Google Forms.

Proposal body must be in 12 pt. font size with one-inch margins. Please observe the word and page limits stated below. Refer to the Proposal Requirements section for description of what should be in each section. The entire proposal package with the exception of the Excel budget form must be combined into a single document in the order listed (proposal may be submitted as a .pdf, .doc, or .docx file. PDF is preferred). The Excel budget spreadsheet can be uploaded separately as an .xls or .xlsx file.

Required Forms

[Cover Page](#)

[Budget Form](#)

Submission Checklist

- Section I:** Complete SAREP Small Grants Application [Project Information and Funding Request questions in the Google Form](#). The questions are an abbreviated version of the Cover

Page. Applicants must both respond to the questions in the Google Form and complete the Cover Page template provided as part of Section II.

- Section II:** Upload the Cover Page and Body of the Proposal (sections A-I) in a single document. Proposal may be submitted as a .pdf, .doc, or .docx file. PDF is preferred).

Cover Page: Complete the [Cover Page](#) form provided. The Cover Page consists of basic applicant information, as well as an abbreviated project title (3-word maximum), and a project summary (150-word maximum).

Body of Proposal: Combine the following sections into a single document in the order listed.

Proposal Narrative: Sections A-F combined, must not exceed five single-spaced pages, 12 pt. font

- A. Relevance to Priority Area and Topics in this RFP
- B. Relevance to Target Audience (Justification)
- C. Goals and Objectives
- D. Methods/Activities/Timetable
- E. Products
- F. Evaluation/Lessons Learned
- G. Capabilities of Project Team (not part of 5-page limit)
- H. Budget Requirements (not part of 5-page limit)
 - Budget Form (see below)
 - Budget Summary: include in your proposal package a list of totals for each budget category and the total budget request
 - Personnel costs (salary and benefits)
 - Materials and supplies
 - Travel
 - Sub-awardees
 - Total direct costs
 - Indirect costs
 - Total costs
 - Budget Justification
- I. Attachments
 - CV or resume of Project Director, not to exceed 2 pages
 - Letters of Support
 - Tribal Council Approval (If the project involves a Tribe, include a letter from Chairperson on letterhead that states they are aware of the grant proposal.)
 - Literature cited (if appropriate)

- Budget:** complete the [Budget Form](#) provided and upload as a separate document

Once all sections of the form have been completed and the applicant is ready to submit, click the “Submit” button at the bottom of Section II. There will be a confirmation screen confirming that your application has been successfully submitted and a copy of the application will be sent via email to the email address used to submit the application.

Please visit the [SAREP Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems Small Grants Program 2025/26](#) webpage for more information and to submit your application.

Submission and Review Schedule

Proposals must be received by Tuesday, January 14, 2025, 5:00 pm PST. Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered for review.

All proposals will be reviewed by a committee of ANR personnel, outside reviewers with relevant experience, and members of SAREP's staff. We expect that successful applicants will be notified of awards by mid-March 2025.

For questions, please contact Kristen Farrar at kfarrar@ucanr.edu or (530) 786-0390.

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