



# ACRE

Agribusiness Center for  
Research & Entrepreneurship

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

### ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM APPLICATION

**Download and save the application before you fill it out. Your work will not be saved if you do not download it first.**

The Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship (ACRE), an initiative of the South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA), connects entrepreneurs with new opportunities in agriculture, research and agribusiness to strengthen the state's economy, particularly in rural counties.

The ACRE Entrepreneurship Center ("Center") seeks the most innovative and forward thinkers in South Carolina agribusiness for participation in an Entrepreneurship Program (the "Program"). The Center is looking for companies and products it can help support in the marketplace through a collaborative effort. This program does not support research. Applicants may not have previously been awarded funds through the Advanced Program.

**Applicants selected to participate in the EC Program could receive a grant of up to \$25,000 to develop their product or business, as well as access to a network of business mentors and grant writing consultants.** This is a competitive program; not all applicants will be selected to pitch or receive funds. If you've received money in the Advanced Program before, you are not eligible to apply again.

Please read the Terms and Conditions carefully before completing and submitting your application. By submitting your application to the Entrepreneurship Center, you accept and agree to the following terms and conditions:

1. Applicant operates a business headquartered in South Carolina.
2. The product and/or company for which Applicant is applying must be agribusiness related, and specifically related to one or more of the following categories:
  - a. Specialty crops
    - i. Fruits and vegetables
    - ii. Tree nuts
    - iii. Dried fruits
    - iv. Horticulture
    - v. Nursery crops
  - b. Meat products
  - c. Other foods (honey, cheese, milk, eggs, etc.)
  - d. Industrial hemp (not including hemp research)
  - e. Hydroponics or aquaponics
  - f. Container, urban, or indoor farming
  - g. Aquaculture
  - h. Timber
  - i. Mechanical harvesting
  - j. Agribusiness technology
  - k. Agritourism/education (school tours, workshops, etc.)
  - l. Row crop value-added product/process
  - m. Food hubs (not restaurants)

3. Applicant must submit his or her business plan along with the Application. See [page 7](#) for required business plan elements.
4. Applicant's business must have sales history and/ or an established product for which the Applicant is applying. ***If you have not reached this stage yet, we encourage you to apply to our Curriculum Program in the fall. Contact Kyle Player for more information.***
5. If Applicant is selected as a finalist:
  - a. Applicant must be able to pitch their product and/or company to our panel of judges.
    - i. Applicant must attend Pitch Day on May 15, 2024 at Phillips Market Center (PMC) at the South Carolina State Farmers Market in West Columbia, SC.
    - ii. Time slots will be set in coordination with the finalists.
  - b. Finalists will be notified of the results by May 24, 2024.
6. If the Applicant is selected to participate in the EC Program:
  - a. Funds will be awarded upfront with a grant agreement, mandatory progress reports, and a site visit from ACRE staff.
    - i. Applicant must supply ACRE with periodic progress reports (timeline to be determined per awardee), including a line item budget for spending the awarded funds.
    - ii. Applicant will work with ACRE staff to set up a site visit to his or her operation.
    - iii. Applicant will submit a final progress report and line item budget after the second distribution of grant funds is complete.
7. Applications are due by **March 8, 2024** and finalists will be reviewed by our advisory panel. All Applicants will be notified if they have been selected as a finalist far in advance of the Pitch Day.
8. Priority will be given to applicants from rural counties and applicants with products or companies that would have a high impact in rural counties, as defined by the USDA [here](#)
9. Applications will be reviewed based on merit as well as demonstrated financial need in the business plan. SCDA reserves the right to consider whether the applicant would be able to complete the proposed project without the requested grant funds.
10. Confidentiality Undertaking: SCDA recognizes that, as part of the application process, Applicants are required to provide SCDA and ACRE with Confidential Information related to Applicants' businesses and products. Confidential Information means all information in tangible or intangible form that is proprietary to the Applicant and has or could have value in the business or industry in which the Applicant is engaged. SCDA, ACRE, and their officers, directors, employees, agents, consultants, and representatives will hold in trust and maintain confidential, not disclose or make available to any third party whether orally, electronically, on disk, in writing, or otherwise, without prior approval of the Applicant, and not use for itself or for any third party (other than a use by a Party for the purposes stated above) any Confidential Information received from the Applicant or Applicant's agents.

I agree to the Terms and Conditions.

\_\_\_\_\_

Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

# APPLICANT QUESTIONNAIRE

\*Required

\*Applicant Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\*Gender  Female  Male  Prefer not to answer

\*Ethnicity  African American  Asian  Caucasian  Hispanic  Native American  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_  Prefer not to answer

\*Company Name \_\_\_\_\_

\*Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ \*City \_\_\_\_\_ \*ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

\*Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ \*Email \_\_\_\_\_

Company Website/Social Media Handles \_\_\_\_\_

\*If actively farming, list the number of acres under production \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation/Place of Employment \_\_\_\_\_

\*Are you a South Carolina Department of Agriculture employee or do you have any related family working as a current South Carolina Department of Agriculture employee?

Yes  No

## BUSINESS DETAILS QUESTIONNAIRE

Please answer all questions fully – “refer to business plan” is not an acceptable answer. If a question is not applicable, please explain.

\*Describe your business or product.

\*When did you start your company or develop your product (month/year)? \_\_\_\_\_

\*When did you make your first sales (month/year)? \_\_\_\_\_



\*Have you ever applied for or received any other grant funds (federal, state, or other)? If so, please describe.

\*Specifically, how would you use a grant award from the Entrepreneurship Center (EC)?

\*What efforts have you made to build your business? Have you been successful?

\*What are the biggest challenges you have had or continue to face?

\*How will your product/company benefit South Carolina and S.C. agribusiness in the short and long term?

\*What do you hope to get out of participation in the EC program?

How did you hear about the EC?

Have you ever been involved in any other agribusiness incubator and/or accelerator program?

# BUSINESS PLAN

\*Please attach your business plan with your application. The following is a brief outline of the topics you should include in your plan. This detailed guide walks you through what should be included in your plan. It also contains links to other business plan resources.

1. **Cover Sheet**

2. **Executive Summary** (no more than one page)

3. **Company Description**

Description of the business

Products or services

Location and facilities

Methods of record keeping

Key tools

4. **Organization and Management**

Legal Structure

Management

Personnel

Contracted professionals

5. **Market and Industry Analysis**

Market trends

Industry trends and descriptions

Competition

6. **Marketing and Promotion**

Target market

Promotional activities

Marketing implementation strategy

Marketing budget

7. **Service or Product Line**

Product benefits

Product design

Pricing

8. **Funding Request**

Grant funds requested

Matching funds and sources

Uses of grant funds

9. **Financials**

Summary of financial needs

Profit and loss/income statement

Cash flow

Sources and uses of funds

10. **Appendices**

Expanded financial tables

Resumes/employee descriptions

References for industry research

Permits, certifications, leases, etc.

Other project support

Please attach any pictures of your farm, product, or operations that the application judges might find helpful. If selected to pitch, you will have the opportunity to present more visuals.

If you have further questions about the application or grant process, please contact us as listed below, and we'd be glad to help.

**Please direct any questions you may have to:**

Kyle Player  
ACRE Executive Director  
803-734-2324  
[kplayer@scda.sc.gov](mailto:kplayer@scda.sc.gov)

**RETURN APPLICATION TO**

South Carolina Department of Agriculture  
Attn: Kyle Player  
P.O. Box 11280  
Columbia, SC 29211  
[kplayer@scda.sc.gov](mailto:kplayer@scda.sc.gov)

You will receive email confirmation from Kyle that your application has been received within three business days.