

The ACRE program continues to be a valuable and important partner in our agribusiness. What started as an opportunity for not just grant funding, but also to solidify our business plan and gain experience in pitching our company to others, has continued to be a valuable relationship and resource in the last five years. Not only has our company benefited and grown because of ACRE, but also ourselves as entrepreneurs in SC.

—2019 Advanced Awardee

This is a great program, and it has the potential to help a lot of small businesses. It has helped me to get to the next step financially, and has raised my confidence in myself, and my business.

—2023 Curriculum Awardee

The ACRE Advanced Grant provided the initial impetus for us to develop a business plan. Although we did not receive the grant the first year, it was an incredible experience. The next year, we received the grant, and it was life changing. Since that time, Kyle and her network have worked tirelessly to support our efforts.

—2020 Advanced Awardee

ACRE gave me even more confidence in my ability to transition into the Agriculture Industry as a new female farmer. The content, information, and resources have been invaluable.

—2022 Curriculum Awardee

### **Other Areas of Emphasis Under ACRE**

- Research initiatives
- Small business development grants
- Workforce development
- High school entrepreneurship program
- Local food logistics

If you have any questions,  
please contact:

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**South Carolina  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

[agriculture.sc.gov](http://agriculture.sc.gov)



**SOUTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**ENTREPRENEURSHIP  
CENTER**



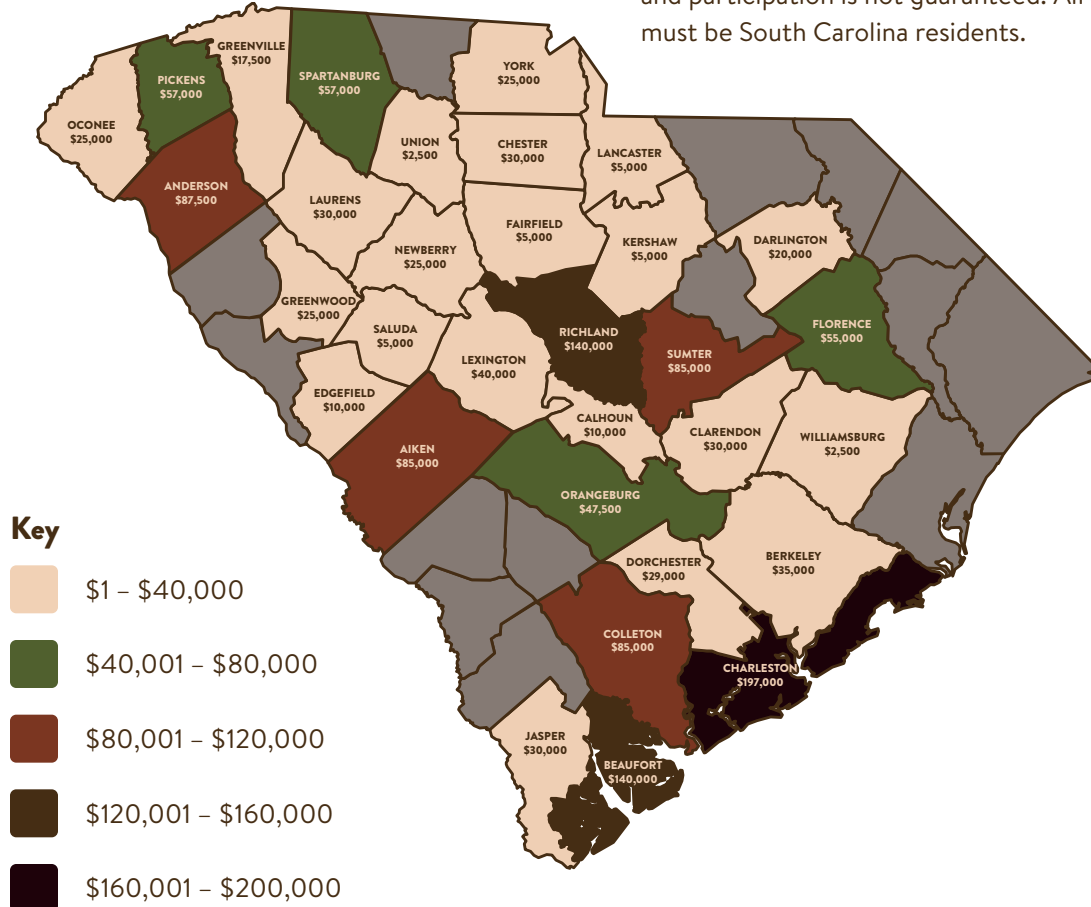
## ENTREPRENEURSHIP CENTER

South Carolina is ripe with budding entrepreneurs who have new and innovative ideas in specialty crops (fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops), meat products, aquaculture, timber, agritourism, hydroponics or aquaponics, container or indoor farming, mechanical harvesting, agribusiness technology, and any other innovative agriculture practices.

ACRE serves this audience with two entrepreneurship grant programs:

**The Curriculum Program** is open to any current or potential farmer/agribusiness owner in South Carolina. It is held in the fall every year, with five two-hour virtual courses spread out over five weeks, concluding with an online pitch day in November. Participants will receive training in marketing, financial planning, value-added processes, legal requirements, state and federal grant opportunities, and more. Upon completion of the program, each participant will have built their own business plan, receive a certificate verifying successful completion, and will have the opportunity to pitch their business for the chance to be awarded one of six \$5,000 grants. This is a free but competitive program, and participation is not guaranteed. All applicants must be South Carolina residents.

**The Advanced Program** takes place every spring and is designed for established agribusinesses. Applicants must have their business operations in South Carolina, possess a business plan, and have an existing product with sales or services provided. Applicants selected as finalists will be asked to pitch their business to a panel of judges. Anywhere from 5–12 awardees will be chosen from this group of finalists. Awardees receive up to \$25,000 in grant funding, professional assistance with further state and federal grant applications, and promotion of their product across the state and beyond. Previous businesses awarded have been specialty crops (luffa, sea beans, tea, lavender, mushrooms), aquaculture (hydroponics, shellfish farming), dairies (cow, goat, sheep), value-added row crops (cotton, peanuts), fertilizer, and agricultural education, tourism, and technology operations.



### Successes

Since 2017, ACRE has:

- Given grants totaling \$1,612,500 to 144 entrepreneurs
- Provided intensive agribusiness training to 131 entrepreneurs
- Hosted agricultural workshops for 3,350 state residents ('18-'25)
- Served people in every South Carolina county
- Received 7 USDA Rural Business Development Grants and 4 Rural Cooperative Development Grant to extend our reach in rural South Carolina

Product Category	Funding (\$)
Ag Education	\$10,000
Ag Input	\$40,000
Ag Marketing	\$25,000
Ag Technology	\$35,000
Dairy	\$117,500
Food Hub	\$57,500
Livestock	\$100,000
Meat Products	\$72,500
Oysters	\$30,000
Produce	\$316,000
Specialty Crops	\$504,500
Value-Added	\$254,500
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,372,500</b>