



**Item #09-6-5  
Information**

**Land Use & Housing Committee**

May 27, 2009

**RUCS Grant Opportunity**

**Issue:** A grant opportunity through the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program is being pursued.

**Recommendation:** None, this item is informational.

**Discussion:** The RUCS team is developing a pre-application for the Research and Education component of the Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. SARE is the U.S. Department of Agriculture's grant program focused on developing agricultural systems that are "economically viable, environmentally sounds and socially responsible." Work that is planned for the RUCS project meets the objectives of this program and could be supported by this grant if an application is successful. Grant awards range from \$30,000 to \$200,000 and matching funds are not required. SACOG will be seeking as much as \$200,000.

A pre-application is due by June 12 and successful proposals will be selected to submit a full application in September. Full applications are due by November 13, 2009. A draft abstract for the pre-application is included as Attachment A. If this pre-application is successful, the full application will be brought to the committee for review and approval.

Approved by:

Mike McKeever  
Executive Director

MM:DS:ef

Attachment

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SACOG Draft Abstract for  
Western SARE Competitive Grants  
Research and Education Program

Historically, the Sacramento region contained a large number of small and medium sized farms that supplied fruit and vegetables to markets throughout the United States. It is impossible to interview producers in this region without the conversation at some point turning to the success of historical agricultural industries and the processing centers that allowed medium sized producers to access markets. Today, markets are dominated by large producers and processors. At the same time, a handful of small farms have developed markets supplying mainly organic fresh vegetable and some fruit to local markets in the San Francisco Bay Area and the Sacramento region. These farm sectors have overshadowed the loss of medium sized farms throughout the region. Today, the Sacramento region has a bimodal distribution of markets that are either small scale organic or large scale commodity operations. Through our Rural-Urban Connections Strategy project, SACOG and project stakeholders have recognized the potential for local markets to help the viability of small and medium scale farms, as well as identified information and education gaps to promoting this opportunity.

SACOG is conducting research and outreach to understand local market opportunities. This work includes analyzing how expanding local markets will drive the need for new and expanded infrastructure, such as warehousing, processing, and distribution, in the region necessary to “re-localizing” the food system. Detailed crop mapping and farm economics completed for our region in 2009 underpin a land use model that will determine yield, return on investment, and land supply needed for our region’s food production. This model is already being used in the Sacramento region to inform policy and regulatory decision for urban growth and transportation investment. SACOG has begun adapting this model to greatly increase the detail at which rural areas can be analyzed for policy makers in the region.

This proposal continues to engage farmers, ranchers, resource agency staff, and university researchers to collect, refine and disseminate qualitative and quantitative information needed to increase market access for medium and underserved small scale farms. SACOG’s current work developing an advisory group of sustainable operations has formed a solid foundation for this effort. A final product of this effort will be a “toolkit” that will provide enough detail to help producers and distributors implement a local food system in the Sacramento region. The toolkit will include guidance on policy and regulatory requirements, which may also be used by local elected officials interested in reforms that streamline the permitting process for smaller farm operations. Economic data being developed will provide the ability to conduct pro forma analysis of various business models for local farms. SACOG’s award-winning outreach approach will engage stakeholders to refine the tools in order to provide easily accessible and usable information to all stakeholders in the Sacramento region. It is anticipated that the toolkit may be used by other regions interested in a local food system.