



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Center for Urban Smart Agriculture

Service Eligibility Partners (SEP) Grant Program Invitation for Proposals

Purpose:

The **Service Eligibility Partners (SEP) Grant Program** is designed to help local growers participate in the “Service Incubator” series presented by **the University of Arizona Center for Urban Smart Agriculture**. This opportunity supports growers and small-scale operations in building the capacity outlined in their business plans, while also increasing their eligibility for USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA) and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) services and programs.

Completed applications must be submitted by 5:00 PM on April 30, 2025.

What Will the Grant Fund?

The SEP Grant program will fund projects that promote

- **Agriculture Business Development:**
 - Professional development in operating an agriculture business.
 - Financial literacy for increase eligibility in USDA, FSA, and NRCS programs and services.
 - Implement or enhance record-keeping for agriculture business.
 - Translation services for growers.
 - And/or other needs producers identify and justify that they will increase their eligibility for FSA and NRCS programs and services.
- **Agriculture Operational Enhancements:**
 - Incorporation of your business,
 - translation services.
- **Eligibility Focus:** Projects that increase eligibility for FSA and NRCS programs and services.

Eligibility Requirements:

- **Location:** Operation must be in Maricopa County, Arizona
- **Farming Status:** Must be actively farming/ranching or starting a farm/ranch.
- **Size:** Small-scale operation must be under 50 acres or under \$25,000 annual revenue.
- **Employees:** Must have no more than 5 employees.
- **Prior Funding:** Not had prior FSA or NRCS funding in the past 10 years.
- **Product:** Cannot be produced for private consumption. The primary product must be a farm commodity. Operations that manufacture agricultural support supplies are not eligible.
- Be registered with the Arizona Department of Revenue.

Funding and Duration:

- Total available funding through the SEP Grant program is \$80,000.
- The minimum grant request is **\$5,000**. The Maximum grant request is **\$10,000**.
- The time period for projects funded through the SEP Grant is **12 months**. All funds awarded through this grant opportunity must be expended within the 12-month project period.
- Advanced payments are available.

Commitment:

- Completion: All work within 12 months of grant agreement.
- Agreement: Grant recipients must sign a Sub-Award Grant Agreement with the University of Arizona and agree to the terms required by the federal government.
- Service Incubator Workshops: Participate in the Service Incubator Series.
- Reporting: The grant recipient must submit monthly reports detailing their progress toward achieving key performance measures to the University of Arizona Center for Urban Smart Agriculture.

Deadline:

- Completed applications and proposals are due **no later than 5 P.M. Wednesday, April 30, 2025**.

Desired Project:

This Section outlines the “Desired Project” that will result from a successful grant application.

The Desired Project should:

- Promote efforts to reduce the impact of local food production/urban agriculture on our changing climate (mitigation).
- Enhance the resiliency of both the farm and local food system in the face of various shocks and disruptions (adaptation).
- Adopt new and/or expand existing sustainable food production practices
- Advance equity within the local food system.
- Strengthen the economic viability of the farm by increasing the ability to grow and sell products locally.
- Contributes to greater capacity to distribute healthy food to people in need.

Criteria:

Proposals will be evaluated through the following:

- Project plan
 - Project plan must include one or more of the desired project characteristics detailed in the previous section.
 - Project plan must clearly demonstrate how project works toward creating a more resilient food system.
 - Clarity of the plan
 - Inputs
 - Outcomes
 - Logistics
 - Project’s alignment with NRCS/FSA program eligibility.

- Feasibility.
- Project plan must include a timeline outlining how the project will be completed within 12 months.
- Project Budget
 - Budget is clear and presented as requested.
 - Justification for all requested funds.
 - Refer to the project budget details under “Proposal Instructions” section.
- Qualifications and experience of applicant(s)
 - Please outline the qualifications and prior experiences of each food and agricultural system entity and team members.
 - Indicate any prior involvement with the University of Arizona Urban Agriculture Production, Small-Scale, and Beginning Farmer Program, including participation in technical assistance opportunities, workshops, field days, or related courses.

Proposal Instructions:

Grant applicants must attach a project proposal as part of this application process. A template is included at the end of this document.

At a minimum, applicant proposals should include:

- Project plan
 - Project description
 - Project outcomes
 - Project timeline
 - Qualifications and experience of applicant(s)
- Eligible Costs and Project budget
 - Personnel (salary and wages)
 - Fringe Benefits
 - Equipment
 - Supplies
 - Contractual Services
 - Consultant (professional services)
 - Occupancy (rent and utilities)
 - Training and Education
 - Administrative costs
 - Miscellaneous costs
 - Other costs
- Applicant Resume or summary of qualifications and experience related to the project
- Additional Optional Attachments
 - Photos
 - Maps
 - Design specs
 - Other

You will be notified about the status of your application within 30 calendar days from the closing date of April 30, 2025.

If you have any questions or need help in completing this application, please contact Naomi Pier at nmpier@arizona.edu or call 602-827-2140.