



South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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ACRE Seeks Entrepreneurs in Agriculture

COLUMBIA — Home-grown innovators could get business mentoring and funding through a program aimed at helping South Carolina agribusinesses.

The [Agribusiness Center for Research and Entrepreneurship](#) (ACRE) at the South Carolina Department of Agriculture will accept applications for its 2021 Advanced Entrepreneurship program through May 3, 2021.

Applicants selected will have the opportunity to pitch to a panel of judges in June, competing to be awarded up to \$25,000 for their company or product.

“We’re looking to find these small businesses that aren’t traditional and help them a little bit,” says Kyle Player, ACRE’s executive director.

Now in its third year, ACRE has so far awarded nearly \$500,000 to 35 entrepreneurs, helped these entrepreneurs secure more than \$1 million in grant funding, and provided intensive training to 60 businesses.

Previous awardees have had some notable successes. Barrier Island Oyster Co. is now selling its hand-raised farmed oysters at Whole Foods. Covered In Cotton, a family company that grows cotton to make woven blankets, was overall winner of Garden & Gun’s Made In the South Awards last year. Heron Farms, a company that grows salt-tolerant sea beans, is in production and growing rapidly. And family-owned dairy Nance Farm used ACRE funding to build a creamery from the ground up.

The Advanced Entrepreneurship application requires a business plan and a prototype or sales history for the applicant’s company or product. Applicants must be South Carolina residents. For the first time this year, the application also includes a detailed guide to what ACRE is looking for in a business plan.

ACRE has a separate program each fall for beginning innovators who have an agribusiness idea but don’t have experience in business.

For more information, visit acre-sc.com or contact Kyle Player at 803-734-2324 or kplayer@scda.sc.gov.

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