

## **Beginning Farmer Travel Scholarships Policy**

### **Tennessee Beginning Farmer Outreach Program**

rev. by Xiurui 'Iris' Cui 10/8/2019

**The Tennessee Beginning Farmer Development Program** awards travel scholarships to assist new and beginning farmers in attending appropriate conferences (Pick Tennessee Conference, Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (SSAWG) Conference, and others as determined by the lead co-principal investigators on the project). Priority will be given to farmers who are currently participating, have recently graduated from, or who are good candidates for participating in the University of Tennessee-Tennessee State University Extension new and beginning farmers training program. Funds are made possible by a grant from USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Scholarships are limited to \$500 per awardee; awardees must attend any sessions sponsored by our training and fully participate in conference activities to obtain these funds. The application for reimbursement will be provided on-site subject to meeting these criteria.

Only one member of a farm family or farming operation can receive the award.

Only one travel scholarship will be awarded by the Tennessee Beginning Farmer Development Program per calendar year per farm family or farming operation.

For 2020, scholarships are available for up to a total of twelve awardees in the state of Tennessee as long as funds are available. **APPLICATIONS DUE by noon on December 2nd, 2019**

#### Conference information and cost estimate:

- Pick Tennessee Conference, Feb 20-22 in Franklin: <http://www.picktnconference.com>
  - Registration \$125 through Feb 15
  - Conference lodging rate: \$145/night, plus state and local tax
  - Meals per diem: \$61/day
- Southern SAWG Conference, Jan 22-25 in Little Rock, AR: <https://www.ssawg.org/>
  - Registration \$190 through Dec 21, 2019
  - Conference lodging rate: \$114/night, plus state and local tax
  - Meals per diem: \$55/day
- Other Conferences: Lodging and meal expenses are up to the GSA CONUS rate + tax for the conference city, with an exception for the official conference hotel and rate published in the conference literature or website. Per diem rates can be found at: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates/>

### **Information for UT-TSU Extension staff:**

- From the proposal:
  - Work plan: “Travel stipends will be awarded through a competitive application process to support travel by beginning farmers to regional or national events where they will gain knowledge and skills to enhance their farm succeed and network. Recipients will conduct training upon their return to transfer their knowledge to local farmers. Some examples of potential destinations to travel include National Farmer Veterans Stakeholders Conference, AgrAbility Project National Training Workshop, National Small Farmers Conference, and National Farm to Cafeteria Conference, Sustainable Agriculture and Research Education (SARE) workshops, other state Beginning Farmer Workshops or educational workshops.”
  - Budget narrative: “We are requesting travel scholarships for Beginning Farmers to participate in Regional and national conferences/workshops. Estimated travel, lodging and registration is \$1,500 per event for a total of 4 events per year totaling \$18,000.” (Note that the \$1,500 estimate is approximate cost to attend AgrAbility National Training Workshop, which has high registration costs, airfare, lodging and per diem.)
- Stipends are limited to \$500 per awardee; awardees must attend any sessions sponsored by our training program and fully participate in conference activities to obtain these funds.
- Only one member of a farm family or farming operation can receive the award.
- UT Form T-6 Non IRIS Travel Expense Report <https://finance.tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads/forms/T-6.doc> will be provided on-site subject to scholarship recipients meeting these criteria.
- Individuals requesting reimbursement of travel and registration expenses will be registered as Guest Traveler in the UT IRIS financial management system by their county Extension office. To expedite the reimbursement process, the Guest Traveler Worksheet (Form T-24 <https://finance.tennessee.edu/wp-content/uploads/forms/T-24.doc>) can be completed and the information entered into IRIS prior to the trip.
  - Individuals may already be registered in IRIS as a guest traveler, past employee or other status.
  - If the individual is already registered in IRIS by another unit (department, region, county), then reimbursement must be submitted through that unit. This is a UT policy that we cannot change. If the individual is no longer affiliated with that department, it may be possible to change their affiliation, but it will most likely not be a quick process.
- Registration may be accomplished online through the conference website, by mailing the registration form and payment, or by faxing the form and credit card information.
- Individuals must pay registration, lodging, travel and other expenses using their own funds and request reimbursement by UT Extension after the event.
- Reimbursement amounts are up to the amounts allowable by UT Extension and UT Fiscal Policy, up to a maximum \$500 reimbursement per award.
  - Lodging expenses are up to the GSA CONUS rate + tax for the conference city, with an exception for the official conference hotel and rate published in the conference literature or website. Per diem rates can be found at: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates/>

- Refer to <https://finance.tennessee.edu/travel> for current UT policy.
- Contact Co-Project Directors Tim Prather or David Hughes if you have questions or need additional information.

**Other conferences:**

Several funding sources are available to benefit farmers, each with its own funding stipulations:

- **Tennessee AgrAbility Project** has funds are designated for:
  - TSU New Farmer Academy tuition (in subaward to TSU)
  - Farmer with disability to participate in 2020 AgrAbility National Training Workshop (UT Extension)
- **TSU Extension SARE projects** may have travel funds available for producers and agents professional development

**FAQ for farmers:**

1. How many travel scholarships are available?
  - a. Up to 12 in the state of Tennessee for 2020. The applications will be reviewed by the selection committee using the following criteria:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Points</b>
Business Plan	The applicant must have a business plan and the plan will be scored based on: 1) Content of the plan, including the thoroughness and quality of the analysis 2) Effective use of business information and research 3) Clear communication 5) Probability of successful launch 6) Community Impact and job creation potential	30
Target Audience	Military personnel, veteran farmers or farmers with disabilities are given priority considerations.	25
Extension Participation	The applicant has been actively participating educational programs with the UT-TSU Extension.	25
Significance	The applicant has not attended the proposed conference before and the conference will provide valuable educational training to the applicant.	10
Applicant Commitment	The applicant is committed to share knowledge with other farmers.	10

2. How can I apply for a travel scholarship to the conference?
  - a. Contact your Tennessee Beginning Farmer Development Program Coordinator (Karla Kean at Montgomery County Extension, or Jenni Goodrich at Morgan County Extension) or your county Extension office to get more information and discuss your interests in the program.
3. Will you pay my registration for me so I won't have to?

- a. No. We will not be doing that because it has not worked out in the past. We have found that people don't commit their time and effort unless they have 'some skin in the game,' and we have had people change their mind after we paid their registration fee, or they want to come at the last minute, long after the registration deadline had passed.
4. What receipts do I need to provide in order to be reimbursed?
  - a. The conference registration receipt and hotel receipts showing a \$0 balance. You do not need a receipt for parking under \$50 or for meals. Your Extension office staff will make sure you have the correct documentation.
5. Why do I have to provide my Social Security Number? I don't want to.
  - a. It is required by the University in order to register a Guest Traveler and for reimbursement of expenses.
6. How long will it take to get my money back?
  - a. The reimbursement process can generally be completed in a week or two, so you should be reimbursed before your credit card payment is due.
7. My (spouse, child, friend, business partner, etc.) wants to attend also. Can they apply for a scholarship too?
  - a. Only one individual per farm family or farm operation will be awarded a scholarship. We need to spread the opportunities to as many farms as possible.
  - b. Remember, attending conferences may be deductible as a business expense. Also remember that if you claim the conference expenses as a business expense, you must account for the income of the travel scholarship.
8. There has to be a string attached to this offer. What is expected from me?
  - a. First, participate in the conference to increase your knowledge and skills in order to be the most successful farmer you can be.
  - b. Second, participate in conference sessions, workshops and activities sponsored by this grant program.
  - c. Third, be an advocate for Tennessee agriculture and a mentor to other beginning farmers in your area, including assistance with UT-TSU programs for beginning farmers.
  - d. You may be asked to represent the Tennessee Beginning Farmer Development Program in an interview or other opportunities to share information gained by attending the conference.