

Thelma Hansen Fund Competitive Grant Program 2026 Request for Proposals

Background and Priority Areas

The Thelma Hansen Fund (THF) awards research, extension and education grants to benefit and sustain agriculture and natural resources in Ventura County. The grant program is managed through the Hansen Agricultural Research and Extension Center (HAREC) and UC Cooperative Extension, Ventura County.

Thelma Hansen Fund Goals

- Ensure the economic viability of plant and animal agriculture to sustain agriculture's contribution to a healthy Ventura County
- Protect natural resources by increasing water and nutrient use efficiency, reducing pesticide and fossil fuel inputs and promoting soil, watershed and ecosystem health
- Increase public understanding and support of agriculture, including the relationship of agriculture to the economy, healthy families, and the natural resource base.

UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) Priority Areas (Strategic Vision 2040)

- Agriculture and food systems
- Natural ecosystems and working landscapes
- Thriving people and communities
- Climate change
- Innovation
- Regulations, policy, and compliance
- Systemic inequities

Ventura County Priority Areas:

- *Water quality and/or quantity:* e.g., improving water use efficiency, fertilizer use efficiency and minimizing contamination of groundwater while sustaining profitable crop yields, protection and rehabilitation of watersheds.
- *Emerging and re-emerging pests, diseases and weeds:* e.g., biology, epidemiology, diagnosis, detection and monitoring, modeling and prediction, loss/damage assessment, biological, cultural, and chemical control, IPM, pesticide resistance.
- *Sustainable/regenerative agriculture methods:* e.g., methods that protect natural resources, improve soil and plant health and resiliency to climate change, improve animal health and welfare, and protect pollinators and beneficial organisms.
- *Innovation and new technology:* e.g., new crops or production techniques, precision agriculture, new technologies to improve quality and value of food products, food safety, production efficiency and waste reduction.
- *Agricultural careers and literacy:* e.g., agricultural education and training for teens and young adults, internship programs, experiential learning and hands-on programs for kids, community education activities.

- *Economic viability:* e.g., strategies that enhance competitiveness of Ventura County’s agricultural producers and products, maintain and enhance market share and provide added value.
- *Natural resources:* e.g., post-fire landscape recovery, working landscapes/ecosystem services, climate change mitigation, carbon sequestration, sustainable urban forests.

1. Eligibility:

University of California researchers and educators, such as advisors, specialists, academic coordinators, and project scientists are eligible to apply for THF grants.

Non-UC researchers or educators are eligible to apply **only** in collaboration with UC researchers or other UC academics. Applicants do not have to be located in Ventura County but the project must benefit Ventura County.

The Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-PIs must be in good standing on all previously funded THF projects.

There is a 2-proposal limit per PI (either as PI or co-PI) per grant cycle. Proposals that exceed the PI eligibility limit (beyond the first two submissions based on timestamp) will be returned without review.

The HAREC Director and the UCCE Director are not eligible to apply for THF funding.

2. Proposal Categories:

Applied Research Grants – Applicants may apply for grants of 1 or 2 years in duration with total project funding up to \$35,000 per project. Applied research grants must contain an extension/outreach component.

Education and Outreach Grants – Applicants may apply for grants of 1 or 2 years in duration with total project funding up to \$35,000 to support educational events, materials and outreach activities.

3. Proposal Requirements:

Proposals may be submitted for research or education activities. Forms can be found on the [THF Competitive Grant Program Website](#). In addition to the [Grant Submission Form and Cover Page](#) the following components are required for a complete application:

- Summary/Abstract:** Provide an abstract of 250 words or less for use in the HAREC Annual Report and website describing the project, the issue(s) being addressed, objectives, methodology and expected outcomes.
- Project Participants:** List PI, Co-PI’s, collaborators and cooperators (other project participants, such as growers, consultants, educators) and their affiliations. Explain the roles and contributions of each participant.
- Project Narrative:** The project narrative should include the following listed below. The narrative should not exceed 5 single-spaced pages, including tables, figures and photos, with no smaller than a 12-point font and 1-inch margins.

- i. **Background:** Include a concise statement of the problem and its importance to Ventura County agriculture and/or natural resources. Identify which Ventura County priority area the project will address. Provide a brief summary of other relevant previous and ongoing research efforts, if applicable.
 - ii. **Justification/Relevance:** Describe how the project will address the problem and the potential short- and long-term benefits to Ventura County agriculture and/or natural resources. Identify and justify which of the Thelma Hansen Fund goals the project supports. Briefly describe community support for the project, if applicable.
 - iii. **Literature Review:** for research proposals (and education proposals as appropriate). Include a concise review of the literature relevant to the proposal, making sure to include recent studies if available (no more than 15 references).
 - iv. **Objectives:** The list of objectives should be brief and logically related to the solution of the problem or the opportunity identified.
 - v. **Procedures:** For research projects, include the experimental design (location, size and number of plot areas, number of treatments, number of replicates, etc.), data to be collected, timeline, and methods of data analysis. For education projects, describe planned activities in detail and include a timeline. Describe methods by which progress on learning objectives will be measured.
 - vi. **Extension of Results:** Explain plans for sharing the project results, engaging with stakeholders and the public, and methods used to evaluate condition changes and anticipated project impacts. Include details such as planned publications, field days, seminars, surveys, etc.
- D. Budget and Budget Justification:** Provide a complete budget using the [2026 THF Budget Worksheet](#) available on the [website](#) and a separate justification that describes project costs in detail, such as type and duration of personnel salaries and benefits, materials and supplies, and purpose and location of travel. A complete explanation of all current and pending support (cash or in-kind) listing the source, amount and effective dates should also be provided. PI and Co-PI salaries are not eligible. Indirect costs are not eligible. Projects already funded by other sources are not eligible. Cost sharing or matching is encouraged but not required.
- E. Curriculum Vitae or Resume:** Include a short CV or Resume (1 to 2 pages) for the Principal Investigator and co-PIs, as well as any key personnel (e.g., postdoc or research associate with major role in the project).
- F. Literature cited list** (no more than 15 references).
- G. Letters of Support** (if appropriate).

4. Review Criteria

In addition to the requirements listed above, the following areas will be considered during the review process:

- The level of direct impact and benefit to agriculture and/or natural resources in Ventura County
- Completeness and clarity of the proposal. For research proposals, the validity and appropriateness of the experimental design, procedures and statistical analysis, and realistic timeline
- Competence, experience, and integrity of the persons/organizations responsible for conducting the proposed project
- Cost-sharing with other sources of funding
- Collaboration or synergistic activities involving multiple investigators or entities
- For research projects, planned location of research:
 - at Hansen REC
 - within the borders of Ventura County or
 - outside of Ventura County - provide clear justification why a Ventura County location is either unavailable or inadequate

5. Submission and Review Schedule

Proposals must be received by **Wednesday, April 8, 2026, at 5:00 pm PDT**. Proposals received after this deadline will not be considered for review. Submit proposals **as a single PDF file** via [THF Grant Submission Form and Cover Page](#). Research proposals received by the deadline will be reviewed by the Hansen Research Advisory Committee for scientific merit and by the UCCE VC Advisory Board for relevance to Ventura County priority areas. Education proposals will be reviewed by the UCCE VC Advisory Board for merit and fit to the priority areas. We expect that successful applicants will be notified by the end of June 2026.

6. Award

Funds will be awarded for performance periods of up to two years. The award start date must be July 1, 2026 or later.

A progress report is due no later than 30 days after the end of each year for multiyear projects. Second-year funding will be released upon evidence of sufficient progress. A final report is due no later than 60 days from completion of the project.

Questions?

Contact Brandy McCarthy (THFProgram@ucanr.edu) with questions about submission, content or program requirements. Forms can be found on the [THF Competitive Grant Program Website](#).