

Rapid Outcomes from Agricultural Research (ROAR)

Background

The purpose of ROAR is to quickly disburse funds for research and extension in response to emerging or unanticipated threats to the nation's food supply caused by agricultural pests and pathogens. ROAR enhances our capacity to mitigate, contain and prevent outbreaks. Research funded through ROAR is short term and focused on deploying diagnostics, instituting monitoring protocols, and developing prevention and mitigation strategies that will be applied quickly through extension or other outreach methods. ROAR leverages private funding from commodity groups, industry and non-governmental organizations by providing matching funds from FFAR for approved projects.

Project Details

Structure

ROAR is structured around self-organized consortia consisting of researchers, extension agents, institutions, commodity and industry representatives, diagnostic laboratories, and relevant state and local government representatives. These consortia 1) provide a network of experts to set research priorities, 2) determine the most qualified teams to complete the work, 3) administer funding, 4) track progress and 5) manage communication around research progress and outcomes.

Application Process

In the event of an outbreak, the consortium may submit a one-page concept note outlining (1) the consortium members including researchers, industry representatives and government officials, (2) the source and amount (up to \$150,000) of matching funds for the project and (3) a brief description of the pest or pathogen threat and why it should be considered for rapid funding. The consortium must designate a lead organization to enter into the potential grant agreement with FFAR. Based upon the concept note, FFAR may invite the consortium to submit an application for the ROAR program.

The application describes the fit of the pest or pathogen for use of the consortium and FFAR's resources, addressing the criteria (1) and (2) below. The application also outlines a one-year action plan and budget and identifies researchers who will perform the work, a communications strategy for disseminating results, a plan for identifying future funding beyond FFAR's investment, and a description of how the outcomes of the project will benefit the agricultural community during future outbreaks. Indirect expenses may not exceed 10% of each consortium application (including indirect costs for subawardees). FFAR internally reviews the application using the following criteria:

1. The outbreak has, or is likely to have, regional (multi-state) and/or national implications.
2. The pest/pathogen is acute in nature and has substantial economic implications for a given commodity.
3. The program targets near-term (one-year) results that enhance the ability to mitigate, contain and prevent outbreaks.

4. The program is scientifically rigorous and identifies the most capable project team to perform the work.
5. The program will produce or contribute to practical solutions for a given pest or pathogen outbreak.
6. The program will generate unique information that can prevent or mitigate similar outbreaks in the future.
7. The budget is adequate to complete the work and/or there is potential to find additional support to continue the work.

FFAR renders decisions to fund or not to fund an application within one week of submission. If FFAR decides to fund an application, funds are transferred to a mutually-agreed upon account managed by the Consortium within two business days of the final negotiated application.

Grants have a term of one year. If the Consortium would like to request resources for one additional year, a separate application for funding must be submitted no earlier than 90 days before, and no later than 30 days after the original grant's end date. FFAR makes a decision to extend or not extend grant funding within 20 business days of application submission. Extensions are also subject to 1:1 matching funding requirements.

Funding Model

Lead organizations enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with FFAR that defines the maximum amount of funding they will provide in the case of an outbreak. This limit is reset annually. FFAR provides matching funds as determined by the ROAR standing committee.

FFAR allocates a nominal percentage of the all funds raised toward program support, including a communal funding pool and program administration. The communal funding pool is reserved for circumstances in which the research needs outstrip the funding capabilities of a given commodity. Additional support for the communal pool is sought from a broad range of organizations in the private and foundation sectors. Program administration includes review of the Consortium applications, collecting reporting requirements, and communication of outcomes to donors and stakeholders.

FFAR can match consortium funds if they are categorized as cash, in-kind specific to a line item in the application budget or parallel funding. The amount accepted from each category is negotiated on a case-by-case basis.

Reporting

A funded application requires reporting to FFAR at 6 months and 12 months following the date of the award. The report is not to exceed 5 pages (single-spaced, Calibri or Times New Roman, 11-12 pt. font, 1 inch margins) and will contain the following:

1. Brief description of the research program.
2. Updates for each of the goals and objectives outlined in the original project application. The updates should describe: progress to date, challenges faced and how the research team is addressing/ has addressed them, and how results for each result/objective are being or will be communicated to the broader agricultural community.

3. For mid-year reviews, a look ahead to work to be completed in the next six months as well as to challenges expected and strategies for overcoming those challenges. For year-end reviews, a discussion of how the information gleaned from the project will be used going forward and summary of outstanding questions to address with further research.
4. For mid-year reviews, an overview of the current budget status. For end-of-year reviews, an overview of final expenditures.