FFAR Primary Evaluation Criteria

1. **Impact and Relevance (15%)**
   - Is the proposal relevant to the RFA?
   - Do the proposed activities address an important problem or need in U.S. food and agriculture systems?
   - Please summarize how the proposal would address the challenge outlined in the RFA.
   - Will the proposed outcomes have a significant impact on U.S. food and agriculture systems?
   - How important are the potential impact if this project is funded and successful (societal and scientific)?
   - Does the proposed continuation/expansion project build on its initial results (baseline) and continue to demonstrate creativity, ingenuity, resourcefulness, or imagination? Does it go beyond the initial project to address what the applicant has learned or explore new partnerships, new audiences, or improvements to systems?
   - If the project fails or does not yield the expected outcome, what are the potential benefits or lessons learned?

2. **Scientific or Technical Merit (20%)**
   - Does the proposal articulate a sound scientific or technical reasoning for the project? In other words, is the proposed project conceptually sound?
   - Does the proposal outline an implementation strategy that demonstrates the feasibility of the project?
   - Does the proposal include a data management plan that is appropriate for the scope of work?

3. **Project Strategy and Feasibility (10%)**
   - Is the proposal responsive to the RFA?
   - Are the overall program approach, strategy, and design clearly described and supported by established theory and practice? Are the base of evidence and any necessary adaptations clearly defined and referenced?
   - Are the proposed objectives and activities feasible within the duration of the award? Has the applicant convincingly demonstrated the short- and long-term impacts of the project?
   - Are possible barriers addressed and approaches for overcoming them proposed?
   - Are the target population and culturally appropriate methods to reach the target population clearly described?
   - Is the budget commensurate with the proposed work?
   - Does the project leverage partners and resources to maximize the reach of the proposed budget and activity? Does the program leverage and complement other non-federal funds?

4. **Innovation (15%)**
   - Is the project innovative?
   - How likely is the proposed project to break new ground to address an old or a new problem?
   - Please describe the old or new problem the proposal seeks to address.
   - What is the innovation described in the project?
   - To what extent does the proposed project suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts, approaches, or methodologies? Please provide examples.
   - Does the proposal clearly define the novel insights to be gained or outcomes that will increase the generality and applicability of research?

- From your perspective, what are the novel insights to be gained or outcomes that address the challenge in the RFA?
- What is the likelihood that the proposed project would lead to novel insights or outcomes mentioned in this section?

5. Outcomes Evaluation (15%)
- Are specific goals and measurable objectives for each year of the project listed for both the initial project and the proposed continuation project? Does the applicant provide the baseline and results or method(s) of measurement?
- Are the proposed outcome measures appropriate for the activities proposed, and are the expected outcome significant?
- Does the application provide a clear and appropriate plan for data collection and management, statistical analyses, and interpretation of results to follow, measure, and report on the project's outcomes?
- Is the qualitative analysis of planned policy or system changes described?

6. Organizational Capacity / Research Environment (10%)
- Will the scientific and educational environment of the proposed research education program contribute to its intended goals?
- Is there tangible evidence of institutional commitment from the applicant organization and its collaborators/partners demonstrate the ability to provide support for the proposed work?
- Does the described role of each collaborating organization make it clear that each organization adds value to the project and is committed to working together to implement the project?
- Is the appropriate infrastructure already in place?
- Does the applicant provide evidence of compelling project progress of the already-funded project? If not, has the applicant addressed obstacles and strategies to overcome those obstacles?
- Is the organization structurally and financially stable and viable?
- Are there feasible plans to sustain some or all the project beyond the funded timeframe of this award?
- Is there a plan to take advantage of the research environment to enhance the educational value or outcomes of the project?
- Are there feasible plans to integrate the program into existing and sustainable systems?
- Is there evidence that the faculty have sufficient institutional support to create a sound educational environment for the participants?
- Where appropriate, is there evidence of collaboration and buy-in among participating programs, third-party organizations, and industry groups?
- Does the proposal demonstrate that the project personnel would have adequate resources (for example, institutional support, equipment and/or other physical resources) to conduct the proposed research or associated activities?
- Will the project benefit from unique features of the work environment or collaborative arrangements?

7. **Qualifications of Project Director, and Key Personnel if applicable (15%)**
- How well qualified is the principal investigator relative to his/her career stage, the team, or the organization to conduct the proposed activities?
- Are the institutional support, equipment and/or other physical resources available to the project personnel adequate for the project proposed?
- If data access is necessary to accomplish the proposed project, does the proposal demonstrate the project personnel's knowledge of how to get access to the data?
- Have the appropriate personnel been recruited to implement, evaluate, and complete the project?

Secondary Evaluation Criteria

1. **Budget**
   - Is the budget appropriate and reasonable for the scope and services of the proposed work?
   - Is the cost per person served appropriate and reasonable?
   - Is the proportion of the funds allocated for direct services reasonable?
   - Is the project a good investment of FFAR funds?

2. **Dissemination and Scalability /Expansion**
   - Are plans for dissemination of the project's results and outcomes, including barriers
   - encountered and successes achieved, clearly described?
   - Does the applicant clearly describe how the project lends itself to dissemination to or adaptation and application by other communities and/or organizations in the State or expansion in the same communities?

3. **Protection for Human and Animal Subjects**
   - What are the potential risks?
   - Are there adequate protections in the proposed project against the potential risks? Did the applicant clearly describe these protections in the application?
   - What are the potential benefits to the subject and others participating in the study?
   - How important is the knowledge to be gained from the experiment?
   - Did the applicant show how the data and safety monitoring of the experiment will be managed?

4. **Previous Project Performance (**only for projects based on previous findings/research)
   - Does the proposed continuation project demonstrate a high likelihood of success based on the initial project's results and outcomes?
   - Has the applicant sufficiently described results and findings of the currently or previously funded application?