

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: NEW INNOVATOR IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AWARD

The Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR) seeks nominations for its New Innovator in Food and Agriculture Research Award. With this program, FFAR intends to support and promote future generations of exceptionally talented and creative new faculty who are conducting critical research and establishing research programs that will lead to expanded availability of food and facilitate the global practice of sustainable agriculture as the world's population grows to more than 9 billion people by the year 2050. The New Innovator Award seeks to promote career advancement of highly creative and promising new scientists who intend to make a long-term career commitment to research in food and agriculture and bring innovative, ground-breaking research initiatives and thinking to bear on problems facing food and agriculture.

U.S. institutions of higher education, U.S. nonprofit institutions other than institutions of higher education, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are invited to nominate up to two applicants for the 2018 New Innovator in Food and Agriculture Research Award.

Within the scope of the New Innovator Program, investigators will have the freedom to explore new avenues of inquiry that arise during their research. Therefore, FFAR is interested in the program of research to be explored and its impact as opposed to a list of very specific aims. It is expected that through this program investigators will have the ability to pursue highly creative ideas, to firmly establish their early lines of research into important food and agriculture scientific areas and provide stability in funding during their critical early career years by reducing the time spent on writing applications.

FFAR anticipates funding no more than ten awards between the two research categories listed below. When submitting full proposals to FFAR, applicants should select the category that best fits their research program. FFAR will not discriminate proposals based on category selection.

Key Dates

Nominations Due: **February 28, 2018 at 4:59:59 pm ET**

(Nominations must be made by the nominee's institution. Up to two per institution. Self-nominations are not accepted.)

Full Application Period Open: **March 12, 2018**

(Open only to nominees invited by FFAR to submit full proposals.)

Applications Due: **April 23, 2018 at 4:59:59 pm ET**

Anticipated Award Date: **Late Summer 2018**

Category 1--Target Areas of Research:

- Achieving a Deeper Understanding of Nutrition and Healthful Food Choices
- Enhancing Sustainable Farm Animal Productivity, Resilience, and Health
- Improving Plant Efficiency
- Managing Food Production Systems to Enhance Nutritional Outcomes
- Optimizing Agricultural Water Use
- Spurring Food System Innovation
- Transforming Soil Health

OR

Category 2--FFAR [Challenge Areas](#):

- Food Waste and Loss
- Healthy Soils, Thriving Farms
- Innovation Pathways to Sustainability
- Making “My Plate” Your Plate
- Protein Challenge
- Urban Food Systems
- Water Scarcity

Eligibility

I. Institutions

- U.S. Institutions of Higher Education
 - Public/state controlled institutions of higher education
 - Private institutions of higher education
 - U.S. Nonprofit Research Institutions other than Institutions of Higher Education
 - U.S. Department of Agriculture

In keeping with FFAR goals to reach a diverse and broad range of institutions and individuals who participate in its programs, the following types of higher education institutions are encouraged to apply for FFAR programs:

- Hispanic-serving Institutions
- 1890s Land Grant Institutions and other Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- Tribal Colleges and Universities
- Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions
- Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions

Institutions may submit up to two nominees to the 2018 New Innovator Award program. To coordinate and streamline submission of nominations by each institution, FFAR recommends

that the nomination(s) be submitted through the organization's Office of Sponsored Programs or a similar central office.

II. Individuals

Faculty members at eligible institutions with the creative ideas, skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research program as Principal Investigator are invited to work with his/her organization to develop an application for support. Faculty member must have been hired on or after **August 1, 2014**, for his or her tenure-track or equivalent position and may work in any discipline or any department within the organization. Preference will be given to individuals near the onset of their independent research career and who are within eight years of receiving a Ph.D. or equivalent degree. Individuals with significant research experience prior to obtaining their faculty position will not be considered.

FFAR recognizes that agriculture and food sciences are highly complex, requiring individuals from a variety of disciplines to realize the potential in each field or research area. Particularly for early stage investigators, collaborators are often essential for success. While this award is made to an outstanding early career investigator, applicants should include information regarding essential collaborators and include letters of support from those collaborators. In these letters, the collaborators should comment on the potential of the individual to achieve success.

Award Information

- Award Duration: Up to 36 months
- Amount per Award: Up to \$100,000/year for up to three years. One-to-one cash match is required.
 - FFAR will award each applicant up to \$100,000 per year for up to three years with an additional \$100,000 required cash match from non-federal sources for a total award of up to \$600,000. Applicants may ask for a longer duration, provided the total funds (FFAR request + Cash Match) do not exceed \$600,000 and FFAR's allocation does not exceed 50% of the total award amount.
 - To receive an award, the match must be secured by the nominating institution. Matching must be from a non-federal source and may not come from funds already designated for other purposes. In-kind matching is not permissible for this Program. Indirect costs are limited to 10% of the total award. Construction and renovation costs are not allowed. Salaries of principal investigators are allowed for time not covered by institutional or other grant funds and effort should be commensurate with the research proposed.
- Estimated Number of Awards: Up to ten (10) awards. This depends on the quality and budgets of successful proposals. FFAR reserves the right to negotiate all or none of the applications received for funding consideration under this opportunity.

Application Components

Nomination Application

1. Required

- Nominee Name
- Nominee's date of appointment to tenure-track or equivalent position (on or after 8/1/2014)
- Nominator Contact Information
- Nominee Contact Information
- Comments on Nominee and nominee's research program/project (500-word limit)
- Can your institution provide the cash match?

2. Optional Information – will not affect the evaluation of the nominee.

- Demographic Information

Full Proposal

1. Required

- Program/Project Title
- Research Area or FFAR Challenge Area
- Proposed Budget
 - Total Request from FFAR
 - Total Cash Match
- Budget Justification
- Program/Project Duration
- Key Personnel
- Public Abstract
- Program/Project Summary
- Program/Project Description
- Program/Project timeline (by year)
- Goals and objectives (by year)
- Anticipated Outcomes (by year)
- Data Management Plan
- Facilities, Equipment and other Resources
- References Cited -
- Organization Assurances
 - Research involving human subjects
 - Research involving vertebrate animals
 - Research involving Recombinant DNA
 - Research involving National Security implications
 - Research involving hazardous materials
 - Research involving human fetal tissue
 - Research involving NEPA review
- Attachments

- a. Required Attachments
 - Budget Form
 - [PI and Key Personnel Biosketch](#): Three-page limit per individual listed as PI or key personnel in the project.
 - Current and Pending Support Form: complete for everyone listed as PI or Key personnel on the project.
- b. Optional attachments to support project description - this section should not be used to circumvent the page limit for the Research Program Plan Section.
 - Graphics, Figures, Equations, and Tables - The textbox for the Research Program Plan does not support equations, tables, graphics, and figures. Applicants may upload a PDF document with graphics, figures, tables, or a list of equations to support the research program plan. **Five-page limit.**
 - Letters of Support - Applicants may provide letters of institutional, collaborator, or stakeholder support for the proposed project. Please combine all letters of support into a single PDF document before uploading as an attachment.

Application Submission Guidelines

Applications must be submitted through FFAR's online application receipt system (<https://proposalcentral.altum.com/>). Only nominations, and applications submitted through this portal will be considered eligible for evaluation. **Late applications will not be accepted.**

If you are a new user, register for an account by clicking the orange "Create One Now" button. You will receive a confirmation email to sign-in to your account. Once you log in, search through the list of institutions to see if there is an institutional profile for your organization. If there is no institutional profile, ask your Grants & Contracts Department or Office of Sponsored Programs to register your organization. Once the organization's profile is registered and saved, the Nominator can select their institution and complete his/her personal profile. To access FFAR's open funding opportunities, click the "Grant Opportunities" button on the top right corner of your screen, then on the top left corner of the screen, pull down the "Filter by Grant Maker" button and scroll down to select FFAR. Select the opportunity you would like to apply for by clicking the "Apply Now" button. Nominators, please be prepared to submit the name of nominee(s), department, institution, title, start date of current position, day of receiving a Ph.D. or equivalent degree, and either FFAR Target Area of Research or FFAR Challenge Area in which the individual(s) will be working.

Once nominations are reviewed by FFAR, only applications listing these nominated individuals as principal investigator will be accepted. Nominees may submit an application only after receiving an invitation through the online application receipt system. Full proposal application receipt for nominees will be open in March 2018.

By submitting an application, the applicant acknowledges and accepts the terms and conditions of this call.

Application Review Process

Nominations Review

All submitted nominations will go through an internal review process to ensure that the nominee is eligible, the nominee's research or research program is relevant to the Call and suitable to FFAR's mission. Only nominees with the most innovative and cutting-edge projects with significant potential for advancing agricultural research will be invited to submit a full proposal application. Nominators should expect to be notified of whether their nominees are invited or not invited to submit a full proposal on March 12, 2018. Only invited nominees can submit a full proposal application.

Full Proposal Review

Submitted full proposals will undergo further review using a two-stage peer review process: (1) External Peer Review, and (2) FFAR Advisory Council review. In the first stage, applications will be evaluated by an independent, external peer review panel of scientific experts using the proposal review criteria posted in RFA. In the second stage, applications judged to be most meritorious by external peer review panels will be evaluated and recommended for funding by the FFAR Advisory Council based on comparisons with applications from the same cycle and FFAR's program priorities. All reviewers are required to read and acknowledge acceptance of FFAR's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) and [Non-Disclosure Agreement](#). We make reasonable efforts to ensure that proposals are not assigned to reviewers with a real or apparent conflict with the applicant or project personnel. Reviewers with a conflict of interests are recused from evaluating or participating in the discussions of proposals with which they have a conflict. Each stage of the review is conducted confidentially, and as such, FFAR is responsible for protecting the confidentiality of the contents of the applications.

Applications recommended for funding by the Advisory Council will go to the Scientific Program Director and FFAR's Executive Director to consider program priorities set by the Advisory Board, portfolio balance across programs, and available funding. FFAR's Executive Director will approve each grant award recommendation made by the Science Program Director.

Review Criteria

Full proposals are evaluated based on scored primary review criteria and unscored secondary review criteria. The bullets under each criterion may serve as a guideline to applicants when writing their proposals, and as a guideline to reviewers on what to consider when evaluating proposals. The bullets are illustrative and not intended to be comprehensive. Reviewers will evaluate and score each primary criterion and subsequently assign a global score that reflects an overall assessment of the application. The overall assessment will not be an average score of the individual criterions; rather, it will reflect the reviewers' overall impression of the application. Evaluation of the scientific merit of each application is within the sole discretion of the peer reviewers and they may raise additional factors to consider that are not covered in the bullets for each criterion.

Primary Review Criteria

Primary criteria will evaluate the scientific merit and potential impact of the proposed project. Concerns with any of these criteria potentially indicate a major flaw in the significance and/or design of the proposed work. Examples of primary review criteria are: Quality of the Candidate, Scientific and Technical Background, Research Environment, Leadership Potential, Communication Skills, Research Significance and Impact, and Value of Fellow-Mentor Pairing.

Secondary Review Criteria

Secondary criteria contribute to the global score assigned to the application. Concerns with these criteria potentially question the feasibility of the proposed research. Examples of secondary review criteria are: Budget, Scalability and Dissemination, Protections for Human and Animal Subjects, and Previous Project Performance.

Award Administration

Selection Notice

Following the full proposal review, the principal investigator and the authorized organization representative listed on the project will be officially notified by email whether (1) the proposal has been selected for funding pending contract negotiations, or (2) the proposal has not been selected for funding. If a proposal is selected for funding, the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research reserves the right to request additional or clarifying information for any reason deemed necessary, including, but not limited to, scope of proposed work, matching funds, or other budget information. Potential grantees are free to accept or reject the Grant Agreement as offered.

Award Notice

FFAR notifies applicants of whether they are selected for funding through email. The notice does not constitute an award or obligate funding from FFAR until there is a fully executed Grant Agreement.

Grant Period(s)

Upon receipt of the Grant Agreement, the potential grantee should note the Start Date and the Expiration Date. Grantees may only use FFAR funds on project expenditures on or after the Grant Agreement is fully executed, or with prior approval of pre-award expenditure. Charging expenditures to the grant prior to the fully executed Grant Agreement date is strictly prohibited. Likewise, grantees may not use FFAR funds after the Expiration Date except to satisfy obligations to pay allowable project costs committed on or before that date. Grantees may have up to the last day of the month of expiration to fulfill obligated expenses.

Once the Grant Agreement is fully executed, the Start Date cannot be changed. The Expiration Date may be changed with a written approval of a no-cost extension request by FFAR. If a no-cost-extension request is approved, FFAR will issue an amendment to the Grant Agreement.

If the grantee requires additional time beyond the Grant Period and the established Expiration Date to assure adequate completion of the original scope of work within the funds already made available, the grantee may request a one-time no-cost extension of up to 6 months. The

request must be submitted to FFAR at least thirty (30) days prior to the Expiration Date of the grant. The request must explain the need for the extension and include an estimate of the unobligated funds remaining and a plan for their use. This one-time extension will not be approved merely for using the unexpended funds.

Post-award Management

Reporting Requirements

After a grant is conferred, the grantee shall provide an annual financial report to FFAR showing grant expenditures to date. The grantee shall also provide an annual progress report to FFAR showing activities being carried out under the grant, including but not limited to project accomplishments to date and grant expenditures. Within 90 days of completion of all grant activities, the grantee shall provide a final progress report. The final progress report should address the original objectives of the project as identified in the proposal, describe any changes in objectives, describe the final project accomplishments, and include a final project accounting of all grant funds.

Scientific Integrity

FFAR's ability to pursue its mission to build unique partnerships to support innovative science addressing today's food and agriculture challenges depends on the integrity of the science on which it relies. A fundamental purpose of FFAR is to facilitate the advancement of knowledge and the application of the science to address challenges relevant to the FFAR's mission. All FFAR grants must be conducted with the highest standards of scientific integrity.

Grant Terms and Conditions

The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research expects applicants to have reviewed the Grant Agreement prior to applying to ensure that the applicants are aware of the applicable terms under which the grant is offered. FFAR will only entertain potential modifications to the Grant Agreement under the most exceptional circumstances. Successful applicants are strongly encouraged to sign the Grant Agreement as presented.

Requirement to Demonstrate Matching Funds

The match share requirement is a one-to-one FFAR-to-awardee ratio. Therefore, for every dollar FFAR awards, the grantee or a third-party must contribute newly dedicated, non-federal dollar towards the project costs. For example, if proposal requests two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) of FFAR funds, the applicant or a third-party must be able to come up with an additional two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000) to match the request, for a grand total project budget of four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000).

The applicant agrees to identify and certify matching funds annually prior to disbursement of award funds. The New Innovator Program requires hundred percent (100%) of the matching funds be cash match. The match share is intended to supplement, not supplant existing funding for the principal investigator (PI). The applicant will abide by FFAR's [Matching Guidelines](#) to meet the matching requirements. To constitute a valid match, all matching funds on a FFAR grant must be expended during the grant period.

Contact Information

1. Technical Help Contact

- i. Hours of Operation: 8:30am – 5:00pm Eastern Time (Monday – Friday)
- ii. Telephone: 800-875-2562 (Toll-free U.S. and Canada)
+1-703-964-5840 (Direct Dial International)
- iii. Email: pcsupport@altum.com

2. Scientific and Grants Questions Contact

- i. Email: grants@foundationfar.org

We only accept scientific programmatic, or grants inquiries by email. We strive to respond to inquiries within two business days, but our response time depends on the volume of questions we receive and the complexity of the questions asked. Please note that we do not monitor this mailbox on evenings, weekends, or federal holidays.