

Achieving Conservation through Targeting Information, Outreach and Networking Request for Application (ACTION) 2022 Request for Applications (RFA)

Matching is Optional for This Funding Opportunity

Key Dates

Pre-Application Open: July 13, 2022, at 12:00pm ET

Pre-Applications Due: August 31, 2022, by 5:00pm ET

***An approved pre-application with an invitation to submit a full application
is required for submission.***

Full Application Invitation: October 26, 2022, at 12:00 PM ET

Full Applications Due: January 4, 2023, by 5:00 PM ET

Award Notification: Spring 2023

Anticipated Project Start Date: Summer 2023

BACKGROUND

The Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR), in collaboration with Walton Family Foundation (WFF), and coordination with the National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF), announces the **Achieving Conservation through Targeting Information, Outreach, and Networking (ACTION)** program. We invite applications to develop innovative research on how to drive farmer/landowners' adoption of conservation practices. FFAR and WFF seek to award meritorious applications that emphasize participatory approaches.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

FFAR and WFF seek projects to increase farmer/landowner adoption of conservation practices that provide a range of ecosystem benefits, including water quality

improvements, particularly those identified in the [Edge of Field Roadmap](#). Projects that commit to testing key hypotheses through project implementation incorporating landowner outreach and engagement efforts to increase conservation practice adoption will be prioritized. Associated projects currently supported by NFWF through its various landscape-scale and national programs or those with potential for future NFWF support for implementation project funding also will receive priority consideration.

Example hypotheses include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. If farmers had precise estimates of costs and field-level estimates of outcomes, they would be more likely to adopt.
2. If we knew farmers' specific needs and developed interventions that addressed those needs, they would be more likely to adopt.
3. Novel engagement approaches, program designs, and intervention strategies can encourage landowners to adopt edge-of-field practices (e.g., financial incentives, crop insurance incentives, community working groups)
4. Practice promotion is enhanced by tailoring intervention approaches to specific farm/farmer segments. We would benefit from a greater understanding of how key variables shaping farmers' practice decisions and/or engagement needs vary across understudied farm and farmer segments (e.g., farm size, farmer ethnicity/race, age, gender).
5. Longitudinal research on farmer decision-making is needed to develop and test intervention strategies.
6. Farmers will likely adopt conservation practices when market incentives and farm-level engagement are coordinated or well-aligned.
7. Using biophysical data and decision tools to target landowner/ farmer engagement increases willingness to adopt practices and environmental outcomes.

Priority will be given to applications that: 1) include diverse partners as key personnel; 2) engage stakeholders as integral members of the research team; and 3) present a conservation practice implementation plan to capitalize on a 'farmer's or 'landowner's willingness generated by the project, for example through existing or potential funding from NFWF. Projects using participatory approaches will be encouraged.

Targeted outcomes include 1) developing more effective outreach strategies to increase farmer willingness to adopt targeted conservation practices, 2) increasing capacity to implement targeted conservation practices, and 3) generating guidance to advance data-driven decision tools.



ELIGIBILITY

The Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research and the Walton Family Foundation welcome applications from domestic and international higher education institutions, non-profit and for-profit organizations, and US government-affiliated research agencies.

Any individual(s) with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research as Program Director(s)/Principal Investigator(s) may apply to the ACTION program through their home institution or organization.

AWARD INFORMATION

At FFAR and WFF's discretion, we will award grants ranging from \$200,000 to \$500,000, for a program total of approximately USD\$1 million. Additional support to expand pilot programs and further validate results is possible, contingent on funding availability. Successful projects will receive annual disbursements.

Matching Funds are optional for this program but forming collaborative partnerships that provide additional funding/match is encouraged. FFAR can match any additional non-federal funds brought to a project, for example, to support a project extension. These partners may include but are not limited to the private sector, non-profits, commodity and trade groups, state governments, and others that do not traditionally work in agriculture.

Key budget considerations are noted below, and additional budgetary guidelines can be found on our [website](#).

- **Matching Funds are optional for this program but** forming collaborative partnerships that provide additional funding/match is encouraged. FFAR can match any additional non-federal funds to a project, for example, to support a project extension. These partners may include but are not limited to the private sector, non-profits, commodity and trade groups, state governments, and others that do not traditionally work in agriculture.
- **A maximum of 10% of the total award may be used for indirect costs.** FFAR's indirect cost allotment is not an indirect cost rate applied to the total modified direct costs; instead, it is an overall allotment from the Total Funds Request, also known as the Total Project Costs. This requirement means that 90% of the requested funds must go directly to the proposed research.
- Reasonable budgets work in favor of the applicant. Budgets that are not commensurate with proposed work or poorly justified will likely negatively affect the 'application's overall evaluation.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All applicants must submit their proposal through [FFAR's online Grant Management System](#).

Pre-Application

- Project title (*up to 250 characters*)
- Key project personnel – name(s), affiliation, expertise, project role, organization background (basic description and history of the organization)
- Project description
 - How will the project address the program challenge? (*up to 500 words*)
 - What innovative outcomes will the project generate? Describe how the project will address food supply or agricultural sustainability challenges (*up to 500 words*)
 - Why is the FFAR-led partnership ideally positioned to fund this project? (*up to 500 words*)
 - How will the project directly support conservation practice implementation efforts, for example, through existing or potential NFWF program support? (*Up to 500 words*)
- Project timeline
 - Proposed project start date
 - Proposed project duration (*in calendar months*)
- Budget
 - Total FFAR funding request
 - Total matching funds
 - Total proposed budget (*FFAR funds + matching funds*)
- Funding partners: List any committed or potential funding partners, describe why they are an appropriate source of matching funds, and highlight any prior contact or relationship you have developed with them about this project.

Full Application Components

Required components

- Project title (*up to 250 characters*)
- Key project personnel – name(s), affiliation, expertise, project role
- Locations of performance
- Project abstract (*up to 500 words*)
- Why is the FFAR-WFF partnership ideally suited to fund this project? (*up to 500 words*)

- Goals and objectives (*up to 500 words*)
 - Project description and strategies (*up to 5000 words*)
 - Anticipated outcomes or outputs (*up to 1000 words*)
 - Data management plan (*up to 500 words*)
 - Barriers to adoption of the research outcome(s) (*Note: FFAR strongly encourages applicants to address social and economic factors in the project design, evaluation processes, and outcomes, where applicable.*) (*up to 500 words*)
 - Organization Assurances
 - Proposed budget
 - Total FFAR funding request
 - Total matching funds
 - Total proposed budget (*FFAR funds + matching funds*)
 - Budget narrative: Provide a brief overview of the budget by objective in parallel to the approach outlined in the 'project's description. Address costs related to personnel, equipment and facilities, and analytics. (*up to 1000 words*)
 - Current and Pending Support Form: complete for everyone listed as PI or Key personnel on the project
- **Required Attachments:** Failure to provide these attachments will disqualify the application.
- Project Description and References Cited: **This should be identical to the Project Description written in the Full Proposal Application form** but may include graphics, figures, equations, and tables. Please also include up to five pages of references cited, which will not count toward the word limit. (*up to 5000 words*)
 - [Budget Form](#)
 - [PI and Key Personnel Biosketch](#): three-page limit per individual listed as PI or key personnel in the project
 - Project timeline (by year), organized
 - Matching Fund Verification Letter(s)
- **Optional attachments:** Applicants can upload any of the following as a single PDF document.
- Five (5)-slide summary or description of the project
 - Letters of Support: Applicants can provide letters of support for the proposed project, especially from matching funders.
 - Graphics, Figures, Equations, and Tables not included in the Project Description: Applicants may upload a PDF document with graphics, figures, tables, or a list of equations to support the research program plan. (***Five-page limit***).

HOW TO APPLY



LOIs and invited full proposals must be submitted by the deadline date through FFAR's online application Grant Management System. Applications submitted outside of this System will not be considered.

To start a **new** application, please click [here](#). If you are a new user, register for an account by clicking "Create Account" button located under the email address field on the left side of the home page. Once you log in, you may begin working on your application. Please be sure to save your work often by clicking on "Save and Finish Later." To access a saved application, please do so through your [Grant Management Account](#).

Only LOIs and invited full proposals submitted by the deadline through FFAR's Grant Management System will be accepted and considered eligible for evaluation. To be fair to all applicants, FFAR will not grant extensions to applicants who missed the deadlines posted in the [Key Dates](#) section.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Review Process

Pre-Application Review: Submitted pre-applications undergo an internal peer review by experts from program sponsors, including FFAR, WFF, and NFWF, to assess the project's relevance to the ACTION RFA, whether the application demonstrates the potential to meet the evaluation criteria and alignment with NFWF program priorities and funding potential. The most innovative and cutting-edge projects with significant potential for advancing FFAR's mission will be invited to submit a full application. ***Applicants must submit a pre-application to be eligible to submit a full application.***

Full Application Review: Full proposals undergo a two-tiered review process. First, a panel of three to six external peer reviewers assesses the technical merit and feasibility of the proposal. Then the advisory committee, including program sponsors, considers the reviewer comments to evaluate which proposals fit best with program objectives.

All external reviewers must agree to and adhere to the terms outlined in FFAR's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) and [Non-Disclosure Agreement](#). FFAR makes reasonable efforts to ensure that applications are not assigned to reviewers with a potential conflict with the applicant, institution, or project personnel. Reviewers with a conflict of interest are recused from evaluating or participating in the related discussions. Each stage of the review is conducted confidentially, and as such, FFAR is responsible for protecting the confidentiality of the contents of the applications.

Evaluation Criteria

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness, and compliance with FFAR policies. Pre-proposal applications must demonstrate the potential to meet the evaluation criteria. Full proposals then will be evaluated on the following criteria:

Novelty, Innovation, and Originality (30%)

- Does the proposed project innovatively explore how to drive farmers' or landowners' adoption of conservation practices by strategically integrating social and biophysical sciences?
- Has the applicant demonstrated that this research has not been done elsewhere?

Technical Merit and Feasibility (30%)

- Does the proposal clearly outline the aims and objectives?
- Does the proposal include appropriately thorough, tractable, and feasible methods?
- Has the principal investigator assembled a qualified research team with access to appropriate technical support?
- Does the proposal present a tractable timeline and budget?
- Does the proposal include adequate risk evaluation and a mitigation plan?
- Does the proposal include an adequate data management plan with a commitment to public access?

Impacts and Outcomes (25%)

- Is the project likely to increase conservation practice adoption?
- Does the applicant plan to advance opportunities for conservation practice implementation developed in their research, for example, through existing or potential support from NFWF?
- Does the proposal adequately describe the impact and applied relevance of the research?
- Does the proposal emphasize scalability and present a plan for disseminating the project outcomes?
- Does the proposal identify how FFAR and WFF are uniquely positioned to fund this project and how proposed activities align with existing or potential NFWF program priorities and funding support?
- Does the proposed project provide training for the next generation of scientists?

Investigator (15%)

- Are the PI and their team well suited to perform the research?
- Is the effort committed sufficiently to perform the proposed research?
- Will this research project serve as a platform for advancing implementation?
- Do the PI and their team have institutional and outside organization support essential to the proposed project?

Award Administration

Selection Notice: Following the full application review process, the principal investigator and the authorized organization representative listed on the project will be officially

notified by email of the status of the application. If an application is selected for funding, FFAR reserves the right to request additional or clarifying information for any necessary reason. Potential grantees are free to accept or reject the Grant Agreement as offered.

Intent to Fund Notification: FFAR notifies applicants of their awards through email. The notice does not constitute an award or obligate funding from FFAR until there is a fully executed Grant Agreement. FFAR encourages applicants to review a sample Grant Agreement before applying to ensure they know the terms under which grants are offered.

Grant Terms and Conditions: FFAR expects applicants to have reviewed the [Sample Grant Agreement](#) before applying to ensure that the applicants are aware of the applicable terms under which the grant is offered. Successful applicants are strongly encouraged to sign the Grant Agreement as presented.

Requirement to Demonstrate Matching Funds: **Matching funds are optional for this program.** If the applicant provides matching funds, the applicant agrees to identify and certify matching funds annually prior to disbursement of award funds. 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 FFAR's matching requirements. To constitute a valid match, all matching funds on a FFAR grant must be expended during the grant period.

Post-award Management

Grant Period: Upon receipt of the Grant Agreement, the grantee should confirm the project's start and end dates. Once signed, the start date cannot be changed. Grantees may use FFAR funds only 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 before the fully executed date is strictly prohibited. Likewise, grantees may not use FFAR funds after the end date except to pay allowable project costs committed on or before that date.

A grantee may request up to two (2) no-cost extension of up to twelve (12) months apiece to complete the work's planned scope. The request must be communicated to FFAR and submitted through the Grant Management System at least thirty (30) days before the grant's end date. The request must justify the need for the extension, including a summary of the remaining unobligated funds, and provide a plan for fulfilling the project's terms. If a no-cost extension request is approved, FFAR will amend the Grant Agreement. This extension will not be approved merely for using unexpended funds.

Annual Reporting Requirements: After FFAR confers a grant, the grantee must provide annual scientific and financial progress reports. The report should include 1) activities carried out under the grant relative to the anticipated timeline presented in the grant



application, 2) planned vs. actual budget expenditures, and 3) match verification. The report also should highlight project accomplishments. Awardees will be provided with access to the required online forms.

Final Report Requirements: Within ninety (90) days of completing the project, the grantee shall provide a final project report. This report should address the project objectives outlined in the original grant application, describe any modifications to the project objectives and scope, present the results and interpretation, describe the final project accomplishments, and include a final project accounting of all grant funds.

Scientific Integrity: FFAR strives to advance knowledge and the application of science to address challenges related to food supply and sustainable agriculture. FFAR's ability to pursue its mission depends on the integrity of the funded science projects and programs. All FFAR grants must be conducted with the highest standards of scientific integrity.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions related to the online submission system, please contact FFAR's Grant Management team at grants@foundationfar.org.

For questions related to ACTION, please email [Dr. Kathleen Boomer at kboomer@FoundationFAR.org](mailto:kboomer@FoundationFAR.org). We only accept scientific or programmatic and grants inquiries by email.