Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research

FFAR Scientific Program Director
Digital Agriculture/Data Science

The Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR) is seeking an exceptional Scientific Program Director (SPD) with expertise in digital agriculture, i.e. data science pertaining to agriculture. The SPD will be responsible for developing public/private partnerships to create a portfolio of innovative research and training grants programs in this burgeoning field. A successful candidate should have training and/or experience that can be applied to programs across multiple FFAR challenge areas.

FFAR supports research programs that are developed in partnership with industry, government, academia and non-profits. FFAR, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, is focused on catalyzing innovation to solve pressing food and agriculture challenges that affect the lives of all Americans. Leveraging public and private resources, FFAR will increase the scientific and technological research, innovation, and partnerships critical to enhancing sustainable production of nutritious food for a growing global population.

FFAR has six Challenge Areas:

- Healthy Soils, Thriving Farms
- Sustainable Water Management
- Next Generation Crops
- Advanced Animal Systems
- Health-Agriculture Nexus
- Urban Food Systems

The SPD will develop and manage a variety of research programs and work with Foundation staff and multi-stakeholder teams. The SPD will develop programs that can be realized through prize and grant competitions, through the development of consortia, or through direct funding. A significant part of the position is to identify the gaps and innovation space within FFAR Challenge Areas and translate those opportunities into research programs. As such, an SPD must be able to network and create relationships with organizations and individuals who work in research areas and/or could become funding partners.

The SPD will oversee evaluation of applications and proposals; design, promote, and monitor the progress of FFAR funded projects and be responsible for the day-to-day management of specific research initiatives, including managing project meetings, logistics, timelines, budgets, and associated grants and contracts. The SPD will develop and lead scientific conferences and other workshops as necessary to develop consensus on the critical research questions that FFAR and its partners should pursue.

This is a science administration and management position that requires scientific and research knowledge, excellent interpersonal and writing skills, a high level of organization, diplomacy and focus, ability to work under tight deadlines, and familiarity with the agriculture research environment.

Key Responsibilities

- Developing and facilitating multi-disciplinary public-private partnerships to support innovative data science
- Developing requests for applications/proposals based on FFAR research priorities
- Organizing the evaluation of research projects
- Managing grants and/or contracts
- Coordinating and managing cross-functional scientific and/or project team meetings
- Developing and managing budgets and expenses
- Managing priority setting processes and relationships among diverse scientific and administrative partners from different sectors (government, nonprofits, academia, and/or private industry)

The ideal candidates possess:

- A graduate degree in a relevant agricultural, related field (doctoral degree preferred). Other areas of expertise may include, but are not limited to: computer science, genomics, integration of genomic/proteomic/metabolomics and other data sources, bioinformatics or precision agriculture
- Deep familiarity with research and scientific issues in FFAR challenge areas particularly how digital agriculture and data science advance the agricultural system
- Knowledge of issues and techniques relating to management, access to and analysis of large, diverse datasets
- Familiarity of privacy concerns for data-sharing
- Integration of diverse datasets from multiple sources to answer large questions
- Ability to connect with farmers, producers and other agricultural stakeholders to communicate the significance of data research concepts
- Understanding of remote sensing, geospatial modeling and/
- spatial biogeochemical models for assessing agricultural ecosystem
- Competency in Digital Ag, system biology, mathematical modeling, and Big Data with direct applications to real-world scenarios
- Familiarity with research and grants administration
- Experience working with the academic, for-profit and/or the agriculture stakeholder community
- An ability and interest in discovering and cultivating professional relationships and networks to further the development of public, private partnerships
- Ability to work with flexibility, efficiency, enthusiasm, and diplomacy both individually and as part of a team
- Ability to multitask, including working across multiple complex projects in different agricultural research areas
- Ability to learn quickly, and make difficult decisions independently to meet tight deadlines
- Attention to detail and strong analytical and organizational skills
- Ability to demonstrate tact, diplomacy and initiative when working with others
- Ability to communicate complex business and scientific issues succinctly and effectively
- Highest levels of personal and professional integrity, along with a sense of humor

To Apply: Please send a resume and cover letter indicating your salary requirements to cdaniels@foundationfar.org. Please specify SPD in the subject line of your message.

We are an equal opportunity employer. Applicants are considered for positions only based on individual merit. We do not discriminate by reason of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, family responsibilities, matriculation, political affiliation, genetic information, disability, source of income, status as a victim of an intrafamily offense, and place of residence or business.