

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: 2020 NEW INNOVATOR IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AWARD

No Matching Funds Required

The Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR) seeks nominations for its 2020 New Innovator in Food and Agriculture Research Award. With this program, FFAR intends to support and promote the future generation of exceptionally talented and creative new faculty who are conducting critical and highly innovative research, and are 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.

Key Dates

Nomination Period Open: **January 8, 2020 at 5:00 pm ET**

Nominations Due: **March 4, 2020 at 5:00 pm ET**
Nominations must be made by the nominee's institution. Self-nominations are not accepted.

Nominees invited to submit full proposals:
March 25, 2020 at 5:00 pm ET
Open only to individuals nominated by their institutions.

Full Applications Due: **May 6, 2020 at 5:00 pm ET**

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 **one applicant** for the 2020 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. The emphasis is on innovation and creativity; preliminary data are not required but may be included. An overall and annual budgets will be required, but connecting them to specific aims will not be necessary. The review process emphasizes the individual's creativity, the innovativeness of the research approaches, and the potential of the program, if successful, to have a significant impact on an important research problem. FFAR always welcomes partnerships that will enhance the research program. Therefore, collaboration with others is encouraged.

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 in the FFAR Challenge Areas:

- Advanced Animal Systems
- Health-Agriculture Nexus
- Next Generation Crops
- Soil Health
- Sustainable Water Management
- Urban Food Systems

ELIGIBILITY

I. Eligible 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 one nominee to the 2020 New Innovator Award program. To coordinate and streamline submission of nominations by each institution, FFAR recommends that the nomination be submitted through the organization's Office of Sponsored Programs or a similar central office.

II. Eligible 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 their institution to develop an application for support. The nominated faculty

member must have been hired on or after **August 1, 2016** for a tenure-track or equivalent position and may work in any discipline or any department within the institution. 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 for this award.

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

- Anticipated Award Duration: Up to 36 months
- Amount per Award: Up to \$150,000/year for up to three years. **Matching funds are NOT required**, however, matching is encouraged to broaden the scope of the program, and, if available, should be reflected in the budget. Lack of matching funds will not influence the review of the application.
 - FFAR will award each applicant up to \$150,000 per year for up to three years. Applicants may ask for a longer duration, provided the total funds do not exceed \$450,000.
 - Indirect costs are limited to 10% of the total award. Unrecovered indirect cost is not permitted. 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. The actual number of awards will depend 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.
- Anticipated Award Date: Late summer 2020.

Application Components

Nomination Application

1. General Information

- Nominee Name

- Nominee's date of appointment to tenure-track or equivalent position (on or after 8/1/2016)
- Nominator Contact Information
- Nominee Contact Information
- Comments on Nominee and nominee's research program (300-word limit)

2. Justification for the nomination

- a. Explain how this individual is outstanding in his/her field (300-word limit)
- b. Explain how this individual was selected for the nomination among, what is likely, many meritorious individuals (300-word limit)
- c. Why should this nominee receive the FFAR New Innovator Award? (300-word limit)

Full Proposal

1. Required

- Program Title
- FFAR Challenge Area
- Proposed Budget
- Budget Justification
- Program Duration
- Stakeholder groups to be served by this program
- Key Personnel
- Public Abstract (500-word limit)
- Executive Summary (2,000-word limit)
- Research Program Overview
 - The scientific challenge or opportunity to be addressed and its importance
 - Overall program goals and objectives
 - The scientific approach to be taken
 - The significance of the research and potential impact
 - What makes the approach exceptionally innovative in the context of the current state-of-the-art of the field
 - How will risks and challenges be addressed
 - Suitability for the New Innovator Award program
- Anticipated Outcomes
- Barriers to adopting research outcomes
- Data Management Plan
- Facilities, Equipment and other Resources
- Organizational 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 program. Include link to download Biosketch Instructions.
 - References Cited
 - b. Optional attachments to support Research Program 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. Refer to RFA for page limit.
 - Letters of Support - Applicants may provide letters of institutional, collaborator, or stakeholder support for the proposed program. 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 – [SM Apply](#). Only nominations and applications submitted through this portal will be considered eligible for evaluation. There is a two-hour grace period for all deadlines. Nominations or full proposals that are not submitted by the deadline or within the grace period will not be accepted. To be fair to all our applicants, FFAR cannot grant an extension to applicants who missed the deadlines posted in the Key Dates section.

If you are a new user, register for an account by clicking the green “Register” button at the top right corner of the home page. You will receive a confirmation email to activate your account before you can sign-in to your account. Once you log in, click on the corresponding program to start your application.

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 justification for the nomination.

Once nominations are reviewed by FFAR, only applications listing these nominated individuals as principal investigator and meeting eligibility criteria will be invited to submit full proposal applications. 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 on March 25, 2020.

Application Review Process

Nominations Review

All submitted nominations will go through an internal review process to ensure that the nominee is eligible for the award. Only eligible nominees will be invited to submit a full proposal application. Nominators should expect to be notified of whether their nominees are invited to submit a full proposal no later than three weeks of the nomination submission deadline. Only invited nominees can submit a full proposal application.

Full Proposal Review

Submitted full proposals will undergo 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. Reviewers will provide comments emphasizing the following: 1) the importance of the scientific problem and the potential impact of the research, 2) the novelty and innovativeness of the approach, 3) evidence of the applicant's potential for creative and innovative research as an early stage investigator, and 4) ability to form partnerships.
- 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 program 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 FFAR's Executive Director for the final funding decision after considering program priorities set by the FFAR Board of Directors, and portfolio balance across programs.

Review Criteria

Only the review criteria described below will be considered in the review process. Questions listed 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 judging proposals. Questions are illustrative and not intended to be comprehensive. 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 questions for each criterion.

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, in consideration of the following review criteria and additional review criteria (as applicable for the research program proposed).

Scored Review Criteria

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit.

Impact and Outcome

Does the research program address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the Challenge Area? Did the applicant identify how FFAR is uniquely positioned to fund this research program? If the program is successful, will it create new paradigms or challenge existing ones in the U.S. and/or global food systems? If applicable, did the applicant address any potential for commercializing research output? Will the applicant train the next generation of food and agriculture research scientists, and if so, how?

Investigator

Is the PI well suited to the research program? Does the PI show the potential to have significant impact on his/her field? Does the PI have the appropriate experience and training? Is the effort committed sufficient to perform the proposed research? Will the PI be an inspiring mentor who will attract and motivate students and post-docs in their lab?

Novelty, Innovation and Originality

Does the application adequately discuss the significance of the challenge that is being addressed in the proposal and how the research will contribute to a solution? Has the applicant demonstrated that this research has not been done elsewhere, or that this research accelerates a current research challenge or addresses a challenge in a new or innovative manner?

Technical Merit and Feasibility

Are the goals and objectives of the proposed research program clear? Are the overall scientific approach and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate? Did the applicant identify potential risks to successfully complete the research goals/objectives and propose to address them? Is the data and results management plan outlined by the applicant adequate? Will the PI share the data and research results with the food and agriculture community during and at the end of the project?

Partnerships

Did the applicant detail the partnerships involved in the program? Does the applicant propose build a diverse team featuring industry, nonprofit, state or local partnerships? Are those partners integral to the proposed program?

Award Administration

Selection Notice

Following the full proposal review, the principal investigator and the authorized organization representative listed on the proposal 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, FFAR reserves the right to request additional or clarifying information for any reason deemed necessary, including, but not limited to 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 Effective Date and the Expiration Date. Grantees may only use FFAR funds on program expenditures on or after the Effective Date of the Grant. Charging expenditures to the grant prior to the effective date is strictly prohibited. Likewise, grantees may not use FFAR funds after the Expiration Date except to satisfy obligations to pay allowable program costs committed on or before that date. The expiration date is the last day of a month.

Once the Grant Agreement is fully executed, the Effective 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 program accomplishments to date and grant expenditures. Within 30 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 program as identified in the proposal, describe any

changes in objectives, describe program accomplishments, and include a final program 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

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

Contact Information

1. Technical Help Contact

Hours of Operation: 6:00 am – 10:00 pm Eastern Time (Monday–Friday)

- i. Telephone: [Click here to request a call back](#)
- ii. Email: support@smapply.com

2. Scientific and Grants Questions Contact: grants@foundationfar.org

We only accept scientific, programmatic, and 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.