

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: 2021 NEW INNOVATOR IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AWARD

No Matching Funds Required

Key Dates

Nomination Period Open: **January 13, 2021 at 12:00 pm ET**

Nominations Due: **March 3, 2021 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 24, 2021 at 12:00 pm ET**

Open only to individuals nominated by their institutions.

Full Applications Due: **May 5, 2021 at 5:00 pm ET**

The Foundation for Food & Agricultural Research (FFAR) seeks nominations for its 2021 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 nine 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. 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.

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 2021 New Innovator in Food and Agriculture Research Award.

The emphasis is on innovation and creativity; preliminary data are not required but may be included. A program budget will be required but associating each annual and total requested amount 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 (10) awards in the [FFAR Challenge Areas](#):

- [Soil Health](#)
- [Sustainable Water Management](#)
- [Next Generation Crops](#)
- [Advanced Animal Systems](#)
- [Urban Food Systems](#)
- [Health-Agriculture Nexus](#)

ELIGIBILITY

I. Eligible Institutions

- U.S. Institutions of Higher Education
 - Public/State controlled institutions
 - Private institutions
- U.S. Nonprofit Research Institutions
- 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 highly 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 2021 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, 2017** 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 (8) 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 any 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 36 months. 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, including subcontracts, if applicable. 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 2021.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

I. Nomination Application

- General Information
 - Nominee's Name
 - Nominee's date of appointment to tenure-track or equivalent



- position (on or after 8/1/2017)
- Nominator Contact Information
- Nominee Contact Information
- FFAR Challenge Area to which the nominee will submit the application
- Comments on Nominee and nominee's research program (300-word limit)
- Justification for the nomination
 - Explain how this individual is outstanding in his/her field (300-word limit)
 - Explain how this individual was selected for the nomination among, what is likely, many meritorious individuals (300-word limit)
 - Why should this nominee receive the FFAR New Innovator Award? (300-word limit)
 - How would the institution benefit from this nominee receiving the New Innovator Award? (300-word limit)
 - Explain how the institution is and will continue supporting the nominee. (300-word limit)

II. Full Proposal

Required

- Program Title
- FFAR Challenge Area
- Proposed Budget
- Budget Justification
- Program Duration
- Stakeholder groups to be served by this program
- Geographic locations of applicant organization and research activities
- Key Personnel
- Public Abstract (500-word limit)
- Executive Summary (2,000-word limit)
- Research Strategy

Describe (1) the significance and potential impact of the program, (2) what makes the approach(es) exceptionally innovative, (3) how will risks and challenges be addressed, and (4) the applicant's qualifications for this award. The description of the scientific plan should be written at a level appropriate for reviewers who are broadly knowledgeable but may not be directly involved in the proposed area of research. To focus the application on the goals of the New Innovator Award and the review criteria, presenting the proposed research as a series of specific aims is discouraged. Do not provide a detailed experimental plan. Preliminary data are allowed but not required. This section should include the following:



- *Program description (3000 words)*: Describe the scientific challenge or opportunity that you propose to address, its importance, and how anticipated outcomes would have a major impact on a broad area of research relevant to the FFAR Challenge Area. Provide the scientific context by summarizing the current landscape of the field and how your research, if successful, would extend substantially beyond current boundaries. Describe the overall approach to be taken.
State prominently that to comply with the RFA, a detailed experimental plan and extensive preliminary data are not being provided. However, this section must be written such that reviewers have a clear sense of what is being proposed to be done and why and are convinced that the research will be performed in a robust and rigorous manner, including addressing risks and challenges.
- *Innovativeness (1000 words)*: State clearly and concisely what makes your project unusually innovative in the context of the current state-of-the-art of the field. Since the approaches may be highly innovative, and hence risky, what will you do if these approaches are not successful?
- *Investigator qualifications (1000 words)*: Provide evidence to support your claim of innovativeness and creativity in your prior research. For example, what personal qualities and experiences demonstrate your inclination to question paradigms and work with intellectual uncertainties, develop unique collaborations, integrate diverse sources of information, or develop novel approaches when new challenges or opportunities arise?
- *Suitability for the New Innovator Award program (500 words)*: Why is the planned program fundamental to building your research career?
- Goals and Objectives (2000 words)
- Anticipated Outcomes or Outputs (1500 words)
- Data Management Plan (1500 words)
- Facilities, Equipment and other Resources (500 words)
- Organizational Assurances for any type of research involving:
 - Human subjects
 - Vertebrate animals
 - Recombinant DNA
 - National Security implications
 - Hazardous materials
 - Human fetal tissue
 - NEPA review
- Attachments
 - a. Required Attachments



- Contact Form
 - Budget Form
 - PI and Key Personnel Biosketch: Three-page limit per individual listed as PI or key personnel in the program (see [Biosketch Guidelines](#)).
 - Current and Pending Support
 - 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.
 - Applicant Feedback on Full Proposal – Applicants may complete a survey giving FFAR feedback on their proposal experience.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Applications must be submitted through FFAR’s online application [Grant Management System](#). Nominations and applications submitted outside of this System will not be considered. Nominations or applications that are not submitted by the deadline will not be accepted.

If you are a new user, register for an account by clicking the green “Register” button at the top right corner of the [Grant Management System](#) home page. You will receive a confirmation email to activate your account. Once you log in, click on the corresponding program to start your application.

Nominators, please be prepared to submit the nominee(s) name, department, institution, title, start date of current position, date Ph.D. or equivalent degree was received, and justification for the nomination.

Once nominations are reviewed by FFAR, only nominated individuals listed as principal investigator and meeting eligibility criteria will be invited to submit full applications. Nominees may submit an application only after receiving an invitation through the Grant Management System. Full proposal application receipt for nominees will be open on March 24, 2021.

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 whether

their nominees are invited to submit a full proposal no later than three weeks of the nomination submission deadline.

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, and 3) evidence of the applicant's potential for creative and innovative research as an early stage investigator.
- 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 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).

The New Innovator Award supports innovative research that has the potential to produce a major impact on FFAR Challenge Areas. A New Innovator Award grant application does not require extensive background material. Preliminary data are not required but may be included. Accordingly, reviewers will provide comments



emphasizing the following: 1) the importance of the scientific problem encompassed in the program of research and its potential impact, 2) the novelty and innovativeness of the approach, and 3) evidence of the applicant's potential for creative and innovative research as an early stage investigator.

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/their field? Does the PI have the appropriate experience and training? Is the effort committed sufficient to perform the proposed research? Will this research program serve as a platform for a successful scientific career? Will the PI be an inspiring mentor who will attract and motivate students and post-docs in their lab? Does the PI have institutional support to carry out the program being proposed?

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? Is the overall scientific approach 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?

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 of the application status (1) the proposal has been selected for funding pending contract negotiations, or (2) the proposal has not been selected 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 financial information.

Intent to Fund 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 the appropriate month and year.

Once the Grant Agreement is fully executed, the Effective Date cannot be changed. If the grantee requires additional time beyond the Grant Period 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 to revise the original Expiration Date noted in the Grant Agreement. The request must be submitted to FFAR at least thirty (45) days prior to the Expiration Date of the grant. The request must explain the need for the extension and include an estimate, if any, of the unobligated funds remaining and a plan for their use. One-time extensions will not be approved for the sole purpose of spending unexpended funds.

Post-award Management

Reporting Requirements

After a grant is conferred, the grantee is responsible for providing FFAR an annual progress report to include a financial report to FFAR detailing grant expenditures to date and scientific report showing activities being carried out under the grant, including but not limited to program 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 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 [Sample 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

I. 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

II. 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 FFAR receives and the complexity of the questions asked. Please note that we do not monitor this mailbox on evenings, weekends, or federal holidays.