



Executive Director

Job type: Full-time

Location: Washington, DC, Remote work available

Job Description

Created through the Farm Bill of 2014 and the resulting statute, the [Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research](#) (FFAR) connects funders, researchers, the food industry and farmers through public-private partnerships to support research addressing the biggest food and agriculture challenges in today's world. Key to enabling these missions is the Foundation's commitment to science and innovation, collaboration and partnership, measurement and rigor. FFAR's publicly available results are shared with the scientific, food and agriculture communities who can employ these solutions.

Per the Congressional statute, FFAR will fund research activities focused on key problems of national and international significance across:

- Plant health, production and products;
- Animal health, production and products;
- Food safety, nutrition and health,
- Renewable energy, natural resources and environment;
- Agricultural and food security; and
- Agriculture systems and technology

Mission and Strategy: FFAR's research, co-created with the food industry and agriculture community, fills critical research gaps to support pioneering science that provides everyone with access to affordable, nutritious food grown on thriving farms. FFAR facilitates technology transfer of research results through interactions with stakeholders drawn from multiple sectors. FFAR employs a rigorous independent review process that produces credible results benefiting the public and private sectors.

By investing in young scientists, FFAR prepares today's scientific workforce to address the food and agriculture challenges of tomorrow. FFAR has fellowship, grant and award programs to recognize scientific leaders, provide unique research opportunities, support young faculty and inspire the next generation of scientists.



The distinguished board of directors includes voting members as well as ex-officio members designated by Congress. The board of directors guide strategy and organizational governance. The ex-officio board positions support our close partnerships with the National Science Foundation and the US Department of Agriculture. There are currently 17 Board members led by Dr. Mark Keenum, President of Mississippi State University.

Current Research Challenge Areas: There are six main research focus areas:

1. **Soil Health:** Climate change is accelerating the degradation and loss of soil, which we need to grow healthy and flavorful food. Soil Health research develops and deploys the latest technology and knowledge to help farmers build and maintain healthy, productive soil.
2. **Sustainable Water Management:** Agriculture counts for 70 percent of water consumption and significantly contributes to the excess nutrient loads in our waterways. Innovative engineering practices customized to local field conditions are essential to minimizing water demand, increasing terrestrial water storage and improving water quality while also enhancing crop production.
3. **Next Generation Crops:** Crop diversity creates greater economic security for farmers, offers environmental benefits and can increase food security. Farmers growing a range of crops can sell to multiple markets and supply chains. Some crops can improve soil, filter water and reduce climate emissions. While much of the corn and soy crops are used for energy, animal feed, or exported abroad, crop diversity can increase food crops and food security.
4. **Advanced Animal Systems:** The demand for animal proteins continues to increase, as do the challenges for livestock producers. Advanced Animal Systems research develops solutions that improve animal health and welfare, bolster producer profitability and improve food supply sustainability.
5. **Urban Food Systems:** Urban food systems can promote community health, but they are affected by many factors such as social inequalities and inefficient supply chains. Technological and policy breakthroughs help agriculture adapt to urban environments and minimize pollution. These developments can also make healthy food physically and economically accessible to urban populations.

6. Health-Agriculture Nexus: One in eight Americans face food insecurity and are unable to obtain affordable, nutritious food. At the same time, on average, 30 percent of food in the US is discarded. FFAR looks to discover pioneering approaches for transitioning food and agriculture systems, focusing on sustainably increasing capability for producing sufficient quantities of affordable nutritious food.

Financial & Operational Highlights

- FFAR was initially funded in the 2014 Farm Bill and refunded by Congress in the 2018 Farm Bill, providing \$385 million to support research in critical areas in the food and agriculture. The Foundation is looking ahead to the next Farm Bill, starting in 2022.
- Public-private partnerships match federal funding from Congress on at least a 1:1 basis. FFAR has worked with over 550 partners to garner a matching of 1:1.40, bringing nearly \$1 billion of expanded resources to food and agriculture research.
- Located in Washington D.C., FFAR has an operation budget of approximately \$9 million and manages over \$100 million in grant funds annually.

Position Description

The executive director of FFAR is accountable for ensuring the Foundation's financial and fiscal sustainability; working with the board to assess and execute long-term strategic goals, maintaining and enhancing relationships with key stakeholders such as Congress; and developing research and scientific workforce initiatives. They will attract, develop and retain a high-performing team for the future and grow the recognition and impact of FFAR by participating in public-facing events. The executive director will also build upon FFAR's pioneering culture of audacity, collaboration, rigor and agility, both internally at the Foundation and across the field externally, in addressing challenges in agriculture, food sourcing, water quality and beyond.

This position reports to the FFAR board of directors. Direct reports for this position include FFAR's six scientific program directors, the chief operating officer and the chief development officer. Other key relationships include Congress and other governing agencies as well as public and private funders.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Maintain the integrity of FFAR's core vision while enabling the organization to move towards new pursuits that align with the needs of the food industry and agriculture research world.
- Sustain and enhance FFAR's strong relationships with key stakeholders, including Congress and other government bodies, research organizations and both private and public funders.
- Develop a comprehensive development strategy to further build a diversified portfolio of funding sources through both private and public partnerships; maintain and expand current success in exceeding 1:1 match from non-federal sources including industry, non-federal and foreign governments, commodity groups, philanthropies, NGOs, academia and individuals.
- Grow FFAR's recognition across the food and agriculture sectors as well as the general population through conferences, panel discussions and media interactions.
- Nurture an inclusive and familial culture that ensures employee retention, satisfaction and diversity while focusing on the Foundation's mission of addressing today's most pressing issues in food and agriculture, building on the proven strengths of the existing staff.

The ideal candidate will have demonstrated experience in an organization with a culture of intellectual rigor, discipline and accountability. S/he/they will be a skilled and confident leader, influencer, collaborator and coalition-builder who can drive alignment and results in a complex, multi-stakeholder environment. This leader will have a strong scientific background, an entrepreneurial spirit and the ability to speak knowledgeably on a wide breadth of pertinent issues relating to the food chain and agriculture systems.

Qualifications

- **Leadership/Expertise in Relevant Areas:** Significant experience at an organization in a field related to the scientific areas in which FFAR works. Experience with/at one of the following required: industry, philanthropies, commodity organizations, academia or with government research labs. Breadth of knowledge across research and focus areas is crucial.
- **Strong Existing Network and Ability to form Networks:** Experience in navigating and leveraging relationships with Congress and other national and federal agencies is advantageous. Ability to negotiate with wide variety of stakeholders to

ensure ongoing funding. A leader with existing networks in relevant organizations and communities. Builds strong relationships with existing staff and Board of Directors and leads team with humility and empathy and demonstrates strong emotional intelligence.

- **Creativity and Entrepreneurship:** Ability to think out of the box and fill research gaps in a creative manner. Agile problem solver who can inspire others to do the same.
- **Grant and Development Experience:** Experience working with grant applications; overall acumen regarding the research and development process. Demonstrated success and innovation in funding areas. Ability to lead fundraising and to broaden breadth of FFAR's donor and stakeholder base to increase influx of non-federal funds.
- **Spokesperson Experience:** A substantively credible spokesperson before the range of relevant and influential FFAR stakeholders and audiences.
- **Relevant Academic or Professional Credentials:** Graduate degree in applicable field is required; Ph.D. preferred but individuals with significant, relevant experience as senior leaders within peer organizations are also highly qualified. The individual's background at minimum must show a strong understanding of and experience in food, agriculture, sustainability, or relevant sciences.

Application and Nomination Process

To apply for this position, please email ffarexecdirector@spencerstuart.com

FFAR reviews applications on a rolling basis and will accept applications until a candidate is selected. Applications must include of a substantive cover letter and resume. Applicants are also encouraged to include four (4) professional references with contact information; no references will be contacted without explicit permission from the candidate. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.

Additional Information

Critical leadership capabilities for this position include:

- **Strategic Thinking**
 - Work with the board and scientific directors to clarify and articulate organizational goals and priorities while also identifying future areas of opportunity to maximize impact.

- Leverage relationships with Congress and others to ensure long-term sustainability. Ensure at least a 1:1 match of federal dollars as required by the Farm Bill and continue to grow non-federal funding.
- Identify and prioritize the most critical factors in determining allocation of grant funding.
- **Collaborating and Influencing**
 - Develop trusted relationships with the Board, senior leadership, staff, affiliate network partners, donors, Congress and other external stakeholders to ensure FFAR's on-going funding and impact.
 - Create new/leverage existing opportunities for FFAR to participate in coalitions and partnerships. Be a convener.
 - Engage others in open dialogue and effectively manage emerging or potential conflicts amongst stakeholders, staff and others.
- **Leading People**
 - Inspiring and empowering a diverse and high-performing team.
 - Building an equitable and inclusive work environment where staff are encouraged to drive critical initiatives, engage in honest discussion and communicate clearly.
 - Delegating significant responsibilities and giving team members authority to lead as needed to focus on priority areas.
 - Leading with gravitas, credibility and humility to create a healthy work culture in which individuals not only meet but exceed their expectations.
- **Personal Characteristics**
 - Genuine passion and commitment to the Foundation's core values and mission and willingness to take initiative and make a real impact on behalf of the Foundation.
 - Aligns with culture of kindness and familial feel of FFAR.
 - Proximity to Washington, D.C. is ideal but not immediately required.



EEO Statement

FFAR is an equal opportunity employer. Applicants are considered for positions without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information or any other category protected by applicable federal, state or local laws. Applications are encouraged from individuals who may fall into any such groups, as well as from veterans and uniformed service members.