

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: 2022 NEW INNOVATOR IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AWARD

No Matching Funds Required

The Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR) seeks nominations for its 2022 New Innovator in Food and Agriculture Research Award (NIA). 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 2022 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 amounts 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, firmly establish their early lines of research into important food and

Key Dates

Nomination Period Open:
January 12, 2022 at 12:00 pm ET

Nominations Due:
February 23, 2022 at 5:00 pm ET
*Nominations must be submitted through
FFAR's Grants Portal.*

Nominees invited to submit full proposals:
March 9, 2022 at 5:00 pm ET
*Open only to individuals nominated by their
institutions.*

Full Applications Due:
May 4, 2022 at 5:00 pm ET

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 2022 New Innovator Award program.

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, 2018** 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 from the applicant, as they are provided by FFAR.** However, additional matching is always 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.
 - 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.
- Anticipated 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: Fall 2022.

APPLICATION COMPONENTS

I. Nomination Application

- Nomination letter on institution letterhead, signed by Authorized Organizational Representative. The Nomination letter must be submitted by the nominee through FFAR's Grants Portal.
- General Information
 - Nominee's Name
 - Nominee's date of appointment to tenure-track or equivalent position (must be on or after 8/1/2018)
 - Nominator Contact Information
 - Nominee Contact Information
 - FFAR Challenge Area to which the nominee will submit the application
 - Nominee's research program overview (300-word limit)

- Justification for the nomination must address all points below
 - Explain how this individual is outstanding in their 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
- 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. The application should focus on the overarching goals of the research program and address the review criteria. It is not necessary to provide the proposed research as a series of specific aims. Do not provide a detailed experimental plan. Preliminary data are allowed but not required. This section should include the following:

- *Program description:* 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 can be performed in a robust and rigorous manner, including addressing risks and challenges.

- *Innovativeness*: 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*: 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*: Why is the planned program fundamental to building your research career?
- Data Management Plan
- Facilities, Equipment and other Resources
- 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
 - Budget Form
 - PI and Key Personnel Biosketch: Three-page limit per individual listed as PI or key personnel in the program (see [Biosketch Guidelines](#)).
 - 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 by the deadline date through FFAR's online application [Grant Management System](#). Nominations and applications submitted outside of this System will not be considered.

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.

Nominators, please be prepared to write a letter on institutional letterhead with the nominee's name, department, institution, title, start date of current position, date they received their Ph.D., and justification for the nomination addressing all points provided in the Application Components section.

FFAR will review nominations against eligibility criteria. Only those meeting these criteria will be invited to submit full applications. Email invitations will be sent to those eligible by March 9, 2022.

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 sent an email being invited to 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 Ad Hoc 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 criteria; 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? 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 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 Start Date and the End Date. Grantees may only use FFAR funds on program expenditures on or after the Start Date of the Grant. Charging expenditures to the grant prior to the Start date is strongly discouraged. Likewise, grantees may not use FFAR funds after the End Date except to satisfy obligations to pay allowable program costs committed on or before that date.

Once the Grant Agreement is fully executed, the Start Date cannot be changed. The End 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 End Date to assure adequate completion of the original scope of work within the funds already made available, the grantee may request a no-cost extension. The request must be submitted to FFAR at least thirty (30) days prior to the End 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.

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 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 applying, the applicant acknowledges and accepts the terms and conditions of this Call for Nominations.

CONTACT INFORMATION

All Scientific and Grants questions must be emailed to grants@foundationfar.org

FFAR only accepts 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.