Achieving Conservation through Targeting Information, Outreach and Networking Request for Application (ACTION)
Reviewer Instructions

Thank you for agreeing to serve as a reviewer for the Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR). This document contains information that will guide you through the review process. If you have any questions, please contact the grants department at grants@foundationfar.org.

Review Process

Applications submitted through FFAR's grant management system undergo one round of peer review. Each application is reviewed by at least three peer reviewers and assigned categorical scores for each review criteria section. Scores from all peer reviewers are averaged by FFAR's grants department.

All applications are to be kept strictly confidential. By participating in FFAR's peer review, all reviewers agree to exercise extreme care to ensure that the information contained in applications is not used, duplicated, or disclosed, in whole or in part, for any purpose other than to evaluate the proposal.

Review

Peer reviewers are required to provide feedback to the applicant in several categories listed on the Application Review Criteria, including Strategic Impact (1), Feasibility (2), Potential Outcomes and Outreach (3), and Qualifications (4).

Review comments are not intended to be exhaustive but should provide reasonably detailed information that will help the applicant improve the application and research. Comments should address all the questions listed under each category. Do not merely state general comments, such as, "important approach," "excellent applicant," or "overambitious," etc. Instead, explain what makes the approach important, applicant excellent, and project overambitious. A synthesis of the reviewer comments will be forwarded to applicants and may be used to guide subsequent revisions/resubmissions.

Reviewer Responsibilities

Peer grant reviewers are responsible for:

- Reviewing and agreeing to FFAR's Conflict of Interest Policy and Non-Disclosure Agreement.
- Reading the provided review instructions and descriptions of grant opportunity.
- Assessing review assignments for conflicts of interest. If a conflict is found with any of the invited applications to review, please notify FFAR's grants department staff immediately.
- Reviewing grant assignments for concerns related to content aligning with your expertise. If you find any of your assigned applications are outside your area of expertise, please notify FFAR's grant department as soon as possible.
- Reading and evaluating each review assignment.
- Scoring each assigned application and providing written critiques in accordance with the review template.

Scoring

Use the scale below to assign a score to the application for each criterion. Note that each criterion has a different weight (i.e., a 10 in the Strategic Impact criterion will be worth more than a 10 in the Potential Outcomes and Outputs criterion).

1. **Unacceptable**: An incomplete proposal. Almost no strengths.
2. **Poor**: A low impact proposal with very few strengths and numerous weaknesses.
3. **Marginal**: A low impact proposal with few strengths and some major weaknesses.
4. **Fair**: A low impact proposal with some strengths but at least one major weakness.
5. **Satisfactory**: A medium impact proposal with some strengths and some moderate weaknesses.
6. **Good**: A medium impact proposal with many strengths but at least one moderate weakness.
7. **Very Good**: A strong proposal with medium impact but numerous minor weaknesses.
8. **Excellent**: A very strong, high impact proposal with some minor weaknesses.
9. **Outstanding**: An extremely strong, high impact proposal with negligible minor weaknesses.
10. **Exceptional**: An exceptionally strong, high impact proposal with essentially no weaknesses.

Application Review Criteria

Once a reviewer accepts the invitation to review and creates a reviewer account, all reviews must be submitted through FFAR's Reviewer Portal. Please score and provide a written critique addressing each of the questions below under its appropriate section (1-4) within the portal. Please see FFAR's Application Review Process webpage for online Review Portal Instructions.

Strategic Impact - Novelty, Innovation, and Originality (30%)
1. Does the proposed project innovatively explore how to drive farmers' or landowners' adoption of conservation practices by strategically integrating social and biophysical sciences?
2. Has the applicant demonstrated that this research has not been done elsewhere?

Feasibility - Technical Merit and Feasibility (30%)
1. Does the proposal clearly outline the aims and objectives?
2. Does the proposal include appropriately thorough, tractable, and feasible methods?
3. Has the principal investigator assembled a qualified research team with access to appropriate technical support?
4. Does the proposal present a tractable timeline and budget?
5. Does the proposal include adequate risk evaluation and a mitigation plan?
6. Does the proposal include an adequate data management plan with a commitment to public access?

Potential Outcomes and Outreach - Impacts and Outcomes (25%)
1. Is the project likely to increase conservation practice adoption?
2. Does the applicant plan to advance opportunities for conservation practice implementation developed in their research, for example, through existing or potential support from NFWF?
3. Does the proposal adequately describe the impact and applied relevance of the research?
4. Does the proposal emphasize scalability and present a plan for disseminating the project outcomes?
5. Does the proposal identify how FFAR and WFF are uniquely positioned to fund this project and how proposed activities align with existing or potential NFWF program priorities and funding support?
6. Does the proposed project provide training for the next generation of scientists?

Qualifications - Investigator (15%)
1. Are the PI and their team well suited to perform the research?
2. Is the effort committed sufficiently to perform the proposed research?
3. Will this research project serve as a platform for advancing implementation?
4. Do the PI and their team have institutional and outside organization support essential to the proposed project?