

2023 Seeding Solutions Review

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 Team at grants@foundationfar.org and/or the Scientific Program Officer at rcomella@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 and weighted by category by FFAR..

All applications are to be kept strictly confidential. By participating in FFAR's peer review, 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 *Novelty, Innovation, and Originality* (1), *Technical Merit and Feasibility* (2), *Impacts and Outcomes* (3), and *Partnerships* (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, or 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 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 the grant opportunity.
- Assessing review assignments for conflicts of interest. If a conflict is found with any of the invited applications to review, please notify the Grants Team at grants@foundationfar.org, and/or the Scientific Program Officer at rcomella@foundationfar.org.
- 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 Grants Team and the Program Officer 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, as illustrated on the following page (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 the appropriate section (1-4) within the portal. Please see FFAR's [Application Review Process](#) webpage **for online Review Portal Instructions and how to find the documents to review.**

All proposals will be screened for relevance, accuracy, completeness, and compliance with FFAR policies. Pre-proposal applications must demonstrate the potential to meet the evaluation criteria. Full proposals will then be evaluated on the following criteria:

Novelty, Innovation, and Originality (30%)

- a. Does the proposed project innovatively address a challenge related to our food supply or sustainable agriculture?
- b. Does the proposal challenge an existing paradigm(s) in food and agriculture science?

Technical Merit and Feasibility (30%)

- a. Does the proposal clearly outline the goals, objectives and underlying hypotheses?
- b. Does the proposal include appropriately thorough, tractable, and feasible methods?
- c. Has the principal investigator assembled a qualified research team with access to the appropriate field and laboratory facilities?
- d. Does the proposal present a tractable timeline and budget?
- e. Does the proposal include adequate risk evaluation and a mitigation plan?
- f. Does the proposal include an adequate data management plan with a commitment to public access?

Impacts and Outcomes (25%)

- a. Does the proposal adequately describe its potential, significant impact and applied relevance to U.S food and agriculture systems, with far-reaching, global impacts? Will the investigators be able to extrapolate their results beyond the study location and domain?
- b. Does the proposal present a plan for disseminating the project outcomes?
- c. Will results have relevance and reach to underrepresented and diverse communities of agricultural producers?
- d. Will the project provide training and support accessibility to a diversity of emerging scientists?
- e. Does the proposal identify how FFAR is uniquely positioned to fund this project?
- f. Does the proposal align with FFAR's Challenge Area or AgMission priorities?

Partnerships (15%)

- a. Does the project present a compelling and novel partnership opportunity?
- b. Does the proposal include adequate confirmation of partner commitment(s)?