

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS: 2024 NEW INNOVATOR IN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE RESEARCH AWARD

Matching Funds Are Optional For This Funding Opportunity

The Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR) seeks nominations for its 2024 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 2024 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.

Key Dates

Nomination Period Open:
January 17, 2024 at 12:00 pm ET

Nominations Due:
February 21, 2024 by 5:00 pm ET
*Nominations must be submitted through
FFAR's Grants Portal.*

Nominees invited to submit full proposals:
February 28, 2024
*Open only to individuals nominated by their
institutions.*

Full Applications Due:
April 3, 2024 by 5:00 pm ET

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 agriculture scientific areas and provide stability in funding during their critical early career years by reducing the time spent on writing applications.

FFAR envisions a world where everyone can access affordable, nutritious food grown on thriving farms. By building collaborative partnerships, we support audacious science that tackles today's food and agriculture challenges. We value and integrate diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) into our efforts to ensure our work reaches everyone. FFAR holds itself accountable to potential partners and stakeholders, by proactively committing time and opportunities to build outreach, programs and relationships that reflect inclusivity and equity.

FFAR, as a part of its mission, seeks brilliant minds as well as diverse and innovative perspectives tackling today's challenges in food and agriculture. FFAR also understands that the outside-the-box thinking needed to drive innovation occurs when researchers with different skill sets and experiences collaborate. Cross-disciplinary research teams, especially those that include disciplines not traditionally associated with food or agriculture science, are strongly encouraged to explore innovative solutions through the New Innovator Award program.

Investigators should uphold FFAR's commitment to [diversity, equity, and inclusion](#) and are strongly encouraged to seek unique perspectives through participatory stakeholder engagement and develop results to serve the diverse stakeholders committed to addressing challenges related to food supply and agricultural sustainability.

FFAR recently released its new [Research Strategy](#), which focuses on interrelated, strategic research priorities as we strive toward our goal: A U.S. food and agriculture system that supports producers and their communities, sustains the environment and enables processors and retailers to deliver foods that equitably nourish our population. In line with the new Research Strategy, FFAR has transitioned from the previous Challenge Area structure to focus on overarching Research Priorities to foster greater collaboration across disciplines. These priorities reflect a systems approach—recognizing the complex relationships between primary production systems, agroecosystems and the food system as a whole. Collectively, these priorities drive transformational systemic change by taking a broad view of U.S. agriculture, considering its social, environmental and economic benefits as well as impacts.

FFAR anticipates funding up to ten (10) awards. We ask that applicants address how their proposed research program will address at least one of FFAR's Research Priority Areas. The proposed research program should also be expected to clearly benefit the U.S. food and agriculture system.

Priority 1: Cultivating Thriving Production Systems: Production systems thrive when input providers and producers have the information and technologies (novel germplasm, digital tools, pest and disease solutions, etc.) to manage their enterprises efficiently and profitably—which includes selecting animals, crops and management practices that support site-specific environmental, social and business goals.

Priority 2: Sustaining Vibrant Agroecosystems: Tools, technologies and integrative models designed at scales needed for site-specific decision making allow producers to create, build and maintain healthy, productive agroecosystems that meet consumer expectations under changing climate conditions. Such solutions must provide flexibility to deal with future uncertainty, and clarify trends and trade-offs in environmental regeneration, productivity and resilience.

Priority 3: Bolstering Healthy Food Systems: In a healthy food system, food processors, distributors and retailers have the information and technologies needed to produce nutritious, environmentally sustainable and culturally appropriate food for consumers. Likewise, consumers require convenient access to safe, nutritious, desirable foods with a balance of macronutrients, micronutrients and protective phytochemicals.

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 2024 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, 2020** 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. For the purpose of this funding opportunity, significant research experience is defined as a nominee that has been awarded a substantial research grant (three to five years of support) or has received project funding totaling over \$1M within the time of their tenure position or has been awarded similar career development awards with similar budgetary scopes.

This research concept must directly benefit U.S. agricultural interests.

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 (36 months). **Matching funds are optional from the applicant, as that requirement is being met 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.
 - 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. 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: Winter 2024.

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. The letter should include the general information and justification outlined below.
 - General Information
 - Nominee's Name
 - Nominee's date of appointment to tenure-track or equivalent position (must be on or after August 1, 2020)
 - Nominator Contact Information
 - Nominee Contact Information
 - FFAR Research Priority Area to which the nominee's proposed research program aligns
 - Program Title
 - Geographic location where the proposed research will take place
 - 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 supporting and will continue to support the nominee. (300-word limit)
- General Information and Proposal Information to be completed on FFAR's online application Grant Management System:
 - Organization Information
 - Nominator Contact Information
 - Nominee's Name
 - Nominee's date of appointment to tenure-track or equivalent position (must be on or after August 1, 2020)
 - Nominee Contact Information
 - Key Personnel
 - Program Title
 - Geographic location where the proposed research will be conducted
 - FFAR Research Priority Area to which the nominee's proposed research program aligns
 - Key topics or areas of research to be covered in the nominee's program (50-word limit)
 - Nominee's research program overview (400-word limit)

- Preliminary budget and optional match information

II. Full Proposal

- Required
 - Organization Information
 - Nominee Contact Information
 - Key Personnel
 - Program Title
 - FFAR Research Priority Area
 - Key topics or areas of research to be covered in the nominee's program (50-word limit)
 - Program Duration
 - Geographic location where the proposed research will be conducted
 - Public Abstract (500-word limit)
 - Stakeholder groups to be served by this program (500-word limit)
 - Research Program Description (2,000-word limit) - 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 outreach and outcomes would have a major impact on a broad area of research relevant to the FFAR Research Priority Area and how it will impact U.S. Agriculture. 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. A detailed experimental plan and extensive preliminary data are not required, but the applicant will need to clearly provide a description of the program being proposed. Applicants must also address how the research will be performed in a robust and rigorous manner, including addressing risks and challenges. If not providing a detailed experimental plan or extensive preliminary data, state prominently that this is done in compliance with the RFA. (1,000-word limit)
 - Innovation and Feasibility: State clearly and concisely what makes your project exceptionally innovative in the context of the current state-of-the-art of the field. Describe how this research has not been done elsewhere or how it accelerates a current research challenge or addresses it in a new or innovative manner. Since the approaches may

- be highly innovative, and hence risky, what will you do if these approaches are not successful? (500-word limit)
- 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? (500-word limit)
 - Suitability for the New Innovator Award program: Why is the planned program fundamental to building your research career? (500-word limit)
 - Data Management and Dissemination Plan (500-word limit)
 - Facilities, Equipment and other Resources (500-word limit)
 - Proposed Budget
 - Budget Justification
 - Optional Match Information
 - 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
 - Required Attachments
 - Budget Form
 - Current and Pending Support
 - References Cited
 - PI and Key Personnel Biosketches: Five-page limit per individual listed as PI or key personnel in the program (see [Biosketch Guidelines](#)).
 - Optional attachments to support Research Program description - This section should not be used to circumvent the page limit for the Research Program Description Section.
 - Matching Funds Contribution Letters
 - Additional Key Personnel
 - Graphics, Figures, Equations, and Tables - The textbox for the Research Program Description 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 description (5-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.

[To start a new application, please click here.](#) 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 February 28, 2024.

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. Reviewers will provide comments using the detailed Review Criteria below.
- 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 interest 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.

The New Innovator Award supports innovative research that has the potential to produce a major impact on challenges related to FFAR Research Priority 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 program's 1) innovation and strategic impact, 2) feasibility, 3) potential outcomes and outreach, and 4) the qualifications of the PI and team. Please see the detailed review criteria below.

Scored Review Criteria

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit.

Innovation and Strategic Impact

- Does the research program address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress within a FFAR Research Priority Area?
- Did the applicant identify how FFAR is uniquely positioned to fund this research program? Does the proposal clearly address at least one of FFAR's research priority areas?
- Did the applicant describe what makes the proposed approach(es) exceptionally innovative in the context of the current state-of-the-art of the field?
- 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?

Feasibility

Note that applicants are asked to focus on the overall program of research. They are **not** asked to provide a detailed experimental plan or list of aims. The program budget does not need to be associated with specific aims.

- Are the overarching goals 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 and propose to address them?
- Is the data and results management plan outlined by the applicant adequate?

Potential Outcomes and Outreach

- Has the applicant sufficiently demonstrated that the proposed research program is expected to directly benefit the U.S. food and agriculture system?
- 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?
- Will the PI share the data and research results with the food and agriculture community? If so, do they also effectively describe how they will share results?

Qualifications

- 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?

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 by FFAR of a no-cost extension request. If a no-cost-extension request is approved, FFAR will issue a Modification 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 which includes a financial report to FFAR, detailing grant expenditures to date and a scientific report showing activities being carried out under the grant, including but not limited to program accomplishments to date. 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.