2023 Organic Center-FFAR joint Organic Research Program Request for Application

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Key Dates

Pre-Application Open: April 17, 2023

Pre-Applications Due: June 1, 2023 5:00pm ET

NOTE: An approved pre-application with an invitation to submit a full application is required for submission.

Full Application Invitation: July 6, 2023

Full Applications Due: August 15, 2023 5:00 PM ET

Award Notification: Fall 2023

The Organic Center and the Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR) is announcing the 2023 Organic Center-FFAR joint Organic Research Program and is inviting applications for innovative research that supports our 2023 focus on Organic 2023 focus on connecting soil health to farm productivity and resiliency to climate change, with a priority on projects that emphasize systems-based approaches and a commitment to cross-sectorpartnerships.

Program Priorities and Requirements:

The Organic Center and FFAR seek projects that connect below and above ground ecosystem health and farm profitability, with specific examination of the relationship between soil health and crop/animal productivity, or climate change resilience.

Applications that address the following will receive preference:

1. Contributes to the understanding of connectivity between below and above ground ecosystem health and farm profitability.

2. Relies on innovative, systems-based approaches with cross-discipline collaboration

throughout project development and implementation.

3. Integrates diversity, equity, and inclusion into the project design, development, and communication.

4. Engages organic farmers in the development, implementation, and/or evaluation of the project.

5. Serves the public good by making data open and accessible to the public and includes at least one open-access publication submission.

6. Has a strong history of serving under-represented farmers, and demonstrate a critical lens in exploring systemic barriers.

7. Increases tools for and success of organic dairy farmers, particularly in the Northeastern Region of the U.S.

Eligibility

The Organic Center and the Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research welcomes applications from all domestic non-profits, higher education institutions, cooperative extension programs, US government-affiliated research agencies, tribal government entities, or any combination of the above.

Funding Availability and Award Information

This program will award up to two grants for a maximum of $200,000 per project and applications for lesser amounts are welcomed. All projects must have planned durations ranging between one and three years. Matching funds are not required for this project, but are encouraged.

Indirect costs are limited to 10% of the total award.

Evaluation Criteria

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

Novelty, Innovation, and Originality (30%)
- o Does the proposed project innovatively connect soil health to farm productivity and profitability using in-field or data synthesis methods?

- o Is the project multi-disciplinary and systems-based?
- o Does the proposed project complement rather than duplicates other efforts?
- o Were farmers involved in the development of the project priorities, and will they continue to be integrated throughout the project?
- o Does the project clearly explore barriers to participation and accessibility from diverse perspectives.

Technical Merit and Feasibility (30%)
- o Does the proposal clearly outline the aims and objectives?
- o Does the proposal include appropriately thorough, tractable and feasible methods?
- o Has the principal investigator assembled a qualified research team with access to the appropriate field and laboratory facilities?
- o Is the research conducted on certified organic or land that is actively in transition?
- o Does the proposal present a tractable timeline and budget?
- o Does the proposal include adequate risk evaluation and a mitigation plan?
- o Does the proposal include an adequate data management plan with a commitment to public access?

Impacts, Outcomes, and Partnerships (40%)
- o Does the proposal adequately describe the potential impact and applied relevance of the research?
- o Does the proposed project include extension to farmers?
- o Does the proposed project include a plan for evaluating farmer adoption?
- o Does the proposal include a description of their partnership with adequate confirmation of partner commitment(s)?
- o Have diversity, equity, and inclusion been integrated throughout the project from project development, to execution (research institutions to researchers and students, to hired/contracted services) and through outreach products and strategies.
- o Will the researchers publish an open-access scientific publication?

How to Apply
Pre-proposals and proposals must be submitted as a single pdf via email to Dr. Amber Sciligo at
ResearchGrant@organic-center.org

Only applications submitted by the deadline will be accepted and considered eligible for evaluation. To be fair to all our applicants, we will not grant extensions to applicants who missed the deadlines posted in the Key Dates section.

Additional Information

Review Process
Pre-Application Review: Submitted pre-applications undergo a review to assess if the project is relevant to the 2022 Organic Center-FFAR joint Organic Research Program and that the application demonstrates the potential to meet the evaluation criteria. The most innovative and cutting-edge projects are invited to submit a full application. ***Applicants must submit a pre-***

application to be eligible to submit a full application.

Full Application Review: Full proposals undergo a three-stage peer-review process. First, each submission is reviewed for relevance and requirements by Organic Center staff. In the second stage, proposals will be reviewed by a panel of subject experts, industry members, Organic Center Scientific Counselor members, and FFAR staff based on the Evaluation Criteria included in this RFA. Finally, positive funding recommendations will be reviewed with consideration to program priorities and available funding.

All external reviewers must agree and adhere to the terms outlined in FFAR's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#) and [Non-Disclosure Agreement.](#) Reviewers with a conflict of interest are recused from evaluating or participating in the related discussions. Each stage of the review is conducted confidentially.

Award Administration

Selection Notice: Following the full application review process, the principal investigator and the authorized organization representative listed on the project will be officially notified by email of the status of the application. If an application is selected for funding, FFAR reserves the right to request additional or clarifying information for any reason deemed necessary. Potential grantees are free to accept or reject the Grant Agreement as offered.

Intent to Fund Notification: FFAR notifies applicant of their awards through email. The notice does not constitute an award or obligate funding from FFAR until there is a fully executed Grant Agreement. FFAR encourages applicants to review a sample Grant Agreement before applying to ensure they know the terms under which grants are offered.

Post-award Management

Selection Notice: Following the full application review process, the authorized organization representative listed on the proposal will be officially notified by email of the status of the application. If an application is selected for funding, The Organic Center reserves the right to request additional or clarifying information for any reason deemed necessary. Potential grantees are free to accept or reject the Grant Agreement as offered.

Intent to Fund Notification: The Organic Center notifies applicant of their awards through email. The notice does not constitute an award or obligate funding until there is a fully executed Grant Agreement.

Post-award Management

Grant Period: Upon receipt of the Grant Agreement, the grantee should confirm the project's start and end dates. Once signed, the start date cannot be changed. Grantees may use award funds only on expenditures on or after the Grant Agreement is fully executed. Charging expenditures to the grant before the fully executed date is strictly prohibited. Likewise, grantees may not use funds after the end date except to pay allowable project costs

committed on or before that date.

A grantee may request a no-cost extension of up to six months to complete the work's planned scope. The request must be communicated at least thirty (30) days before the end date of the grant. The request must justify the need for the extension, include a summary of the unobligated, remaining funds, and provide a plan for fulfilling the project's terms. If a no-cost extensionrequest is approved, The Organic Center will issue an amendment to the Grant Agreement.

Annual Reporting Requirements: After The Organic Center confers a grant, the grantee must provide annual progress reports. The report should include activities carried out under the grant, highlighting project accomplishments, and an account of all expenditures to date.

Final Report Requirements: Within 90 days of completing the project, the grantee shall provide a final project report. This report should address the project objectives outlined in the original grant application, describe any modifications to the project objectives and scope, describe the final project accomplishments, and include a final project accounting of all grant funds.

Application Components

Please include each section listed below in a single pdf, and submit to Dr. Amber Sciligo at ResearchGrant@organic-center.org

Pre-Application Components
- Project title (*up to 250 characters*)
- List of key project personnel – name(s), affiliation, expertise, project role
- Project location(s)
- Project description (*up to 750 words*)
    o Contributes to the understanding of connectivity between below and above ground ecosystem health and farm profitability?
    o What are the project goals and objectives?
    o What innovative outcomes will the project generate?
    o How are you incorporating/increasing diversity, equity and inclusion in the project?
    o How are farmers involved in the project?
- Project timeline
    o Proposed project start date
    o Proposed project duration (*in calendar months*)
- Budget
    o **Indirect costs are limited to 10% of the total award**.
    o Total funding request amount
    o A full budget breakdown is not required for the pre-application.
- Funding partners (optional but preferred): List any committed or potential funding partners, describe why they are an appropriate source of matching

funds, and any prior contact you have had or relationship you have developed with them about this project.

Applications that demonstrate strong partnerships by way of matching from external sources outside the applicant institutions are encouraged, but not required. These partners may include but are not limited to the private sector, non-profits, commodity and trade groups, state governments andothers that do not traditionally work in agriculture.

Full Application Components*
*Brevity is encouraged and word limits are set to reduce burden on applicants and reviewers. If word limits are prohibitive for any section, please reach out to Dr. Amber Sciligo at ResearchGrant@organic-center.org

Required components
- Project title (*up to 250 characters*)
- Key project personnel – name(s), affiliation, expertise, project role description (*up to 500 words*)
- Locations of performance
- Project abstract (*up to 300 words*)
- Goals and objectives (*up to 300 words*)
- Project description and approach (*up to 750 words*)
- Anticipated outcomes or outputs (*up to 500 words*)
- Project management plan (*up to 300 words, organizational chart encouraged*)
    o Who will be managing the various components of work?
- Barriers to adoption of the research outcome(s) (*up to 300 words*)
- Proposed budget:
    - Use this budget template to show breakdown of proposed expenses.
    - Budget narrative (*up to 1000 words*) must include:
        o A brief overview of the budget by task or objective, in parallel to the approach outlined in the project's description. Address costs related to personnel, equipment, facilities and analytics. (*up to 750 words*)
    - Budget justification by year (*up to 750 words*)
        o **Indirect costs are limited to 10% of the total award**.
- References list (*no word limit*)
- Letters of support (*no limit*)