



## Request for Research Proposals

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**Posted September 30, 2011**

OFRF is pleased to announce that funding is available to fund research or education/outreach projects on any agricultural production, social, economic, or policy-related topic of concern to organic farmers or ranchers.

Special funding is also available for projects in the categories of organic seed quality or crop breeding thanks to a partnership with the Clif Bar Family Foundation.

To streamline the application process, OFRF will now accept proposals via electronic submission. Follow the guidelines below and submit proposals by **Tuesday, November 15, 2011.**

**ATTENTION FARMERS AND RANCHERS:** Other funding opportunities may be available to you if you are a farmer, beginning farmer, landowner, Extension educator/specialist, or researcher working on related topics. Please refer to the publication "Building Sustainable Farms, Ranches and Communities" online at <http://attra.ncat.org/guide/>.

OFRF offers prospective applicants guidance on crafting your proposal. Contact OFRF's Grants Program Director, Jane Sooby, at (831) 426-6606 or [jane@ofrf.org](mailto:jane@ofrf.org) for details.

### **Applicant eligibility and proposal deadlines**

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) grants program is open to all applicants residing in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. OFRF does not fund projects outside of these countries.

OFRF particularly encourages farmers, ranchers, researchers, and Extension personnel to consider applying for funding. Farmers and ranchers often find that working with a professional researcher can

make it easier to design and carry out a research project, and OFRF encourages applications from such partnerships.

The deadline for the next granting cycle is **Tuesday, November 15, 2011.**

### **Overview of the Research Grants Program**

The Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF) funds research on organic farming and food systems and the dissemination of these research results to the agricultural community. Proposals must involve farmers or ranchers in project design and implementation and take place on working organic farms or ranches whenever possible. Proposals should articulate how the proposed research project will foster the improvement or adoption of organic farming systems.

OFRF will only fund projects in Canada, the United States, and Mexico.

Project proposals are reviewed and awarded by the OFRF Board of Directors, the majority of whom are certified organic producers.

### **Funding levels**

OFRF requests proposals which have objectives that are realistically achievable with a modest level of funding. OFRF will not fund a project for more than \$15,000 per year. The average grant award in the most recent funding cycle was \$12,425. Matching funds from other sources and in-kind contributions from cooperators are encouraged but not required.

### **Multi-year projects**

OFRF acknowledges the importance of conducting long-term research to verify experimental results. OFRF will consider funding multi-year projects, but OFRF cannot guarantee funding for any project beyond a single year. Submission of an interim report and new proposal is required for OFRF to consider continued funding in subsequent years.

### **Topics**

This request for proposals is open to any agricultural production, social, economic, or policy-related topic of concern to organic farmers or ranchers. OFRF supports research that is relevant to and takes place in certified organic systems. OFRF does not normally fund studies that compare conventional with organic systems as a primary objective.

Thanks to a partnership with industry, OFRF has special funding available for organic seed quality or crop breeding projects.

Fundable topics in the category of organic seed quality and crop breeding include but are not limited to: systems approaches to managing seed-borne diseases; participatory plant breeding activities; developing strategies for maintaining integrity of organic seed.

Additionally, OFRF has identified the following as areas of particular interest:

- organic livestock systems;
- economic constraints and opportunities relevant to the viability of small- and medium-scale organic farms and ranches;
- projects that take a systems-management (rather than an input-substitution) approach to solving production problems.

Proposals submitted in any topic area will be given the same consideration in the evaluation process, but by articulating these priorities the Board hopes to receive a larger number of proposals in these subject areas.

OFRF supports research that is relevant to and takes place in certified organic systems. OFRF does not normally fund studies that compare conventional with organic systems as a primary objective.

Research projects must include a strong outreach component.

### **Organic certification of research sites**

Strong preference is given to research done on certified organic land. Applicants are required to provide information on organic certification status and length of time under organic certification for all study sites.

### **Proposal requirements**

In order to fairly evaluate an increasing volume of grant proposals, OFRF is implementing the following policies:

**OFRF now accepts electronic proposal submissions.** To apply, send proposal as an attachment to an email in .doc, .wpd, .pdf, or .txt formats. OFRF will not accept proposals submitted in the body of an email.

**The primary audience for your proposal** is a hardworking group of volunteer board members who bring a wide range of expertise to the

evaluation process. They review numerous proposals per cycle and appreciate proposals that are brief and to the point.

**All proposals must be a maximum of 9 pages in length.**

Bibliographic references, investigators' curricula vitae (CVs), and letters of support may be included as appendices to the proposal. CVs are limited to no longer than two pages each.

**Proposals that surpass the page limit or otherwise do not meet these requirements will not be considered for funding.**

**Number the pages of your proposal.** Limit the proposal to no more than 9 pages. OFRF requires that 12-point font be used for all text in the proposal.

**Begin your proposal with a 1/2-page abstract** of the project and then address each of the 10 points outlined below under Proposal Content Guidelines.

**The successful application will provide a clear rationale for the project** and demonstrate that there is a significant need for the research project proposed. It is important that the objectives for your project be clear, well-structured, and succinct. Demonstrate why your project is necessary, present measurable outcomes, and explain what, specifically, you hope to accomplish.

**Appendices** (in addition to the 9-page maximum) may be used only for literature citations, a one- to two-page curricula vitae for major participants, and letters of support for the project.

**General budget information**

OFRF funds can only be used for expenses directly relating to your research project. **General overhead and operational costs may not be included in your budget proposal.**

OFRF generally **will** provide funding for:

- Labor and other expenses for recording, analyzing, documenting and disseminating results;
- Rental of equipment necessary to the project;
- Stipends for farmer/rancher cooperators;
- Mileage for field travel (reimbursed at a rate no greater than the U.S. General Services Administration's rate on the date of application, currently 51¢ per mile).

Ordinarily, OFRF **will not** provide funding for:

- Faculty salaries;
- Farm labor not related to research activities;
- Other farm expenses not related to research activities;
- Permanent equipment;
- International travel;
- Travel to professional meetings or publication in scientific journals.

### **Proposal content guidelines**

Provide a ½-page abstract of your project and its objectives, then address each of these points in order:

1. List the name, phone number, address, and electronic contact information for all the researchers and farmer/rancher collaborators involved in the project. **Make sure to identify the primary investigator for the project and the project title.** State total amount of funding requested from OFRF. (Provide full budget with details later in proposal. See question 10.)
2. What are the specific objectives of this project? For each objective, present a measurable outcome that will indicate successful achievement of it. Describe how the project will foster the improvement and/or widespread adoption of organic farming systems.
3. What is the issue that you are addressing and why is it important to organic producers? Detail how farmers or ranchers have been involved in determining the focus of the project and in its planning. How will they be involved throughout the project?
4. What steps have you taken to determine that the project you're planning has not already been done? What organic farmers and/or ranchers have you consulted on the topic? **OFRF requires that you conduct a literature search on the subject matter and present your findings in the proposal.**
5. What is your methodology for this project? **Include details of the actual mechanics of your project, including experimental design, treatments, materials, measurements, etc.** How have farmer/rancher collaborators been involved in developing the methodology of the experiment? How will they be involved in the experiment's implementation?

6. Organic certification. Describe the organic certification status of the research area, length of time under organic certification, and provide the certifier's name. If an area is not certified organic, please explain why. If it is in transitional status, provide the date when it is expected to come under certification.

7. What is your plan for delivering the information from the project to farmers/ranchers or other end users? **Each project MUST have a strong outreach plan to disseminate the findings** including a combination of field days, articles, publications, videos, etc. If you plan to develop a publication or video, describe how it will be distributed.

8. Provide a timeline or calendar of important milestones. If submitting a proposal for a multi-year project, please provide a year-by-year breakdown of the project timeline.

9. What are your qualifications to do this work? What previous experience do you have in conducting organic systems research? Include the qualifications of any researchers or producers with whom you are collaborating. Please provide a 1- or 2-page CV or resume for major participants only.

10. What is your project budget? Document other sources of support for the project, all matching and in-kind resources, and list other funding sought. Your budget should detail labor, materials, travel, and outreach costs, with justification for each. Include fair compensation for farmer collaborators. If applying for a multi-year project, please provide a breakdown of your budget by year.

### **Submission requirements**

Make sure to supply the name, address, e-mail address, and telephone number for the principal investigator for the project.

1. Email your proposal as an attachment in either .doc, .wpd, .pdf, or .txt format to [jane@ofrf.org](mailto:jane@ofrf.org). Please call or email if you need to make other arrangements for electronic delivery.

Paper option:  
via U.S. Postal Service, mail to:

Grants Program  
Organic Farming Research Foundation  
P.O. Box 440  
Santa Cruz, CA 95061

via express shipping, delivery address is:

Grants Program  
Organic Farming Research Foundation  
303 Potrero St., Ste. 29-203, Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Telephone 831-426-6606.

**Proposals must be received in the OFRF office by midnight on the deadline. The upcoming deadline is Tuesday, November 15, 2011.**

Proposals submitted electronically or otherwise delivered after 12:01 AM Pacific Time Wednesday, November 16, 2011, will not be considered for funding unless previously arranged with the Grants Program Director.

**2. 12-point font must be used for all text in the proposal.**

3. Number the pages of your proposal and limit it to 9 pages.

**4. Proposals that do not address organic farming issues or follow these guidelines will not be considered for funding.**

### **Review**

Proposals will be reviewed by the members of the Board of Directors of the foundation. OFRF reserves the right to seek outside technical consultation as necessary.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate research proposals:

1. Presents clear objectives demonstrating that the project will foster the improvement and/or widespread adoption of organic farming practices, and specifies measurable outcomes that will indicate successful achievement of the objectives. (10 points)

2. Addresses a high priority organic farming issue, including production, social, or economic problems, and takes a systems rather than an input-substitution approach to solving production problems. (10 points)

3. Demonstrates meaningful farmer involvement in identifying the problem addressed by the project and in carrying out the project; provides compensation for farmer participation. (10 points)
4. Documents uniqueness of project with a thorough literature review. (5 points)
5. Uses a scientifically sound methodology appropriate to meeting project objectives. (15 points)
6. Is entirely sited on certified organic land. (10 points)
7. Presents an outreach plan describing how the results will be disseminated to the farming community. (15 points)
8. Proposal is well-written and clear; follows the requirements in the Request for Proposals including page limits and font size; demonstrates the conceptual adequacy of the project, and presents a realistic timeline for each of the project's activities. (10 points)
9. Describes the qualifications and skills of the applicants and all cooperators demonstrating that they are qualified to ensure the success of the project. (5 points)
10. Presents a well-justified and detailed budget appropriate to carrying out the project's objectives, showing any matching funds applied for or already secured. (10 points)

**If your project is funded**

OFRF requires that successful applicants sign a grant contract before initial payment of the grant award. OFRF will retain 10% of the total grant award until completion of the project, timely submission of a final report by the grantee, and a satisfactory evaluation of the project by OFRF staff. Evaluation involves analyzing whether or not the original project objectives were met, not the success or failure of a project.

**Suggested references**

OFRF's [List of previously-funded projects](#). This will give the applicant a sense of the type of projects the Board has an interest in funding and help avoid duplicating previously funded work.

OFRF's [Guide to Conducting On-farm Research](#), which may be useful in determining project objectives and experimental design.

OFRF's [Guide to Conducting a Literature Review](#)

If you have additional questions, you may write to, call, or email OFRF Grants Program Director Jane Sooby, phone 831-426-6606, e-mail [jane@ofrf.org](mailto:jane@ofrf.org)

*Revised September 2011*