

FY 2019 AAES AGRICULTURE RESEARCH ENHANCEMENT AND SEED FUNDING PROGRAM (ARES)

SUBMISSION DEADLINE

June 15, 2018

PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES

The Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station (AAES) at Auburn University was established in 1883 by an act of the Alabama Legislature to conduct scientific research that would advance Alabama's agricultural and forestry industries. AAES operations are supported with funding support from the USDA NIFA Hatch funding program and the State of Alabama. AAES researchers conduct innovative fundamental and applied (mission-oriented) research that supports the advancement of Alabama's agriculture and forestry industries, for the purpose of improving quality of life and well-being of citizens and communities of Alabama and beyond. Research conducted by AAES faculty focus on the following four priority areas:

1. **Plant Production and Management Systems** (including plant production/cropping systems; plant protection and biosecurity; genetics and genomics for improved crop cultivars; soil fertility; plant-soil-microbial interactions; agricultural technologies, innovations and data-driven decision systems; and impact of agricultural systems on the ecosystem).
2. **Food Animal Systems** (including animal breeding, reproduction and genetics; efficient and sustainable animal production systems and technologies; animal nutrition, immunity and health; and safe use of animal manure).
3. **Integrated Food and Human Health Systems** (including food safety and quality; rural, economic and community development; and human nutrition, health and obesity).
4. **Sustainable Ecosystems and Renewable Resource Management** (including biodiversity and landscapes; ecosystem services and preservation; alternative crops; bioproducts and renewable resources; water and aquatic resources; novel approaches to create value-added products; natural resource conservation and management; and climate change).

The AAES Agriculture Research Enhancement and Seed (ARES) funding program is designed to strengthen agriculturally-related research and infrastructure at Auburn University by providing seed funding for innovative research ideas and collaborations in the above listed four research priority areas.

FUNDING CATEGORIES

Funding Categories for the FY 2019 ARES program include:

1. Equipment Funding
2. Agricultural ReSearch Enhancement, Exploration and Development (AgR-SEED)
3. AAES Award for Interdisciplinary Research (AAES-AIR)

ELIGIBILITY

- The lead principal investigator (P.I.) must have an AAES appointment and a USDA-approved (or pending USDA approval) Hatch project or serve as Auburn's Official Station Representative for a Hatch/Multistate project (membership alone in a multistate project is NOT sufficient for this requirement).
- The P.I. must have submitted their 2017 Hatch or Hatch/Multistate project report in the REEport system. The requirement of a Hatch project for faculty members hired within the last 12 months can be waived upon the approval of the department head. The department head should email their request for waiver to the Associate Dean for Research &

Note: The amount of funding for this program is currently unknown and therefore all or part of this RFA is subject to change depending on the economic situation and the amount of HATCH funds received from the federal government.

Associate Director of AAES (Dr. Henry Fadamiro) before a proposal is submitted. Note that a waiver of the requirement for Hatch project for faculty hired within the last 12 months will only ensure consideration of their proposal by the evaluation panel. If recommended for funding, the P.I. must submit a Hatch project in REEport before release of awarded funds.

- Investigators can be the lead P.I. on only one proposal per category (i.e., a faculty can serve as lead P.I. for one Equipment proposal, one AgR-SEED proposal, and one AAES-AIR proposal).
- Faculty members who received an AAES AgR-SEED grant in FY 2018 (as lead P.I.) are not eligible to submit an AgR-SEED grant proposal this year. Similarly, faculty members who received an AAES Equipment grant in FY 2018 (as lead P.I.) are not eligible to submit an Equipment support proposal this year.
- Faculty members who previously received (as lead P.I.) an AAES grant (i.e., Production Agricultural Research or PAR, AgR-SEED or Equipment grant), but have not submitted competitively reviewed proposal(s) for extramural funding as lead P.I. or Co-P.I. (excluding Auburn University internal grants, commodity funding and industry gifts) since their last AAES grant(s) are not eligible for this competition.
- These rules do not apply to Co-PIs.

AWARD CATEGORIES

Equipment Funding

Equipment Funding of \$5,000 to \$50,000 will be provided toward the purchase of a single piece or a cluster of equipment. The total cost of the equipment is unlimited, but **AAES will provide awards up to \$50,000. These awards require a minimum of 50% cost share** (e.g., for a \$100,000 piece of equipment, AAES would provide up to \$50,000 and the PI would provide at least \$50,000).

Agricultural ReSearch Enhancement, Exploration and Development (AgR-SEED)

AgR-SEED funding program is to be viewed as a source of funds to initiate, stimulate, or partially fund innovative research programs; these funds should not be viewed as a primary source of research support. Principal investigators (P.I.s) are required to seek extramural funding for additional research dollars, particularly from regionally or nationally competitive funding programs. Proposed research projects should address Alabama agricultural or related needs and ultimately serve as economic engines for the state of Alabama. Therefore, the objectives of research projects should align with Alabama's agricultural needs and with extramural funding opportunities. **Funding amount is up to \$25,000 per year, for two years.**

AAES Award for Interdisciplinary Research (AAES-AIR)

The purpose of AAES-AIR is to foster interdisciplinary research collaborations between AAES faculty members.

Definition: The National Science Foundation (NSF) uses the definition of interdisciplinary research proposed in a National Academies report: *"Interdisciplinary research is a mode of research by teams or individuals that integrates information, data, techniques, tools, perspectives, concepts, and/or theories from two or more disciplines or bodies of specialized knowledge to advance fundamental understanding or to solve problems whose solutions are beyond the scope of a single discipline or area of research practice."* https://www.nsf.gov/od/oia/additional_resources/interdisciplinary_research/definition.jsp

The above definition is being adopted as a working definition of interdisciplinary research for the AAES-AIR program.

Interdisciplinary research teams are expected to define an innovative interdisciplinary research project that addresses an important issue related to the mission of AAES. The proposed interdisciplinary research must lead to the development of competitive proposals for extramural funding. Each collaborative team must include an AAES faculty lead P.I and Co-P.I(s). Collaborations with non-AAES faculty members are encouraged but the budget **cannot** include funding support for non-AAES faculty members. AAES-AIR should be viewed as an investment in the interdisciplinary research proposed by the team to enhance the team's ability to attract extramural funding for the research. Thus, expected outcomes of AAES-AIR funding include submission/award of competitive interdisciplinary extramural grants. **Funding amount is up to \$75,000 per year, for up to two years.**

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS AND FORMAT

1. Format:

- Margin - 1 inch: top, bottom, left, and right.
- Minimum font size - 11 points.
- Single- or double-spaced, single-sided 8.5 x 11 inch pages.
- Pages should be numbered

2. Proposal Content:

Equipment Funding

- Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station Hatch/Multistate Grant Proposal Cover Form – signatures are needed on the cover form. The form is available at: <http://aaes.auburn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/82/2018/02/Grant-Proposal-Cover-Form-AAES-20180208.pdf>

- Description of P.I.'s research program to include research area, long-term research goals, efforts to collaborate with researchers on campus, and the strategic direction of the research program (limit to 1 page).
- Need and justification for the equipment: Present written justification for the need of the equipment. Address how the equipment will be used to enhance your research (limit to 3 pages).
- A letter signed by the P.I.'s department head/chair/director and the Associate Dean for Research (ADR), certifying that the requested equipment is not available for the P.I.'s use. For P.I.s hired in the last five years (i.e., since 2013), the letter should also confirm that the requested equipment was not included in the P.I.'s start-up package. College of Agriculture faculty members are encouraged to review the College of Agriculture Searchable Equipment Database for the possible availability of the requested equipment prior to soliciting a letter of certification from their department head and ADR. <http://aaes.auburn.edu/resources/available-equipment/>
- Vendor Quote: Attach an official vendor quote.

AgR-SEED Funding

Proposals for AgR-SEED must include the following sections:

- A. **Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station Hatch/Multistate Grant Proposal Cover Form** – signatures are needed on the cover form. The form is available at: <http://aaes.auburn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/82/2018/02/Grant-Proposal-Cover-Form-AAES-20180208.pdf>
- B. **Project Summary/Abstract** – The Project Summary is limited to **one typed page**.
- C. **Project Narrative (Project Description)** – limited to **10 single- or double-spaced pages, including figures and tables**. The page limit will be strictly enforced to ensure fair and equitable competition. Proposals that fail to comply with the page limit will be returned without review. The Project Narrative should consist of the following sections:
 - (a) **Response to Previous Review.** This requirement only applies to Resubmitted Applications to the AgR-SEED program. P.I. must respond to the previous review panel summary on no more than one page, titled “RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS REVIEW.” When a Response to Previous Review is included in the Project Narrative, the page limitation is increased to 11 total pages to include the one-page response.
 - (b) **Introduction.** The introduction should include a clear statement of the research question/problem, long-term goal(s), and supporting objectives or research questions of the proposed project. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project, including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed research. All works cited should be referenced [see References Cited]. This is the section to set the stage for your project, to answer a significant scientific question or to resolve a significant problem.
 - (c) **Rationale and Significance.** Concisely present the rationale behind the proposed research project, the specific relationship of the project’s objectives to at least one of the priority areas of this funding program, the potential long-term impact on improvement in and sustainability of U.S. agriculture, food and forestry systems, and the potential of this project to enhance future extramural grant applications. *Use this section to make a case to the reviewers why your research should be funded.*
 - (d) **Approach.** The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described. Specifically, this section must include: 1.) a description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed, 2.) methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, 3.) the feasibility of the methods, considerations of alternative methods and if the proposed method is state of the art, 4.) expected outcomes, 5.) means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted, how results or products will be used, 6.) pitfalls that may be encountered and the alternative approaches to compensate for pitfalls, 7.) limitations to proposed procedures, 8.) a full explanation of any materials, procedures, situations, or activities related to the project that may be hazardous to personnel, along with an outline of precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards, and 9.) a brief timeline of the proposed project.
 - (e) **Plans for securing extramural funding.** Leverage of extramural funding will be used as one of the key criteria in funding decisions. Provide a list of specific anticipated extramural funding opportunities to support continuation of the proposed research. This must include agency name, target program, anticipated RFA release, and estimated date for proposal submission by the team to the funding program.
- D. **Results from Prior AAES Support – 2-Page Limit per prior Award.** If the P.I. has received AAES support in the past five years, information on results from that prior funding is required. Required information includes year of previous AAES funding and dollar amount, publication list, patents, products, or other significant research output as appropriate.
- E. **Leverage of Prior AAES Support – No Page Limit.** AAES ARES is a seed funding program. An important measurement of its success is the leverage of additional funding from extramural sources. If the P.I. has received AAES support in the past five years, please provide a list of extramurally funded projects with information on funding agency, funding period, and dollar amount of the grants/contracts (please do not list Auburn University intramural grants, commodity grants or

industry gifts). Earmarked funding can be listed, but must be so noted. A separate list of proposals that were submitted to extramural sources, but were not funded, should also be included. This list should provide the name of each submitted proposal, the requested funding level, and the agency to which the proposals were submitted. This information will be used in the application review (see Proposal Evaluation).

- F. References Cited – No Page Limit.** All work cited in the text, including that of key personnel, should be referenced in this section of the application. All references must be complete, including titles and all co-authors in a professional journal format, listed in alphabetical order, using the last name of the first author or listed by number in the order of citation.
- G. Facilities & Equipment – 2-Page Limit.** In addition to describing available equipment, list applicable items of nonexpendable equipment, and facilities in the outlying units that are necessary to conduct and successfully complete the project.
- H. Budget-** Provide a budget for each year, use USDA standard format similar to: <http://aaes.auburn.edu/resources/aaes-research-funding-programs/>

Appropriate Costs include:

- Salaries and Wages.
- Fringe Benefits (FY 2019: 31.1% for full time, 12.2% for part time, 4.1% for Graduate Assistants, 15.42% for temporary employees, and 0% for undergraduates)
- Materials and Supplies (including payment to human subjects).
- Travel directly relevant to proposed effort.
- Equipment (total is limited to \$5,000).
- Publication Costs.

- I. Budget Justification – 2-page limit.** Provide a justification for budget requests.

(a) Budget requests can be made for technical or postdoctoral salary support, graduate research assistantships, and undergraduate research support. AAES recognizes the importance of graduate and undergraduate training and encourages P.I.s to involve graduate and undergraduate students in agricultural research.

(b) Request for summer salary for P.I.s on 9-month appointment is allowed only for the lead P.I. for up to one-month salary per year regardless of the number of collaborators; fringe benefits must be included for all salaries as appropriate. Salaries already supported by AAES funds cannot be charged to these projects.

(c) Payments for various materials, chemicals, and supplies, travel directly related to the project, publication costs, and/or equipment (up to \$5,000 total) can be requested.

(d) Projects which will be conducted in one (or more) of the AAES Outlying Stations must include an appropriate budget for the specific station(s) to support labor, equipment and supplies costs at the station. The P.I. must list the station(s) and include a statement of support (letter or email) from the station's director.

(e) Funds cannot be requested for indirect costs such as office supplies, phones, cell phones, internet service, subscriptions, memberships, laptop computers, ipads, software, desktop computers, or computer peripherals (e.g., printers, data storage, etc.).

- J. Functions of Key Personnel** – Clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of the P.I. and Co-P.I.s.
- K. Curriculum Vitae** – Provide a biosketch for each investigator, **limited to two pages in length** excluding the publications list. The CV should be limited to presentation of academic and research credentials. Do not include meetings attended, seminars given, or personal data. The publications list shall include a chronological or reverse chronological list of all publications in refereed journals during the past four years. Please indicate with an (*) publications that have resulted from previous AAES grants.
- L. Current and Pending Support Form for each P.I.** – A template is available at: <http://aaes.auburn.edu/resources/aaes-research-funding-programs/>
- M. Collaboration** – Evidence such as letter(s) of support from collaborators only providing services or materials should be provided showing the collaborators involved have agreed to render services. If a collaborator is playing an active role in the project, a senior/key person profile (biographical sketch, current and pending support) should be included for the collaborator.
- N. Conflict of Interest List for each P.I.** – You can provide an alphabetical list, or use the USDA Conflict of Interest List Template that can be found with budget pages at: <http://aaes.auburn.edu/resources/aaes-research-funding-programs/>.

No additional materials, appendices, or supplementary documentation will be accepted.

AAES-AIR Funding

Proposals for AAES-AIR must include the following sections:

- A. **Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station Hatch/Multistate Grant Proposal Cover Form** – signatures are needed on the cover form. The form is available at: <http://aaes.auburn.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/82/2018/02/Grant-Proposal-Cover-Form-AAES-20180208.pdf>
- B. **Project Summary/Abstract** – The Project Summary is limited to **one typed page**.
- C. **Project Narrative (Project Description)** – limited to **12 single- or double-spaced pages, including figures and tables**. The page limit will be strictly enforced to ensure fair and equitable competition. Proposals that fail to comply with the page limit will be returned without review. The Project Narrative should include the following sections:
 - (a) **Introduction.** The introduction should include a clear statement of the research question/problem, long-term goal(s), and supporting objectives and research questions of the proposed project. Summarize the body of knowledge or other past activities that substantiate the need for the proposed project. Describe ongoing or recently completed significant activities related to the proposed project including the work of key project personnel. Include preliminary data/information pertinent to the proposed research. All works cited should be referenced (see References Cited). This is the section to set the stage for your project, to answer a significant scientific question or to resolve a significant problem.
 - (b) **Rationale and Significance.** Concisely present the rationale and vision for the proposed research project, and its innovative nature. This section should also highlight the long-term research goals and specific relationship of the project's objectives to at least one of the priority areas of this funding program, the potential long-term impact on improvement in and sustainability of U.S. agriculture/forestry and food systems, and the potential of this project to enhance future extramural grant applications. *Use this section to make a case to the reviewers why your research should be funded.*
 - (c) **Approach.** The activities proposed or problems being addressed must be clearly stated and the approaches being applied clearly described. Specifically, this section must include a description of the activities proposed and the sequence in which the activities are to be performed, methods to be used in carrying out the proposed project, feasibility of the methods, considerations of alternative methods and if the proposed method is state of the art, expected outcomes, means by which results will be analyzed, assessed, or interpreted, how results or products will be used, pitfalls that may be encountered and the alternative approaches to compensate for pitfalls, limitations to proposed procedures, a full explanation of any materials, procedures, situations, or activities related to the project that may be hazardous to personnel, along with an outline of precautions to be exercised to avoid or mitigate the effects of such hazards, and a brief timeline of the proposed project.
 - (d) **Justification for interdisciplinary/team approach.** Provide a justification for an interdisciplinary approach involving multiple investigators, including a presentation of the strengths of the proposed interdisciplinary team.
 - (e) **Plans for securing extramural funding.** Leverage of extramural funding will be used as one of the key criteria in funding decisions. Provide a list of specific anticipated interdisciplinary extramural funding opportunities to support continuation of the proposed interdisciplinary research. This must include agency name, target program, anticipated RFA release, and estimated date for proposal submission by the team to the funding program.
- D. **Results from Prior AAES Support – 2-Page Limit per prior Award per P.I./Co-P.I.** If the P.I./Co-P.I.s have received AAES support in the past five years, information on results from that prior funding is required. Required information includes year of previous AAES funding and dollar amount, publication list, patents, products, or other significant research output as appropriate.
- E. **Leverage of Prior AAES Support – No Page Limit per P.I./Co-P.I.** AAES-AIR is a seed funding program. An important measurement of its success is the leverage of additional funding from extramural sources. If the P.I./Co-P.I.s have received AAES support in the past five years, please provide a list of extramurally funded projects with information on funding agency, funding period, and dollar amount of the grants/contracts (Please do not list Auburn University intramural grants, commodity grants or industry gifts). Earmarked funding can be listed, but must be so noted. A separate list of proposals that were submitted to extramural sources, but were not funded, should also be included. This list should provide the name of each submitted proposal, the requested funding level, and the agency to which the proposals were submitted. This information will be used in the application review (see Proposal Evaluation).
- F. **References Cited – No Page Limit.** All work cited in the text, including that of key personnel, should be referenced in this section of the application. All references must be complete, including titles and all co-authors in a professional journal format, listed in alphabetical order, using the last name of the first author or listed by number in the order of citation.
- G. **Facilities & Equipment – 4-Page Limit.** In addition to describing available equipment, list applicable items of nonexpendable equipment, and facilities in the outlying units that are necessary to conduct and successfully complete the project.
- H. **Budget** - Provide a single budget for the team for each year, use USDA standard format similar to: <http://aaes.auburn.edu/resources/aaes-research-funding-programs/>

Appropriate Costs include:

- Salaries and Wages.
- Fringe Benefits (FY 2019: 31.1% for full time, 12.2% for part time, 4.1% for Graduate Assistants, 15.42% for temporary employees, and 0% for undergraduates)
- Materials and Supplies (including payment to human subjects).
- Travel directly relevant to proposed effort.
- Equipment (total is limited to \$5,000).
- Publication Costs.

I. Budget Justification – 4-page limit. Provide a justification for budget requests.

(a) Budget requests can be made for technical or postdoctoral salary support, graduate research assistantships, and undergraduate research support. AAES recognizes the importance of graduate and undergraduate training and encourages P.I.s to involve graduate and undergraduate students in agricultural research.

(b) Request for summer salary for the lead P.I. and Co-P.I.s on 9-month appointment is allowed only for the lead P.I. for up to one-month salary per investigator per year; fringe benefits must be included for all salaries as appropriate. Salaries already supported by AAES funds cannot be charged to these projects.

(c) Payments for various materials, chemicals, and supplies, travel directly related to the project, publication costs, and/or equipment (up to \$5,000 total) can be requested.

(d) Projects which will be conducted in one (or more) of the AAES Outlying Stations must include an appropriate budget for the specific station(s) to support labor, equipment and supplies costs at the station. The P.I. must list the station(s) and include a statement of support (letter or email) from the station's director.

(e) Funds cannot be requested for tuition or indirect costs such as office supplies, phones, cell phones, internet service, subscriptions, memberships, laptop computers, ipads, software, desktop computers, or computer peripherals (e.g., printers, data storage, etc.).

(f) Travel budget can include funds for the investigator(s) to visit specific funding agencies or to participate in workshops that will enhance the team's ability to compete for extramural funding.

J. Functions of Key Personnel – Clearly describe the roles and responsibilities of the lead P.I. and Co-P.I.s.

K. Curriculum Vitae – Provide a biosketch for each investigator, **limited to two pages in length** excluding the publications list. The CV should be limited to presentation of academic and research credentials. Do not include meetings attended, seminars given, or personal data. The publications list shall include a chronological or reverse chronological list of all publications in refereed journals during the past four years. Please indicate with an (*) publications that have resulted from previous AAES grants.

L. Current and Pending Support Form for lead P.I. and Co-P.I.s. – A template is available:

<http://aaes.auburn.edu/resources/aaes-research-funding-programs/>

M. Documentation of Collaborations – Evidence such as letter(s) of support from Co-P.I.s and other collaborators should be provided showing the Co-P.I.s and collaborators involved have agreed to their assigned role in the project.

N. Conflict of Interest List for each P.I. and Co-P.I. – You can provide an alphabetical list, or use the USDA Conflict of Interest List Template that can be found with budget pages at: <http://aaes.auburn.edu/resources/aaes-research-funding-programs/>.

No additional materials, appendices, or supplementary documentation will be accepted.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Application deadline: Proposals must be received by **5:00 PM, June 15, 2018.**

Proposals should be submitted in one single pdf file to: aaesgrant@auburn.edu.

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Equipment Funding

Each application will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the eligibility and administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. **Applications that do not meet the guidelines as stated in the RFA will be eliminated from the competition and returned to the applicant without review.** Second, an internal panel of AAES faculty will be convened to evaluate applications that meet these requirements for technical content, based on the following criteria:

1. Merit of the P.I.s research program (50 points).

Proposals should include a section entitled “*Description of the PI's research program*” to include research area, major technology or techniques used in the research, long-term research goals, research productivity, funding history,

competitiveness of the research program, and the strategic direction of the research program. Please include how the P.I. will collaborate and work with others for programmatic development.

2. Need and justification for the equipment (50 points).

The proposals should include a section entitled “*Need and justification for the equipment*” to explain the P.I.’s research program/project(s) for which the equipment will be used. Include how the equipment will complement or enhance the research program and allow the applicant to become more competitive for future extramural funding.

3. Cost share amount (Mandatory).

The application must include the required cost share amount and sources. A minimum of 50% cost share is required. Funds from federal sources including funds from AAES Hatch grants cannot be used as part of the match.

4. Letter of support by the P.I.’s department head/chair/director and ADR (Mandatory).

The letter must certify that the requested equipment is not available for the P.I.’s use. For P.I.s hired in the last five years (i.e., since 2013), the letter should also confirm that the requested equipment was not included in the P.I.’s start-up package. College of Agriculture faculty members are encouraged to review the College of Agriculture Searchable Equipment Database for availability of the requested equipment prior to soliciting a letter of certification from their department head and ADR. <http://aes.auburn.edu/resources/available-equipment/>

5. Official vendor quote for the equipment (Mandatory).

AgR-SEED Funding

Each application will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the eligibility and administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. **Applications that do not meet the guidelines as stated in the RFA will be eliminated from the competition and returned to the applicant without review.** Second, a review panel will evaluate applications that meet these requirements for technical content. The review panel members will consist of representation of expertise of research areas. This review panel may include internal, external, or a mix of internal/external members. In addition to the review panel, written comments may be solicited from ad hoc reviewers. The Review Panel will meet, discuss, evaluate, rank, and make recommendations for funding.

All proposals will be evaluated and ranked by the panel based on the following criteria:

- 1. Overall merit of the application**, including rationale and vision for the proposed research project and its innovative nature, novelty, uniqueness, and originality, conceptual adequacy of the hypothesis, research question, or problem(s) to be addressed, clarity and delineation of objectives, adequacy of the description of the undertaking and suitability and feasibility of methodology, and probability of success of project. **(25 points)**.
- 2. Qualifications of proposed project personnel and adequacy of facilities**, including research productivity and quality as measured by peer-reviewed publications in high-quality professional journals, patents awarded, or products developed as reflected in the biosketch, experience, track record, and training, and adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation. **(15 points)**.
- 3. Relevance of the project to Alabama and/or U.S. agriculture/forestry**, and a clear justification of how the proposed project is aligned with AAES and national research priorities and how such alignments will lead to extramural funding to continue the research. **(20 points)**.
- 4. Plans for securing extramural funding**, including a list of specific anticipated extramural funding opportunities to support continuation of the proposed research. This must include agency name, target program, anticipated RFA release, and estimated date for proposal submission by the team to the funding program. **(20 points)**.
- 5. Leverage of prior AAES support and extramural funding success**, and compliance with NIFA Hatch reporting requirements. For researchers who were previously funded through AAES funds, demonstrated efforts of extramural funding applications are required before being eligible again for AAES funding (see Eligibility section). Success in extramural funding from all sources (e.g., federal, regional, state, industry, private/foundations, etc.) will be key factors for consideration of continued AAES funding. Timely and satisfactory reports as required by federal laws or regulations are required for continued AAES funding. **(20 points)**.

The review panel will rank all the proposals into categories of **Outstanding, High Priority, Medium Priority, Low Priority, and Do Not Fund**. Funding decisions and funding levels will be determined based on the evaluation ranking in consideration of the availability of funds. Final funding decisions will be approved by the AAES Director. A panel summary, along with reviews, will be sent to the lead P.I. upon completion of the funding cycle evaluations.

AAES-AIR Funding

Each application will be evaluated in a two-part process. First, each application will be screened to ensure that it meets the eligibility and administrative requirements as set forth in this RFA. **Applications that do not meet the guidelines as stated in the RFA will be eliminated from the competition and returned to the applicant without review.** Second, a review panel will evaluate applications that meet these requirements for technical content. The review panel members will consist of representation of expertise of research areas. This review panel may include internal, external, or a mix of internal/external members. In addition to the review panel, written comments may be solicited from ad hoc reviewers. The Review Panel will meet, discuss, evaluate, rank, and make recommendations for funding.

All proposals will be evaluated and ranked by the panel based on the following criteria:

1. **Overall merit of the application**, including rationale and vision for the proposed research project and its innovative nature, novelty, uniqueness, and originality, conceptual adequacy of the hypothesis, research question, or problem(s) to be addressed, clarity and delineation of objectives, adequacy of the description of the undertaking and suitability and feasibility of methodology, and probability of success of project. **(25 points)**.
2. **Justification for interdisciplinary/team approach**, including a presentation of the strengths of the proposed interdisciplinary team. **(15 points)**.
3. **Qualifications of proposed project personnel (P.I. and Co-P.I.s) and adequacy of facilities**, including research productivity and quality as measured by peer-reviewed publications in high-quality professional journals, patents awarded, or products developed as reflected in the biosketch, experience, track record, and training, and adequacy of available or obtainable support personnel, facilities, and instrumentation. **(15 points)**.
4. **Relevance of the project to Alabama and/or U.S. agriculture/forestry**, and a clear justification of how the proposed project is aligned with AAES and national research priorities and how such alignments will lead to extramural funding to continue the research. **(15 points)**.
5. **Plans for securing extramural funding**, including a list of specific anticipated interdisciplinary extramural funding opportunities to support continuation of the proposed interdisciplinary research. This must include agency name, target program, anticipated RFA release, and estimated date for proposal submission by the team to the funding program. **(15 points)**.
6. **Leverage of prior AAES support and extramural funding success of P.I. and Co-P.I.s**, and compliance with NIFA Hatch reporting requirements: For researchers who were previously funded through AAES funds, demonstrated efforts of extramural funding applications are required before being eligible again for AAES funding (see Eligibility section). Success in extramural funding from all sources (e.g., federal, regional, state, industry, private/foundations, etc.) will be key factors for consideration of continued AAES funding. Timely and satisfactory reports as required by federal laws or regulations are required for continued AAES funding. **(15 points)**.

The review panel will rank all the proposals into categories of **Outstanding, High Priority, Medium Priority, Low Priority, and Do Not Fund**. Funding decisions and funding levels will be determined based on the evaluation ranking in consideration of the availability of funds. Final funding decisions will be approved by the AAES Director. A panel summary, along with reviews, will be sent to the lead P.I. upon completion of the funding cycle evaluations.

AWARD NOTICE

Upon the completion of funding decisions, the lead P.I. will be notified. The award announcement will include the following:

- Title of project.
- Project period, specifying the duration of the project AAES intends to support the project without requiring re-competition for Funds.
- Total dollar amount as approved by the AAES Director during the project period.
- Instructions on expectations and completion of the required REEport forms.

*Note: Equipment support awards must be expended by August 31, 2019. Your department is responsible for preparing the necessary paperwork to purchase and pay for the equipment. The AAES Business Office will provide a FOP for the award portion of the funds. No-cost extensions will **NOT** be allowed.*

REQUIREMENTS FOR APPROVED PROJECTS AND RELEASE OF FUNDS

In order to reduce redundant reporting, a single page Award Acceptance Form will be included as a part of the AAES ARES award notice. On this form, the P.I. will be asked if the proposed project falls under the scope of his/her existing Hatch project or Hatch/Multistate project(s) (please note: participation in multistate project is insufficient, the P.I. must have a Hatch/Multistate project number). If the answer is yes, then the P.I. will be asked to pledge by signing that all the methodologies and procedures in the project are covered by the existing Hatch/Multistate project in compliance with federal and state regulations concerning human subjects, animal welfare, recombinant DNA, and any other hazardous materials, and that the P.I. will comply with all the reporting requirements set for Hatch projects or the AAES/Multistate Funding program. If the proposed project **does not** fall under the existing Hatch or match/Multistate project(s), the P.I. must complete the following before the release of funds:

1. The awarded proposal must be entered into REEport as a new project.
2. Each year, a progress report must be completed in the REEport system for the period of October 1 to September 30. Hatch funds will be withheld if reports are not completed to the satisfaction of the Director. A final report will be filed in the last year of the project covering the last year only.

3. Recipients of AAES ARES Program Funds will be expected to work with the Office of Ag Communications and Marketing to communicate their results, impact and success stories to the public.
4. Recipients of AAES ARES Program Funds are required to acknowledge USDA-NIFA and AAES support in their materials (i.e., publications, presentations, etc.) using the following suggested language: **“This (material, project, data, publication, presentation, etc.) is based upon work that is supported by the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture.”**
5. Approvals for work with animals, human subjects (including those participating in surveys), hazardous materials (including biological agents and toxins), and recombinant DNA are required. Such approvals must be finalized and documented by completing the Assurance Statement in the project initiation, by using the project change tabs in REEport, or by signing the P.I. Pledge Form prior to release of funds for approved projects. The P.I. should notify the research office when these forms are completed. Information for each category is listed below.
 - **Animals** – an approved Animal Subjects Review Form (ASRF) will be needed for approved projects before funds are released. More information can be obtained at: <https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/compliance/iacuc/forms>
 - **Recombinant DNA, Radioactive Products, Hazardous Materials, and Biologicals** – contact the Office of Safety and Environmental Health, Leach Science Center, 844-4870. More information can be obtained at: <https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/compliance/ibc/forms>
 - **Human Subjects** – training and IRB approvals needed. More information can be obtained at: <https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/compliance/irb/forms>

Additional Information:

Applications containing proprietary information will be evaluated with due consideration for protection of this information to the extent permitted by law. Therefore, any information that the applicant wishes to have considered as confidential, privileged, or proprietary should be clearly marked within the application.

PROPOSED TIMELINE

May 17, 2018	Q&A session about the AAES-ARES Program 2:00-3:00 pm, Comer 109
June 15, 2018	Proposals due by 5:00 pm to: aaesgrant@auburn.edu
Early August 2018	Review Panel meets and recommends projects for approval and funding
August 2018	AAES Director will finalize & approve funding decisions, final decisions will be communicated to lead P.I.s
September 2018	P.I. completion of requirements for release of funding
October 1, 2018	Project start, pending NIFA approval

CONTACT

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