



2026 Excellence in Agricultural Research Innovation Award Nominations: Early, Mid-Career, and Life-Time Career Categories

Purpose and Overview

The Agricultural Research Innovation Award of Excellence is given to researchers who strive in their research career to achieve benchmarks reflective of excellence. These benchmarks include, but are not limited to, demonstration of high impact of research within their discipline; a sustained record of scholarly productivity, including funding, publications, and patents; commitment to accessibility; professional recognition of research excellence through local, regional, national, and/or international awards and honors; demonstrated ability to inspire and lead effective collaborations; and foster development of other scientists, including postdoctoral researchers, graduate students, and undergraduate students.

Who is Eligible?

The nominee must be an active researcher employed by a land-grant university with research representing a major portion of their effort as of the deadline of the nomination.

For the early career researcher award:

- Nominee must be at the assistant level professorial rank equivalent (tenure or non-tenure track).

For the mid-career researcher award:

- Nominee must be at the associate level professor rank equivalent (tenure or non-tenure track) with no more than 10 total years of experience at this rank.

For the life-time career researcher award:

- Nominee must be at the professor rank equivalent (tenure or non-tenure track) with experience beyond the associate level.

Nominees must hold a valid Hatch or Evans-Allen project and/or participate on a multistate committee supported by Hatch Multistate or Evans-Allen funds at the time of nomination. Administrative professionals serving in agInnovation leadership positions are not eligible.

Honorees

Regional – Five awards are granted to regional competitors.

National – One awardee selected by the agInnovation Science and Technology Committee from the pool of the regional honorees.



agInnovation will provide regional honorees a four-year Silver-level membership with the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and a cash award of \$500. The National winner will receive an additional \$500 cash award from agInnovation. The five honorees in each category will be recognized during the Awards Program at the Annual Meeting of agInnovation in September. The national award winner will be invited to accept their additional cash award and an award plaque at the agInnovation annual meeting. Travel reimbursement for the national honorees will be provided by agInnovation. Regional award winners may also be invited to receive their cash award at the agInnovation annual meeting, but travel reimbursement shall be the responsibility of the respective regional associations or the winner's home institution. Summaries of each regional honoree's excellent work will be released to the national news media and published in the agInnovation Awards Program as well as in the *Food and Agricultural Sciences Excellence in College and University Awards Program: A Community of Scholars Honoring Excellence* by APLU.

Process

Nominations open after the APLU annual meeting in November. Nominations may be submitted to the offices of respective [regional associations](#) by a nominee, supervisor, or peer and **must have the written endorsement and verification of the nominee's eligibility by the respective State Agricultural Experiment Station Director or 1890 Agricultural Research Director.** Each agInnovation institution is permitted to submit one nomination per year.

Committees formed by the [regional associations](#) will use eligibility and criteria described below to score nominations in the first round. Winners of each regional competition will be automatically considered for the national award. Regional award winners will have an opportunity to revise their nomination based on feedback from the regional committees. **The deadline for regional associations to submit nominations to the agInnovation Science and Technology Committee (STC) is 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time on May 1.**

The second and final round of scoring to select a national winner is conducted by the agInnovation Science and Technology Committee (STC) during June and July. All will be invited to attend the agInnovation Awards Ceremony in September. Nominations are to be prepared to match the evaluation criteria indicated below, including a CV, not to exceed 10 pages, that highlights the evaluation criteria.

National award recipients are not eligible for renomination. Regional award honorees may be renominated for the national award after receiving the regional award. However, regional award honorees shall only receive one regional monetary award and one award plaque. Renominations for the national award may be revised before submission by the regional association on May 1. Regional associations shall determine which nominations will be advanced for the national award competition.

Evaluation Criteria

Relevance of the research to one or more of the agInnovation [Grand Challenges](#) is required otherwise the nomination will be disqualified from the national competition.



Early Career Award:

- Demonstrated high impact of research, described by the following (1000 words or less). **Weight – 60%**
 - Explain the creativity, innovation, translation, adoption, and/or impact (or potential impact on policy, environment, economic benefits, productivity and/or efficiency) of the research program on US agriculture following the format of the national impacts database (landgrantimpacts.org) (30%).
 - Document the ability to foster science collaborations and participate as an active member or leader of interdisciplinary teams (20%).
 - Mentorship and increasing accessibility to research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral scientists, and other early career scientists (10%).
- Recognized excellence in one's field of expertise (500 words or less).

Weight – 40%

- Detailed grant funding history, including the nominee's specific role in each project (e.g., principal investigator, co-PI, collaborator). (15%)
- Publication record, inventions, licensures, patents, and commercialization (10%).
- Contributions as a scientific expert on panels or committees and invitations to present research at national and international conferences (10%).
- Recognition through professional awards and other notable achievements (5%).

Mid-Career Award:

- Demonstrated high impact of research, described by the following (1000 words or less). **Weight – 60%**
 - Explain the creativity, innovation, translation, adoption, and/or impact (or potential impact on policy, environment, economic benefits, productivity and/or efficiency) of the research program on US agriculture following the format of the national impacts database (landgrantimpacts.org) (30%).
 - Document the ability to inspire and lead effective science collaborations, including interdisciplinary teams (20%).
 - Demonstrated effectiveness in fostering the development of other scientists, including postdoctoral scientists and other early career scientists, graduate students, and undergraduate students. (10%).
- Recognized excellence in one's field of expertise (500 words or less).

Weight – 40%

- Detailed grant funding history, including the nominee's specific role in each project (e.g., principal investigator, co-PI, collaborator). (15%)
- Publication record, inventions, licensures, patents, and commercialization (10%).
- Contributions as a scientific expert on panels or committees and invitations to present research at national and international conferences (10%).
- Recognition through professional awards and other notable achievements (5%).



Life-Time Career Award:

- Sustained high impact of research, described by the following (1000 words or less). **Weight – 60%**
 - Explain the creativity, innovation, translation, adoption, and/or impact (or potential impact on policy, environment, economic benefits, productivity and/or efficiency) of the research program on US agriculture following the format of the national impacts database (landgrantimpacts.org) (30%).
 - Document the ability to inspire and lead effective science collaborations, including interdisciplinary teams (20%).
 - Demonstrated effectiveness in fostering the development of other scientists, including mentoring early- and mid-career scientists, postdoctoral scientists, and, graduate students, and undergraduate students. (10%).
- Recognized excellence in one's field of expertise (500 words or less). **Weight – 40%**
 - Detailed grant funding history, including the nominee's specific role in each project (e.g., principal investigator, co-PI, collaborator). (15%)
 - Publication record, inventions, licensures, patents, and commercialization (10%).
 - Contributions as a scientific expert on panels or committees and invitations to present research at national and international conferences (10%).
 - Recognition through professional awards and other notable achievements (5%).



Limitations

- Incomplete nominations or nominations that exceed the word limits may not be reviewed.
- No more than one nomination by an agInnovation member institution is considered for each award category.
- Only nominations submitted per the instructions provided by the deadline will be considered.

Timeline

- December – Announcement sent to Directors and Administrators, by agInnovation Chair.
- March 15 – Nominations due at Offices of the Executive Directors
- March/April – Nominations reviewed by regional committees and recommendations submitted to regional associations.
- March/April – Regional associations approve regional nominations at Spring meetings.
- April - Regional associations provide feedback to nominator and nominee and provide an opportunity to revise their nomination prior to the final submission
- May 1 – Associations submit final regional nominations to STC via the regional association supporting STC (**pdf or word document**)
- June/July –STC Committee reviews regional nominations and selects the national winner.
- July/August– STC Executive Vice-chair collects information from regional associations, secures photographs, and submits materials to agInnovation and APLU for booklet and program script.
- September – National winner presentation at agInnovation meeting
- November – National award announced at APLU Meeting

Where to Begin

Use the nomination format indicated on the following page.

Contact

Please contact your regional association office if there are questions:

Lisa Williamson, ARD <lmwilliamson1@ncat.edu>
Chris Hamilton, North Central < christina.hamilton@wisc.edu>
David Leibovitz, Northeast <david_leibovitz@uri.edu>
Cindy Morley, South <cmorley@uark.edu>
Jennifer Horton, West <jennhorton@unr.edu>



Nomination Format

(The nomination should be a very concise summary and must be in this format.)

Nominating Region: _____ Award Category: _____

Nominator: _____ E-mail: _____

Nominee Name E-mail: _____

Nominee Institution and Title: _____

Nominee E-mail: _____

ARD or SAES Director: _____ E-mail: _____

Nomination Summary (the following and should not exceed 1500 words; refer to the above for additional details within each award category):

- Demonstrated high impact of research, described by the following (1000 words or less). **Weight – 60%**
 - Explain the creativity, innovation, translation, adoption, and/or impact (or potential impact on policy, environment, economic benefits, productivity and/or efficiency) of the research program on US agriculture following the format of the national impacts database (landgrantimpacts.org) (30%).
 - Effective collaborations (20%).
 - Development of other scientists (10%).
- Recognized excellence in one's field of expertise (500 words or less). **Weight – 40%**
 - Detailed grant funding history (15%).
 - Publication record, inventions, licensures, patents, and commercialization (10%).
 - Contributions as a scientific expert (10%).
 - Recognition through professional awards and other notable achievements (5%).

Please use single-spaced, Times Roman 12 point and one-inch margins.

Include a CV, not to exceed 10 pages, that highlights the evaluation criteria.

Regions may utilize other information in selecting their nominee. The final regional nomination should be submitted by email to the Offices of the regional Executive Directors, by **c.o.b. March 15, 20XX**:

Lisa Williamson, ARD <lmwilliamson1@ncat.edu>
Chris Hamilton, North Central <christina.hamilton@wisc.edu>
David Leibovitz, Northeast <david_leibovitz@uri.edu>
Cindy Morley, South <cmorley@uark.edu>
Jennifer Horton, West <jennhorton@unr.edu>