Agricultural Research Institute (ARI)

FY 2027-28 Request for Proposals

Application Deadlines:

System Pre-Proposal Application Deadline: Wednesday, November 18, 2026, 5:00 p.m. PT

Campus & System Full Proposal Application Deadline: Wednesday, February 17, 2027 5:00 p.m. PT

*** Note: Check with your Campus Coordinator/Point Person for your campus's internal deadline submission for Campus and System proposals.**

Click here to prepare and submit proposal.

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Executive Summary

The Agricultural Research Institute (ARI) exemplifies the California State University System (CSU) working for California through university-industry partnerships. The ARI primarily focuses on finding immediate and practical solutions for high-priority challenges facing California agriculture and natural resources. ARI provides a diversified, multi-campus applied research program that annually matches $4.37 million in State General Funds with at least one-to-one external support for research on high-priority issues facing California agriculture.

The ARI engages the collective expertise of the CSU's four colleges of agriculture, defined as Member Campuses, at California State University, Fresno; California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo; California State Polytechnic University, Pomona; and CSU, Chico. Associate ARI Campuses include CSU, Monterey Bay and Cal Poly Humboldt. Faculty are encouraged to work collaboratively with faculty and research scientists from other CSU and University of California (UC) campuses, the USDA, and other State, Regional and Federal organizations. ARI's research and technology transfer activities complement the basic research conducted by the nation's land grant universities and aim to improve the economic viability and sustainability of California agriculture.

Part I - Funding Opportunity Description

This RFP provides essential information to prospective researchers and administrators regarding the funding opportunities, and the purpose of the program. Further details regarding policies and procedures are available in the ARI Policies and Procedures.

A. Research Focus and Topics

The ARI's State funding must be annually matched at least one-to-one with industry and/or other non-CSU State General Funds to support high impact applied agricultural research. Priority is given to research conducted through university-industry and/or collaborative multi-college/university partnerships that demonstrate the potential to improve the economic efficiency, productivity, profitability, and sustainability of California agriculture and its allied industries.

Projects must focus on an applied research problem for which the proposer can convincingly demonstrate the project is both needed and wanted by industry. Projects with match from industry will receive priority funding over those from any other source. Industry prioritization is further stratified by favoring projects with match from a commodity board or marketing board over those from an individual company.

Project results dissemination and technology transfer should lead to increased consumer awareness and confidence in our environmentally sound and science-based food and agricultural systems. The ARI focuses on the following agricultural and natural resource issues that have the potential to affect the sustainability and profitability of California agriculture (for full descriptions of each issue and research topic please visit the ARI website at https://ari.calstate.edu):

- Water
- Labor
- Environment
- Regulations

The ARI funds applied research projects within the following research topics:

- Advanced Technologies
- Animals
- Business and Economics
- Environment
- Farming and Ranching
- Food Science
- Health
- Human Sciences
- Natural Resources
- Plants

Part II – Award Information

A. Available Funding

ARI funds are intended to encourage excellence in applied agricultural research. Research funding opportunities are not exclusive to colleges of agriculture and traditional agricultural programs but are available to faculty and research scientists from many disciplines to support applied agricultural and natural resource research projects.

Funding is restricted to public domain projects for all types of awards.

1. System Competitive Research Funding

The ARI annually allocates $762,488 in support of a multi-campus shared pool of competitive research funding for research of statewide significance and is open to all 22 CSU campuses.

2. Campus Competitive Research Funding

The ARI annually allocates $2.55 million to be dispersed by ARI Administration among the four CSU ARI Member colleges of agriculture in support of individual campus competitive applied agricultural research. Individual campus funding allocations are made specifically for addressing unique local and/or regional project activities.

Associate campus funding is provided through a separate allocation from the Chancellor's Office. In FY 2027-28 it is anticipated that CSU Monterey Bay and Cal Poly Humboldt will receive $110,000 and $260,000, respectively. Of these allocations, CSU Monterey Bay will use $10,000 and Cal Poly Humboldt $25,000 to support administration of the ARI program on their campus. In total, the

annual research allocation for CSU Monterey Bay and Cal Poly Humboldt is $100,000 and $235,000, respectively.

B. Types of Applications

1. System Funding

Eligible Applicants: Any qualified researcher from the 22 CSU campus system. Principal Investigators (PI) may be faculty (tenure-track or adjunct), lecturers or research scientists with campus-defined eligibility from their respective CSU campus.

System grants can be funded for a maximum of 3 years with a minimum request of $75,000 per year and a maximum request of $150,000 per year. Pre-proposals are required. Requests for full proposals will be based on a pre-proposal evaluation and ranking.

System grants are open to all 22 CSU campuses. Collaboration is required; the PI must be from a CSU campus and the project must include at least one off-campus scientist serving as a Co-Investigator (CI). The CI may be faculty or research scientists from another CSU campus, the UC, industry or another qualified research organization's faculty or research scientists. System proposals must document the research collaboration in terms of financial support and scope of work, through subcontracts, standard agreements, and/or transfer of matching funds from collaborator(s) to the Principal Investigator's campus. System proposals involving multiple CSU campuses will receive priority.

The number of awards available is dependent on available funding each year.

Each System research project is required to obtain 1:1 match to ARI funds provided with a minimum of 25% cash.

2. Campus Funding

Eligible Campuses: Cal Poly, Pomona, Cal Poly, SLO, Chico State, Fresno State, Cal Poly Humboldt, CSU Monterey Bay.

Eligible Applicants: In addition to residing at an ARI campus, Project Directors for Campus ARI projects must be faculty (tenure-track or adjunct), lecturers or research scientists with campus-defined eligibility from the member or associate campus that receives the ARI allocation.

Campus grants can be funded for a maximum of 3 years with a maximum request of $150,000 per year.

Collaboration is not required but encouraged.

The number of awards is dependent on available funding each year.

Each Campus research project is required to obtain 1:1 match to ARI funds provided with a minimum of 25% cash, with the exception of Seed and New Investigator Funding (see below).

3. Seed Funding

Eligible Campuses: Cal Poly Pomona, Cal Poly SLO, Chico State, Fresno State, Cal Poly Humboldt and CSU Monterey Bay.

Eligible Applicants: In addition to residing on an ARI campus, applicants must be faculty (tenure-track or adjunct), lecturers or research scientists with campus-defined eligibility from the member or associate campus that receives the ARI allocation. **Please check with your campus ARI office for specific information and available funding, if any, for this type of application.** A campus is not obligated to fund Seed grants in a given funding cycle.

Seed grants are funded for one year with a maximum request of $10,000. Collaboration and match are not required for individual projects. However, the campus research allocation must be matched in aggregate to cover seed grants.

4. New Investigator Funding

Eligible Campuses: Cal Poly Pomona, Cal Poly SLO, Chico State, Fresno State, Cal Poly Humboldt, and CSU Monterey Bay.

Eligible Applicants: In addition to residing at an ARI campus, an applicant must be a first-through fourth-year tenure-track faculty member who has not been a past or current recipient of a campus competitive award. **Please check with your campus ARI office for the specifics and available funding, if any, for this type of application.** A campus is not obligated to fund New Investigator grants in a given funding cycle.

New Investigator grants can be funded for a maximum of two years with a maximum request of $20,000 per year; no minimum.

Collaboration is not required.

The number of awards is limited to four per funding cycle per campus.

Each New Investigator project is required to obtain a minimum 75% total match; 20% of the 75% match must be cash. The campus research allocation must be matched in aggregate to cover new investigator grants.

Part III – Match Requirement

With the exception of Seed and New Investigator funding (see above), each System and Campus research project is required to obtain 1:1 match to ARI funds provided with at least 25% being cash. In addition, the campus research allocation must be matched in aggregate to cover Seed and New Investigator grants.

Projects with match from industry will receive priority funding over those from any other source.

ARI external match funding goals and objectives are intended to:

- Augment and extend CSU research faculty's capacity to conduct priority applied research, information dissemination, and technology transfer activities
- Help identify priority applied agricultural and natural resource research projects and activities
- Facilitate CSU and ARI industry partnerships and community engagement
- Provide students with in-depth discipline-specific science training and faculty mentoring
- Develop a highly trained science and technology-based workforce for California agriculture and natural resource industries
- Keep ARI State funding actively committed to on-going research activities

Matching funds must be project-related and be fully explained in the "Match & ARI Specific Objectives" form, added as a required attachment. As an example, if support has already been received through the match source to perform objectives 1, 2 and 3, use the form to indicate how ARI funding will be used to support additional new objectives, or alternatively, co-funding of the same objectives. Care must be taken to demonstrate the scope of work completed under each form of support (ARI and match) and the relationships between/among these funding sources. Note that the budget template requires the PD to specify ARI and match sources at the line-item level. Proposals that do not contain all the required sections and proper documentation of in-hand matching funds will not be considered.

A. Cash Match

Cash match is defined as any cash, check and/or other negotiable United States currency contribution made by non-CSU State General Fund sources that directly benefits and is specifically pertinent to an ARI or ARI master grant funded project. An allowable match directly benefits and is specifically applicable to an ARI or ARI master grant funded project and must be received by the ARI project PI or Co-PI. For system projects, cash match from both the PI and Co-PI CSU campuses will be counted and the cash must reside on one of those CSU campuses.

Cash matching funds must be project-related and verified with the signature of the Foundation/Auxiliary/State Authorizing personnel using the "ARI Cash Match Verification" form, added as a required attachment.

B. In-Kind Match

In-kind matching for an ARI funded grant program is the portion of project costs not paid by ARI funds. Matching includes any contributions from a non-CSU entity, in which time, goods, services, equipment or other expendable property of verifiable financial "fair market value" is contributed to

the ARI project in support of achieving the objectives as presented in the project proposal. Matching contributions cannot originate from the CSU State General Fund allocation or other contributions that have been previously utilized as ARI or ARI master grant match.

Fair market value is defined as the generally acceptable commercial value of a donation. For example: the value of consultant and/or staff time will be determined based on what the individuals involved are actually paid by other clients for similar work. Proper accounting for the match includes documentation of land value, contributed time supported through payroll documents, receipts for materials and supplies. Matching contributions are subject to audit and should be verified via support documentation submitted on a quarterly basis, or at least annually.

In-kind cash matching funds must be project-related and verified with the signature of the Foundation/Auxiliary/State Authorizing personnel using the "ARI In-kind Match Verification" form, added as a required attachment.

C. Match Allowability

Cash or in-kind match originating from any CSU State General Fund allocation, any other ARI funded program, previously funded ARI projects or other donations which have been previously utilized as match for other projects is specifically prohibited from being used as external match. ARI and ARI master grant funding do not qualify as reciprocating match. Unrecovered indirect costs are not allowed as part of a match.

CSU Project personnel are not allowed to count their volunteer time on ARI projects as in-kind match.

D. Match Priority

Projects with match from industry will receive priority funding over those from any other source. Industry prioritization is further stratified by favoring projects with match from a commodity board or marketing board over those from an individual company. The type of match further stratifies projects of equal ranking. Priority will be given to those proposals that document 100% cash match. Proposals with a combination of cash and in-kind match are prioritized in order of highest percentage of cash match relative to the ARI funding request.

E. Match Acquisition Timeframe

Project match must be documented and verified between six months prior and six months post either the start of the fiscal year (July 1) or notification by the ARI Executive Director of ARI fund availability, depending on campus policies and procedures.

For match arriving prior to six months before the project start date, only the available balance at the six months prior date is allowed as project match.

F. Documentation

Awarded ARI funding will not be released until match is received. Match is considered received if it is documented and verified on the appropriate ARI match verification form. The Project Director and campus or auxiliary official must sign the form.

Pending match may be submitted with proposals but must be received prior to release of project funds by the campus. The only exception is pending in-kind service which needs to be documented as "pledged" at the beginning but must also be verified as "received" with support documentation after completion or no less than annually. In-kind service is subject to audit and should be verified via support documentation submitted on a quarterly basis, but no later than annually.

Part IV – Application and Submission Information

All ARI system and campus pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted through the ARI InfoReady web-based proposal submission and routing system. InfoReady is accessible on the ARI website at www.ari.calstate.edu.

A. Content and Form of Application Submission

1. Pre-Proposals for System Competitions

System competitions require a pre-proposal. Some campuses may require a pre-proposal or letter of intent for their Campus competition; please check with your respective ARI Campus Coordinator.

Pre-proposals require completion of the information fields/attachments listed below. A complete definition and/or explanation of the information being requested is provided in each web page subsection.

InfoReady Required Fields:

- PI Details
- Co-Investigator(s) Details
- Cooperator(s) Details
- Project Information
    - Proposal Title
    - Proposal Abstract
    - Funding Type
    - Duration
    - Focus Area
    - Research Category
- Estimated Funding Request
- Estimated Cash Match
- Estimated In-Kind Match
- Estimated Faculty/Research Staff Release

InfoReady File Uploads

- Project Narrative (required)
  The pre-proposal narrative must not exceed five pages, 1.15 line spacing pages, not including references. Use Times New Roman, font size 11, 1" margins and bold headings. It must be uploaded as an Adobe PDF.

  Include the following headings in the pre-proposal narrative:

  - Identification of the Problem
  - Importance to California agriculture
  - Objectives and Experimental Approach
  - Budget narrative
    - Provide an estimated budget that includes an overview of support for personnel, equipment, supplies, travel, etc. needed for the project.
- Miscellaneous Attachments/Appendix
  Load documents in support of your application, which may include letters of support, match verification, preliminary data, etc. This could also include routing approval, budgets or other forms required by your individual campus.

2. Full Proposals

System and campus full proposals require completion of the information fields listed below. Researchers are encouraged to review the Evaluation Criteria below to determine how their respective proposals will be evaluated. Your proposal will be reviewed by a mixed audience of specialists and scientists from other fields. Therefore, write your proposal in clear, accessible language, avoiding jargon whenever possible. Provide a strong rationale and context for your choices, especially when describing your methodology, so that both expert and non-expert reviewers can understand and appreciate the significance of your work.

InfoReady Required Fields:

- PI Details
  - Curriculum Vitae/Resume – **Limited to three pages**; ARI Presentations & Publications should be HIGHLIGHTED.
  - Current & Pending Support Form(s) – Use template provided.
- Co-Investigator(s) Details
  - Letter of Commitment – Use template provided. Required for each Co-Investigator
  - Curriculum Vitae/Resume - **Limited to three pages**; ARI Presentations & Publications should be HIGHLIGHTED. Required for each Co-PI.
  - Current & Pending Support Form(s) – Use template provided. Required for each Co-PI.

- Cooperator(s) Details
- Project Information
    - Proposal Title
    - Proposal Abstract - In ≤ 2000 characters, in lay-person's terms, please provide a concise, stand-alone description of the project including a) identification and significance (extent) of the problem to California agriculture and natural resources; b) goals and objectives of the project; c) contribution to California workforce development through student participation in project; d) statement on the potential impact of the project to California agriculture and/or natural resources. (This pastes as plain text so please do not use symbols, italics or special formatting.)
    - Funding Type
    - Duration
    - Focus Area
    - Research Category
- Funding Request
- Cash Match Details
- In-Kind Match Details
- Faculty/Research Staff Release Request- MUST match the budget

InfoReady File Uploads:

- Project Narrative (consisting of sections A-E, 10-page limit, see below)
- Staffing and Budget Justification (consisting of sections F and G, no page limit)
- References Cited
- Timeline of Activities (use template provided)
- ARI Budget Spreadsheet (use template provided)
- Appendices/Data in support of proposal
- Current and Pending Support Form for PI (use template provided)
- Match & ARI Specific Objectives (use template provided; not required for seed funding)
- Principal Investigator CV (Limited to three pages)
- Co-Investigator(s)
    - CV (Limited to three pages)
    - Current and Pending Support (use template provided)
    - Letter of Commitment (use template provided)
- Data Sharing and Use of Preexisting Intellectual Property (use template provided)
    - Investigators are expected to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable time, the primary data, samples, physical collections and other supporting materials created or gathered in the

course of work under ARI grants. A declaration of pre-existing intellectual property must be noted on the form and submitted with the proposal.

- Cash Match Verification Form(s) (use template provided; only required for in-hand matches; not required for seed funding)
- In-Kind Match Verification Form(s) (use template provided; only required for in-hand matches; not required for seed funding)
- Campus Internal Budget (if applicable, use your campus template)

Project Narrative

The Project Narrative consists of sections A-G, listed below. Sections A-E (inclusive) must not exceed ten pages. Sections F-G must be included in the narrative but will not be counted against the ten-page limit. Load narrative sections A-E as a single file; load narrative sections F-G as a single file; load "References Cited" as a single file.

All files should be saved as an Adobe PDF, using Times New Roman, font size 11, normal (1") margins, 1.15 line spacing, with narrative section headings in bold.

Project narratives must include the following sections; please use the headings and bold font as listed below to label each section.

A. Problem/Issue to be Addressed

Identify and briefly describe the problem or issue being addressed and explain why it is a high priority for California agriculture; justify the project by briefly discussing the extent of the problem and the anticipated economic impact of addressing the issue as proposed. Describe the current knowledge relevant to this problem and provide relevant citations. Describe how the proposed work will contribute to the body of knowledge and solving the stated problem.

B. Statement of Methodology

Provide a statement of the purpose of the research, a list of the research goals and objectives as well as a detailed description of research activities. List the objectives and methodology in sufficient detail for reviewers to judge the likelihood of success in obtaining data that supports the objectives and will test the stated hypotheses. Include the experimental design; describe the data that will be generated and how those data will be analyzed. Identify and address possible pitfalls in the methodology and their solutions. Use and attach the form "Match & ARI Specific Objectives" to describe which objectives are supported by the ARI and those of the match source. Use and attach the form "Timeline of Activities" to provide an overview of the activities that will be undertaken in support of each objective.

C. Dissemination Plan

Each plan must contain a detailed account of the actions that will be taken to disseminate project results to the California agricultural industry and consumers. ***Attribution of ARI funding must be made for all communications of ARI-supported research, including journal and trade articles, posters, presentations, etc. Please use the following language to acknowledge ARI support: "This project was supported by the California State University Agricultural Research Institute grant number XX-XX-XXX."*** It is also recommended that external donors be acknowledged and recognized for their contributions to the success of a project.

The ARI requires and will assess each project regarding whether an effort was made to provide information to California farmers, ranchers, agribusiness concerns and other relevant consumer and stakeholder groups. A budget that includes specific support for industry and grower outreach events demonstrates a clear and intentional effort. Professional journal publications, presentations at professional meetings, and service to your discipline are highly encouraged. However, a complete ARI dissemination plan requires more than these efforts. Because California farmers, ranchers, consumers, and agribusiness don't typically engage with these publications or events, you must also include outreach activities that directly reach these key audiences.

D. Evidence of Industry Need and Economic Impact to the California Industry and Consumer

Projects must focus on an applied research problem for which the proposer can convincingly demonstrate the project is both needed and wanted by industry. Describe the value of the proposed research to California agriculture and its related industries or the consumer. Provide a brief economic analysis of the expected benefits of this work to the relevant sector of agriculture or consumer. If industry has been able to provide financial support for this project, provide reference to this here and on the **budget** and **match documentation forms**. The ARI strongly encourages faculty to engage with industry to learn their research needs. Although not required, letters of support from industry for your proposed project are strongly encouraged and help provide evidence that you have communicated with industry and they support your project. In-kind contributions, but especially cash-match, from industry will strengthen your proposal by demonstrating the research being proposed is valued by industry.

E. Deliverables and Impact

Please provide a narrative of how the project will be evaluated in relation to the objectives and the impact of the research.

- Briefly describe the project's objectives and the evidence that indicates the objectives have been met. This may be as simple as indicating a dataset was created, new knowledge was created or a new variety was created and by doing so fulfills objective 1, 2, or 3.

- Describe or list the deliverables for this project.
- Address the impact of the proposed research to industry or the consumer. What are the scientific impacts? Note that this includes the outcomes and accomplishments, which are considered synonymous. They can represent a change in knowledge, action and/or condition. Almost all research projects have an outcome with a change in knowledge, but many ARI projects also have other outcomes because of their applied nature. Impacts may be realized beyond the end of the project, and if this situation applies to this project, please state so.

Sections F-G must be included in the narrative but will not be counted against the ten- page limit. Upload sections F-G (Staffing and Budget Narrative) as a single file.

F. Staffing

Provide the following information for all key project personnel (Project Director, Co-investigator(s), and Cooperators(s)). Provide a detailed statement of each key individual's roles and responsibilities as listed in the timeline of activities. If students are supported on this project, provide a detailed statement of each student's role and responsibilities as indicated in the Timeline of Activities.

For campus proposals, ARI strongly encourages collaborative working relationships among departments, other colleges, other CSU campuses, the University of California, industry partners, and other agricultural research agencies. For system proposals, collaboration is required and must include at least one CSU campus faculty or research scientist collaborating with another CSU campus faculty or research scientist from a UC, industry or another qualified research organization's faculty or research scientists. The principal investigator must be from a CSU campus.

The participation of graduate and undergraduate students in project activities is strongly encouraged and valued.

G. Budget Narrative

Budget narratives and budget spreadsheets must be consistent. Sufficient detail should be provided to allow the reviewer to determine whether there is a clear relationship between the resources requested and the work proposed. Provide a complete budget narrative justification for sections A – G from the Budget Spreadsheet:

- *Senior Personnel* – Provide the annual base salary and percent commitment in the details of your calculations for each Senior Personnel. Include additional employment, summer salary and release time.

- *Other Personnel* – As appropriate, provide annual salary or hourly rate, number of hours committed to the project (if student indicate AY and/or summer) and complete calculations of funding request for each personnel.
- *Fringe Benefits* – Provide benefit rate and complete calculation of benefit request for each Senior and Other Personnel.
- *Equipment* – Provide estimated cost including tax and shipping.
- *Travel* – Please identify meetings expected to attend, estimated registration fees, estimated lodging costs, per diem costs, travel costs and anticipated associated costs.
    - ARI PI Meeting – PI's with system grants are required to attend the annual PI meeting each year the grant is active. PI's with a campus grant of $100,000 over the lifetime of the grant or $35,000 in a single year are required to attend each year the grant is active. Travel funds should be requested in the proposed budget to support attendance of the meeting every year during the life of the grant. Please identify lodging, per diem and travel costs plus other anticipated costs.
- *Participant Costs* – Provide details and all calculations regarding tuition reimbursement, scholarships, stipends, travel, etc.
- *Other Direct Costs* – Include details of materials and supplies used in support of experimental objectives. Include unit costs when appropriate. Include publication costs, consultant services, computer services, subawards, etc.

Faculty may claim academic release time and/or additional employment pay (summer salary and/or overload) on ARI projects. Generally, preference will be given to proposals for which release time, rather than additional pay, is requested for academic year duties. When claiming faculty release and/or additional pay, technical/other staff, and/or student salary funding, an appropriate university/auxiliary payroll tax/benefit expense must be included in the project budget. To determine the appropriate benefit rate, consult with your respective Campus Coordinator or Point Person.

While Campus Coordinators and/or their respective designee(s) will make every reasonable effort to assist Project Directors in budget development, monitoring, and tracking, Project Directors are responsible for budget development and accountability.

B. Electronic Application Submission

All ARI system and campus pre-proposals and full proposals must be submitted through the ARI InfoReady web-based proposal submission and routing system.

The application guidelines included herein and on the website are designed to assist in the preparation, submission, and management of ARI pre-proposals, full proposals and projects funded in FY 2026-27. Additional assistance is available by first consulting with the appropriate Campus Coordinator(s) and thereafter by contacting the ARI system administrative office at (909) 869-4328.

Approvals Required for System and Campus Proposals

In addition to the following required approvals, your individual campus may request other signatures.

System Competitions:

For ARI Member / Associate Campuses:

- ✓ Campus Point Person
- ✓ ARI Executive Director

For All Other Campuses:

- ✓ ARI Executive Director

Campus Competitions:

For ARI Member and Associate Campuses:

- ✓ Campus Point Person

Part V – Application Review Requirements

A. General

1. System Funding Applications

System pre-proposals will be collaboratively evaluated and ranked by the Deans' Council and the Executive Director in accordance with the criteria identified below prior to the requests for full proposals to determine 1) alignment with one or more of the ARI research priority areas, 2) statewide significance of the proposed research, and 3) appropriate level of collaboration. System proposals involving multiple CSU campuses will receive priority.

To ensure a fair and comprehensive evaluation, full proposals undergo a two-step review process. First, subject matter experts and scientists from diverse fields review the proposals. To ensure they can fully understand your work, please write your proposal in clear, accessible language and avoid technical jargon. Following this initial review, the Executive Director and the ARI Deans' Council consider the reviewers' comments and collectively recommend the strongest proposals to the ARI Board for final approval.

2. Campus Funding Applications

Campus proposals are reviewed by technical review committees comprised of campus and other subject matter experts chosen by the campus ARI personnel.

Proposals, including all content and ideas, are the intellectual property of the proposer, and reviewers are required to protect this proprietary information by not sharing it in any capacity.

B. Evaluation Criteria

Full proposals will be evaluated by peer reviewers using the criteria listed below. In addition to asking reviewers to assign a numeric score to each of the proposal subsections listed, they are asked to provide comments and/or suggestions that they believe may enhance the proposal goals and/or outcomes.

If you believe that a colleague can make a substantive contribution to the review of a proposal and/or its attachment(s), which you have agreed to review, please consult the appropriate ARI system or campus administrator (ARI Executive Director or Campus Coordinator) before contacting your colleague. When you complete the review process please delete all associated electronic files and destroy any proposal documents.

a. **Problem/Issue to be Addressed** (20 points): Determine whether the problem is addressed clearly and presented convincingly. The Principal Investigator should demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the problem, which should be solvable. Determine whether other researchers are addressing this problem, and whether the Principal Investigator demonstrated a thorough understanding of related work that has been reported by others.
b. **Statement of Methodology** (25 points): Determine whether the proposed methodology is sound and whether there are any significant limitations associated with the proposal design. Determine if pitfalls and possible solutions were identified. Determine whether the proposal indicates data will be collected and analyzed, whether the major objectives and milestones of the proposal have been identified, and whether they are appropriate. Evaluate whether the timeline of proposed activities is realistic and appropriate to the work proposed, and whether the objectives can be achieved using the approach identified. If matching funds were required, has the relevance of those funds been addressed, including non-overlap of objectives except in the case of direct cost-share?
c. **Dissemination Plan** (10 points): Determine whether the information dissemination activities proposed are adequate, that they primarily address California farmers', ranchers', and/or agribusiness concerns (a requirement for all ARI funded proposals), and that they are well thought out.
d. **Evidence of Industry Need and Economic Impact to the California Industry and Consumer** (15 points):
   Projects must focus on an applied research problem for which the proposer can convincingly demonstrate the project is both needed and wanted by industry. Evaluate the value of the work proposed relative to California agriculture, agribusiness, food and natural resources and consumers. Determine whether the agricultural industry's recognition of this problem as being high priority was economically accurate. Establish that industry has provided adequate support for this project or justified why it cannot.
e. **Deliverables and Impact** (5 Points): Evaluate if the deliverables appear reasonable and achievable. Evaluate if the proposed research addresses its impact on the agriculture and natural resource industry, consumers, or science by adding new knowledge.

f. **Staff Needs/Researcher Qualifications and Collaboration** (10 points): Determine whether the proposal clearly describes the qualifications of the Project Director and other key personnel to solve the identified proposal problem (training, education, demonstrated awareness of the issue) and whether the level of staffing is appropriate. Determine whether the roles and activities of all the key personnel have been clearly defined. Student involvement is strongly encouraged and their roles in the project should be clearly defined.

g. **Budget Appropriateness** (15 points): Evaluate whether the resources requested are appropriate to the work proposed and whether there are more efficient ways to conduct the project. Determine whether there is a clear relationship between the resources requested and the work proposed.

Part VI – Submission and Processing Timeline

Follow the submission deadlines indicated on the cover page for both Campus and System competitions.

***Please note: Your campus may have earlier internal deadlines; please check with your ARI Campus Coordinator and/or Point Person for internal submission deadlines. If you are from a non-ARI campus, please check with the CSU ARI office.**

System Funding

September 1, 2026	Request for proposals released
November 18, 2026	Pre-proposal submission deadline
December 4, 2026	Request for full proposals
February 17, 2027	Full proposal submission deadline

Campus Funding

September 1, 2026	Request for proposals released
February 17, 2027	Full proposal submission deadline

Part VII – Award Administration

A. Acceptance Terms

In accepting project funding from ARI, faculty agree to comply with all financial, external match and reporting requirements identified in the applicable Call for Proposals, ARI Policies and Procedures Manual, and any other applicable campus- or system-specific policies. This includes timely submission of annual reports and completion of the faculty mentoring survey each year in which a project is active.

B. Award Reductions and Cancellations

1. Reductions

Reductions will be pro-rated based on the percentage of the cash requirement met or the percentage of the total match requirement received, whichever is the more limiting factor.

Awards may be reduced from the original budget as a consequence of proposal review or a match shortfall. In cases where award amounts are reduced from the original budget, the PI will submit a revised budget, budget narrative and objectives. Reductions in award amounts will be proportionate to the reduced received match by the deadline for the funding year, whether original year or subsequent years, for all projects requiring match.

Reductions cannot be recovered in subsequent years.

2. Cancellations

Proposals for which no external match can be documented within the approved match acquisition timeframe will not be approved. Campus and System unallocated funds are subject to dynamic reallocation (see Policy and Procedure Manual for details).

Project Directors may appeal an ARI campus administrative decision to cancel tentatively approved project funding based on delinquent external match funding verification to the ARI Executive Director. Appeals must be dated and accompanied by a written justification within 30 days of a written funding cancellation notice. All appeal notices submitted to the Executive Director must be copied to the respective ARI Campus Coordinator and College Dean. The Executive Director shall have 30 days from receipt of an appeal to render a final decision.

C. Project Start Date

A project's start date is either 1) the start of the fiscal year or 2) the date of notification by the ARI Executive Director of ARI fund availability, depending on campus policies and procedures. Single and multi-year project anniversary dates are observed in 12-month intervals commencing on each project's start date.

D. Budget Revisions

When any budget category (i.e., A-G on ARI spreadsheet) deviates by 20% of that category, a rebudget is required and requires approval by the Campus Coordinator for campus projects and the CSU ARI Executive Director for system and all non-foundational grants. No project expense may exceed the total project budget. Each campus may elect rebudget criteria that are more restrictive, but not less restrictive, than that stated above.

1. Budget Revisions Under Disruptions Due to Pandemics or Natural Disasters

Projects disrupted by a pandemic or regional natural disasters can request the suspension of the 20% category deviation threshold that under normal circumstance requires a re-budget. The budget must be rebalanced during the next funding period in accordance to the local campus policy.

E. Indirect Charges

Pursuant to ARI policy adopted by the Board of Governors regarding indirect charges, the ARI does not allow the imposition of any indirect charges to ARI State General Fund funded projects, contracts, subcontracts, and/or the transfer of portions of a project budget between colleges, centers, campuses, university systems, or other public or private agencies. Each ARI Campus receives an allocation to support administration of the program on that campus; any additional administrative fees and/or indirect charges cannot be built into individual projects; this includes transaction fees charged by the campus Foundation or other auxiliary.

F. Confidentiality of Proposals

The ARI receives research proposals in confidence and is responsible for protecting the confidentiality of their submission and contents. Proposals and accompanying attachments made accessible for administrative and review purposes may contain privileged and/or confidential information only for use by the intended recipient(s) for the express purpose of financial, technical, and/or scientific review and evaluation. Recipients of these materials are also charged with maintaining the confidentiality of their contents. If you have received a hardcopy proposal and/or electronic proposal access in error, please immediately notify the appropriate ARI system and/or campus administrator (ARI Executive Director or Campus Coordinator) listed in the contact page of this Request for Proposals (see section VIII). Recipients of a hardcopy proposal and/or electronic proposal access **MAY NOT** copy, quote, distribute, or otherwise use material from an ARI proposal submission without the expressed written consent of its author(s), unless required by law.

G. Intellectual Property Policy

ARI project funding is restricted to public domain endeavors, therefore all intellectual property which is created or developed with ARI funding shall be subject to federal and state laws, all California State University applicable collective bargaining agreements, and individual campus policy.

H. Citations

Attribution of ARI funding must be made for all communications of ARI-supported research, including journal and trade articles, posters, presentations, etc.

a. Please use the following language to acknowledge ARI support: "This project was supported by the California State University Agricultural Research Institute grant number **XX-XX-XXX**."

Part VIII – Award Reporting

A. General

While Campus Coordinators, their respective designee(s), and other appropriate administrative staff will make every reasonable effort to assist Project Directors in completing progress reporting obligations, Project Directors are responsible for timely and accurate financial and programmatic progress reporting. Future funding and proposal submission approval may be withheld from Project Directors with progress reporting delinquencies or poor project management.

ARI annual assessments and final reports must be completed using the appropriate online Annual Assessment or Final Report Templates available on the appropriate cards on the PI Resource Center carousel on the ARI AgCommons website.

B. Annual Assessments

Yearly submission of an annual assessment report is required for all active projects, due on 15 August. In addition to the annual report, in the year when the project is completed a final report is due within 90 days after a project's scheduled completion date.

C. Additional Annual Reports as a Result of a No-Cost Extension

If no-cost extensions are approved, additional annual reports will be required on 15 August of the extension year. In addition to the annual report, in the year when the project is completed a final report is due within 90 days after a project's scheduled completion date.

D. Final Reports

Final reports for all projects are due within 90 days after a project's scheduled end date. The PI is responsible for the annual report for their project. The form for the final report can be found here.

It is essential that ARI research is understandable and relevant to our stakeholders, including the agricultural community and general public. To this end, Project Directors may be contacted by the ARI Executive Director or administrative staff to assist in preparation of public impact statements that describe the project's findings and justify the use of ARI funds. Non-technical summaries of Final Reports should be written with this in mind.

Part IX – ARI Program Contacts

CSU ARI

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