

RFP on Alternative Protein R&D

Since 2016, Coefficient Giving has allocated several million dollars toward the development of better and cheaper alternatives to animal products.

We now see an opportunity to accelerate progress on several fronts, particularly in closing the taste and price gap between alternative proteins and the animal products they aim to replace.

After a decade of investment, the alternative protein category has produced commercially significant products but has yet to achieve mainstream adoption. The dominant hypothesis, as illustrated by consumer surveys and industry, is that taste and price represent the dominant barriers to mainstream adoption.

For example, plant proteins often have “grassy” or “beany” off-flavors that overwhelm engineered flavor systems. Fat systems built on commodity oils don’t generate the same mouth-feel of animal fat, nor do they adequately replicate the lipid-Maillard chemistry that produces “meatiness” during cooking. Egg replacement has remained largely static, despite increased buyer interest due to avian influenza and feed price increases. Additionally, entire categories of widely consumed fish that are processed into unstructured products like pastes, soups, sauces, and surimi remain poorly understood at the flavor-chemistry level, even though these unstructured formats make them tractable targets for replacement.

These are foundational, pre-competitive research problems. They are unlikely to be solved by any single company, and they are systematically underfunded by both public agencies and private R&D budgets. We think this is precisely the kind of neglected gap that philanthropy should fill.

We expect to spend up to \$10 million USD on this RFP and could spend more depending on application quality.

We’re soliciting proposals across four priority areas:

1. **Off-flavor reduction** in plant- and fermentation-derived protein ingredients, via agricultural, breeding, processing, or fermentation-based interventions;
2. **Fat alternatives for flavor generation**, including oleogels, emulsion systems on existing margarine/spread lines, oil bodies, novel flavor-active lipid compounds, and oilseed breeding for longer-chain monounsaturates;
3. **Egg reduction and replacement** through enzymatic approaches, hybrid systems, and foundational functional characterization in industrial bakery, mayonnaise/dressings, and pasta; and
4. **Characterizing fish flavors** in welfare-priority species, including tilapia and milkfish, carp and bottom-dwellers (including pond loach), and catfish.

We’ve published a technical context document describing each priority, the metrics we care about, and the rubrics we’ll use to evaluate proposals. **Applicants should read this document carefully before applying.** Proposals that ignore the metrics and methodology preferences described there are unlikely to be competitive.



from across the R&D ecosystem, including universities and research institutes; small, medium, and large companies; and public-sector research organizations. Successful teams will likely be interdisciplinary, combining expertise across analytical chemistry, sensory science, food science, fermentation, breeding, and/or industry-relevant scale-up. We strongly encourage applications that include industry partners or articulate a credible pathway to industry uptake. Applicants from anywhere in the world are welcome to apply, though award eligibility will be subject to legal and financial due diligence.

Applications will remain open until Aug 10, 2026. The first and only step is to [submit an application](#). Please read the [technical context document](#) carefully before applying. Awards will be announced on a rolling basis, with final decisions shared before November 30, 2026.

If you have questions about the application process, please email altproteinrfp@coefficientgiving.org. Please note we can't provide detailed feedback on draft proposals before submission.

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