



## **Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI) Requests Proposals for a Grant for**

### **Independent Plant Breeders Developing Organic-Adapted Open Source Varieties**

The purposes of this OSSI-sponsored grant program are to create more organic-adapted open source varieties, to support and assist independent plant breeders (who have created more than 95% of the OSSI-Pledged open-source varieties), and to, where relevant, enhance the quality and usefulness of organic-adapted open source varieties for farms of all sizes, from small gardens to large-scale commercial agriculture.

We plan to award five or more grants at a maximum of \$2,000/year for up to three years with a possible extension to a fourth year. Most OSSI-Pledged open source varieties don't cost the breeder more than \$2,000/year to develop. Many independent breeders are farmers, market gardeners, or seed producers who are already growing the plants anyway. In addition, our grants are designed specifically to support variety development, so paperwork is simple and the funds can be used for anything plant breeding requires, including leasing land, services such as tilling, weeding, harvesting, photography and growing transplants, fertilizer, organic certification, labor (including applicant's own labor), subcontracting for seed multiplication prior to variety release, subcontracting for laboratory services to identify the presence of disease resistance or other genes for marker assisted selection (MAS) or gene identification, or to determine the protein or amino acid content in your new grain or grain legume variety.

## Schedule:

Applications are available now at

<https://osseeds.org/ossi-plant-breeders-grant-application/>

Applications are due September 15, 2026.

Award decisions will be announced November 2026.

Each year's funds will be disbursed in January for applicants in USA or Canada and as modified appropriately for those in Australia or New Zealand.

## Eligibility:

- OSSI board members and their spouses and family members are not eligible for these grants.
- Applicants must be at least 18 years old and residing and gardening/farming in **USA, Canada, Australia, or New Zealand.**
- Applicant must be (or want to be) an independent plant breeder. (No institutional affiliation except to family seed companies or to seed companies strongly committed to open source varieties.) This program is for the independent plant breeder operating completely as an independent plant breeder, with full responsibility for the project proposed. (We believe in the value of participatory and collaborative plant breeding, but that is not what these grants are for.)
- Breeders will usually be expected to do their plant breeding on organic-managed land. The land need not be *certified* organic.
- There will be just one plant breeding project per grant.
- The project must be for developing new finished open-pollinated varieties. Not hybrids, breeding materials, gene pools, or land races. (These other materials are also valuable, but are not what this grant is about.) This program is also not for developing GMO varieties.
- Project may involve any crop, but project should already be in progress and/or have a realistic chance of being completed in three years. 'Completed' means ready for preliminary release as a useful OSSI-Pledged variety, even if it will take many more years to achieve all goals to the breeder's satisfaction.
- Projects where all that is needed is seed increase and/or variety characterization before release are welcomed.
- Applicant must be willing to OSSI-Pledge and release any variety developed in

whole or part with funding from this grant.

- Project must involve only germplasm whose use does not preclude OSSI-Pledging resulting varieties.
- Applicants who have already bred and released at least one variety will *usually* be given priority. However, efforts will also be made to include new plant breeders if the proposed project so warrants.
- Criteria for selection of projects for funding will not be rigidly fixed. The Plant Breeding Committee will have the freedom to apply the general principles noted above.
- No, we didn't forget about whether you have attended or graduated from high school or college or have formal schooling at all. Having a particular educational background is not required to be eligible for these grants.

### **Selection Process:**

- Review and evaluation will be by the OSSI Plant Breeding Committee. [Carol Deppe (Chair) (Fertile Valley Seeds), Andrew Still (Adaptive Seeds), Don Tipping (Siskiyou Seeds), Tom Michaels, (University of Minnesota), Jack Kloppenburg (University of Wisconsin-Madison, Emeritus)] That is, three independent plant breeders, one university plant breeder, and one university expert on seed sovereignty.
- Selection criteria will include demonstrated experience, competence, and creativity of applicant.
- Selection criteria will include the contribution to an agronomic need and anticipated benefit to the community, humankind, and/or the planet of the project.
- For experienced breeders—Evidence of plant breeding success/experience. (List most important varieties you have bred that are or were available commercially in a catalog and/or on a web site.) (Providing additional information or references is optional.)
- For new plant breeders, describe any relevant employment or volunteer experiences, any plant breeding courses taken, and any independent study undertaken. In addition list one to five references who have agreed to support your application.

**Questions? Contact us at [info@osseeds.org](mailto:info@osseeds.org)**