EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Hawai‘i Agriculture Research Center (HARC) | O‘ahu, Hawai‘i

$150,000–$200,000, commensurate with qualifications and experience • Full-time, on-site

Lead the Next Era of Tropical Agricultural Research

The Hawai‘i Agriculture Research Center (HARC) seeks an entrepreneurial, collaborative, scientific executive to lead the organization through a pivotal period of transition and into its next era of growth and impact. Building on more than a century of applied agricultural research in Hawai‘i, HARC has repeatedly evolved with Hawai‘i agriculture, from its origins serving the sugar industry to a diversified nonprofit research organization. Today, HARC has an opportunity to again define how its scientific capabilities, facilities, partnerships, and distinctive tropical setting can address the changing needs of agriculture in Hawai‘i and beyond.

About HARC

HARC is a private 501(c)(3) nonprofit agricultural research organization headquartered at the Kunia Research Station in Waipahu, O‘ahu. Its team of scientists, agronomists, foresters, conservationists, and technical experts works across five core research divisions. Current work includes crop improvement and breeding, coffee leaf rust resistance, agrivoltaics, native forest restoration, crop propagation and tissue culture, and applied research supporting Hawai‘i producers and natural-resource managers.

The Opportunity

HARC is at an institutional inflection point. The organization seeks a leader who respects and learns from its history and deep institutional knowledge while recognizing that agricultural science, crop biotechnology, research funding, technology, and Hawai‘i’s agricultural economy continue to change. The next Executive Director will help HARC consolidate a compelling mission and long-term vision, establish a focused and financially sustainable research strategy, and build organizational alignment around that direction.

This is a CEO-level opportunity for a leader who can unite scientific credibility, organizational leadership, financial and operational discipline, and external partnership development with the vision and energy to help shape HARC’s future. Following more than three decades of continuity in executive leadership, the next Executive Director will work collaboratively with HARC’s senior project leaders, staff, Board, producers, community partners, funders, industry, universities, and government agencies to clarify strategic direction, focus research priorities, strengthen financial sustainability, and position HARC for its next chapter.

Key Responsibilities

- **Organizational leadership, mission & strategy:** Lead a collaborative process with the Board, senior project leaders, staff, and key partners to refine HARC’s mission, establish a compelling long-term vision, set research and organizational priorities, and translate them into measurable plans and outcomes.
- **Financial sustainability & business development:** Build a durable financial model by aligning resources with strategic priorities, strengthening existing programs, diversifying federal, state, philanthropic, industry, and fee-for-service revenue, and developing new sponsored-research and partnership opportunities.
- **Research portfolio & scientific innovation:** Work with HARC’s scientific leaders to evaluate and focus the research portfolio, support high-quality applied research, identify opportunities in new crops and emerging technologies, and help develop competitive grants, contracts, collaborations, and programs with meaningful producer and community impact.
- **People, culture & organizational alignment:** Build a high-performing, collaborative organization by developing and retaining strong staff, clarifying roles and expectations, fostering accountability and professional growth, and aligning personnel and resources with HARC’s strategic priorities. Make difficult organizational decisions when needed while communicating them fairly, respectfully, and transparently.
- **Operations & infrastructure:** Provide executive oversight of budgets, contracts, compliance, research facilities, farms, laboratories, and organizational systems; ensure projects meet commitments and deliverables.
- **External relations & partnership development:** Serve as a visible ambassador for HARC and deepen relationships with Hawai‘i producers, communities, industry, universities, government agencies, and funders while developing national and international partnerships that advance tropical agricultural research and innovation.

The Candidate We Seek

The strongest candidate may come from a nonprofit research institute, agricultural or biotechnology company, university research center, government research organization, agricultural technology company, public-private partnership, or another science-based organization. Prior service with the title Executive Director or CEO is valuable but is not required. HARC is interested in demonstrated executive capacity and increasing responsibility.

Required Qualifications

- Advanced degree in agriculture, plant science, natural resources, biological sciences, or a closely related field; a PhD or equivalent advanced scientific training is required.

- Approximately 10 years or more of progressively responsible leadership experience in agriculture, research, biotechnology, natural resources, or another science-based organization. Exceptional candidates with a demonstrated record of rapidly increasing executive responsibility will be considered.
- Substantial experience leading multidisciplinary scientific, technical, operational, or commercial teams and developing high-performing staff.
- Demonstrated responsibility for organizational or program budgets, financial planning, grants, contracts, operations, or other significant resources.
- Track record of developing external partnerships and securing or managing diverse sources of funding, such as government grants and contracts, industry-sponsored research, philanthropy, fee-for-service activity, or strategic partnerships.
- Ability to understand and communicate science while connecting research priorities to producer, community, partner, and organizational needs.
- Excellent written, verbal, interpersonal, and public-facing communication skills.
- Demonstrated integrity, sound judgment, accountability, and the ability to work effectively with a governing Board.

Additional Attributes That Will Distinguish Candidates

- Experience in crop improvement, plant breeding, agronomy, biotechnology, forestry, or related applied agricultural research.
- Experience moving research or innovation toward field application, technology transfer, commercialization, or producer adoption.
- Experience with research farms, field operations, laboratories, controlled-environment facilities, or other research infrastructure.
- Ability to enter a new community with humility, listen and learn, build trust across diverse constituencies, and develop durable relationships.
- Entrepreneurial and opportunity-oriented mindset balanced by stewardship of long-term research programs, people, institutional knowledge, and mission.
- Experience working with government agencies, regulators, universities, industry, producers, donors, and community organizations.
- Demonstrated success leading an organization, program, or team through significant change, strategic repositioning, growth, or transformation.
- Ability to synthesize diverse perspectives into a clear vision, make disciplined choices about priorities, and build support for change without losing scientific rigor or institutional trust.
- Curiosity about emerging agricultural technologies and research models, including modern crop improvement, biotechnology, data-enabled agriculture, and new public-private approaches to applied research.

Compensation & Relocation

Base salary: $150,000–$200,000, commensurate with qualifications and experience, with the opportunity for additional performance-based compensation tied to achievement of Board-established performance goals and metrics.
HARC recognizes that accepting this position may require a significant household relocation to O‘ahu. A competitive relocation package will be offered to the selected candidate subject to Board-approved terms and applicable tax requirements.

HARC also offers employer-supported medical and dental coverage, paid vacation and sick leave, paid holidays, retirement benefits, temporary disability insurance, and a flexible spending plan.

Organizational Relationships

The Executive Director reports to the HARC Board of Directors and works closely with research faculty, administrative and facilities leadership, research associates, technicians, and outreach and education staff. The ED also maintains important organizational relationships with HARC-affiliated entities, including Kunia Village Title Holding Corporation, Kunia Village Development Corporation, and the Hawai‘i Foundation for Agriculture Research, as assigned by the Board.

Application

Candidates should submit a cover letter describing their interest in HARC and how their scientific, leadership, operational, financial, and partnership experience prepares them to lead the organization, together with a curriculum vitae or résumé and contact information for, at least three, professional references.

Applications will be accepted until October 31, 2026. Candidate review and interviews will begin following the initial application period. The position will remain open until filled. Email application to Florida Chow at fchow@harc-hspa.com.
HARC welcomes candidates whose careers demonstrate strong leadership potential even if their path has not followed a traditional nonprofit Executive Director trajectory. The selection process will emphasize demonstrated accomplishments, leadership capacity, financial and operational judgment, scientific credibility, relationship-building ability, and alignment with HARC’s mission. HARC welcomes applications from both U.S. and international candidates who are currently authorized to work in the United States.

Equal Opportunity

HARC is committed to a professional, inclusive workplace and encourages qualified applicants from diverse backgrounds and career paths to apply.