

Dr. Sally Rockey, Executive Director



Dr. Sally Rockey became the inaugural Executive Director of the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR) in September 2015. Prior to this role, Dr. Rockey was a leader in Federal research, overseeing the operations of the extramural programs in both agriculture and biomedicine. She received her Ph.D. in Entomology from the Ohio State University and did postgraduate work at University of Wisconsin prior to joining the government.

Rockey spent 19 years with the U.S. Department of Agriculture where she held a number of positions within the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service which is now the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. She became the head of the competitive grants program, overseeing the extramural research grants process and portfolio. In her final years with USDA she was the Chief Information Officer, applying her breadth of government knowledge to IT. From there she moved to the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

As Deputy Director for Extramural Research at NIH, Rockey oversaw the operations of the largest extramural research program in the world. She led groundbreaking initiatives on scientific workforce, research administration, and electronic government. As a principal leader for research administration in the government, she headed numerous federal committees such as the National Science and Technology-Committee on Science-Research Business Models. Rockey transformed the relationship of NIH with the academic and scientific research communities by promoting transparency in NIH decision-making processes and using social media, particularly her blog “RockTalk” which served as a model for government communication, to make a lasting positive impact on the research community. She served as Vice President of the Human Frontiers of Science program, an international life-science grant program which funded multinational teams of scientists conducting groundbreaking research. Dr. Rockey has been recognized for her numerous professional accomplishments with the Presidential Rank Award for excellence in government leadership, the Joseph F. Carrabino award for promoting government university relationships, and the Association of Independent Research Institutions Public Service Award. Rockey retired from the government in 2015 and to become the first Executive Director of FFAR.

Dr. Rockey has devoted her career to improving people’s lives through research and will continue her mission by seeing FFAR become an essential component of the scientific enterprise.

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