

2016 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

Grant Proposal Instructions

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE 10.170

Released:
February 18, 2016

Grant Proposals Due:
By 11:59 pm PDT on March 20, 2016
No late submissions accepted.



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About the Program

Purpose

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is pleased to invite you to participate in Phase II of the 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) process, submittal of a grant proposal.

Grant proposal projects must *solely* enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. Specialty crops are fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture). Visit the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Agricultural Marketing Service website <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/scbgbp> for a comprehensive list of eligible and ineligible commodities.

Funding and Duration

CDFA anticipates that up to \$22 million will be awarded to projects solely enhancing the competitiveness of California specialty crops. Grant amounts range from \$50,000 to \$450,000. The maximum grant duration is two (2) years, six (6) months. In the case of fixed amount awards, grant amounts range from \$50,000 to \$150,000 and the maximum grant duration is two (2) years. Grant funds cannot be expended before October 1, 2016 or after March 31, 2019. CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.

Eligibility and Exclusions

Only applicants invited to submit a grant proposal are eligible to participate in this phase of the solicitation process.

Non-profit and for-profit organizations; local, state, and federal government entities including tribal governments; and public or private colleges and universities are eligible to receive funding. Individuals are not eligible to receive funding.

Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that directly benefit or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.

Grant funds will not be awarded to applicants with an active exclusion or delinquent federal debt according to the federal System for Award Management (SAM). Visit www.sam.gov for additional information and to verify the status of your organization.

Grant funds cannot be used to duplicate activities funded by other federal or state grant programs.

Criteria

CDFA's intent is to fund projects that can produce the highest degree of measurable benefits to California's specialty crop industry in relation to each dollar spent. Applicants' grant proposals will be evaluated on the criteria set forth in the [Grant Proposal Questions, Scoring and Review Criteria](#) below.

Review Process

CDFA will conduct two levels of review during the grant proposal process. The first level is an administrative review to determine whether grant proposal requirements are met, the project activities and costs are allowable, and, if applicable, assess the applicant's past CDFA grant performance.

The second level is a technical review to evaluate the merits of the grant proposals. The CDFA SCBGP Technical Review Committee (TRC) will perform the technical review. The TRC is comprised of growers and representatives from industry, universities, public agencies, and non-profits with an interest and expertise in specialty crops and agricultural systems.

Feedback

Projects that are disqualified will be notified within three weeks of the grant proposal due date. All other applicants will be notified regarding the status of their grant proposals in October 2016. Successful applicants will receive an award letter with further instructions on the grant agreement process. Applicants not awarded funds will receive administrative and technical review feedback on their grant proposals on the feedback tab in the FFAST system.

Timeline

Phase II: Grant Proposal <i>(by invitation only)</i>	
Invitation to submit grant proposals	February 18, 2016
Webinars	February 29, 2016 and March 3, 2016
Grant proposals due	March 20, 2016, 11:59 pm PDT
Grant proposals to USDA for approval	July 2016
Award	
Announce and award funding	October 2016

Program Requirements

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act

Recipients of 2016 SCBGP funds must comply with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA). This includes registering in the [System for Award Management](#). Recipients must also obtain a [Dun and Bradstreet \(D&B\) Data Universal Numbering System \(DUNS\) Number](#). A DUNS Number is a unique, non-indicative nine-digit identifier issued and maintained by D&B that verifies the existence of a business entity globally.

Successful 2016 applicants will be required to provide the applicant organization's DUNS number before SCBGP funds are awarded. Applicants are highly encouraged to begin the registration process now.

Federal Cost Principles

Federal cost principles are regulations based on organization type used to determine allowable costs and ensure consistent treatment of costs. In addition to CDFA and USDA program requirements, applicants are responsible for identifying the federal cost principles appropriate to their organization and consistent application of cost principles to the SCBGP grant funds, and ensuring contractors or consultants comply with federal cost principle requirements. State, local or Indian tribal governments, non-profit organizations, colleges and universities will be subject to [2 CFR 200](#). For-profit organizations will be subject to [48 CFR Subpart 31.2](#).

Disqualifications

The following will result in the disqualification of a project proposal:

- Incomplete proposals: proposals with one or more unanswered questions necessary to administrative or technical review.
- Incomplete proposals: proposals with missing, blank, unreadable, corrupt, or otherwise unusable attachments.
- Proposals that include activities outside the grant duration.
- Proposals for less than the minimum award amount or more than the maximum award amount.
- Proposals with unallowable costs or activities necessary to complete the project objectives.

APPEAL RIGHTS: Any discretionary action taken by the Office of Grants Administration (OGA) may be appealed to the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture within ten (10) days of receiving this notification. The appeal must be in writing and signed by the responsible party named on the grant application or his/her authorized agent. It must state the grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documents and a copy of the OGA decision you are challenging. The submissions must be sent to the California Department of Food and Agriculture Office of Hearings and Appeals, 1220 N Street, 4th Floor, Sacramento 95814. If submissions are not received within the time frame provided above, the appeal will be denied.

How to Apply

Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST)

Grant proposals must be submitted electronically through the Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) system. FAAST can be accessed through the [State Water Resources Control Board \(SWRCB\) website](#).

The FAAST system is organized into various tabs and utilizes a question and answer format. Questions are answered in either a text box or as a document attachment.

Responses to all questions must be submitted in the manner and format required by the grant proposal Application Questionnaire and in FAAST without exception. Applications that do not follow the required format and/or incomplete submissions will be deemed ineligible.

Applicants are encouraged to review the FAAST Frequently Asked Questions and User's Manual on the [SWRCB website](#). If, after reading the information available on the website, you have questions about the FAAST System, please contact FAAST customer service at (866) 434-1083, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm or [via email](#).

Computer System Recommendations

To ensure your grant proposal application and attachments are submitted successfully, CDFA strongly encourages all applicants to comply with the computer system recommendations provided by FAAST. CDFA cannot guarantee that the FAAST system or the required templates will be compatible with other browsers or operating systems. Use of other browsers or operating systems will limit the ability of CDFA and FAAST staff to provide applicants with technical assistance, should any issues arise.

CDFA and FAAST recommend that applicants:

- Use a Windows PC with Internet Explorer 6.0 or higher.
- Disable pop-up blocking software while using FAAST.
- Save work often – the system will time out after 90 minutes and any unsaved work will be lost.

Grant Proposal Questions, Scoring and Review Criteria

Applicants are encouraged to review and update the General Information, Project Management, and Cooperating Entities sections in FFAST to ensure the information is current and reflects the grant proposal. Ensure the **Project Description** (abstract) includes a description of the project goals and outcomes, and presents the general tasks to be completed to achieve the stated goals and outcomes. The Project Description should be appropriate for dissemination to the public. The **Project Budget** amount listed in FFAST should be updated to reflect the grant proposal budget amount. Under "funds requested," enter the total amount of SCBGP funds requested for this project; this number must match the amount listed in the grant proposal's budget narrative. Under "local cost match," enter the total amount of cost sharing committed to this project from other sources, if applicable. Under "total budget," enter the sum of funds requested plus local cost match.

Applicants must respond to all of the following grant proposal questions on the Application Questionnaire tab as well as upload the required attachments on the Attachments tab in FFAST. Failure to answer one or more questions, including both scored and unscored questions, may result in disqualification:

1. Project Purpose (10 Points):

All of the following must be addressed:

- Define the specific issue, problem, or need.
- Explain why the project is important and timely for the specialty crop industry.
- Describe the overall goal of the project.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the specific issue, problem, or need the project will address, and the timeliness and relevance to the California specialty crop industry.

2. Program Priorities (5 Points):

Identify at least one of the 2016 SCBGP program priorities for the chosen funding category as described in the [Request for Concept Proposals](#) and explain how the project addresses this priority.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the extent to which the project demonstrates a link to the program priorities identified in the [Request for Concept Proposals](#).

3. Project Objectives (20 Points):

The Project Objectives MS Word Document must be completed using 11 point font with 1 inch margins, not to exceed two pages. Download, complete, and attach the [Project Objectives](#) template.

Identify the objectives that the project will seek to achieve and describe the activities that will be undertaken to achieve the objectives. Objectives should clearly state the intended results of the project. The description of activities should summarize the grant funded activities performed by the applicant organization or any contractors or consultants to achieve the stated objectives.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the relevance of the project objectives to the program priorities, the importance of the objectives to California’s specialty crop industry, and the likelihood that the objectives will be successful.

4. Project Beneficiaries (15 points):

All of the following must be addressed:

- Estimate the number of project beneficiaries.
- Identify the project beneficiaries and describe how they benefit from the project objectives.
- Address how the proposal benefits the specialty crop industry, rather than directly benefiting a single individual or organization, such as the applicant.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on how clearly the proposal identifies and quantifies the beneficiaries and explains how they will benefit, as well as the relevance and significance of the anticipated project benefit(s) to the specialty crop industry.

5. Specialty Crop Enhancement (not a scored question):

SCBGP funds must solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops as [defined by USDA](#). Therefore, projects that may have the potential to benefit ineligible products or commodities (e.g., farmers’ market, ‘buy local’ campaigns, CSA, etc.) must address how SCBGP funding will be used to solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops.

- If the project has the potential to enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops, describe in detail what tracking mechanisms and processes are in place or will be implemented to verify all SCBGP funds are expended on activities and costs that solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible California specialty crops.
- If the project does not have the potential to enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops, indicate “This project does not enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops.”

Note: If cost sharing will be used to cover activities and/or costs that are unallowable under the program, describe the specific funds or contributions that will be used (including their source) and detail the activities and costs they will cover.

6. Prior Year SCBGP Projects (not a scored question):

If the grant proposal project will build upon a previous SCBGP funded project, all of the following must be addressed:

- Describe how this project will differ from and build upon the previous project.
- Provide a summary (three to five sentences) of the outcomes of the previous efforts.
- Provide lessons learned from the previous project, including potential improvements and how they will be incorporated into the project so that it is more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes.

If the project does not build on a previously funded SCBGP project, indicate “This project does not build upon a previously funded SCBGP project.”

7. Project Sustainability (10 Points):

SCBGP projects should have a long-term impact without relying indefinitely on grant funding. In this section, describe:

- The likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on SCBGP funds, and/or;
- The benefit(s) to California's specialty crop industry resulting from the project that will continue beyond the grant duration.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the extent to which the proposal demonstrates the project will become self-sustaining and/or that the benefit of the project will continue beyond the grant duration without relying indefinitely on SCBGP funding.

8. Funding Sources (not a scored question):

Activities funded under the SCBGP cannot duplicate activities funded by another federal or state grant program. If the proposal has been or will be submitted to or funded by another federal or state grant program other than the SCBGP, all of the following must be addressed:

- Identify the federal or state grant program and the agency administering the program.
- State the amount of grant funds requested or awarded by the program.
- Describe how the proposed SCBGP project supplements rather than duplicates efforts funded by the other federal or state grant program.

If the proposal has not been submitted to or funded by another federal or state grant program, indicate "This project has not been submitted to or funded by another federal or state grant program."

Note: SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects. If at any time an applicant is awarded funds from another federal or state grant program, it is the responsibility of the applicant to notify CDFG immediately.

9. External Project Support (10 Points):

Proposals must demonstrate that the specialty crop industry approves of/endorse the project objectives. In this section, identify at least one specific specialty crop stakeholder and explain why they believe the project is important and timely. Stakeholders included in the external project support section should:

- Be individuals or organizations involved in the specialty crop industry (e.g., specific growers, companies, certified crop advisors (CCAs) and pest control advisors (PCAs), commodity boards or commissions, trade associations, etc.) rather than the general public or organizations not affiliated with the specialty crop industry.
- Not be involved in the project in any way. The applicant, employees of the applicant, cooperators, contractors, or any other entity that will participate in the project or receive project funding should not be included.
- Be supportive of what the project will accomplish.

If applicable, attach letters of support (LOS) in PDF format and name each file: LOS1, LOS2, LOS3, etc. Letters of support should be on official letterhead, be addressed to CDFA Office of Grants Administration, and explain why the organization is in support of the project.

Note: In this instance, support refers only to approval/endorsement of the proposed project outcomes rather than financial support. Any individuals or organizations that will donate matching funds or in-kind contributions should be described in the response to question 12.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the relevance and timeliness of the project as demonstrated by the support for and commitment to the project from California's specialty crop industry.

10. Outcome Measures (15 Points):

The Outcome Measures MS Word Document must be completed using 11 point font with 1 inch margins. Download, complete, and attach the [Outcome Measures](#) template.

Select at least one of the eight outcome measures and at least one indicator for the selected outcome. Describe the data collection methods and any activities that will be undertaken to monitor and report on the outcome(s) and indicator(s) selected.

*Note: All proposals submitted to the **California Grown Promotion** funding category must select the outcome measure to increase sales. Proposals in other funding categories that involve marketing or promotion of specialty crops as defined in the [Outcome Measures Supplement](#) must also select the outcome to increase sales.*

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the significance of the anticipated project outcome, the relevance to the project activities, soundness of data collection methods, and likelihood of success.

11. Budget Narrative (15 Points):

The Budget Narrative MS Word document must be completed in paragraph form using 11 point font with 1 inch margins. The Budget Narrative provides detailed breakdown to justify the amount of SCBGP funding requested. Download, complete, and attach the [Budget Narrative](#) template.

All budget items and activities should solely support enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops, correlate to the goal(s) of the project, and demonstrate that they are reasonable and adequate for the proposed work.

Only activities supported by SCBGP funds should be included in the Budget Narrative.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the reasonableness of the budget and relevance to the project activities and goals.

12. Cost Sharing (not a scored question):

If matching funds and/or in-kind contributions have been secured, the Cost Sharing Summary MS Word Document must be completed using 11 point font with 1 inch margins. Download, complete, and attach the [Cost Sharing Summary](#) template.

If cost sharing not been secured, indicate “This project will not utilize cost sharing.”

13. Project Oversight (not a scored question):

Attach either a current resume or curriculum vitae (CV) for the Project Director(s), Project Manager(s), Principal Investigator(s), and any collaborators who will receive a portion of the project funds. Attach resumes or CVs in PDF format and name each document: R1, R2, R3 or CV1, CV2, CV3, etc.

Supplemental Guidance

Outcome Measures

USDA and the Office of Management and Budget have developed SCBGP national outcomes measures mandatory to the program beginning in Federal Fiscal Year 2016. CDFA has developed an [Outcome Measures](#) supplement with additional information on these requirements and to assist applicants in complying with the new SCBGP outcome measures.

Solely Enhancing the Competitiveness of Specialty Crops

SCBGP funds must be used solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. CDFA has developed [guidance](#) based on content from USDA to help applicants ensure compliance with this essential program requirement.

Fixed Amount Awards

CDFA has developed [guidance](#) for proposals submitted to Fixed Amount Awards for Adaptation to Drought or the Food Safety Modernization Act. This document addresses common questions by fixed amount award applicants that will assist them in completing the grant proposal and budget template.

Guidance for Developing the Budget Narrative

In developing the grant proposal Budget Narrative, applicants should ensure that all costs are reasonable, necessary to meet the objectives of the project, allowable, and incurred in a manner consistent with the applicant organization's established practices. Both the Budget Narrative and the activities that the requested funds will support must conform to the appropriate cost principles for the applicant organization, USDA program requirements, and the requirements established by CDFA in the [Request for Concept Proposals](#). Unallowable costs and activities will be removed from a project as a condition of receiving an award. Excessive unallowable costs or activities may result in the disqualification of a grant proposal during the administrative review process.

Unallowable Costs

CDFA has developed an [Allowable and Unallowable Costs Table](#) to assist applicants in preparing their proposal budget. The table provides overall guidance for the handling of common costs and includes USDA and CDFA requirements specific to this program. Proposals with unallowable costs may be subject to disqualification as described on [page three, above](#).

Indirect Costs

The maximum indirect cost rate is six (6) percent of total personnel costs (salary and wages plus fringe benefits).

Applicants are responsible for presenting costs incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances consistently and must not include costs associated with an established indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, applicants cannot allocate a cost as a direct cost if it is also incurred as an indirect cost for the same purpose and vice versa.

Direct costs are costs that can be identified specifically with a particular award, project, program, service, or other organizational activity or that can be directly assigned to such an activity relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy. Typically, direct costs include, but are not limited to, compensation of employees who work directly on the award to include salaries and fringe benefits, travel that is necessary for the project, and scientific research equipment and supplies used solely for the project to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”) are costs incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be identified specifically with a particular project, program, or organizational activity. Below are typical indirect costs for specific types of organizations. The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should normally be treated as indirect costs. Direct charging of these costs may be appropriate where all of the following conditions are met:

- Administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity
- Individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity
- Such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the federal awarding agency
- The costs are not also recovered as indirect costs

The following are considered indirect and should not be included in the Budget Narrative as direct costs:

- Information technology services
- Rent
- Utilities and internet service
- Telephone service (mobile and land-line)
- General office supplies
- Insurance

Travel

Travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by the General Services Administration, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <http://www.gsa.gov>. Applicants should apply the current government mileage rate for personally owned vehicles used for travel related to the project: <http://www.irs.gov/Tax-Professionals/Standard-Mileage-Rates>.

Note: International travel must comply with the [Fly America Act, 49 U.S.C. 40118](#) and [Department of State Standardized Regulations](#). Also, consideration should be given to the use of alternative technologies such as teleconferencing or videoconferencing if they are available, appropriate for the project, and less costly.

Grant Proposal Templates

To ensure a complete application suitable for administrative review, technical review and, for the projects selected, submission to USDA, CDFA has developed three mandatory templates that must be completed and attached to each grant proposal and one optional template that must be attached to the grant proposal for projects with cost sharing.

Mandatory Templates

The first mandatory template is the [Project Objectives](#) template. This template should be completed and attached to the proposal in FFAST in response to question three of the grant proposal application. This MS Word Document must be completed using 11 point font with 1 inch margins and must not to exceed two pages.

The second mandatory template is the [Outcome Measures](#) template. This template should be completed and attached to the proposal in FFAST in response to question 10 of the grant proposal application. This MS Word Document must be completed using 11 point font with 1 inch margins. Outcome measures are defined by USDA and the Office of Management and Budget and cannot be altered, amended or replaced.

The third mandatory template is the [Budget Narrative](#) template. This template should be completed and attached to the proposal in FFAST in response to question 11 of the grant proposal applications following the instructions above. This MS Word Document must be completed using 11 point font with 1 inch margins.

Optional Template

The [Cost Sharing](#) template is required only for proposals that will include matching funds or in-kind contributions. If a proposal includes cost sharing this template should be completed and attached to the proposal in FFAST in response to question 12 of the grant proposal application. This MS Word Document must be completed using 11 point font with 1 inch margins and should not exceed 2 pages.

Additional Guidance

All templates should be completed and uploaded to the grant proposal application in FFAST in the original MS Word format, rather than PDF, Excel or any other format or file type. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review each attached template before submitting their grant proposal. Proposals with missing, blank, unreadable, corrupt, or otherwise unusable attachments will be disqualified. To ensure best results, and minimize the risk of disqualification, please follow the [Computer System Recommendations](#) on page four when completing the grant proposal templates.

Assistance and Questions

Grant Proposal Webinars

CDFA will conduct two webinars for applicants invited to the grant proposal phase, as noted in the timeline on page two. The webinars will provide additional information on developing a grant proposal, allowable and unallowable costs, and participant questions will be addressed. All applicants invited to submit a grant proposal are encouraged to participate in one of the two webinars.

Q & A

CDFA will conduct three rounds of questions and answers (Q&A) to address general questions about the grant proposal phase. All questions about the solicitation process must be submitted via email to: grants@cdfa.ca.gov. Responses to all questions received during the webinars or received by email will be posted to CDFA's SCBGP website according to the following schedule:

Questions Received by:	Responses Posted by:
February 29, 2016 at 8:00 am PST	March 3, 2016 at 5:00 pm PST
March 7, 2016 at 8:00 am PST	March 10, 2016 at 5:00 pm PST
March 14, 2016 at 8:00 am PDT	March 17, 2016 at 5:00 pm PDT

March 14, 2016 at 8:00 am PDT is the final deadline to submit questions for the grant proposal phase.

In order to maintain the integrity of the competitive grant process, CDFA is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with any information regarding specific proposals during the solicitation process.