

**USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill (SCBGP – FB)
Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources**

2016 Concept Proposal Instructions

MDAR Specialty Crop Block Grant Program has a two-phase application process. The first phase is the development of a Concept Proposal. This step allows applicants to explain the main points of their project without the high level of detail that is necessary during the second phase of the application process. Concept Proposals are competitively ranked and scored by a Review Panel. Projects with the highest combined scores will serve as recommendations to the Commissioner as to which applicants should be asked to complete the second phase of the application process. All projects are subject to the availability of funds.

1. **ORGANIZATION / BUSINESS TYPE** – Select the applicant's organization/business type.
2. **ORGANIZATION / BUSINESS INFORMATION** – List the organization/business name. Include the Federal Tax Identification Number, Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number, along with the contact information and the amount of grant funds the entity is requesting. Instructions on how to obtain a DUNS Number can be found at www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants/duns_num_guide.pdf.
3. **PROJECT COORDINATOR** – Identify the person who will be directing the proposed project.
4. **ORGANIZATION HISTORY** – Indicate whether the organization has ever received prior Specialty Crop Block Grant funds.
5. **AREA OF FOCUS** – Select a funding area from the choices below.
 - increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
 - improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems;
 - assisting all entities in the specialty crop distribution process in implementing practices and standards that improve food safety which may include but are not limited to the “Commonwealth Quality Program”, “Good Agricultural Practices”, “Good Handling Practices”, “Good Manufacturing Practices”, and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors;
 - investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
 - developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;

- Pest and disease control;
 - Development of organic and sustainable production practices
 - Focus on productivity enhancements and innovation in production practices, mechanization, irrigation, natural resource management, energy conservation/efficiency, ecosystems services and other arenas.
6. **BEGINNING OR SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMER**– Indicate whether the applicant is a Beginning Farmer or a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer. A Beginning Farmer means an individual or entity that has not operated a farm for more than ten (10) years and substantially participates in the operation. A Socially Disadvantaged Farmer means a farmer who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.
 7. **PROJECT PURPOSE** – In two (2) paragraphs (1,000 characters maximum), describe how your project will solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Clearly state the specific issue, problem, interest or need, and how the project will address it. Explain why the project is important and timely.
 8. **ESTIMATED TIMELINE** – Enter the estimated timeline for the proposed project. Projects can start October 1, 2016 or later, and can last up to three (3) years in length. All projects must be completed on or before September 30, 2019.
 9. **EXPECTED MEASURABLE OUTCOMES** – What are the goals and objectives of the project? How do the objectives support the goals? Goals are long-term broad visions and may take time to achieve. Objectives are significant steps that must be completed to achieve the goal. Objective statements should focus on the outcome, rather than the methods used. Each goal should have one or more objectives. Identify at least one (1) of the AMS-defined expected measurable outcomes listed in the RFR, and at least one (1) indicator for each selected outcome. Goals, objectives, and outcomes should meaningfully and directly support the project's purpose.
 10. **PRELIMINARY PROJECT WORK PLAN** – List the major tasks of the proposed project.
 11. **PROJECTED BUDGET** – Complete the budget for the proposed project. If a project is selected to be included in the State Plan, **much more detailed budget information will be required in the second phase of the application process.**

Personnel – Includes employed personnel. Those employed elsewhere should be listed as subcontractors or consultants in the Contractual cost category. Identify the total for all SCBGP-FB funded personnel.

Fringe Benefits – Provide the rate of fringe benefits for each project participant's salary. Identify the total for all SCBGP-FB funded fringe benefits.

Travel – Calculate the costs for travel by taking into account destinations, number of trips, days traveling, transportation costs, estimated lodging and meal costs, and estimated mileage rate.

Equipment – This category includes items of property having a useful life of more than one (1) year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000. If the acquisition cost is under \$5,000, then include these items under Supplies. If purchasing or renting equipment, include an itemized list of each item along with a brief narrative on the intended use of each equipment item and the cost for all the equipment purchases or rentals. Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land are unallowable.

Supplies – This includes anything with acquisition cost under \$5,000 and could be anything from office supplies and software to education or field supplies.

Contractual – If contractual work will be involved with carrying out the work of the project, identify the total SCBGP-FB contractual expenses. When determining the total cost for this category, include the fees for the professional services, travel costs, lodging expenses, and any other related contractual expenses.

Other – This category includes fees for conferences or meetings, facility and equipment rental costs, communication costs, speaker fees, publication costs, and data collection.

Program Income – If program income is earned, it may be used for (1) expanding the project or program; (2) continuing the project or program after the grant or sub grant support ends; and (3) supporting other projects or programs that further the broad objectives of the grant program. Any earned income must be fully reinvested to help sustain and grow the project.

Indirect Charges – Indirect costs are not allowable.

12. **SUBMISSION DEADLINE** – Four (4) copies of the concept proposals must be received **not postmarked** by **May 13, 2016** and one (1) copy must be emailed to alexander.gill@state.ma.us. Mail concept proposals to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Attn: Alexander Gill, Grants Manager, 251 Causeway St. Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114.