

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program



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Socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers, eligible non-profit organizations, local, government entities, for-profit organizations, industry trade associations, producer groups, and commodity commissions can submit projects that aim to enhance the production and competitiveness of Massachusetts specialty crop industries.

Grant funds will **not be awarded** for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

- **Phase I**

Concept Proposal Due March 29, 2013 by 4:30 pm

- **Phase II**

Notification by MDAR to submit grant proposals

April 29, 2013

- **Phase III**

Full Grant Proposal Due, May 17, 2013 by 4:30 pm

WHAT IS THE SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM?

Under the 2008 Farm Bill, MDAR is awarded grant funding from USDA to **solely enhance the competitiveness** of Massachusetts specialty crops.

MDAR conducts an annual competitive application process (RFR) to award Specialty Crop Grant funds to organizations and individuals.

The **PURPOSE** of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is to **solely enhance the competitiveness** of specialty crops.

WHAT IS A SPECIALTY CROP?

USDA defines specialty crops as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops. Eligible plants must be intensively cultivated and used by people for food, medicinal purposes, and/or aesthetic gratification to be considered a specialty crop.

- **Fish (marine or freshwater)**
- **Shellfish (marine or freshwater)**
- **Livestock products**
- **Dairy products**
- **Eggs**
- **Poultry Products**

WHAT DOES “SOLELY ENHANCE” MEAN?

Solely: Project funds only go towards specialty crops and do not benefit a non-specialty crop.

Enhances the competitiveness: the project makes the focused specialty crop(s) more **competitive** locally, statewide, regionally, nationally, or internationally.

- Applications for grant funds should describe how the project potentially impacts and produces measurable outcomes for the **specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual.**
- **Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.** Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

PROJECT TYPES

- Education
- Food Safety
- Marketing & Promotion
- Pest & Plant Health
- Production
- Research

- Increasing child and adult **nutrition** knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- **Production:** Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems;
- **Food Safety:** Assisting all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing “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;

- Funding to contract with a university to conduct **research** on the feasibility of planting, cultivating, and growing a specialty crop in a particular area, the results of which can be shared with many growers throughout the State.
- A single grower requests funds to **demonstrate** the viability of organic small fruit production and partners with Cooperative Extension to publicize the **working model of diversification to other regional growers**.
- A single company requests funds to provide a viable pollination alternative to specialty crop stakeholders in the region, which currently does not have one.
- A single specialty crop organization requests funds to conduct an advertising campaign that will benefit their specialty crop members.

- A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop for the purpose of making a profit, or to expand production of a **single business**.
- A State requests grant funds to make grants to individual specialty crop businesses or roadside stands to promote their **individual business**.
- A **sole proprietor** requests grant funds to redesign her/his logo in order to make her/his specialty crop value-added product stand out at the local farmers market.
- A **specialty crop producer** requests funds to promote their asparagus at a roadside stand.

MDAR' Specialty Crop Block Grant Program has a **two-phase application** process. The **first phase** is the development of a **required** 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.

Answer the following questions in this section:

1. What is the specific issue, problem or need to be addressed by the project?
2. Why is the project important and timely?
3. What are the objectives of the project?
4. Does the project have the potential to enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops (ex: farmers market, general buy local, etc.)?

IF YES, describe the methods or processes the applicant will use to ensure **all grant funds will solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops**. (Ex: using the registration process for a conference to ensure that only specialty crop farmers attend; matching 50 percent of the funds to cover a portion of the project that does not benefit specialty crops).

Has this project received SCBGP funding previously?

If the project builds on a previously funded SCBGP project, then describe **how the projects differ from one another**. Provide a summary (3 to 5 sentences per project) of the results of the **completed work** on this project, the long-term quantifiable effects of these results (especially as they impact on the specialty crop industry), and **how this year's funding will supplement or build on previous funding**.

Has the project been submitted to or funded by **another Federal or State grant program**?

IF NO, indicate that it has not.

IF YES, identify which Federal and/or State grant program and describe how the project differs from and supplements efforts of the SCBGP and the other Federal or State grant program rather than duplicates funding efforts. **The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects.**

- This section demonstrates how the project potentially impacts the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. **The following questions should be answered:**
- Who are the specialty crop beneficiaries of the project?
- How many specialty crop beneficiaries will be impacted?
- How will the specialty crop beneficiaries be impacted by the project?
- What is the potential economic impact of the project if available?

What is **at least one distinct**, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that directly and meaningfully supports the project's purpose and is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries? The measurable outcome, when possible, should include the following:

- o GOAL
- o PERFORMANCE MEASURE
- o BENCHMARK
- o TARGET

How will performance toward meeting the outcome(s) be monitored?

What are your data sources for monitoring performance?

How will data be collected? For example are you using a survey or questionnaire?

For further information on expected measurable outcomes, pick up "Developing Measurable Outcomes" hand-out.

- The **GOAL** of this project is to promote specialty crop X in Mexico in order to increase the volume.
- **PERFORMANCE MEASURE**: Derive data from specialty crop commission assessment reports at the end of each year.
- **BENCHMARK 2007**: Actual volume (20# equiv. cases) of specialty crop exported to Mexico: 53,969
- **TARGET 2008**: 60,000
- **TARGET 2009**: 70,000
- **TARGET 2010**: 80,000

- Increase the number of specialty crop farmers following Good Agricultural Practices (GOAL) from the current 18 (BENCHMARK) to 55 in two years (TARGET) measured by the number of GAP audits passed (PERFORMANCE MEASURE).
- Increase fruit and vegetable purchases (GOAL) from the current level of \$2.50 (BENCHMARK) to at least \$3 per enrolled student in awarded schools in one year (TARGET) measured by bi-annual school reports (PERFORMANCE MEASURE).
- Work directly with specialty crop industry X to develop a uniform tool to access the health of their specialty crops to give the industry early warning of potential problems in order to optimize their management practices (GOAL). No such tool currently exists (BENCHMARK). The success of the evaluation will be measured by interviewing 20 stakeholders at the end of three years to determine if they developed the tool (TARGET and PERFORMANCE MEASURE)

- Develop a predictive model for the spread of the specialty crop disease, an analysis of virus resistant varieties, and a foundation for an integrated pest management (IPM) strategy to combat the disease (GOAL). No such model currently exists (BENCHMARK). The information will be shared with more than 700 tomato growers, increasing awareness of the model, at the 2008 conference break-out session (TARGET) measured by attendance at the session (PERFORMANCE MEASURE).
- Increase visits to the Specialty Crop Website (GOAL) 25% over the course of one year (TARGET) from the current 9,000 annual hits (BENCHMARK) by measuring website visits each month over the next year (PERFORMANCE MEASURE)
- Increase consumer awareness of specialty crops by distributing 1000 pieces of informational materials containing locations where to purchase specialty crops (GOAL). Six months after distribution, survey 50 locations (PERFORMANCE MEASURE) to determine if sales increased by 25% (TARGET) from the level before distribution of marketing materials (BENCHMARK)

Address these questions in this section:

- **What** activities are necessary to accomplish the project objectives?
- **When** will your performance monitoring/data collection plan activity be accomplished?
- **How** will outcomes measures be completed or measured inside the grant period?
- **Who** will do the work of each activity? If collaborative arrangements or subcontracts are used, make sure you specify their role and responsibilities in performing project activities.
- **When** will each activity be accomplished? Include timelines for accomplishing each activity. Make sure to include the month and year the project is scheduled to begin and end.

Include in Work Plan

- **Project Partner Oversight:** Which organization will be overseeing which activities? How will oversight be performed. For example, will monthly (weekly) meetings be held?
- **Project Commitment:** Indicate what specialty crop stakeholder outside of the organization support this project. How will these stakeholders work towards meeting goals and measurable outcomes?

BUDGET CATEGORIES ARE:

Personnel

Fringe

Supplies

Equipment

Contractual

Travel

Other

- Advertising and public relations costs that solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops;
- Compensation for personnel services during the period of performance under the Federal award, including salaries, wages, and fringe benefits to the extent that they are reasonable for work performed as part of the grant;
- Costs of professional and consultant services rendered by persons who are members of a particular profession or possess a special skill;
- Costs incurred for materials & supplies;
- Costs of meetings and conferences with the primary purpose of dissemination of technical information. This includes costs of **meals** (some restrictions apply), transportation, rental of facilities, speakers' fees, and other items incidental to such meetings & conferences;
- Publication costs include the costs of printing (including the processes of composition, plate-making, press work, binding, and the end products produced by such processes), distribution, promotion, mailing and general handling

If meals are being offered as part of project for a training or workshop, you must demonstrate that not providing meals would disrupt the continuity of the training or workshop.

Meals are allowed as part of per diem travel expense.

Meals are not allowed as part of entertainment.

- Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land are considered unallowable;
- Amusement, diversion, and social activities and any costs directly associated with such costs (such as tickets);
- Development or participation in lobbying activities including costs of membership in organizations substantially engaged in lobbying and
- Indirect Costs

PERSONNEL - Persons employed by the organization should be listed in this category. Those employed elsewhere would be listed as subcontractors or consultants in the “Contractual” category.

EXAMPLE:

Personnel (\$27,000.00)

Expenses of \$21,000.00 are requested for one **half-time Senior Research Specialist (0.5 FTE)** who will coordinate most of the laboratory operations and perform a majority of the laboratory and greenhouse experiments. Additionally, the specialist will be responsible for data entry and record keeping. An additional \$6,000.00 is requested to support **two undergraduate student researchers**. The undergraduate students will work in Dr. Jones’ laboratory and learn experimental skills while assisting the Project Investigator (PI) and the research specialist in various aspects of the project.

The narrative must include the **rate of fringe** for the salary of each person who is being assessed a fringe rate. The total fringe cost must also be included.

EXAMPLE:

Fringe Benefits (\$9,585.00)

The current fringe benefit rates at the University are 44.74% (\$9,387.00) for the research specialist, 3.3% (\$198.00) for undergraduate students.

This is anything with acquisition cost **under \$5,000**

Office supplies and software to educational or field supplies. For non-typical materials & supplies items, include a brief narrative of how this fits with the project.

Provide an itemized list and estimate the dollar amount for each item.

Show the total for all SCBGP funded supplies.

Items such as telephone, postage, fax and express mail are more appropriately listed under the “Other” category.

EXAMPLE:

Supplies (\$4,446.00)

Office Supplies (pro-rated) (\$1,235.00) for paper, color ink cartridges, toner and other supplies.

Program Supplies (\$3,211.00) of which \$2,000 is for 20 full-color promotional banners (@\$100 each) plus pro-rated amount of \$1,211 for cooking demonstration supplies, specialty seeds, harvest equipment, packaging and other materials.

- “Special purpose equipment” is equipment that is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities.
- Unit cost of **\$5,000 or more**
- Must receive approval from AMS
- The special purpose equipment is to solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops and benefit the specialty crop industry
- This equipment cannot only benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual

- Provide a short description of the services each contractor will perform.
- Indicate if the cost is a flat rate fee or hourly rate.
- Provide the hourly rate or the flat fee based on GS-14 Step 10 Federal Employee maximum rate of \$65.84/hr.
- If the rates or flat fee exceeds this rate, provide a brief justification including a cost analysis of at least three contractors who can perform the service.

Contractual (\$23,000.00)

Stipends for GAP/GHP Video Shoot/Edit: flat fee stipends for 5 youth at \$2,000.00 each (\$10,000.00) to be coordinated through County Extension Hmong Youth Film Project. Youth will film and edit video in close collaboration with DA staff and under supervision of SU Hmong Outreach Coordinator.

Online Toolkit Development and Adaptation: this flat rate \$10,000.00 contract will take the online toolkit donated by University State X, and adapt it for DA use and web specifications. Any leftover funds will develop State-specific content for the toolkit.

Processing Study Analysis: this hourly rate \$3,000.00 (\$20/hr X 150 hrs) contract will analyze the production information on processing needs of growers and current availability of processing facilities and compile a report.

Travel must adhere to the U.S. General Services Administration Rates.
www.gsa.gov/portal/category/100000

Please provide the following information in the narrative if applicable:

1. destination;
2. purpose of trip;
3. number of trips;
4. number of people traveling;
5. number of days traveling;
6. estimated airfare costs;
7. estimated ground transportation costs;
8. estimated lodging and meals costs; and
9. estimated mileage rate and costs for the travel.

Show the total for all SCBGP-FB funded travel.

Conferences/Meeting – Costs of holding a conference or meeting are included in this category. Some examples are the rental of facilities or equipment for the meeting. Details of costs for each conference or meeting should be broken out and provided in the budget.

Communications – Mailings, postage, express mail, faxes, and telephone long distance charges. Provide the estimated cost for this category.

Speaker/Trainer Fees – Provide the amount of the speaker's fees and a description of the services they are providing.

Publication Costs – Provide the estimated cost of printing of brochures and other program materials or scientific or technical journals as well as an estimate of the number of pieces to be printed/published.

Data collection – Provide the estimated cost of collecting performance data to measure the project outcome measures.

Show the **total** for Other budget category.

How will MDAR evaluate proposals?

- Proposals meets all the submission requirements
- Proposal shows that it will **solely enhance the competitiveness of Specialty Crops**
- Proposal effectively shows a timeline and strategy for implementation
- **Well developed EMO!!!!!!**
- A well constructed budget will show in the highest detail possible how funds are to be expended. Staff time will be broken down by staff member (specifying hours on the project and hourly rate) and equipment purchased can only be used for the project, supplies must be exactly specified (showing how many of each project will be purchases, the cost per item, and the total cost)

Submission Instructions:

- Five (5) copies of the concept proposals must be received **not postmarked** by March 29, 2013 by 4:30 p.m. and one (1) copy must be emailed to julia.grimaldi@state.ma.us. Mail concept proposals to the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, Attn: Julia Grimaldi, Program Coordinator, 251 Causeway St. Suite 500, Boston, MA 02114.