



**Specialty Crop Block Grant Program - Farm Bill
Fiscal Year 2024**

Request for Response (RFR): RFR File: [AGR-SC-2024](#)

To address the goals the United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) has for enhancing the competitiveness of Specialty Crops. Specialty crops are defined by the USDA as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture (including maple syrup and honey), and nursery crops (including floriculture).

**Responses must be received by
2:00PM Friday, April 5th, 2024
Contact: Keri Cornman
Email: Keri.Cornman@mass.gov**



**Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114**

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
 Grant Announcement. RFR ID: AGR-SC-2024. Dated: **February 12, 2024**
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

1. GRANT OPPORTUNITY SUMMARY:	
Proposals Sought For:	The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (“MDAR”) is soliciting proposals for projects that specifically address the goals the United States Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) has for enhancing the competitiveness of Specialty Crops . <i>Specialty crops are defined by the USDA as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture (including maple syrup and honey), and nursery crops (including floriculture).</i>
Overview and Goals:	<p>The overall goal of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (“SCBGP”) is to leverage efforts to market and promote specialty crops, assist producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops, expand availability and access to specialty crops, and to address local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers. MDAR’s goal with the SCBGP is to increase access to healthy, affordable food options, with a preference for fresh, locally-sourced, Massachusetts-grown, caught or harvested healthy food, and to improve economic opportunities for nutritionally underserved communities in urban, rural, and suburban localities.</p> <p>A full definition and a list of Specialty Crops can be found on the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (“AMS”) Specialty Crop Website, www.ams.usda.gov/scbcp. The USDA is the final approver and funding entity for the SCBGP. While MDAR will conduct the initial review of project proposals and make recommendations to USDA, USDA shall make the final decision concerning grant awards.</p> <p>SCBGP projects can be 1-3 years in length. Projects must be completed within three (3) years of the start of the grant period. The grant period must begin no earlier than October 1, 2024, and end no later than September 29, 2027. Applicants must indicate the start and end dates on application Form C.</p>
Funding Availability:	<p>MDAR intends to fund approximately \$420,000 in projects that will result from this competitive RFR process. All funding is subject to appropriation. The suggested dollar value of projects is between \$40,000 and \$90,000 per project. The SCBGP does not have a Federal cost-sharing or matching requirement.</p> <p>A successful respondent will enter into a contract with MDAR. MDAR reserves the right to fund the project in part, add and delete tasks, and ask for clarification on the work plan, timeline and budget. MDAR may ask grantees to acknowledge MDAR as a grantor where appropriate. No contract shall be entered into until MDAR is satisfied with all the specifications of the project.</p> <p>Any grant award is dependent upon the availability of federal funds and the final approval from the USDA. Any successful contractor will be required to follow all the applicable federal and state regulations that pertain to the SCBGP.</p>
Reporting Requirements:	<p>The recipient shall be required to submit progress reports on a regular basis. Due dates for progress reports shall be specified in the contract’s Work Plan and Scope of Services. The reports may require, among other things, a narrative detailing how project goals are being completed, details of obstacles that are preventing the project from being completed, and an expenditure report detailing how the grant funding is being expended.</p> <p>Late or incomplete reports will result in a site visit by MDAR staff to assess program performance and may result in the suspension of the project and any related payments. Ongoing reporting issues may result in ineligibility for future MDAR grants.</p>

Deadline:	<p>Applications must be received by 2:00 PM Friday, April 5, 2024. Postmarks and late email submissions will not be considered. You may submit proposals via email to Keri.Cornman@mass.gov</p> <p>Applications that are sent by fax will <u>NOT</u> be accepted. If you do not receive an email confirmation of receipt from MDAR, do not assume the application was received. Please reach out to Keri Cornman (info below) if you do not receive a confirmation of receipt email for your application submission. MDAR will not accept any late submissions, and will not consider late applications due to technical difficulties, so please be mindful of your submission timeliness.</p>
Additional Information	<p>Informational Webinars where questions may be asked will be held for interested applicants on the dates listed below. Please click the link(s) below to access one or more of the webinars. Webinars will be 1.5 hours in length, and may cover the FSMIP program as well as SCBGP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 1:00pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Register for this webinar date here. • Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 11:00am <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Register for this webinar date here. <p>To the extent applicable at the time a project is commenced under the terms of any contract, projects must be conducted in accordance applicable federal, state, and local public health orders, regulations, ordinances, or other guidance issued related to COVID-19.</p>
Contact	<p>Keri Cornman, Department of Agricultural Resources 100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114 Email: Keri.Cornman@mass.gov Phone: 617-620-0200</p>

2. PERFORMANCE AND CONTRACT SPECIFICATIONS

A. Eligible Applicants:

Socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers or ranchers, 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, provided their proposals meet all the specifications in this RFR and the USDA. **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.

Beginning Farmer or Rancher is defined as “an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than ten (10) years and substantially participates in the operation.”

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is defined as “a farmer or rancher 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.”

B. Eligible Project Areas:

While all projects that meet SCBGP requirements will be considered, the categories listed below are examples of eligible projects.

Projects must be related to enhancing the competitiveness of Specialty Crops, specifically in regards to the following areas specified by USDA. Visit <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/awards> to view grant awards for projects that have been funded from 2016 – 2023.

Examples of Eligible Projects:

- 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;
- Enhancing food safety;
- Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, 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; and
- Sustainability.

C. Ineligible Project Areas:

Examples of Ineligible Projects:

- A proposal for 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 proposal for funds from a specialty crop organization to promote their members’ businesses;
- A proposal for capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land;
- A proposal that seeks to support a non-specialty crop project.

D. Funding Availability & Additional Information

Funding	<p>MDAR intends to fund approximately \$420,000 in projects which will result from this competitive RFR process. All funding is subject to appropriation. The suggested dollar value of projects is between \$40,000 and \$90,000 per project, though there is no required minimum or maximum project amount.</p> <p>A successful respondent will enter into a contract with MDAR. MDAR reserves the right to fund the project in part, add and delete tasks, and ask for clarification on the work plan, timeline and budget. MDAR may ask grantees to acknowledge MDAR as a grantor where appropriate. No contract shall be entered into until MDAR is satisfied with all the specifications of the project.</p> <p>Any grant award is dependent upon the availability of federal funds and the final approval from the USDA. Any successful contractor will be required to follow all the applicable federal and state regulations that pertain to the SCBGP.</p>
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	Applicants <i>will not</i> be able to request indirect funds for this project.
Invoicing and Disbursement of Grant Funds	<p>Successful Applicants will receive funding on a reimbursement basis only. Contracts shall require the applicant to invoice MDAR on a pre-determined schedule unless a waiver is provided by MDAR. All invoices at a minimum must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date(s) of service covered; • Invoice number; • Invoice date; • Full contact information for the contracted entity; and • Sufficient supporting documentation to show that all reimbursed costs are allowable, reasonable/necessary, and allocable. Supporting documentation may include, but is not limited to, canceled checks, receipts, paid bills, payroll, and contracts. <p>Invoices that are incomplete, fail to meet the invoicing schedule, and/or include unauthorized charges will not be paid, and may result in a site visit by MDAR staff to review financial and programmatic documents. Repeated invoicing issues may result in ineligibility for future SCBGP grants.</p>
E. Environmental Justice Policy	
Environmental Justice Policy	<p>For the purposes of this RFR, “Environmental Justice” (“EJ”) is defined as the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people and communities with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and burdens. Environmental Justice is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental hazards and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment regardless of race, color, national origin, income or English language proficiency.</p> <p>“Environmental Justice Population” is defined by the Environmental Justice Policy, issued by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs in 2017, as neighborhoods where one or more of the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual median household income that is equal to or less than 65 percent of the statewide median • 25% of its population is minority; or • 25% or more of the residents have English Isolation.
F. Reporting	
Reporting	<p>The recipient shall be required to submit progress reports on a regular basis. Due dates for progress reports shall be specified in the contract’s Work Plan and Scope of Services. The reports may require, among other things, a narrative detailing how project goals are being completed, details of obstacles that are preventing the project from being completed, and an expenditure report detailing how the grant funding is being expended.</p> <p>It is the recipient’s duty to adhere to deadlines for reporting stated in the contract’s Work Plan and Scope of Services. Late or incomplete reports will result in a site visit by MDAR staff to assess program performance, and may result in the suspension of the project and any related payments. Ongoing reporting issues may result in ineligibility for future MDAR grants.</p>
G. Evaluation Criteria: Responses will be scored using the following measures:	

The Application (Form C) must be submitted, and shall be evaluated based upon how well it meets the required criteria. Applications with the highest scores will serve as recommendations to the MDAR Commissioner, and the Commissioner has final say before final recommendations are sent to USDA. All “required” criteria must be satisfied for the proposal to be deemed eligible for consideration.

Criteria [Out of a Possible 85 Points]:

- a. Applications must answer Yes or No – Does the project ensure it does not benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual? [No point value. If “No,” evaluation will not continue and the project will not be considered. If “Yes,” evaluation of the project will continue.]
- b. The proposal clearly demonstrates an explicit project purpose that addresses a specific issue, problem, interest, or need that is timely and important. [15 points](REQUIRED);
- c. The proposal lists and demonstrates clear, defined objectives that relate to the project purpose. Projects should show a clear project approach with unambiguous goals and objectives [10 points] (REQUIRED);
- d. The proposal identifies at least one (1) Expected Measurable Outcome, as defined by USDA (**see below**), that directly and meaningfully supports the Project’s Purpose and Objectives and at least one (1) of the indicators listed underneath the selected Outcome(s) or created by the applicant if listed indicators are not relevant. (REQUIRED) [10 points];
- e. The proposal clearly defines a data collection plan and/or methods to report on selected Outcomes and Indicators [10 points]
- f. The proposal demonstrates an effective timeline with task accountability throughout project implementation [10 points] (REQUIRED);
- g. The project will add to new knowledge or expertise to effectively promote the competitiveness of Specialty Crops as a whole [5 points];
- h. The project will demonstrate and disseminate replicable practices and results [5 points];
- i. The proposal includes a well-constructed and detailed budget [10 points](REQUIRED);
 - o If Program Income is expected to be earned as part of the project, provide an estimate of that income and describe how it will be used to further expand the project or program objectives and solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops.
 - o No indirect charges are to be included in the financial plan.
- j. For applicants with **previous history** of receiving MDAR grant funding, **the applicant has consistently met reporting and invoicing requirements**. New applicants will receive a score of zero. [0 points, range of 0 to -10 (negative 10) points]
- k. Up to **10 points** for a project that is located within a mapped EJ Population **with demonstrated positive impacts to that community** and **demonstrated support from the community**. To receive full points, the Applicant should:
 - o Provide specific relevant demographic information related to the EJ Population (i.e., income, race, or English isolation) and a description of where the community is located geographically relative to the project site.
 - o Demonstrate how the project will benefit this EJ Population; and
 - o If the project will benefit EJ Populations, demonstrate support from the EJ Population that the project is intended to benefit. Demonstration of support may include letters of support from residents or community groups representing these populations.

The evaluation team may have to cut funding requests to one or more awarded applicants who meet minimum requirements, depending on available funding and the amount of funding applicants request. A score cut-off will be determined by the evaluation team after final scores have been tallied, and applicants below that cut off may either receive a funding cut proportional to the amount they requested in relation to other below-score cutoff applicants, or no funding (and only projects above the cut-off will receive funding). MDAR and the evaluation team reserves the right to determine the score cut-off it believes is in the best interest of the SCBGP.

Fiscal Year 2024 - Expected Measurable Outcomes

The USDA, AMS, and the Office of Management and Budget (“OMB”) developed standardized outcome measures and performance indicators that apply to the SCBGP. The reason for this is to compile data across all states making it easier to see the effect the program has on the specialty crop industry, which in turn strengthens the need for continued funding. Applicants submitting proposals to the SCBGP must select at least one of the seven outcomes listed below and at least one of the indicators listed underneath the selected outcome(s). If there are multiple sub-indicators under the selected indicator, applicants must select at least one. All selected outcome measures and related indicators/sub-indicators must be achievable during the grant duration.

Full Proposals must identify at least one (1) of the AMS-defined expected measureable outcomes listed below, and at least one (1) indicator for each selected outcome. Additionally, if there are multiple sub-indicators under the selected indicator, select at least one (1). If the indicator(s) below the selected outcome(s) are not relevant to a project, a project specific indicator(s) may be developed which will be subject to approval by MDAR and AMS.

Funded entities will be required to provide progress updates using identified indicators on all performance reports and final reports. AMS will aggregate the data collected to assess the overall impact of the program and report to OMB and Congress on these national outcome measures. AMS will review the quality of the information received in subsequent performance reports and modify the outcomes and indicators as needed over time to lead to better results in showing the impact of the SCBGP.

Outcome/Indicator Options:

Outcome 1: Increasing Consumption and Consumer Purchasing of Specialty Crops

(mandatory for all marketing and promotion projects as defined below)

Definition: Marketing and promotion projects focus efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, and generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue. These include, but are not limited to:

- a. Uses of social media to market and promote;
- b. Specialty crop local, regional, and national campaigns;
- c. Specialty crop only tradeshow;
- d. Website promotion and development;
- e. Use/development of billboards, radio, television, magazine, and email ads, and marketing materials, such as direct mail and brochures;
- f. Agritourism;
- g. Export market development;
- h. Retail promotions including point of purchase items, labels, packaging, etc.;
- i. Promotion of specialty crops at Farmers market; and
- j. Marketing and promotion campaigns with an education component directed to consumers.

Indicators:

1.1. Total number of consumers who gained knowledge about specialty crops_____.

1.1a Adults_____.

1.1b Children_____.

1.2. Total number of consumers who consumed more specialty crops_____.

1.2a Adults_____.

1.2b Children_____.

1.3. Number of additional specialty crop customers counted_____.

1.4. Number of new additional business transactions executed_____.

1.5. Increased sales measured in:

1.5a Dollars \$_____.

1.5b Percent change _____%.

1.5c Combination of volume and average price as a result of enhanced market activities.

Volume: _____. Average Price:_____.

Outcome 2: Increasing Access to Specialty Crops and Expanding Specialty Crop Production and Distribution

Indicators:

2.1. Number of stakeholders that gained technical knowledge about producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing specialty crops_____.

2.2. Number of stakeholders that gained technical knowledge about producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing specialty crops_____.

2.3. Total number of market access points for specialty crops developed and expanded.

Of those:

2.3a Number of new online portals created to sell specialty crops_____.

2.3b Number of expanded seasonal availability_____.

2.3c Number of existing market access points that expanded specialty crop offerings_____.

2.3d Number of new market access points that expanded specialty crop offerings_____.

2.4. Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about more efficient and effective distribution systems_____.

2.5 Number of stakeholders that adopted best practices or new technologies to improve distribution systems_____.

2.6. Total number of partnerships established between producers, distributors, and/or other relevant intermediaries related to distribution systems_____. Of those established:

2.6a Number formalized with written agreements (i.e. MOU's, signed contracts, etc.)_____.

2.6b Number of partnerships with underserved organizations_____.

2.7. Total number of new/improved distribution systems developed_____.

Of those, the number that:

2.7a Stemmed from new partnerships_____.

2.7b Increased efficiency_____.

2.7c Reduced costs_____.

2.7d Increased specialty crop grower participation_____.

2.7e Expanded customer reach_____.

2.7f Increased online presence_____.

2.8. Number of specialty crop-related crops:

2.8a Created_____.

2.8b Maintained_____.

2.9 Total number of new individuals who went into specialty crop production as a result of marketing_____. Of those, the number who are:

2.9a Beginning farmers and ranchers_____.

2.9b Socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers_____.

2.10 Number of market access points that reported increased:

2.10a Revenue_____.

2.10b Sales_____.

2.10c Cost-saving_____.

Outcome 3: Increase Food Safety and Knowledge Processes

Indicators:

3.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about prevention, detection, control, and/or intervention food safety practices, including relevant regulations (to improve their ability to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and/or meet the standards for aligned third party food safety audits such as Harmonized GAP/GHP)_____.

3.2. Number of stakeholders that:

3.2a Established a food safety plan_____.

3.2b Revised or updated their food safety plan_____.

3.3 Number of specialty crop stakeholders who implemented new/improved prevention, detection, control, and intervention practices, tools, or technologies to mitigate food safety risks (to improve their ability to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and/or meet the standards for aligned third party food safety audits such as Harmonized GAP/GHP)_____.

3.4. Number of prevention, detection, control, or intervention practices developed or enhanced to mitigate food safety risks_____.

3.5. Number of stakeholders that used grant funds to:

3.5a Purchase_____.

3.5b Upgrade food safety equipment_____.

Outcome 4: Improve Pest and Disease Control Processes

Indicators:

4.1. Numbers of stakeholders that gained knowledge about science-based tools to combat pests and diseases_____.

4.2. Number of stakeholders that adopted pest and disease control best practices, technologies, and innovations_____.

4.3. Number of stakeholders that implemented new diagnostic systems, methods, or technologies for analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases_____. Of those:

4.3a The number of additional acres managed using integrated pest management_____.

4.4. Number of stakeholders that implemented new diagnostic systems, methods, or technologies for analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases_____.

4.5. Total number of producers/processors that enhanced or maintained pest and disease control practices_____. Of those, the number that reported:

4.5a Reduction in product lost to pests and diseases_____.

4.5b Improved crop quality_____.

4.5c Reduction in labor costs_____.

4.5d Reduction in pesticide use_____.

4.6. Number of producers/processors improving the efficiency of pests and disease control diagnostics and response testing, as reported by:

4.6a Improving speed_____.

4.6b Improved reliability_____.

4.6c Expanding capability_____.

4.6d Increasing testing (i.e. survey work for pests)_____.

Outcome 5: Develop New Seed Varieties and Specialty Crops

Indicators:

5.1 Number of cultivar and/or variety trials conducted_____. Of those:

5.1a The number that advanced to further stages of development_____.

5.2 Number of cultivars and/or seed varieties developed_____.

5.3 Number of cultivars and/or seeds varieties released_____.

5.4 Number of growers adopting new cultivars and/or varieties_____.

5.5 Number of acres planted with new cultivars and/or varieties_____.

Outcome 6: Expand Specialty Crop Research and Development

Indicators:

6.1 Number of research goals accomplished_____.

6.2 For research conclusions, the number that:

6.2a Yielded findings that supported continued research_____.

6.2b Yielded findings that led to completion of study_____.

6.2c Yielded findings that allow for implementation of new practice, process, or technology_____.

6.3. Number of industry representatives and other stakeholders who engaged in research results_____.

6.4 Total number of research outputs published to industry publications and/or academic journals_____. For each published research output, the:

6.4a Number of views/reads of published research/data_____.

6.4b Number of citations counted_____.

Outcome 7: Improve Environmental Sustainability of Specialty Crops

Indicators:

7.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies_____.

7.2 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technology_____.

- 7.3. Number of producers that adopted environmental best practices or tools_____.
- 7.4. Number of new tools/technologies developed or enhanced to improve sustainability/ conservation or other environmental outcomes_____.
- 7.5. Number of additional acres managed with sustainable practices, tools, or technologies that focused on:
- 7.5a Water quality/conservation_____.
- 7.5b Soil health_____.
- 7.5c Biodiversity_____.
- 7.5d Reduction in energy use_____.
- 7.5e Other positive environmental outcomes (optional)_____.
- 7.6 Number of additional acres established and maintained for the mutual benefit of pollinators/specialty crops_____.

Additional information:

Difference between "jobs" and "careers": jobs are net gain of paid employment; new businesses created or adopted can indicate new careers.

Beginning farmer is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

Socially disadvantaged farmer is 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.

H. Application Submission Instructions:

An application form is attached and must be completed and received by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources by the response deadline. **Applicants must submit proposals via EMAIL to Keri.Cornman@mass.gov by the deadline of Friday, April 5, 2024 at 2:00pm.** Applications that are sent by fax will NOT be accepted. **If you do not receive an email confirmation of receipt from MDAR, do not assume the application was received.** Please reach out to Keri Cornman (info below) if you do not receive a confirmation of receipt email for your application submission. MDAR will not accept any late submissions, and will not consider late applications due to technical difficulties, so please be mindful of your submission timeliness.

No application will be accepted after the due date. Form C is competitively ranked, and scored by a Review Panel. Applicants must fill out the SCBGP application posted both on Commbuys listed as Form C and also posted on MDAR's website. All materials must be sent to the attention of:

**Keri Cornman, Grants Manager, Department of Agricultural Resources,
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02114**
Keri.Cornman@mass.gov
617-620-0200

I. Additional Required Documentation

If selected, the applicant(s) will be required to submit the following forms to complete the contract: Commonwealth Standard Contract Form and Commonwealth Terms and Conditions, filled out and signed by the applicant(s); Scope and Budget Form; Commonwealth W-9 tax information form filled out and signed by the

applicant(s); Completed Contractor Authorized Signature Verification Form; Completed Electronic Funds Transfer Form; Proof of entity good standing in Massachusetts and IRS letter of Determination as 501 entity, if applicable. Assistance to complete these forms will be provided to Respondents selected to participate in the Program. These forms are available for review at www.mass.gov/osd or by request.

3. DEADLINES AND PROCUREMENT CALENDAR

A. Release of RFR:	February 12, 2024
B. Application Deadline:	2:00PM Friday, April 5th, 2024
C. State Plan Submitted to the USDA:	May 2, 2024
D. Estimated Contract Start Date:	The grant period may begin on October 1, 2024 or later. Eligible costs are those incurred only after an award is issued and a final scope of services has been negotiated and executed by all parties. Costs incurred prior to the executed contract shall not be eligible for reimbursement. The effective start date of a contract shall be the latest of the following dates: the date the Standard Contract Form has been executed by an authorized signatory of the contractor and the procuring department; the date of secretariat or other approval(s) required by law or regulation; or a later date specified in the Standard Contract Form.
E. Webinars	<p>Informational Webinars where questions may be asked will be held for interested applicants on the dates listed below. Please click the link(s) below to access one or more of the webinars. Webinars will be 1.5 hours in length, and may cover the FSMIP program as well as SCBGP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wednesday, February 28, 2024 at 1:00pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Register for this webinar date here. • Tuesday, March 12, 2024 at 11:00am <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Register for this webinar date here.

4. RFR SPECIFICATIONS

A. Type of Procurement: Grant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grant
B. Use of This Procurement by Single or Multiple Departments:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This RFR is single department procurement. Contracts awarded under this RFR will be utilized solely by MDAR.
C. Number of Grantees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDAR is looking to award multiple grants.
D. Anticipated Contract Duration

- MDAR, subject to notification of awards by the USDA, will negotiate with all successful respondents within the established three year grant period. The grant period may begin on October 1, 2024 or later. All projects shall be completed by September 29, 2027 or earlier.

E. RFR Distribution Method:

- This RFR has been distributed by MDAR's Farm and Market Newsletter, posted to the program's website at www.mass.gov/agr, and by a distribution list of requested applicants.
- This RFR has been distributed electronically via COMMBUYS. It is the responsibility of every Applicant to check COMMBUYS for any addenda or modifications to an RFR to which they intend to respond. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its subdivisions accept no liability and will provide no accommodations to Applicants who fail to check for amended RFRs and submit inadequate or incorrect responses. Potential Respondents are advised to check the "last change" field on the summary page of RFRs for which they intend to submit a response to ensure they have the most recent RFR files.
- Respondents may not alter RFR language or any RFR component files. Those submitting a proposal must respond in accordance to the RFR directions and complete only those sections that prompt a Respondent for a response. Modifications to the body of this RFR, specifications, terms and conditions, or which change the intent of this RFR are prohibited. Any unauthorized alterations will disqualify response.

PROJECT PURPOSE

PROVIDE THE SPECIFIC ISSUE, PROBLEM OR NEED THAT THE PROJECT WILL ADDRESS THAT IS TIMELY AND IMPORTANT

PROVIDE A LISTING OF THE OBJECTIVES THAT THIS PROJECT HOPES TO ACHIEVE

Objectives are separate from Expected Measurable Outcomes. Proposals should list and demonstrate clear, defined Objectives that relate to the Project Purpose. Projects should show clear project approach with unambiguous goals and objectives. If awarded, the recipient will be expected to directly report on successes and set-backs of these stated Objectives.

Add more objectives by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete objectives that aren't necessary.

Objective 1

Objective 2

Objective 3

Objective 4

Add other objectives as necessary

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Proposals must show that the project does not benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.

Estimate the number of project beneficiaries:.....Enter the Number of Beneficiaries

Does this project directly benefit socially disadvantaged farmers as defined in the RFR?

Yes **No**

Does this project directly benefit beginning farmers as defined in the RFR?

Yes **No**

STATEMENT OF ENHANCING SPECIALTY CROPS

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that this project enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops in accordance with and defined by the Farm Bill. Further information regarding the definition of a specialty crop can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp.

CONTINUATION PROJECT INFORMATION

Does this project continue the efforts of a previously funded SCBGP project? Yes No

If you have selected "yes", please address the following:

DESCRIBE HOW THIS PROJECT WILL DIFFER FROM AND BUILD ON PREVIOUS EFFORTS

PROVIDE A SUMMARY (3 TO 5 SENTENCES) OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE PREVIOUS EFFORTS

PROVIDE LESSONS LEARNED ON POTENTIAL PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS

What was previously learned from implementing this project, including potential improvements?

How are the lessons learned and improvements being incorporated into the project to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes?

DESCRIBE THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE PROJECT BECOMING SELF-SUSTAINING AND NOT INDEFINITELY DEPENDENT ON GRANT FUNDS

OTHER SUPPORT FROM FEDERAL OR STATE GRANT PROGRAMS

The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects. Did you submit this project to a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP for funding and/or is a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP funding the project currently?

Yes

No

IF YOUR PROJECT IS RECEIVING OR WILL POTENTIALLY RECEIVE FUNDS FROM ANOTHER FEDERAL OR STATE GRANT PROGRAM

Identify the Federal or State grant program(s).

-

Describe how the SCBGP project differs from or supplements the other grant program(s) efforts.

EXTERNAL PROJECT SUPPORT

Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support this project and why (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project).

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IMPACTS

If your project falls within an EJ Community, describe how the project will demonstrate positive impacts to the community and provide demonstrated support from the community.

EXPECTED MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

SELECT THE APPROPRIATE OUTCOME(S) AND INDICATOR(S)/SUB-INDICATOR(S)

You must choose at least one of the seven outcomes listed in the [SCBGP Performance Measures](#) below (also listed on Pages 7- 11 of the RFR), which were approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to evaluate the performance of the SCBGP on a national level.

Outcome(s) selected should directly and meaningfully support the Project's Purpose and align with Objectives. If awarded, the recipient will be expected to directly report on the results of chosen Outcomes, using language directly from the Work Plan (taken from the accepted Application Form C).

OUTCOME MEASURE(S), INDICATORS, AND DATA COLLECTION PLAN

Select at least one of the seven outcome measures and at least one indicator for each selected outcome. Select the outcome measure(s) that are applicable for this project from the listing below.

DATA COLLECTION TO REPORT ON OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS

Explain how you will collect the required data to report on the Outcome(s) and Indicator(s) in the space below. Data collection plans should be clearly defined, and should relate directly to selected Outcome(s) and Indicator(s). Include any and all methods of data collection.

Recipients are expected to have a thorough, outlined data collection plan at time of application submission, prior to project start date. If awarded, the recipient will be expected to directly report on how the data collection plan was utilized in gathering Indicator quantifiable results.

TIMELINE

Provide a detailed timeline of the project. Please include all objectives and outcomes, and the expected tasks to be completed. A successful timeline is effective and includes task accountability throughout the life of the project.

NEW KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE IN PROMOTING SPECIALTY CROPS

Explain how the project will add to new knowledge or expertise to effectively promote the competitiveness of Specialty Crops as a whole.

DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS

Explain how the project will demonstrate and disseminate replicable practices and results.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

All expenses described in this Budget Narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP. If any matching funds will be used and a description of their use is required by the State department of agriculture, the expenses to be covered with matching funds must be described separately. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov). Indirect costs are not allowed for recipients.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Expense Category	Funds Requested
Personnel	
Fringe Benefits	
Travel	
Equipment	
Supplies	
Contractual	
Other	
Direct Costs Sub-Total	
Indirect Costs	*NOT APPLICABLE FOR SCBGP APPLICANTS*
Total Budget	

EXPENSES BY COST CATEGORY

PERSONNEL

List the organization's employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

#	Name/Title	Level of Effort (# of hours OR % FTE)	Funds Requested
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

add more rows as necessary

Personnel Subtotal:

PERSONNEL JUSTIFICATION

For each individual listed in the above table, describe the activities to be completed by name/title including approximately when activities will occur. Add more personnel by copying and pasting the existing listing or deleting personnel that aren't necessary.

Personnel 1:

Personnel 2:

Personnel 3:

Add other Personnel as necessary

FRINGE BENEFITS

Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project's salaried employees described in the Personnel section that will be paid with SCBGP funds. If fringe rates vary, please provide justification below.

#	Name/Title	Fringe Benefit Rate	Funds Requested
1			
2			
3			
4			

add more rows as necessary

Fringe Subtotal:

FRINGE JUSTIFICATION

TRAVEL

Explain the purpose for each Trip Request. Please note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. For recipient organizations that have no formal travel policy and for-profit recipients, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <http://www.gsa.gov>. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

#	Trip Destination	Type of Expense (airfare, car, rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.)	Unit of Measure (days, nights, miles, etc.)	# of Units	Cost per Unit	# of Travelers Claiming the Expense	Funds Requested
1							
2							
3							
4							

add more rows as necessary

Travel Subtotal:

TRAVEL JUSTIFICATION

For each trip listed in the above table describe the purpose of this trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Be sure to include approximately when the trip will occur. Add more trips by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete trips that aren't necessary.

Trip 1 (Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):

Trip 2 (Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):

Trip 3 (Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):

Add other Trips as necessary

CONFORMING WITH YOUR TRAVEL POLICY

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that my organization's established travel policies will be adhered to when completing the above-mentioned trips in accordance with [2 C.F.R. 200.474](#) or [48 C.F.R. subpart 31.2](#), as applicable.

EQUIPMENT

Describe any special purpose equipment to be purchased or rented under the grant. "Special purpose equipment" is tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one (1) year and an acquisition cost that **equals or exceeds \$5,000** per unit and is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

Rental of "general purpose equipment" must also be described in this section. Purchase of general purpose equipment is not allowable under this grant. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

#	Equipment Item Description	Rental or Purchase	Acquire When?	Funds Requested
1				
2				
3				
4				

add more rows as necessary

Equipment Subtotal:

EQUIPMENT JUSTIFICATION

For each Equipment item listed in the above table describe how this equipment will be used to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Add more equipment by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete equipment that isn't necessary.

Equipment 1:

Equipment 2:

Equipment 3:

Add other Equipment as necessary

SUPPLIES

List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing **less than \$5,000** per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal and solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

#	Supplies Item Description	Per-Unit Cost	# of Units/Pieces Purchased	Acquire Date?	Funds Requested
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

add more rows as necessary

Supplies Subtotal:

SUPPLIES JUSTIFICATION

Describe the purpose of each supply listed in the table above purchased and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s).

CONTRACTUAL/CONSULTANT

Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be described separately. (Repeat this section for each contract/consultant.) Contractor/consultant rates may not exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in the area (for more information, visit the [OPM](#) website).

ITEMIZED CONTRACTOR(S)/CONSULTANT(S)

Provide a list of contractors/consultants, detailing out the name, hourly/flat rate, and overall cost of the services performed. Please note that any statutory limitations on indirect costs also apply to contractors and consultants.

#	Contractual Name/Organization	Hourly Rate/Flat Rate	Funds Requested
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

add more rows as necessary

Contractual Subtotal:

CONTRACTUAL JUSTIFICATION

Provide for each of your real or anticipated contractors listed above a description of the project activities each will accomplish to meet the objectives and outcomes of the project. Each section should also include a justification for why contractual/consultant services are to be used to meet the anticipated outcomes and objectives. Include timelines for each activity. If contractor employee and consultant hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in your area (for more information please go to <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>) provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses.

Contractor/Consultant 1:

Contractor/Consultant 2:

Contractor/Consultant 3:

Add other Contractors/Consultants as necessary

CONFORMING WITH YOUR PROCUREMENT STANDARDS

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that my organization followed the same policies and procedures used for procurements from non-federal sources, which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the Federal laws and standards identified in [2 C.F.R. Part 200.317-326](#), as applicable. If the contractor(s)/consultant(s) are not already selected, my organization will follow the same requirements.

OTHER

Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, publication costs, and data collection.

If you budget meal costs for reasons other than meals associated with travel per diem, provide an adequate justification to support that these costs are not entertainment costs. Applicants should review the AMS General Terms and Conditions section [8.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#) (begins on Page 9 of document) prior to developing their budget narrative (can also be produced upon request – contact Keri Cornman at Keri.Cornman@mass.gov).

#	Other Item Description	Per-Unit Cost	# of Units	Acquire Date?	Funds Requested
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					

add more rows as necessary

Other Subtotal:

OTHER JUSTIFICATION

Describe the purpose of each item listed in the table above purchased and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s).

PROGRAM INCOME

Program income is gross income—earned by a recipient or subrecipient under a grant—directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned only because of the grant agreement during the grant period of performance. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); registration fees for conferences, etc.

#	Source/Nature of Program Income	Description of how you will reinvest the program income into the project to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops	Estimated Income
1			
2			
3			
4			

add rows as necessary

MATCHING COSTS (NOT REQUIRED)

Please list any matching costs that will be contributed to the project. Matching costs are not required for SCBGP projects.

ITEMIZED MATCHING COSTS

Provide a list of matching costs, providing details

#	Personnel/Item/Etc.	Detail/Description of cost	Funds Contributing
1			

#	Personnel/Item/Etc.	Detail/Description of cost	Funds Contributing
2			
3			
4			

add rows as necessary

Matching Subtotal:

SECTION THREE: ATTESTATION:

By signing this application you attest all statements herein are accurate and true. If requested, you also give permission to a site visit conducted by MDAR before a funding decision is made. All site visits will be arranged with applicants in advance.

Signature: _____ Title: _____

Date: _____

RFR - Required Specifications for Commodities and Services

Revision Date: July 13, 2023

In general, most of the required contractual stipulations are referenced in the *Standard Contract Form and Instructions* and the *Commonwealth Terms and Conditions*. However, the following RFR provisions must appear in all Commonwealth competitive procurements conducted under 801 CMR 21.00.

The terms of *801 CMR 21.00: Procurement of Commodities and Services* are incorporated by reference into this RFR. Words used in this RFR shall have the meanings defined in 801 CMR 21.00. Additional definitions also may be identified in this RFR. Other terms not defined elsewhere in this document may be defined in OSD's [Glossary of Terms](#). Unless otherwise specified in this RFR, all communications, responses, and documentation must be in English, all measurements must be provided in feet, inches, and pounds and all cost proposals or figures in U.S. currency. All responses must be submitted in accordance with the specific terms of this RFR.

1. COMMBUYS Market Center. COMMBUYS is the official source of information for this Bid and is publicly accessible at no charge at www.commbuys.com. Information contained in this document and in COMMBUYS, including file attachments, and information contained in the related Bid Questions and Answers (Q&A), are components of the Bid, as referenced in COMMBUYS, and are incorporated into the Bid and any resulting contract.

Bidders are solely responsible for obtaining all information distributed for this Bid via COMMBUYS. Bid Q&A supports Bidder submission of written questions associated with a Bid and publication of official answers.

It is each Bidder's responsibility to check COMMBUYS for:

- Any amendments, addenda, or modifications to this Bid, and
- Any Bid Q&A records related to this Bid.

The Commonwealth accepts no responsibility and will provide no accommodation to Bidders who submit a Quote based on an out-of-date Bid or on information received from a source other than COMMBUYS.

2. COMMBUYS Registration. Bidders may elect to register for a free COMMBUYS Seller account which provides value-added features, including automated email notification associated with postings and modifications to COMMBUYS records. However, to respond to a Bid, Bidders must register and maintain an active COMMBUYS Seller account.

All Bidders submitting a Quote (previously referred to as Response) in response to this Bid (previously referred to as Solicitation) agree that, if awarded a contract: 1) they will maintain an active seller account in COMMBUYS; 2) they will, when directed to do so by the procuring entity, activate and maintain a COMMBUYS-enabled catalog using Commonwealth Commodity Codes; 3) they will comply with all requests by the procuring entity to utilize COMMBUYS for the purposes of conducting all aspects of purchasing and invoicing with the Commonwealth, as added functionality for the COMMBUYS system is activated; and 4) in the event the Commonwealth adopts an alternate e-procurement platform, successful Bidders will be required to utilize such system, as directed by the procuring entity. Commonwealth Commodity Codes are based on the United Nations Standard Products and Services Code (UNSPSC).

COMMBUYS uses terminology with which bidders must be familiar to conduct business with the Commonwealth. To view this terminology and to learn more about COMMBUYS, please visit the [Learn about COMMBUYS Resources](#) page on mass.gov.

3. Multiple Quotes. Bidders may not submit Multiple Quotes in response to a Bid unless the RFR authorizes them to do so. If a Bidder submits multiple quotes in response to an RFR that does not authorize multiple responses, only the latest dated quote submitted prior to the bid opening date will be evaluated.

4. Quote Content. Bid specifications for delivery, shipping, billing, and payment will prevail over any proposed Bidder terms entered as part of the Quote, unless otherwise specified in the Bid.

5. Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) Programs. Pursuant to [Executive Order 599](#), the Commonwealth supports the use of diverse and small businesses through the Small Business Purchasing Program (SBPP) and the Supplier Diversity Program (SDP). Based on the estimated value of the procurement, one of the above-mentioned programs shall be applicable to this RFR. For more information on the program that applies to this solicitation, see the body of this RFR.

6. Small Business Purchasing Program (SBPP)

Program Background. The Massachusetts [Small Business Purchasing Program](#) (SBPP) was established pursuant to [Executive Order 599](#) to increase state contracting opportunities with small businesses having their principal place of business within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Pursuant to the SBPP, it is the intention of the issuing department to award this Small Procurement to one or more SBPP participating business(es) as described below.

SBPP Award Preference. While all businesses, no matter the size or principal place of business, may submit responses to this solicitation, should an SBPP participant respond and meet the best value criteria described in this solicitation, the SBPP participant shall be awarded the contract. The Strategic Sourcing Services Team (SST) will not evaluate submissions from non-SBPP participants unless no SBPP Bidder meets the SST's best value evaluation criteria.

SBPP Participation Eligibility. To be eligible to participate in this procurement as an SBPP participant, an entity must meet the following criteria, and be marked as an SBPP-registered business in [COMMBUYS](#):

1. Have its principal place of business in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts;
2. Been in business for at least one year;
3. Employ a combined total of 50 or fewer full-time equivalent employees in all locations, or employees work less than a combined total of 26,000 hours per quarter; and
4. Have gross revenues, as reported on appropriate tax forms, of \$15 million or less, based on a three-year average.

Non-profit firms also must be registered as a non-profit or charitable organization with the MA Attorney General's Office and be up to date with all filings required by that office and be tax exempt under Section 501(c) of the Internal Revenue Code.

SBPP Compliance Requirements. It is the responsibility of the Bidder to ensure that their SBPP status is current at the time of submitting a response and throughout the life of any resulting contract. Misrepresentation of SBPP status will result in disqualification from consideration, and may result in debarment, contract termination, and other actions. To learn more about the SBPP, including how to apply, visit the SBPP webpage, <http://www.mass.gov/sbpp>.

Program Resources and Assistance. Bidders and Contractors seeking assistance regarding SBPP may visit the [SBPP Webpage](#), or contact the SBPP Help Desk at sbpp@mass.gov.

7. Supplier Diversity Program (SDP)

Program Background. Pursuant to [Executive Order 599](#), the Commonwealth's [Supplier Diversity Program](#) (SDP) promotes business-to-business relationships between awarded Contractors and diverse businesses and non-profit organizations ("SDP Partners") certified or recognized (see below for more information) by the [Supplier Diversity Office \(SDO\)](#).

All Bidders and Contractors are strongly encouraged to create a profile on the SDO's Supplier Diversity Hub to access the Commonwealth's supplier diversity resources and tools.

Financial Commitment Requirements. All Bidders responding to this solicitation are required to make a significant financial commitment ("SDP Commitment") to partnering with one or more SDO-certified or recognized diverse business enterprise(s) or non-profit organization(s). This SDP Commitment must be expressed as a percentage of contract sales resulting from this solicitation that would be spent with the SDP Partner(s).

After contract award (if any), the Total SDP Commitment shall become a contractual requirement to be met annually on a Massachusetts fiscal year basis (July 1 – June 30) for the duration of the contract. The minimum acceptable Total SDP Commitment in response to this solicitation shall be 1%. Bidders shall be awarded additional evaluation points for higher SDP Commitments.

No contract shall be awarded to a Bidder without an SDP Commitment that meets the requirements stated herein. This requirement extends to **all** Bidders regardless of their own supplier diversity certification.

Eligible SDP Partner Certification Categories

SDP Partners must be business enterprises and/or non-profit organizations certified or recognized by the SDO in one or more of the following certification categories:

- Minority-Owned Business Enterprise (MBE)
- Minority Non-Profit Organization (M/NPO)
- Women-Owned Business Enterprise (WBE)
- Women Non-Profit Organization (W/NPO)
- Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (VBE)
- Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (SDVOBE)
- Disability-Owned Business Enterprise (DOBE)
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Business Enterprise (LGBTBE)

Eligible Types of Business-to-Business Relationships. Bidders and Contractors may engage SDP Partners as follows:

- **Subcontracting**, defined as a partnership in which the SDP partner is involved in the provision of products and/or services to the Commonwealth.
- **Ancillary Products and Services**, defined as a business relationship in which the SDP partner provides products or services that are not directly related to the Contractor's contract with the Commonwealth but may be related to the Contractor's own operational needs.

Other types of business-to-business relationships are not acceptable under this contract. All provisions of this RFR applicable to subcontracting shall apply equally to the engagement of SDP Partners as subcontractors.

Program Flexibility. The SDP encompasses the following provisions to support Bidders in establishing and maintaining sustainable business-to-business relationships meeting their needs:

- SDP Partners are **not** required to be subcontractors.
- SDP Partners are **not** required to be Massachusetts-based businesses.
- SDP Partners **may be changed or added** during the term of the contract, provided the Contractor continues to meet its SDP Commitment.

SDP Plan Form Requirements. All Bidders must complete the SDP Plan Form included in this solicitation and attach it to their bid response. In addition to proposing an SDP Commitment, each Bidder must propose one or more SDP Partner(s) to utilize to meet its SDP Commitment. Certified diverse Bidders may not list their own companies, their subsidiaries, or affiliates as SDP Partners and may not meet their SDP Commitment by spending funds internally or with their own subsidiaries or affiliates.

Bidders may propose SDP Partners that are:

- **Certified or recognized by the SDO:** Such partners appear in the [SDO Directory of Certified Businesses](#) or in the [SBA Veteran Small Business Certification \(VetCert\)](#) directory. After contract award (if any), spending with such partners will contribute to meeting the Contractor's SDP Commitment.
- **Not yet certified or recognized by the SDO:** Such partners must be certified in eligible categories by a third-party certification body, such as another city or state supplier diversity certification office, the [National Minority Supplier Development Council](#), the [Women Business Enterprise National Council](#), [Disability: IN](#), or the [National LGBT Chamber of Commerce \(NGLCC\)](#), but are not listed in the above-mentioned directories. Self-certification is not acceptable. While Bidders may list such proposed SDP Partners on their SDP Plans, spending with such partners will not contribute to meeting the Contractor's SDP Commitment unless they apply for and are granted SDO supplier diversity certification or recognition. If proposed SDP Partners do not receive SDO supplier diversity certification or recognition, the Contractor must find alternative SDP Partners to meet the SDP Commitment.

It is the responsibility of the Contractor to ensure that their proposed SDP Partners obtain such certification or recognition by the SDO after contract award (if any). The issuing department and the SDO will not conduct outreach to proposed SDP Partners to ensure their certification. Furthermore, no guarantee may be made that a proposed SDP Partner will be certified, or regarding the time it may take to process a proposed SDP Partner certification. Contractors may direct partners to the SDO's homepage, www.mass.gov/sdo and the [Certification Self-Assessment Tool](#) for guidance on applying for certification.

It is **desirable** for Bidders to provide an SDP Focus Statement that describe the bidder's overall approach to increasing the participation of diverse businesses in the provision of products and services under this proposal/contract (subcontracting) and in the Bidder's general business operations (ancillary products and services). Such a description may include but not be limited to:

- A clearly stated purpose or goal.
- Specific types of diverse and small businesses targeted.
- Which departments/units within the business are responsible for implementing supplier diversity.
- Types of opportunities for which diverse and small businesses are considered.
- Specific measures/methods of engagement of diverse and small businesses.
- An existing internal supplier diversity policy.
- Public availability of the Bidder's supplier diversity policy.

It also is **desirable** for Bidders to use the SDP Plan Form to describe additional creative initiatives (if any) related to engaging, buying from, and/or collaborating with diverse businesses. Such initiatives may include but not be limited to:

- Serving as a mentor in a mentor-protégé relationship.
- Technical and financial assistance provided to diverse businesses.
- Participation in joint ventures between nondiverse and diverse businesses.
- Voluntary assistance programs by which nondiverse business employees are loaned to diverse businesses or by which diverse business employees are taken into viable business ventures to acquire training and experience in managing business affairs.

Evaluation of SDP Forms. To encourage Bidders to develop substantial supplier diversity initiatives and commitments as measures valuable to the Commonwealth, at least 25% of the total available evaluation points for this bid solicitation shall be allocated to the evaluation of the SDP Plan submissions. Because the purpose of the SDP is to promote business-to-business partnerships, the Bidders' workforce diversity initiatives will not be considered in the evaluation.

SDP Spending Reports. After contract award, Contractors must submit reports at least annually to demonstrate compliance with the agreed-upon SDP Commitment. To submit SDP spending reports using the Hub, Contractors must create a profile in the Hub. Contractors must follow report submission instructions from the issuing department and the SDO.

SDP Spending Compliance. Only spending with SDP Partners that appear in the [SDO Directory of Certified Businesses](#) or in the [SBA Veteran Small Business Certification \(VetCert\)](#) directory shall be counted toward a Contractor's compliance with their SDP Commitment. Spending with SDP Partners that do not appear in the directories above shall not be counted toward meeting a Contractor's SDP Commitment.

It is the responsibility of the Contractor to ensure they meet their SDP Commitment, and the SDO and the issuing department assume no responsibility for any Contractor's failure to meet its SDP Commitment.

SDP Spending Verification. The SDO and the contracting department reserve the right to contact SDP Partners at any time to request that they attest to the amounts reported to have been paid to them by the Contractor.

Program Resources and Assistance. Contractors seeking assistance in the development of their SDP Plans or identification of potential SDP Partners may visit the SDP webpage, www.mass.gov/sdp, or contact the SDP Help Desk at sdp@mass.gov.

8. Agricultural Products Preference (only applicable if this is a procurement for Agricultural Products). Chapter 123 of the Acts of 2006 directs the State Purchasing Agent to grant a preference to products of agriculture grown or produced using locally grown products. Such locally grown or produced products shall be purchased unless the price of the goods exceeds the price of products of agriculture from outside the Commonwealth by more than 10%. For purposes of this preference, products of agriculture are defined to include any agricultural, aquacultural, floricultural, or horticultural commodities; the growing and harvesting of forest products; the raising of livestock, including horses; raising of domesticated animals, bees, and/or fur-bearing animals; and any forestry or lumbering operations.

9. Best Value Selection and Negotiation. The Strategic Sourcing Services Team or SSST may select the response(s) which demonstrates the best value overall, including proposed alternatives that will achieve the procurement goals of the department. The SSST and a selected bidder, or a contractor, may negotiate a change in any element of contract performance or cost identified in the original RFR or the selected bidder's or contractor's response which results in lower costs or a more cost effective or better value than was presented in the selected bidder's or contractor's original response.

10. Bidder Communication. Bidders are prohibited from communicating directly with any employee of the procuring department or any member of the SSST regarding this RFR except as specified in this RFR, and no other individual Commonwealth employee or representative is authorized to provide any information or respond to any question or inquiry concerning this RFR. Bidders may contact the contact person for this RFR in the event this RFR is incomplete or the bidder is having trouble obtaining any required attachments electronically through COMMBUYS.

11. Contract Expansion. If additional funds become available during the contract duration period, the department reserves the right to increase the maximum obligation to some or all contracts executed as a result of this RFR or to execute contracts with contractors not funded in the initial selection process, subject to available funding, satisfactory contract performance and service or commodity need.

12. Costs. Costs which are not specifically identified in the bidder's response and accepted by a department as part of a contract will not be compensated under any contract awarded pursuant to this RFR. The Commonwealth will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by bidders responding to this RFR.

13. Electronic Communication/Update of Bidder's/Contractor's Contact Information. It is the responsibility of the prospective bidder and awarded contractor to keep current on COMMBUYS the email address of the bidder's contact person and prospective contract manager, if awarded a contract, and to monitor that email inbox for communications from the SSST, including requests for clarification. The SSST and the Commonwealth assume no responsibility if a prospective bidder's/awarded contractor's designated email address is not current, or if technical problems, including those with the prospective bidder's/awarded contractor's computer, network, or internet service provider (ISP) cause email communications sent to/from the prospective bidder/awarded contractor and the SSST to be lost or rejected by any means including email or spam filtering.

14. Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). All bidders responding to this RFR must agree to participate in the Commonwealth Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) program for receiving payments, unless the bidder is able to provide compelling proof that it would be unduly burdensome. EFT is a benefit to both contractors and the Commonwealth because it ensures fast, safe, and reliable payment directly to contractors and saves both parties the cost of processing checks. Contractors may track and verify payments made electronically through the Comptroller's [Vendor Web system](#). A link to the EFT application may be found on the [OSD Forms](#) page (www.mass.gov/lists/osd-forms). Additional information about EFT is available on the [VendorWeb](#) site (www.mass.gov/osc). Click on MASSfinance.

Successful bidders, upon notification of contract award, will be required to enroll in EFT as a contract requirement by completing and submitting the *Authorization for Electronic Funds Payment Form* to this department for review, approval, and forwarding to the Office of the Comptroller. If the bidder already is enrolled in the program, it may so indicate in its response. Because the *Authorization for Electronic Funds Payment Form* contains banking information, this form, and all information contained on this form, shall not be considered a public record and shall not be subject to public disclosure through a public records request.

The requirement to use EFT may be waived by the SSST on a case-by-case basis if participation in the program would be unduly burdensome on the bidder. If a bidder is claiming that this requirement is a hardship or unduly burdensome, the specific reason must be documented in its response. The SSST will consider such requests on a case-by-case basis and communicate the findings to the bidder.

15. Executive Order 509, Establishing Nutrition Standards for Food Purchased and Served by State Agencies. Food purchased and served by state agencies must be in compliance with Executive Order 509, issued in January 2009. Under this Executive Order, all contracts resulting from procurements posted after July 1, 2009, that involve the purchase and provision of food must comply with nutrition guidelines established by the Department of Public Health (DPH). The nutrition guidelines are available at the Department's website: [Tools and Resources for Implementation of Executive Order 509](#).

16. HIPAA: Business Associate Contractual Obligations. Bidders are notified that any department meeting the definition of a Covered Entity under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) will include in the RFR and resulting contract sufficient language establishing the successful bidder's contractual obligations, if any, that the department will require in order for the department to comply with HIPAA and the privacy and security regulations promulgated thereunder (45 CFR Parts 160, 162, and 164) (the Privacy and Security Rules). For example, if the department determines that the successful bidder is a business associate performing functions or activities involving protected health information, as such terms are used in the Privacy and Security Rules, then the department will include in the RFR and resulting contract a sufficient description of business associate's contractual obligations regarding the privacy and security of the protected health information, as listed in 45 CFR 164.314 and 164.504 (e), including, but not limited to, the bidder's obligation to: implement administrative, physical, and technical safeguards that reasonably and appropriately protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the protected health information (in whatever form it is maintained or used, including verbal communications); provide individuals access to their records; and strictly limit use and disclosure of the protected health information for only those purposes approved by the department. Further, the department reserves the right to add any requirement during the course of the contract that it determines it must include in the contract in order for the department to comply with the Privacy and Security Rules. Please see other sections of the RFR for any further HIPAA details, if applicable.

17. Minimum Quote (Bid Response) Duration. Bidders Quotes made in response to this Bid must remain in effect for at least 90 days from the date of quote submission.

18. Prompt Payment Discounts (PPD). All bidders responding to this procurement must agree to offer discounts through participation in the Commonwealth's Prompt Payment Discount (PPD) initiative for receiving early and/or on-time payments, unless the bidder provides compelling proof that it would be unduly burdensome. PPD benefits both contractors and the Commonwealth. Contractors benefit by increased, usable cash flow as a result of fast and efficient payments for commodities or services rendered. Participation in the Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) initiative further maximizes the benefits with payments directed to designated accounts, thus eliminating the impact of check clearance policies and traditional mail lead time or delays. The Commonwealth benefits because contractors reduce the cost of products and services through the applied discount. Payments that are processed electronically may be tracked and verified through the Comptroller's Vendor Web system. The PPD form may be found as an attachment for this Bid on [COMMBUYS](#).

Bidders must submit agreeable terms for Prompt Payment Discount using the PPD form within their proposal, unless otherwise specified by the SSST. The SSST will review, negotiate, or reject the offering as deemed in the best interest of the Commonwealth.

The requirement to use PPD offerings may be waived by the SSST on a case-by-case basis if participation in the program would be unduly burdensome on the bidder. If a bidder is claiming that this requirement is a hardship or unduly burdensome, the specific reason must be documented in or attached to the PPD form.

19. Public Records. All responses and information submitted in response to this RFR are subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law, M.G.L., c. 66, s. 10, and to c. 4, s. 7, ss. 26. Any statements in submitted responses that are inconsistent with these statutes, including marking by bidders of information as confidential during the quote submission process in COMMBUYS, shall be disregarded.

20. Reasonable Accommodation. Bidders with disabilities or hardships that seek reasonable accommodation, which may include the receipt of RFR information in an alternative format, must communicate such requests in writing to the contact person. Requests for accommodation will be addressed on a case by case basis. A bidder requesting accommodation must submit a written statement which describes the bidder's disability and the requested accommodation to the contact person for the RFR. The SSST reserves the right to reject unreasonable requests.

21. Restriction on the Use of the Commonwealth Seal. Bidders and contractors are not allowed to display the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Seal in their bid package or subsequent marketing materials if they are awarded a contract because use of the coat of arms and the Great Seal of the Commonwealth for advertising or commercial purposes is prohibited by law.

22. Subcontracting Policies. Prior approval of the department is required for any subcontracted service of the contract. Contractors are responsible for the satisfactory performance and adequate oversight of its subcontractors. Human and social service subcontractors are also required to meet the same state and federal financial and program reporting requirements and are held to the same reimbursable cost standards as contractors.

23. Acceptable Forms of Signature

Effective June 15, 2021, for all 1) CTR forms, including the Standard Contract Form, W-9s, Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) forms, ISAs, and other CTR-issued documents and forms, or 2) documents related to state finance and within the statutory area of authority or control of CTR (i.e. contracts, payrolls, and related supporting documentation), CTR will accept signatures executed by an authorized signatory in any of the following ways: 1. Traditional "wet signature" (ink on paper); 2. Electronic signature that is either: a. Hand drawn using a mouse or finger if working from a touch screen device; or Page 2 b. An uploaded picture of the signatory's hand drawn signature 3. Electronic signatures affixed using a digital tool such as Adobe Sign or DocuSign. If using an electronic signature, the signature must be visible, include the signatory's name and title, and must be accompanied by a signature date. Please be advised that typed text of a name not generated by a digital tool such as Adobe Sign or DocuSign, even in computer-generated cursive script, or an electronic symbol, are not acceptable forms of electronic signature.

#END#

Attachment A:

USDA's List of Specialty Crops: Please go to www.usda.gov and the specialty crop block grant page in order to see the USDA's list of eligible specialty crops and other key resources.

Fruit and Tree Nuts					
Almond	Apple	Apricot	Avocado	Banana	Blackberry
Blueberry	Breadfruit	Cacao	Cashew	Citrus	Cherimoya
Cherry	Chestnuts (for nuts)	Coconut	Coffee	Cranberry	Currant
Date	Feijoa	Fig	Filbert (hazelnut)	Gooseberry	Grape (includ. raisin)
Guava	Kiwi	Litchi	Macadamia	Mango	Nectarine
Olive	Papaya	Passion Fruit	Peach	Pear	Pecan
Persimmon	Pineapple	Pistachio	Plum (includ. prune)	Pomegranate	Quince
Raspberry	Strawberry	Suriname Cherry	Walnut		
Vegetables					
Artichoke	Asparagus	Bean (snap or green Lima dry, edible)	Beet, table	Broccoli (includ. broccoli rabe)	Brussels sprouts
Cabbage (includ. Chinese)	Carrot	Cauliflower	Celeriac	Celery	Chive
Collards (includ. kale)	Cucumber	Edamame	Eggplant	Endive	Garlic
Horseradish	Kohlrabi	Leek	Melon (all types)	Mushroom (cultivated)	Mustard and other greens
Okra	Pea (garden, English or edible pod)	Onion	Opuntia	Parsley	Parsnip
Pepper	Potato	Pumpkin	Radish (all types)	Rhubarb	Rutabaga
Salsify	Spinach	Squash (winter and summer)	Sweet corn	Sweet potato	Swiss chard
Taro	Tomato (includ. tomatillo)	Turnip	Watermelon		
Culinary Herbs and Spices					
Ajwain	Allspice	Angelica	Anise	Annatto	Artemisia (all types)
Asafetida	Basil (all types)	Bay (cultivated)	Bladder wrack	Bolivian Coriander	Borage
Calendula	Chamomile	Candle nut	Caper	Caraway	Cardamom
Cassia	Catnip	Chervil	Chicory	Cicely	Cilantro
Cinnamon	Clary	Cloves	Comfrey	Common rue	Coriander
Cress	Cumin	Curry	Dill	Fennel	Fenugreek
Filé (gumbo, cultivated)	Finger root	French Sorrel	Galangal	Ginger	Hops
Horsehound	Hyssop	Lavender	Lemon thyme	Lovage	Mace
Mahlab	Malabathrum	Marjoram	Mint (all types)	Nutmeg	Oregano
Orris root	Paprika	Parsley	Pepper	Rocket (arugula)	Rosemary
Rue	Saffron	Sage (all types)	Savory (all types)	Tarragon	Thyme
Vanilla	Wasabi	Water cress			
Medicinal Herbs					
Artemisia	Arum	Astragalus	Boldo	Cananga	Comfrey
Coneflower	Fenugreek	Feverfew	Foxglove	Ginkgo biloba	Ginseng
Goat's rue	Goldenseal	Gypsywort	Horehound	Horsetail	Lavender
Licquorice	Marshmallow	Mullein	Passion flower	Patchouli	Pennyroyal
Pokeweed	St. John's wort	Senna	Skullcap	Sonchus	Sorrel
Stevia	Tansy	Urtica	Witch hazel	Wood betony	Wormwood
Yarrow	Yerba Buena				

Note: Under the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), turfgrass sod is not eligible. Under the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program—Farm Bill (SCBGP-FB), horticulture was added to the definition making turfgrass sod and seed eligible.

Nursery, Floriculture and Horticulture Crops						
Christmas Trees	Cut Flowers	Honey	Turfgrass	Tea Leaves	Maple Syrup	Honey

