

2016 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

Proposed 2016 Program Priorities

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE 10.170

Released:
September 18, 2015

Public comments accepted through:
5:00 pm PDT on October 2, 2015



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About the Program

Purpose

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) proposes the following program priorities for the 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) for public comment. SCBGP funds must support projects that *solely* enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops.

Specialty crops are fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture). Visit <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/scbgp> for a list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities.

Funding and Duration

CDFA anticipates that up to \$19 million will be awarded to projects solely enhancing the competitiveness of California specialty crops. Grant amounts range from \$50,000 to \$450,000. The maximum grant duration is two (2) years, six (6) months and grant funds cannot be expended before October 1, 2016, or after March 31, 2019. CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.

Eligibility and Exclusions

Non-profit and for-profit organizations; local, state, and federal government entities, including tribal governments; and public or private colleges and universities are eligible to apply. Individuals are not eligible to apply. There is no limit on the number of concept proposals applicants may submit; however, each concept proposal should be for a wholly unique project. Applicants should not submit multiple concept proposals for a single project, or submit the same project over multiple funding categories.

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

Funding Areas, Funding Categories and Program Priorities

CDFA has developed three funding areas, with two to three categories within each area. Funding areas, funding categories and program priorities are intended to clearly define the 2016 SCBGP priorities and help prospective applicants both to develop their projects and submit their projects to the most appropriate category.

Funding Area I: Market Enhancement

Projects in this funding area will focus on increasing sales of California specialty crops through promotion of the California Grown identity, developing new markets, increasing opportunities in existing markets, improving availability and increasing demand.

Market Enhancement Category A: California Grown Promotion

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that enhance the marketability and long-term competitiveness of specialty crops through projects that leverage the California Grown identity. Projects submitted for the California Grown Promotion category should seek to increase the awareness and consumption of specialty crop products through the development of markets (local, domestic, and international) for all California producers by expanding the California Grown identity through cooperative promotion and partnerships. *Entities submitting projects under this category may wish to coordinate with the Buy California Marketing Agreement (BCMA).*

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Expanding opportunities for specialty crop producers, marketing orders and other specialty crop stakeholders through innovative marketing and promotional activities that incorporate multiple specialty crop products.
- Creating economic opportunities for specialty crop producers through specialty crop market development activities that focus on local, regional and international markets by leveraging the California Grown identity.
- Emphasizing the quality, food safety and healthy lifestyle benefits of specialty crops leveraging the California Grown identity.
- Developing environmental stewardship educational initiatives that expand the consumer marketability of California specialty crops leveraging the California Grown identity.

Projects submitted for the California Grown Promotion category will be evaluated by a committee designated by the board of BCMA. This committee will make funding recommendations to CDFA.

Examples:

- *Development of cooperative marketing activities that leverage the California Grown identity to emphasize quality, food safety and lifestyle benefits of California specialty crops.*
- *Increase the sales of specialty crops through multi-commodity promotions that leverage the California Grown identity.*
- *Create economic opportunities for specialty crop producers through commodity content development and social media activities leveraging the California Grown identity.*
- *Support specialty crop marketing concepts that target the unique characteristics of California grown specialty crops in domestic and international markets.*
- *Develop marketing concepts that promote the healthy lifestyle benefits of California Grown specialty crops.*

Market Enhancement Category B: Market Expansion and Access

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that increase the competitiveness of California specialty crops by expanding the specialty crop consumer market or improving availability of specialty crops to California consumers. Projects submitted for the Market Expansion and Access category should seek to increase the consumption of specialty crops by increasing consumer demand or the overall availability of specialty crops.

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Increasing the availability of specialty crops in homes, schools, the work place and underserved communities.
- Increasing capacity for small-scale specialty crop production and distribution into urban communities.
- Increasing demand for specialty crops through targeted market efforts.

Examples:

- *Improving efficiency and reducing costs of specialty crop distribution systems.*
- *Engaging underserved communities in the planning and production of specialty crops in the local food system.*
- *Addressing “food deserts” with improved access to specialty crops at farmers markets, corner stores, grocery stores, food hubs or other systems.*

Funding Area II: Training and Education

Projects in this funding area will focus on improving the competitiveness of California specialty crops through training for producers and growers to equip them for current and future challenges in specialty crop agriculture, and nutritional education for consumers to promote increased consumption.

Training and Education Category A: Specialty Crop Nutrition Education

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that improve the public’s knowledge and understanding of specialty crop agriculture and its beneficial importance to the health and well-being of

all Californians. Projects submitted for the Specialty Crop Nutrition Education category should seek to increase consumption of healthy, safe California specialty crops for improved nutrition and overall health.

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Improving awareness among adults and seniors of the health benefits of California specialty crops.
- Education to promote increased specialty crop consumption among children to develop lifelong healthy habits.
- Increasing consumption of California specialty crops through education that furthers integration of specialty crops into a healthy diet.
- Increasing knowledge of how to produce, prepare or preserve specialty crops.

Examples:

- *Increasing child nutritional knowledge through education in the classroom.*
- *Increasing interest in specialty crops through experiential learning (such as school gardens).*
- *Training or demonstrations that educate families on increasing consumption of specialty crops in their diets.*
- *Improving knowledge of the health benefits of specialty crops among children, seniors and caregivers.*

Training and Education Category B: Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that benefit current and future specialty crop farmers through education and training. Projects submitted for the Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers category should seek to ensure the viability of California specialty crops by investing in training for operators to address current and future challenges.

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Training and equipping the next generation of young and beginning farmers in agronomic, economic, and environmental stewardship skills.
- Creating and implementing workforce training programs to maintain the technical skills required to keep the California specialty crops sector competitive.
- Introducing and recruiting young people to the variety of specialty crop career opportunities.
- Develop and implement training to support specialty crop producers in adopting the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act.
- Support research to spur innovation and solve production issues.

Examples:

- Strengthen agricultural job training skills for specialty crop beginning farmers.
- Assisting in developing Good Agricultural Practices, Good Handling Practices and Good Manufacturing Practices for specialty crop farmers.
- Recruit and train new specialty crop farmers in the skills for sustainable food production.
- Develop and implement sustainable farming practices and beneficial management practice tools that improve farm viability and the agricultural economy as well as the environment.
- Accelerate Best Management Practices implementation in specialty crop production for water conservation and efficiency.

Funding Area III: Research

Projects in this funding area will focus on improving the competitiveness of California specialty crops through projects that invest in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes, pest control and disease and organic and sustainable production practices. While research may be the primary objective of projects in this funding area, all SCBGP projects are required to include an outreach component.

Research Category A: Environmental Stewardship and Conservation

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that enhance soil health and conservation of agricultural land, water, habitat, and biodiversity, as well as proposals that address agriculture’s specialty crop contribution to adaptation and/or mitigation of climate change. Projects submitted to the Environmental Stewardship and Conservation category should seek to expand stewardship practices, natural resource conservation, and the development of ecosystem services to improve the environmental and financial performance of California specialty crop growers.

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Develop strategies and tools to enable specialty crop growers to adapt to climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and sequestering carbon.
- Develop innovations in water use efficiency and drought resilience.
- Improve soil health.
- Expand organic and sustainable production practices.

Examples:

- Improve air and water resources in specialty crop farming to further the environmental sustainability and marketability of products.
- Assist communities in climate smart agriculture and planning for specialty crops in California.
- Research and develop new technologies to improve water use efficiency in specialty crop production.
- Development of sustainable farming practice tools and programs for specialty crop growers in California.

Research Category B: Plant Health and Pest Management

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that address pests and diseases that affect the production of California's specialty crops. Projects submitted to the Plant Health and Pest Management category should include applied research related to the probability and impact of invasive pests, disease, and weed threats to specialty crops, and research to develop tools to detect, eradicate, and control pests and diseases.

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Develop new tools to detect, eradicate and control pests and diseases.
- Prevent and manage pests and diseases to minimize economic and environmental harm to specialty crop growers.
- Enhance speed and reliability of detection methods.

Examples:

- *Enhance speed and reliability of detection of pests affecting specialty crops.*
- *Develop new tools for eradication of pests affecting specialty crops.*
- *Develop specialty crops resistant to pests and diseases.*
- *Develop secondary inspection and detection capacity of pests affecting specialty crops.*
- *Conduct pest surveys to ascertain threat and spread of threat to specialty crops.*
- *Develop pest protocol programs for a subsector of specialty crops.*

Research Category C: Food Safety (*Separate proposal solicitation*)

CDFA will continue its partnership agreement with the Center for Produce Safety Foundation (CPS) to utilize the technical expertise of their grant reviewers in the area of food safety. CPS will release a separate food safety proposal solicitation. Please contact CPS at (530) 757-5777, or visit the CPS website at <http://www.centerforproducesafety.org/> for the solicitation timeline and proposal requirements.

Fixed Amount Awards

Fixed amount awards are a type of agreement under which CDFA would provide a specific level of funding for projects that address time-sensitive needs of California's specialty crop industry. Accountability for fixed amount awards is based primarily on performance and results, rather than actual costs incurred. For the 2016 SCBGP, CDFA will consider fixed award amount projects that address two urgent priorities in California specialty crop agriculture:

Food Safety Modernization Act

CDFA will consider practical on-the-farm projects that assist California specialty crop farmers in meeting the standards developed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's **Food Safety Modernization Act** (FSMA).

Example:

- A project to develop curriculum for small and mid-size farmers to train them in the Produce Safety requirements of FSMA and assist them in implementation of appropriate on-farm practices.

Adaptation to Drought

CDFA will consider practical on-the-farm projects that assist specialty crop farmers in adapting to California's historic drought with methods that reduce water use or improve efficiency.

Example:

- A project to train farmers on practical water efficiency practices and assist them in implementing those practices on the farm

Additional Information on Fixed Amount Awards

Fixed Amount Awards include the following additional requirements:

- Projects submitted for fixed amount awards cannot request funding that exceeds \$150,000.
- Projects submitted for fixed amount awards cannot have a timeframe that exceeds two years.
- Fixed award amounts are developed based on the federal cost principals and there must be sufficient historical, adequate cost, or unit pricing data available to establish a fixed amount award based on a reasonable estimate of actual cost.
- Fixed amount awards will be paid in one of two ways:
 - In several partial payments, the amount of each agreed upon in advance, and the “milestone” or event triggering the payment also agreed upon in advance, and set forth in the award; or,
 - In one payment upon completion.

Public Comments

CDFA is seeking to ensure that the proposed program priorities best meet the current needs of California's specialty crop industry. Comments from specialty crop stakeholders are strongly encouraged. Interested parties may submit comments to grants@cdfa.ca.gov beginning September 18, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. until October 2, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. Public comments received will be published, unedited, on the CDFA SCBGP website: www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants and will be considered in the development of final program priorities for 2016.

2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Timeline

Phase I: Concept Proposal	
Release Request for Concept Proposals	October 2015
Workshops and Webinars	November 2015
Concept Proposals Due	December 2015
Phase II: Grant Proposal <i>(by invitation only)</i>	
Invitation to Submit Grant Proposals	February 2016
Grant Proposals Due	March 2016
Grant Proposals to USDA for Approval	July 2016
Award	
Announce and Award Funding	October 2016