

***2014 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT
PROGRAM***

**NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY
REQUEST FOR CONCEPT PROPOSALS**

CATALOGUE OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE 10.170



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF
FOOD & AGRICULTURE**

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2014 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Notice of Funding Availability

Purpose

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is pleased to announce a competitive solicitation process to award 2014 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds for proposals that solely enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops.

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

Funding

Grant awards range from \$50,000 to \$400,000 for two (2) years, nine (9) months and cannot be expended before October 1, 2014, or after June 30, 2017. CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.

Funding is contingent upon passage of a Farm Bill and available funding from the United State Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA, AMS).

Eligibility

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.

Solicitation Process

Phase I, Concept Proposal:

Submit online using the Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) to answer all Concept Proposal questions. CDFA will advise all applicants as to the outcome of Concept Proposal review.

Phase II, Grant Proposal:

Successful Concept Proposal applicants will be invited to participate in the Grant Proposal Phase using FAAST to answer all Grant Proposal questions. Specific requirements and instructions will be included in the “Invitation to Submit Grant Proposals” notification.

KEY POINTS

Solely enhance California specialty crops.

*\$50,000–\$400,000
per project*

*Duration: October 2014 –
June 2017*

*Cannot directly benefit or
provide a profit to a single
organization, institution, or
individual.*

*Brief & concise –
equivalent to 3 pages*

** Invitation Only *
February 2014
Equivalent to 5 pages
plus attachments*

Timeline

Phase I Concept Proposal	October 28, 2013	Release Notice of Funding Availability - Request for Concept Proposals
	November 6–19, 2013	Workshops & Webinar
	December 6, 2013 5:00 pm PST	Concept Proposals Due
Phase II Grant Proposal	February 2014	Invitation to Submit Grant Proposals
	March 21, 2014 5:00 pm PST	Grant Proposals Due
	July 2014	Grant Proposals to USDA for Approval
Award	October 2014	Announce & Award Funding

Funding Categories

Although Concept Proposals may address multiple Funding Categories, applicants must select a single category (identified in Appendix A) as the primary focus of their proposal. There is no limit on the number of Concept Proposals applicants may submit.

Program Goals and Objectives

Applicants must address at least one of the following 2014 SCBGP Program Goals and Objectives in the Concept Proposal. The Program Goals and Objectives are meant to provide focus to the project’s concept development and are independent of Funding Categories. Project proposals should:

- Demonstrate a high likelihood of success
- Describe the specialty crop grower benefit and grower connection to the project
- Be scalable to the larger community based on the outcome of the project proposals for ongoing projects to illustrate a sustainable funding source beyond the life of the proposed grant

All research proposals should include an outreach component addressing how conclusions and research findings will be extended to specialty crop growers.

KEY POINTS

*Schedule & locations:
www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants*

*No late proposals –
Submit Early!*

*No late proposals –
Submit Early!*

Every applicant notified

*Each submission must
represent a unique project.*

Appendix A, page i

*Address at least one
program goal and objective*

**Incorporate an outreach
component**

Program Goals and Objectives

1. *Enhance the marketability and competitiveness of specialty crops through the development of markets (local, domestic, and international) for all California producers to leverage the work and commitment of a diversity of stakeholders:*
 - a. Expand California Grown participation among specialty crop producers, marketing orders, and other stakeholder groups through innovative marketing and promotional activities;
 - b. Create economic opportunities for specialty crop producers through market development activities that focus on local, regional, or international markets;
 - c. Connect farmers to consumers by enhancing direct marketing opportunities that highlight production practices, individual farmers, and growing locations;
 - d. Further develop and enhance agritourism opportunities in local communities through partnerships with community organizations to enhance the economic viability of specialty crop producers.

2. *Expand access to healthy, safe California specialty crops at school, at work, and in neighborhoods:*
 - a. Improve nutritional awareness of children and adults, and increase consumption of California specialty crops;
 - b. Enhance utilization of California-grown specialty crops by improving efficiency of processing and distribution systems from farm-to-table;
 - c. Encourage and expand availability of affordable and locally-grown specialty crops through farm-to-fork programs that make it easier for producers to sell to local institutions;
 - d. Assist specialty crop growers and others in the distribution chain to develop and implement Good Agricultural Practices and Good Handling Practices.

3. *Expand stewardship practices, natural resource conservation, and the development of ecosystem services to improve the environmental and financial performance of California specialty crop growers:*
 - a. Develop and implement beneficial management practices that improve farm viability and the agricultural economy as well as the environment;
 - b. Create markets that economically reward and promote good environmental stewardship;
 - c. Promote energy conservation and use of renewable energy produced from biomass wastes including wood, agricultural production, food processing, and other organic wastes;

*Reminder:
Address at least one
program goal and objective*

- d. Develop strategies to enable specialty crop growers to adapt to climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and sequestering carbon;
 - e. Prevent and manage pests and diseases to minimize economic and environmental harm to specialty crop growers.
4. *Ensure the viability of California specialty crops by investing in the next generation of operators:*
- a. Train and equip the next generation of young and beginning farmers in agronomic, economic, and environmental stewardship skills;
 - b. Create and implement workforce training programs to maintain the technical skills required to keep the California specialty crops sector competitive;
 - c. Introduce and recruit young people to the variety of specialty crop career opportunities;
 - d. Support research to spur innovation in new specialty crop product development, and solve production issues;
 - e. Expand organic and sustainable production practices;
 - f. Increase capacity for small-scale specialty crop production and distribution into urban communities.

Requirements and Application Procedures

Federal Cost Principles

Federal cost principles are regulations based on organization type used to determine allowable costs and ensure consistent treatment of costs. See Appendix C for a list of applicable administrative requirements by organization type.

Recipients are responsible for identifying the Federal cost principles appropriate to their organization and consistent application of cost principles to the SCBGP grant funds. Recipients are responsible for ensuring contractors or consultants comply with applicable Federal cost principle requirements.

Indirect Cost: Maximum Indirect Cost is five (5) percent of total personnel costs. Rate is subject to change pending passage of a Farm Bill and USDA-SCBGP regulations.

For more information on restrictions, limitations, and allowable/unallowable costs, see Appendix C.

Appendix C, page i

*Indirect cost - 5% maximum
of Personnel and Fringe
Benefit Costs*

Appendix C, page i

Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST)

CDFA has entered into an agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to host a web-based Concept and Grant Proposal solicitation process.

Applicants must register to receive a login account for FAAST in order to submit Concept Proposals. FAAST can be accessed through the SWRCB website, <https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov>.

The FAAST system is organized into various tabs and utilizes a question and answer format. See Appendix A for a list of the Concept Proposal application questions as they appear in the FAAST system.

Assistance & Questions

CDFA will conduct workshops and a webinar on the 2014 SCBGP solicitation process, use of the FAAST system, and grant writing tips the weeks of November 4–14, 2013. Please visit CDFA’s SCBGP website www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants, for date, times, and locations.

Email all questions about the solicitation process to: grants@cdfa.ca.gov. Responses to all questions received during the workshops, webinar, or by email will be posted to CDFA’s SCBGP website according to the following schedule:

Questions Received by:	Responses Posted by:
11/19/13 – 5:00 pm PST	11/20/13 – 5:00 pm PST
11/26/13 – 5:00 pm PST	11/27/13 – 5:00 pm PST
12/03/13 – 5:00 pm PST	12/04/13 – 5:00 pm PST

December 3, 2013, at 5:00 pm PST is the final deadline to submit questions for the Concept Proposal Phase.

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

The SWRCB website at: <https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov> contains a Frequently Asked Questions section and a User’s Manual for the FAAST system. If after reading the information available on the website, you have questions about the FAAST System, please contact FAAST customer service at (866) 434-1083, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm or via email, faast_admin@waterboards.ca.gov.

Review Criteria

CDFA’s intent is to fund projects that can produce the highest degree of measurable benefits to California specialty crop producers in relation to each dollar spent. Applicants’ Concept Proposals will be evaluated on the criteria set forth in the **Concept Proposal Review Criteria**.

KEY POINTS

Appendix A, page iii

Most sections include character limitations

*Website:
www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants*

*Email:
grants@cdfa.ca.gov*

*Final deadline for FAQs:
12/3/2013, 5:00 pm PST*

*FAAST Technical Support?
Contact SWRCB
(866) 434-1083
faast_admin@waterboards.ca.gov*

See Appendix B, page ii

Process

CDFA will conduct two levels of review during the Concept Proposal process. The first level is an Administrative Review to determine Concept Proposal requirements are met, and if applicable, assess an applicant's past CDFA grant performance. The second level is a Technical Review to evaluate the merits of the Concept Proposals.

The CDFA SCBGP Technical Review Committee (TRC) will perform the Technical Review. The TRC is comprised of growers, industry, universities, public agencies and representatives from non-profits with an interest and expertise in specialty crops and agricultural systems.

Feedback

Applicants not invited to participate in Phase II – Grant Proposal will receive feedback on their Concept Proposal within 60 days after receiving notification.

Every applicant notified

Appendix A

Funding Categories

Market Enhancement

In this Funding Category, CDFA will consider projects that promote the California Grown message and increase or develop long-term sales and competitiveness of specialty crop products.

Examples:

- Support statewide market promotion and awareness of specialty crops
- Support specialty crop marketing concepts that target the unique characteristics of local, regional areas in domestic and/or international markets
- Increase customers and sales of California specialty crops

Agriculture 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.

Examples:

- Strengthen specialty crop agricultural job training skills for beginning farmers
- Educate consumers about California's specialty crops
- Reconnect communities with specialty crop production
- Educate the public about the identity and threat of invasive species to California specialty crops

Nutrition

In this Funding Category, CDFA will consider projects that improve access and consumption of specialty crops, and/or integrate human health and nutrition with specialty crops.

Examples:

- Develop community and school gardens, urban farms, and other innovative projects that support local and regional food systems
- Increase consumption of specialty crops among all populations through vigorous marketing, promotion, and public/private partnerships
- Implement school initiatives that link cafeterias, classrooms, gardens, parents, worksites, and communities with local farmers
- Develop farm-to-fork networks that include schools, worksites, retail, and restaurant outlets to connect local agriculture with nearby communities
- Promote and/or demonstrate the health benefits of California specialty crops

KEY POINTS

Examples under each Funding Category are suggestions—should not be considered exclusive.

KEY POINTS

*Reminder:
Examples under each
Funding Category are
suggestions—should not be
considered exclusive.*

*CDFFA partners with CPS –
separate solicitation*

Environmental Stewardship and Conservation

In this Funding Category, CDFFA 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.

Examples:

- Integrate resource base issues (i.e., improve both air and water resources)
- Address regulatory challenges for California’s specialty crop growers
- Assist communities in planning for specialty crop agriculture
- Assist growers “in adapting to” climate change by conducting research and implementation of strategies where technologies are already available – such as water use efficiency and invasive pest detection, control, and management
- Accelerate Best Management Practices implementation for water conservation and efficiency

Plant Health and Invasive Species Impact Mitigation

In this Funding Category, CDFFA will consider projects that address pests and diseases that affect the production of California’s specialty crops. This includes 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.

Examples:

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

Food Safety

CDFFA has entered into a partnership agreement with the University of California, Davis’ Center for Produce Safety (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://cps.ucdavis.edu> for the solicitation timeline and proposal requirements.

Concept Proposal Questions (as they appear in FAAST)

Under the General Information and Project Budget tabs, Applicants must respond to the following:

Applicant Organization:

Legal name of organization that will be the lead applicant for this project

Submitting Organization:

Name of organization submitting proposal

Project Title:

Clear, concise and brief

Project Description:

Summary of proposal

Project Budget:

Funds requested and anticipated matching funds

Under the Application Questionnaire tab, Applicants must also respond to the following Concept Proposal questions based on SCBGP requirements:

1. *Organization Type:*

Type that correctly reflects the nature of applicant organization

2. *Funding Category:*

Select one of the following which most accurately aligns with the nature of the proposal.

- Market Enhancement
- Agriculture Education
- Nutrition
- Environmental Stewardship and Conservation
- Plant Health and Invasive Species Impact Mitigation

3. *Project Purpose:*

Identify the specific and existing issue, problem, or need the project will address, and explain why the proposal is important and timely.

4. *Program Purpose:*

Identify the main objective(s) of the proposal and how it meets one of the 2014 SCBGP's goals and objectives.

5. *Prior Year SCBGP Project:*

Indicate if the proposal builds on a previously funded SCBGP project. If 'YES,' provide the Grant Agreement number(s), explain how the new proposal complements previous work, results of the completed work and long-term quantifiable effects of the results—specifically, the impact on the specialty crop industry. Include sustainability efforts.

KEY POINTS

*Use acronyms sparingly –
define at least once*

*Avoid personal and
possessive pronouns like
“we” and “our”*

Use non-technical language

*Matching funds not
required—strongly
encouraged*

*Text box—500 character
limit*

*Text box—500 character
limit; Program Goals and
Objectives listed on
pages 4–6*

*Text box—1,000 character
limit*

6. *Potential Impact:*
Identify and quantify specialty crop beneficiaries. State economic impact(s) to specialty crop industry. Note the specific specialty crop, if possible.
7. *Expected Measurable Outcome(s):*
Provide at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that directly and meaningfully supports the proposal’s purpose and is of direct importance to intended beneficiaries. See Appendix C for more guidance.
8. *Project Duration:*
Estimate the “Start Date” and “End Date” in mm/yyyy format.
9. *Work Plan:*
Describe activities that will be performed to accomplish project objectives and support expected measurable outcomes. Include tasks for all personnel responsible for carrying out project activities.
10. *Budget:*
Download, complete, and attach the “**Budget Template.**”

KEY POINTS

Text box—500 character limit

Text box—1,000 character limit

Appendix C, page ii

*Duration:
October 2014 – June 2017*

Text box—1,000 character limit; do not include matching fund/or in-kind contribution activities

*See Appendix B, page i
Verify budget is attached*

Appendix B

Budget Template

Download the Excel Budget Template (.xls) from FFAST.

PIN #				Insert PIN No.
Instructions: Complete each budget category by entering the amount of grant funds requested for each budget category and corresponding grant year. Sections H and J will automatically calculate, no entry is required.				
Budget Categories	Year 1 (10/2014–09/2015)	Year 2 (10/2015–09/2016)	Year 3 (10/2016–06/2017)	Total
A. Personnel				\$0
B. Fringe Benefits				\$0
C. Travel				\$0
D. Equipment (>\$5,000 per unit)				\$0
E. Supplies (<\$5,000 per unit)				\$0
F. Contractual <i>Contractual hourly rates cannot exceed \$65. The hourly rate is determined by the salary of a GS-14 step 10. To access the GS-14 step 10 visit http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/#url=2013 and click on General Schedule and Locality Pay Tables.</i>				\$0
G. Other				\$0
H. Total Direct Costs (sum of sections A-G)				\$0
I. Indirect Costs <i>Cannot Exceed 5% of Personnel + Fringe Benefits</i>				\$0
J. Total Grant Funds (sum of sections H+I)				\$0

Concept Proposal Review Criteria

SCORING CRITERIA	Maximum Points
1. ORGANIZATION TYPE (Non-Scoring Criteria)	
2. FUNDING CATEGORY (Non-Scoring Criteria)	
3. PROJECT PURPOSE Identify the specific and existing issue, problem, or need that the project will address, and explain why the proposal is important and timely.	5
4. PROJECT PURPOSE Identify the main objective(s) of the proposal and how it meets one of the 2014 SCBGP's goals and objectives as outlined on page 6 of the 2014 Notice of Funding Availability.	5
5. PRIOR YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS (Non-Scoring Criteria) Indicate if the proposal builds on a previously funded SCBGP project. If 'YES,' provide the Grant Agreement number(s), explain how the new proposal compliments previous work, results of the completed work and long-term quantifiable effects of the results—specifically the impact on the specialty crop industry. Include sustainability efforts.	
6. POTENTIAL IMPACT Identify and quantify specialty crop beneficiaries. State economic impact(s) to specialty crop industry. Note the specific specialty crop, if possible.	10
7. EXPECTED MEASURABLE OUTCOMES Provide at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that directly and meaningfully supports the proposal's purpose and is of direct importance to intended beneficiaries.	10
7. PROJECT DURATION (Non-Scoring Criteria) Estimate the "Start Date" and "End Date" in mm/yyyy format.	
8. WORK PLAN Describe activities that will be performed to accomplish project objectives and support expected measurable outcomes. Include tasks for all personnel responsible for carrying out project activities.	10
9. BUDGET (attachment) Download, complete, and attach the "Budget Template."	10
TOTAL	50

Appendix C

KEY POINTS

Additional Guidance

Federal Cost Principles Summary Table

Organization Type	Administrative Requirements	Cost Principles
State, local or Indian tribal government	7 CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3016	2 CFR 225
Private non-profit organization other than an (1) institution of higher education, (2) hospital, or (3) organization named in OMB Circular A-122 as not subject to that circular.	7 CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3019	2 CFR 230
Colleges and Universities	7 CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3019	2 CFR 220
For-profit organization other than a hospital and an organization named in OMB Circular A-122 as not subject to that circular.	7 CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3019	48 CFR Subpart 31.2

Allowable and unallowable costs

Applicant is responsible for determining which cost principles apply-cost principles flow-down to sub-recipients based on organization type

Restrictions and Limitations

Grant funds shall supplement, rather than replace (supplant) the expenditure of State funds.

Grant funds may not be used to fund political activities. Development of participation in lobbying activities including costs of membership in organizations substantially engaged in lobbying are unallowable.

Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land are unallowable as direct and indirect charges.

- Capital expenditures** means expenditures for the acquisition cost of capital assets (equipment, buildings, land), or expenditures to make improvements to capital assets that materially increase their value or useful life. Acquisition cost means the cost of the asset including the cost to put it in place. Acquisition cost for equipment, for example, means the net invoice price of the equipment including the cost of any modifications, attachments, accessories, or auxiliary apparatus necessary to make it usable for the purpose for which it is acquired. Ancillary charges such as taxes, duty, protective in transit insurance, freight, and installation may be included in, or excluded from the acquisition cost in accordance with the governmental unit's regular accounting practices.
- General purpose equipment** means equipment not limited to research, scientific, or other technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.

- **Equipment** means an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000.

Capital expenditures for special purpose equipment are allowable as direct costs provided that items with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more have the approval of CDFA. Applications for grant funds should describe how the project potentially impacts and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public.

- **Special purpose equipment** means equipment which is used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities. The special purpose equipment must solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops and benefit the specialty crop industry.

Rental costs of buildings, equipment, and vehicles are allowable as direct costs in accordance with the cost principles.

Expected Measurable Outcomes

Definition

Expected Measurable Outcome must indicate a goal, benchmark, target, and performance measure that solely benefits specialty crops.

- **Goal:** What the project will accomplish, i.e., the intended results.
- **Performance Measure:** Measures/indicators used to observe progress and measure actual results compared to expected results, usually quantifiable (numeric values, percentages, scores and indices).
- **Benchmark:** A specific numerical number/metric serving as a point of reference from which measurements may be made. If data does not exist, describe the lack of data.
- **Target:** Quantity of change expected, framed in terms of level of achievement.

Expected Measurable Outcomes must be outcomes, not outputs. Outputs are the products or services delivered, while outcomes are events, occurrences, or conditions outside the activity or program of direct importance to the beneficiaries and the public generally.

Examples of outcome measures may include, but are not limited to: per capita consumption, consumer awareness as a percent of target market reached, market penetration based on sales by geographic region, dollar value of exports, or website hits. Research grants they may include generation of new knowledge, research quality, attainment of Best Management Practices in the field, or the development of opportunities for specialty crop growers.

For further information on expected measurable outcomes, please see the “[SCBGP Logic Model](#).”