

2015 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)
DECEMBER 3, 2014

Please refer to “New Questions” identified under each section for most current questions and responses.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. When are Concept Proposals due?
A. Concept Proposals must be submitted through the State Water Resources Control Board's Financial Application Assistance Submittal Tool (FAAST) by Friday, December 5, 2014, at 5 pm PST.
2. Q. Are resources available for applicants?
A. Yes, the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) website at www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants has a number of SCBGP resources for new and returning applicants.
3. Q. Will CDFA provide answers to specific questions regarding the eligibility of Concept Proposals or assist applicants in selecting a Funding Category?
A. To maintain the integrity of the competitive grant process, CDFA is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with feedback on specific proposals during the solicitation process. CDFA cannot provide guidance on the most appropriate Funding Category for a Concept Proposal and will not move a proposal submitted under one Funding Category to a more appropriate category.

Applicants must determine whether their project purpose meets the criteria established for SCBGP funding and select the most appropriate Funding Category for their project.

4. Q. Is there a limit to the number of Concept Proposals an applicant organization can submit?
A. CDFA does not impose a limit on the number of Concept Proposals that an applicant can submit; however, each Concept Proposal should be for a unique project. Submitting the same Concept Proposal over multiple Funding Categories is prohibited.

Applicants who have previously been awarded funds are allowed to submit Concept Proposals for the 2015 SCBGP. If the new Concept Proposal builds upon the work of a previously awarded SCBGP grant, the applicant will be asked to provide an explanation of how the new Concept Proposal expands upon or compliments the prior grant.

5. Q. Does CDFA allocate a set amount of funding or projects per Funding Category?
A. No, CDFA does not allocate a set amount of funding or projects per Funding Category.
6. Q. Can a Concept Proposal address more than one type of specialty crop?
A. Yes, a Concept Proposal can address more than one type of specialty crop, but it is not required. Also, benefiting multiple specialty crops does not necessarily increase the chances of a project proposal receiving a SCBGP award.

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7. Q. Is it appropriate to use abbreviations or acronyms in the Concept Proposal?
A. Yes, abbreviations and acronyms can be used in the Concept Proposal, but must be defined and spelled out at least once within the Concept Proposal.
8. Q. What attachments are required to be submitted with the Concept Proposal application?
A. The Budget Template is the only required attachment in the Concept Proposal phase. Because this is the only required attachment, the Technical Review Committee is not required to review/consider any additional documents attached to the Concept Proposal application. For this reason, applicants are discouraged from relying on additional attachments to support or explain their Concept Proposal.
9. Q. Can researchers outside of California be listed as Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-PI?
A. Yes, researchers outside of California can be listed as PI or Co-PI.
10. Q. Should applicants avoid possessive pronouns such as “my”, “our” and “we”?
A. Yes, for consistency and clarity CDFA encourages applicants to depersonalize projects.
11. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to build upon or expand on a project funded by another Federal or State grant program?
A. Yes, SCBGP funds may be used to build upon or expand on a project funded by another Federal or State grant program; however, SCBGP funds cannot be used to duplicate activities funded by the other project.
12. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to purchase non-specialty crop items (e.g., flour, soy sauce, salad dressing, salt, pepper, rice) if the items necessary for the promotion of the specialty crop (i.e., cooking demonstration and/or recipes)?
A. SCBGP funds may be used to purchase non-specialty crop items for recipes/processed products as long as the main focus is on the specialty crop and the specialty crop make up more than 50 percent of the recipe/processed product by weight (excluding water). Also, if purchasing a large amount of non-specialty crop commodities, applicants are required to use other funding.
13. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to purchase separate, non-specialty crops for sides or pairings?
A. SCBGP funds cannot be used for separate complementary non-specialty crop products (e.g. sides, pairings).
14. Q. Who should be listed as Cooperating entities?
A. Cooperating entities are organizations an applicant will be working with to plan and/or implement the proposed project. Cooperating entities can include individuals who may receive a portion of the SCBGP funds and/or provide Matching Funds or In-Kind Contributions.

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15. Q. Can CDFA provide two examples of a cost that was allowable prior to 2014 SCBGP but is no longer allowable?
- A. Purchasing Specialty Crops to give away as meals are no longer allowable. SCBGP funds cannot be used for vouchers or coupons, but can be used for the printing or production cost associated with these items. The [2015 RFCP](#) includes a detailed but not exclusive explanation of allowable and unallowable costs for this program. Applicants are strongly encouraged to utilize this information in preparing their Concept Proposal.
16. Q. Is manufacturing equipment used to manufacture products whose primary ingredients are California specialty crops potentially allowable as direct or indirect costs?
- A. No, Manufacturing equipment used to manufacture products whose primary ingredients are California specialty crops are unallowable as direct and indirect charges, because it is considered general purpose equipment. Refer to the [2015 RFCP](#), page 12.
17. Q. Is a DUNS number required to submit a Concept Proposal?
- A. No, the Data Universal Numbering System, abbreviated as DUNS is a propriety system developed by Dun and Bradstreet (D&B) that assigns a unique numeric identifier to a single business entity. Applicants do not need a DUNS number to submit a Concept Proposal, but if awarded SCBGP funds, recipients will need to obtain a DUNS number before a grant agreement can be executed.
18. Q. Where can applicants that were unable to attend the workshops and webinars find the materials from these presentations?
- A. Materials from the 2015 SCBGP workshops and a recording of the November 14, 2014 webinar are available on CDFA's SCBGP website at www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants.
19. Q. Do contractor's names need to be specified in the Concept Proposal phase if their fees will be paid with matching funds?
- A. No, it is not necessary to include the name of a contractor paid with matching funds in the Concept Proposal phase. However, additional information on Matching Funds will be required in the Grant Proposal phase. See the "Matching Funds" section below for additional information.
21. Q. Where should discussion of project outcome evaluation be included in the in the Concept Proposal?
- A. Applicants may briefly describe how they will evaluate the success of their project in the Expected Measurable Outcomes and Work Plan sections of the Concept Proposal. Successful Concept Proposal applicants will be required to explain project evaluation strategies in detail in the Grant Proposal phase.

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22. Q. Is it necessary for applicants to attach documentation to demonstrate support from cooperating entities during the Concept Proposal phase?
- A. No, it is not necessary for applicants to attach documentation to demonstrate support from cooperating entities. Successful Concept Proposal applicants will have an opportunity to submit supporting documentation during the Grant Proposal phase.
23. Q. Can funds be awarded to a single organization or are projects required to have cooperating entities? What is meant by "funds cannot benefit a single individual?"
- A. SCBGP funds may be granted to a single organization and projects are not required to have cooperating entities. Please refer to [General Questions FAQ #14](#) for a definition of cooperating entities. The statement "funds cannot benefit a single individual" refers to the beneficiaries of the end result of the project. Proposals must demonstrate that the project will ultimately benefit the California specialty crop industry - not just a single entity, individual, or organization.
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ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. Who is eligible to apply for SCBGP funding?
- A. The organizations eligible to submit a Concept Proposal are: non-profit and for-profit organizations; local, state, and federal government entities including tribal governments; and public or private colleges, and universities. Refer to the [2015 RFCP](#), page one.
2. Q. Where can organizations access information regarding eligibility of a particular crop or commodity?
- A. A list of eligible specialty crops is available on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) website <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/scbgp>.
3. Q. Are concept proposals focused on processed foods made from California-grown specialty crops eligible for SCBGP funding?
- A. Yes, concept proposals focused on processed specialty crop products are eligible for SCBGP funding. However, since the purpose of the program is to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, the focus of the project proposal must be on the specialty crop in the processed product. Additionally, the specialty crop in the processed product must constitute greater than 50 percent of the product by weight, exclusive of added water.
4. Q. Are organizations outside of California eligible to apply for SCBGP funding?
- A. The purpose of the SCBGP is to enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. Organizations outside of California must adequately demonstrate that their concept proposal will solely enhance the competitiveness of California Specialty Crops. Projects

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that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in other states and territories should submit proposals to their State Department of Agriculture.

5. Q. Can a proposal that promotes California specialty crops include ineligible products or commodities?
A. Proposals may benefit ineligible products or commodities; however, SCBGP funds cannot be used to benefit non specialty crops. At the Grant Proposal phase applicants will be required to describe in detail what steps, methods, and processes will be used to ensure that all SCBGP funding will be used to solely enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. Some examples include: tracking systems, prorating costs, and/or using other funding.
 6. Q. Are organic crops considered specialty crops?
A. Not all organic crops are specialty crops; however, any organically grown commodity on [USDA's list of eligible commodities](#) would be considered a specialty crop, and eligible under the SCBGP.
 7. Q. The commodity that is the focus of our organization's proposal is not on the [USDA's list of eligible commodities](#). Are there any other resources available that define specialty crops?
A. For commodities not included on the list of eligible commodities, applicants can refer to [USDA's detailed definition of specialty crops](#).
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FAAST APPLICATION

1. Q. Are all the sections/tabs in the FAAST system required for SCBGP Concept Proposal applications?
A. No, the FAAST system is used for a number of purposes other than SCBGP. Sections such as latitude/longitude are not applicable to SCBGP and therefore are not required.
2. Q. Can corrections be made to a Concept Proposal that has already been submitted in FAAST?
A. Yes, corrections can be made to a Concept Proposal that has already been submitted in FAAST prior to the Concept Proposal deadline. Applicants can contact the FAAST Help Desk at (866) 434-1083 or FAAST_ADMIN@waterboards.ca.gov, provide their Project Identification Number (PIN) and FAAST can make the Concept Proposal available for the applicant.

Reasonable time should be given in advance of the submission deadline if changes need to be made to a project that has already been submitted. Changes cannot be made after the submission deadline.

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3. Q. Is there an overall character limit for Concept Proposals? What is counted toward the character limit?
- A. There is a character limit for each individual Concept Proposal question in FFAST. This limit includes letters, punctuation, and spaces. There is no cumulative character limit for the entire Concept Proposal.
4. Q. Is it possible to view an application in FFAST without creating an account?
- A. To view an application in FFAST, you must log in with a FFAST account. It is up to the applicant organization to decide whether to share a single FFAST account among multiple users working on an application or create multiple FFAST accounts.
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PRIOR YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS

1. Q. **Revised December 3, 2014.** Which number should be used to identify prior-year SCBGP projects in the Concept Proposal?
- A. Please provide the grant agreement number(s) of any prior-year SCBGP projects. The grant agreement number is listed on your initial grant agreement with CDFA as well as subsequent progress reports and starts with "SCB."

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2. Q. If the grant agreement number from a previously funded SCBGP project is unknown, what information should applicants provide?
- A. If the grant agreement number is unknown, applicants should provide as much information about the previously funded SCBGP project as possible, such as Proposal Identification Number (PIN), name of the organization granted the SCBGP award, and SCBGP year (i.e. 2010, 2011, etc.) so CDFA and USDA can identify the previously funded SCBGP project.
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SUSTAINABILITY

1. Q. What information should applicants provide in response to the Sustainability question?
- A. Applicants should be able to demonstrate that either the activities of the project will be able to continue beyond the grant period without continued reliance on SCBGP funding, or that the benefit of the project to California's specialty crop industry will continue beyond the life of the project.

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SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED/BEGINNING FARMERS

1. Q. Why is CDFA asking if Concept Proposals will benefit Socially Disadvantaged or Beginning Farmers?
A. USDA requires CDFA to identify projects that benefit socially disadvantaged or beginning farmers. To make sure CDFA accurately responds to this question, applicants are asked to identify projects that provide benefits to these groups. It is not required that projects directly benefit members of these groups and this is not a scored question in the Concept Proposal.
 2. Q. What are Socially Disadvantaged and Beginning Farmers?
A. USDA defines a beginning farmer as an individual or entity that has not operated a farm for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation. A socially disadvantaged farmer is defined by USDA as 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.
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EXPECTED MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

1. Q. What does “technical feasibility” refer to in the review criteria for Expected Measurable Outcomes?
A. Technical feasibility refers to the reasonableness and likelihood that the outcome(s) described in this section of the Concept Proposal will be successful.
2. Q. What is the difference between an output and an outcome?
A. Outputs are the activities that will be conducted to carry out the project. Examples include experiments, surveys, workshops, etc. Outcomes are changes in knowledge action or condition that will be accomplished.
3. Q. What is meant by quantify?
A. Quantify means to measure something numerically (i.e., numeric values, percentages, scores and indices).

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4. Q. What elements should applicants include in the Expected Measurable Outcomes section?
- A. Applicants should include at least one distinct, quantifiable and measurable outcome that solely supports enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. Successful Concept Proposal applicants will be required to provide a Goal, Performance Measure, Benchmark, and Target for each Expected Measurable Outcome in the Grant Proposal phase.
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PROJECT DURATION

1. Q. What is the maximum grant duration for any proposed project?
- A. The maximum grant duration is two years, nine months. Projects can have a duration of less than two years, nine months, but cannot exceed this timeframe. Grant activities cannot occur and grant funds cannot be expended before October 1, 2015 or after June 30, 2018.
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WORK PLAN

New Questions: December 3, 2014

1. Q. Should staff that will contribute to activities performed on the project be identified by name/function in the Work Plan section?
- A. Staff that will contribute to project activities supported by the SCBGP should be included in the Work Plan using position title or function, not by name.
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BUDGET

1. Q. Does CDFA adjust project budgets, or are the amounts granted at the requested value?
- A. CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.
2. Q. What is the General Schedule 15 (GS-15), Step 10?
- A. The GS-15, Step 10 is the maximum pay allowed annually and hourly for contractors and consultants by the federal government. Contractor costs above GS-15, Step 10 must be paid from a source other than SCBGP funds unless a justification is provided and approved by CDFA and USDA.
3. Q. What is the maximum amount of indirect cost an organization is allowed?
- A. The maximum amount of indirect cost an organization is allowed is five percent of the total personnel cost (salary and fringe benefits). This limitation includes organizations with an established federal indirect cost rate.

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4. Q. If a Cooperating Entity is being paid with SCBGP funds, should they be listed under Personnel or Contractual?
A. If a Cooperating Entity is being paid with SCBGP funds they must be listed under Contractual.
5. Q. The budget template indicates that supplies are less than \$5,000; is that annually or total cost?
A. This is a per unit cost, not cumulative. Supplies are items with a cost less than \$5,000 per unit.
6. Q. What is Program Income?
A. Program Income means gross income earned during the grant period from activities supported by or as a direct result of the grant.
7. Q. Can modifications be made from the Concept Proposal to either increase or decrease the amount requested in the Grant Proposal?
A. Yes, the Concept Proposal budget should estimate the SCBGP funds necessary to conduct the activities of the proposal. Applicants invited to the second phase of the process may need to make slight modifications in the original budgeted amount or shifts in budget categories in the course of developing a Grant Proposal. CDFA does not impose limitations on the amount that a budget may change during the second phase of the process; however, changes should be reasonable, allowable and appropriate to the original project purpose.
8. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used for fundraising?
A. No, SCBGP funds cannot be used for organized fundraising, financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, or similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions, regardless of the purpose for which the funds will be used. This includes salaries of personnel involved in activities to raise capital.
9. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used for grant writing?
A. No, SCBGP funds cannot be used for grant writing.
10. Q. Are bus rentals an allowable cost and if so, what is the appropriate budget category?
A. Yes, bus rentals are allowable to the extent that the rates are reasonable, necessary to achieve the project purpose and solely benefit the competitiveness of specialty crops. Rental costs of buses should be categorized under the budget category "Other."
11. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used for legal fees?
A. No, legal fees are generally unallowable. For example, SCBGP funds may not be used to establish/incorporate an organization, for the defense or prosecution of criminal and/or civil proceedings, claims, appeals, and/or patent infringements.

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12. Q. Are general improvements to buildings or land which materially increase their value or useful life allowable?
A. No, general improvements to buildings or land which materially increase their value or useful life are unallowable.
13. Q. Where can applicants download the Concept Proposal Budget Template?
A. A link to the Concept Proposal Budget is located in the Questionnaire tab under question 11 "Budget" in [FAAST](#).
14. Q. Should all sections of the Budget Template be completed?
A. It is only necessary to complete those sections for which SCBGP funds will be used to complete the activities of the project; i.e.; if SCBGP funds will be used to pay for supplies but a project involves no travel, the "Supplies" section of the template should be complete and the "Travel" section can be left blank, or filled with a zero.
15. Q. Why are only certain cells in the Concept Proposal budget template able to be edited? What is the password to unlock the template?
A. Applicants can enter information only in the following cells in the Concept Proposal budget template: PIN # and the Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and Description columns. To maintain the consistency of the template, all other cells are protected and cannot be edited.
16. Q. Would renting booth space at a trade show that is not specific to specialty crops be considered an allowable cost?
A. The cost would only be allowable if the applicant's booth at the trade show is solely used to promote specialty crops.
17. Q. Would costs for updating an applicant organization's logo as part of a promotional campaign to increase sales of "XYZ GROWN" specialty crop commodity be considered an allowable cost?
A. No, costs for updating an applicant organization's logo are not allowable, even as part of a promotional campaign to increase sales of a specialty crop. Funding for this type of activity can be secured from another source, such as matching funds.
18. Q. What is the difference between "special purpose" and "general purpose" equipment?
A. Both "special purpose" and "general purpose" equipment refer to tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 per unit. "Special purpose" equipment used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities may be conditionally allowable. "General purpose" equipment is used for purposes other than research, scientific, or other technical activities and is not allowable.
19. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used for market research?
A. Yes, SCBGP funds may be used for market research, providing the research is an essential component of a project and will solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

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20. Q. In previous years, SCBGP funded projects provided vouchers for the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables to participants in nutrition education programs as well as when a customer spent their federal benefits (SNAP/CalFresh, WIC, WIC-FMNP, etc.) to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at a farmers' market. Is the reimbursement of the value of those vouchers still an allowable cost?
- A. SCBGP funds cannot be used for vouchers or coupons, but can be used for the printing or production cost associated with these items only if they solely promote the specialty crop rather than promote or benefit a program or single organization. Refer to the [2015 RFCP](#) for a detailed but not exclusive explanation of allowable and unallowable costs for this program.

Projects that support the increase of fruits and vegetables in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing incentives at the point of purchase and/or include technologies for benefit redemption systems should consider submitting those projects to the [Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grants Program](#).

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21. Q. What type of costs would be eligible under Other?
- A. Cost that can be listed under Other include, but are not limited to: conferences or meetings, communications, speaker/trainer fees, publication costs, data collection, and other budgeted costs associated with the project.
22. Q. Which totals should match between the Project Budget tab in FFAST and the Excel budget template?
- A. The amount listed under Funds Requested in FFAST should match the amount listed on line J in the Excel budget template (Total Grant Funds).
23. Q. Are Matching Funds and In-Kind Contributions considered Program Income and therefore be listed in the budget template?
- A. No, Matching Funds and In-Kind Contributions are not considered Program Income and therefore should not be included in the budget template. See [Budget FAQ #6](#) for a definition of Program Income.
24. Q. Does the \$5,000 per unit cost limit for supplies include tax?
- A. No, the \$5,000 per unit cost limit for supplies does not include tax, shipping, etc.
25. Q. Is it possible to enter the information on a PDF version of the budget template?
- A. No, applicants should enter all budget information into the Excel budget template provided in FFAST.

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MATCHING FUNDS

1. Q. Are Matching Funds and In-Kind Contributions required?
A. Matching Funds and In-Kind Contributions are not required, but are strongly encouraged and can be useful in demonstrating industry support for a project. Because Matching Funds and In-Kind Contributions are not a requirement of the SCBGP, these funds should only be totaled on the Project Budget tab under Local Cost Match.

 2. Q. What is the difference between Matching Funds and In-Kind Contributions?
A. Matching Funds refers to real dollar contributions to a project from sources other than the SCBGP. In-Kind Contributions refers to the determined value of assets donated to the project (i.e., equipment, use of land, volunteered staff time).
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GRANT PROPOSAL PHASE, GRANT MANAGEMENT AND AUDITS

1. Q. Where can applicants access information about requirements of the SCBGP Grant Proposal Phase?
A. CDFA will provide detailed Grant Proposal Instructions, FAQs and conduct a webinar for applicants invited to participate in the second phase of the process.

2. Q. Where can applicants access about the administration and audit requirements of approved grants?
A. Administrative and audit requirements can change from year to year, but applicants can find information in the Grant Management Procedures Manuals available in the [Recipient Resources](#) section of the CDFA grants web site.