

2020 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 16, 2019

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. Can a single individual participate in multiple proposals?
A. There is no limit on the number of projects in which an individual can participate. However, before agreeing to participate, individuals should ensure they have adequate capacity to effectively participate in multiple SCBGPs and that the combined time will not exceed 100 percent full time equivalent (FTE), if all proposals are awarded funds.
2. Q. Is there a minimum acreage requirement in order to qualify for the SCBGP?
A. There is no acreage requirement for SCBGP proposals.
3. Q. Is there a grammatical-style applicants must use when preparing a concept proposal?
A. There is no preferred or required style applicants must use; however, applicants should be mindful of the character limits in FFAST and use layperson's terms whenever possible.
4. Q. Where can applicants access project descriptions for previously awarded SCBGP projects?
A. Applicants can find project abstracts and Final Performance Reports for past grant awards on the [CDFA SCBGP website](#). Note: Program requirements change year to year, so past projects may not necessarily conform to current program requirements.
5. Q. Should applicants specify whether project activities will be conducted locally, regionally, nationally, or even internationally?
A. Generally, a proposal should indicate the purpose of project activities and where they will occur as part of describing what the proposal will accomplish and how it will benefit the California specialty crop industry. Project activities can be conducted locally, regionally, nationally, and/or internationally. However, SCBGP funds must benefit and seek to enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops.
6. Q. Can project activities occur outside of the grant period of November 1, 2020 through April 30, 2023, and if so, can the costs of those activities be charged to the grant?
A. Grant funds cannot be expended prior to November 1, 2020. However, it is possible to fund activities that occur prior to that date utilizing matching funds or in-kind contributions. Note that activities undertaken before awards have been announced are done at the applicant's own risk. CDFA is not responsible for reimbursing applicants for costs incurred if no award is received.
7. Q. The phrase "solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops" was removed from the SCBGP under the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (Farm Bill). How does this change the program and can funds now benefit non-specialty crops?
A. The removal of this phrase does not substantially change the SCBGP, rather, this amendment, and the additional Farm Bill language that replaced this phrase clarifies methods through which specialty crop competitiveness may be enhanced. These methods were largely already present in CDFA's program priorities. This language also supports that some projects may have an ancillary benefit to non-specialty crops while primarily benefiting specialty crops. However, this change did not correspond to a change in the project types permitted by USDA or to the allowable costs and activities associated with the

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program. As such, SCBGP funds still cannot directly benefit an ineligible commodity or provide a benefit or profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.

8. Q. Can cooperators or contractors outside the state of California be involved in project activities?
A. Project cooperators or contractors outside the state of California can be involved in project activities as long as the applicant demonstrates that the primary benefit of the proposal will be to California specialty crops. As with all contractors, the applicant must, at a minimum, demonstrate that procurement transactions for contractors were or will be conducted in a manner that provides full and open competition and is consistent with the standards described in 2 CFR 200.317 – 200.326. In addition, in accordance with California Assembly Bill 1887, state funded and state sponsored travel to states with discriminatory laws is prohibited. SCBGP funds cannot be used to support costs for travel to states with active discriminatory laws.
9. Q. Do proposals have to focus on one specific specialty crop or multiple specialty crops?
A. Proposals can focus on either one specialty crop or multiple specialty crops.
10. Q. Can applicants include letters of support with the Concept Proposal application?
A. Letters of support are not required in the Concept Proposal phase. In addition, attachments other than the required attachments detailed in the RFCP are highly discouraged and Technical Review Committee members are not required to review extraneous attachments. However, letters of support can be provided in the Grant Proposal phase.
11. Q. Is it necessary to hire a grant writer to develop a proposal? Can CDFA recommend a grant writer?
A. It is not necessary for applicants to hire a grant writer, and each year many proposals are funded that were developed without the assistance of a grant writer or professional proposal development staff. It would not be appropriate for CDFA to recommend a grant writing organization to prospective applicants; however, organizations that have not previously received funding may consider applying to the Additional Assistance for Historically Underrepresented Organizations (hereinafter referred to as Additional Assistance) Funding Area. Finally, note that grant writing costs are considered pre-award costs and cannot be covered using grant funds.
12. Q. If project costs will exceed the maximum award amount, can applicants request an amount greater than the maximum? Will CDFA reduce a proposal that exceeds the maximum award amount?
A. Applicants may not request more than the maximum award amount of \$450,000 (\$100,000 for Additional Assistance). If project costs are expected to exceed the maximum award amount, applicants should consider using cost share to reduce the SCBGP funding requested, revising the scale of the proposal, or identifying an alternative funding source. Note that requesting funds greater than the maximum award amount will result in disqualification of a proposal and applicants should not rely on CDFA to reduce the project budget.

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13. Q. What are the standards for projects that will utilize human subjects?
A. Projects that include human subjects must follow appropriate human subjects protocols and institutional approvals. Note that while each applicant must follow its own institution's policies and protocols regarding human subjects, CDFA does not require human subject approval at the concept proposal phase.
14. Q. Are there any criteria for who can be named as a Project Director, Project Manager, and/or Principle Investigator?
A. Project personnel must be qualified to fill their stated role. It is up to the applicant to select the individual(s) best suited for their project.
15. Q. Must all proposals include cooperating entities? Do projects with cooperating entities receive additional consideration in the review process?
A. Cooperating entities are not required and are not a factor in the scoring criteria. However, including cooperating entities may be viewed as an indicator of industry support by the Technical Review Committee.
16. Q. If multiple organizations or institutions are collaborating on a proposal, is only one considered the applicant?
A. Only one organization or institution may be listed as the applicant organization in the concept proposal application. Additional organizations or institutions should be listed as cooperators. Cooperating entities that will receive grant funds if a proposal is awarded funding should also be listed as contractors in the budget template.
17. Q. Can a staff position funded in a prior-year SCBGP project be funded in a new project or would that be considered duplicated costs?
A. SCBGP funds cannot be used to duplicate costs or activities supported by prior-year SCBGP awards or other state or Federal programs. Applicants must demonstrate that costs or activities requested in a new proposal do not duplicate efforts of other projects. Costs for a staff position that will work on two projects concurrently would be allowed as long as the applicant details the tracking mechanisms and processes in place to ensure that time spent working on each project is accurately recorded and invoiced.
18. Q. Can figures, pictures, or tables be included in the Concept Proposal?
A. The FAAST system is text based and not designed to facilitate figures, pictures, or tables. Additionally, proposals selected for funding must conform with the USDA application format for this program which does not allow figures, pictures, or additional tables so the applications attachments should not be altered to include such items.
19. Q. How are urban and rural communities defined?
A. Generally, definitions of the terms "urban" and "rural" refer to population density of a geographic area. The use of the phrase "urban and rural communities" within the program priorities is intended to be inclusive, rather than exclusive, as all communities would be either urban or rural depending on population density.

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20. Q. What is an underserved community?
A. USDA defines "underserved" as an area or community lacking an adequate level or quality of service. For the purpose of the SCBGP, this would typically include, but is not limited to, food deserts, communities with above average rates of poverty or obesity, or disadvantaged/severely disadvantaged communities.
21. Q. How does USDA define beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers?
A. USDA defines beginning farmers 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 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.

New Question: October 11, 2019

22. Q. Can a project have multiple Co-Principal Investigators from different organizations? If so, how should this be reflected in the budget template?
A. A proposal can have multiple Co-Principal Investigators from different organizations; however, only one organization may act as the applicant. All costs for project personnel employed by organizations other than the applicant must be listed under contractual. At this phase, it is only necessary to enter the total estimated contractual cost for each grant year and list the organizations that will be participating in the description column. In the Grant Proposal phase, an additional breakdown of contractual costs will be required.
23. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to promote attendance at a market enhancement event?
A. Such activities and the associated costs may be allowable if the purpose is to benefit the specialty crop(s) at the event rather than the event itself or any organization.
24. Q. Can applicants use any version of Microsoft Word to submit the required templates?
A. Applicants may use any version of Microsoft Word if the required templates are submitted as Word documents.
25. Q. What is a cooperating entity and what types of organizations can be listed in this section of the FAAST application?
A. Cooperating entities are organizations an applicant will work 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 contribute cost share. There is no restriction on what types of organizations may serve as cooperating entities, provided the organization will have a role in project activities and has agreed to participate as a cooperator. Note that organizations that support the project but will not be directly involved are not appropriate to list as cooperators.

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26. Q. Can a proposal promote artisanal production for a specialty crop?
A. Promotion of artisanal production of specialty crops may be allowable so long as the project will promote the specialty crops rather than the process or any individual/organization.
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ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. Are specialty crops purchased as part of an educational program allowable?
A. SCBGP funds may be used to purchase specialty crops needed as part of an educational program. For example, purchasing specialty crops for a cooking demonstration or for samples to accompany an educational curriculum is allowable. However, it is not allowable to purchase specialty crops to provide to participants to take home.
2. Q. Are non-specialty crop items (e.g., salad dressing, salt, pepper) allowable if the items are necessary for the promotion of the specialty crop (i.e., for cooking demonstrations and/or recipes)?
A. SCBGP funds may be used to purchase non-specialty crop items for tastings (processed products) or recipes as long as the main focus is on the specialty crop and the specialty crop makes up more than 50 percent of the processed product or recipe by weight (excluding water). Note that the amount of each non-specialty crop item purchased must be reasonable for the activity. It is unallowable to use SCBGP funds to purchase large amounts of non-specialty crop commodities.
3. Q. Is honey a specialty crop?
A. Honey is a specialty crop. For a list of eligible and ineligible crops, reference [USDA's What is a Specialty Crop website](#).

New Question: October 11, 2019

4. Q. If an applicant submits a proposal under the Additional Assistance Funding Area, are the cooperators or contractors in the proposal also able to directly apply to the SCBGP in another funding category?
A. Cooperators and/or contractors on an Additional Assistance proposal may also submit their own, separate SCBGP proposal. Only direct applicants to the Additional Assistance funding area are prohibited from submitting multiple proposals to multiple funding categories.
5. Q. Are physical barriers such as hedgerows, screen fences, vector attractants, etc. an allowable cost for the SCBGP?
A. Physical barriers of this type may be allowable if they are necessary to the project and provide a clear benefit to the specialty crop industry, rather than improve the value of the affected land, which would be an unallowable capital expenditure.
6. Q. Are applicants to the Grown in California Funding Category required to be members of the Buy California Marketing Agreement (BCMA) or promote the CA GROWN logo?
A. Membership in BCMA is not a requirement of the Grown in California Funding Category and is not a factor in the scoring criteria. Further, costs for membership in BCMA are not an

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allowable cost using SCBGP funds. SCBGP funds cannot be used to promote an organization's image, logo, or brand name. Proposals submitted to the Grown in California Funding Category should focus on promoting the specialty crops identified rather than promoting the any logo or brand.

7. Q. Are proposals related to food waste reduction and food recovery eligible for to the SCBGP?
A. All proposals must enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, meet at least one of the program priorities as described in the RFCP, and be able to achieve at least one outcome measure and indicator to be eligible for this program. Note that efforts to reduce food waste by collecting and giving away or selling specialty crops at a discount would be considered a donation, and any costs associated with that activity are unallowable.

New Questions: October 16, 2019

8. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to promote wine as part of a balanced lifestyle?
A. There are no prohibitions against promoting wine as part of a balanced lifestyle; however, any benefits promoted in a proposal must be truthful, not misleading or deceptive, and include adequate disclaimers if appropriate. Further, all messaging must comply with the regulations of the Federal Trade Commission: (<https://www.ftc.gov/about-ftc/bureaus-offices/bureau-consumer-protection>) The U.S. Food and Drug Administration: (<https://www.fda.gov/food/food-ingredients-packaging>) and current Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion dietary guidelines: (https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/resources/2015-2020_Dietary_Guidelines.pdf)
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ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED ORGANIZATIONS

1. Q. If an applicant submits a proposal under the Additional Assistance Funding Area, can additional applications be submitted under other funding categories?
A. Applicants who submit a proposal to the Additional Assistance Funding Area may submit no more than one proposal and may not submit proposals under other funding areas or categories.

New Questions: October 8, 2019

2. Q. Is the project timeframe for the Additional Assistance Funding Area different from the other funding areas?
A. Proposals submitted under the Additional Assistance Funding Area cannot have a timeframe that exceeds two years. However, as with the other funding areas, grant funds cannot be expended before November 1, 2020 or after April 30, 2023.
3. Q. How does CDFA define "Historically Underrepresented Organizations?"
A. Historically Underrepresented Organizations are organizations that are stakeholders in the specialty crop industry but have not proportionally participated in the SCBGP. This lack of participation may be due to limited resources and the substantial burden of applying for and administering a Federal grant. For the purpose of the Additional Assistance Funding Area,

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organizations must be non-profits or Tribal governments that have not previously received SCBGP funds.

4. Q. Would training for specialty crop farmers who are primarily Spanish speakers be appropriate for the Additional Assistance Funding Area?
- A. Training in the primary language of non-English or English as a second language speakers, may be a common feature of culturally competent and appropriate training. A project focused on such training may be appropriate to the Additional Assistance Funding Area if the applicant organization is eligible to participate and all other program requirements are met.

New Question: October 11, 2019

5. Q. Are non-profit trade associations eligible to apply to the Additional Assistance Funding Area?
- A. All non-profit organizations and Tribal governments that have not previously received SCBGP funding are eligible to apply for this program. While there is no prohibition on the type of non-profit organizations eligible to participate, all applicants to this category must have knowledge and experience in either supporting socially disadvantaged and beginning farmers or providing nutrition education and/or access to specialty crops in underserved communities.

FAAST APPLICATION

1. Q. Is information about the project location (i.e., latitude/longitude) required in FAAST?
- A. Applicants are not required to enter information about the project's location (latitude/longitude) in FAAST. However, applicants must provide the county where the majority of project work will be done which assists CDFA in determining where to conduct outreach.

New Questions: October 8, 2019

2. Q. Will applicants receive a confirmation email from FAAST indicating that their Concept Proposal application has been successfully submitted?
- A. After clicking the 'Submit Application' button in FAAST, a 'Submission Confirmation' screen will appear and an email will be sent within 24 hours to confirm receipt of the application. Applicants may also view their submitted applications in the FAAST system at any time by clicking on "Submitted Applications" from the Main Menu.
3. Q. What should an applicant do if they are experiencing difficulties with FAAST?
- A. Applicants experiencing difficulties using FAAST should contact the FAAST Help Desk at (866) 434-1083 or FAAST_ADMIN@waterboards.ca.gov. All communications should reference the 2020 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program along with the applicant's proposal identification number (PIN). The FAAST help desk is staffed Monday - Friday (8:00 am - 5:00 pm).

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4. Q. Are spaces included in the character limit for each question in FFAST?
A. The character limit for each question in FFAST includes letters, numbers, punctuation, spaces, and special characters.
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FUNDING AREA AND FUNDING CATEGORY

1. Q. Can an applicant select more than one funding category for a single proposal?
A. Only one funding category can be selected for each proposal in FFAST. Although a proposal may address elements of more than one funding category, it is up to the applicant to determine the most appropriate funding category for their proposal.
2. Q. Can an applicant submit proposals to multiple funding areas and funding categories?
A. Applicants can submit multiple proposals to different funding categories (within the same funding area or a different funding area) as well as within the same funding category, except for applicants to the Additional Assistance Funding Area. If submitting multiple proposals, each proposal submitted, regardless of funding area or category, must be unique. In addition, applicants should only submit the number of proposals their organization would be able to administer if all were ultimately awarded funding. Applicants to the Additional Assistance Funding Area may submit no more than one proposal.

New Questions: October 11, 2019

3. Q. Can a single proposal contain multiple projects?
A. A proposal may contain multiple projects but only one funding area and related funding category may be selected. Additionally, CDFA cannot anticipate how projects that are broad in scope will be received by the Technical Review Committee.
4. Q. How can an organization apply for Research Category C: Food Safety?
A. The Center for Produce Safety releases a separate solicitation, conducts a technical review, and submits recommendations to CDFA. The Center for Produce Safety has already released their solicitation and the deadline to submit a preliminary food safety proposal is Tuesday, November 12, 2019 at 12:00 noon Pacific Standard Time. Applicants interested in submitting a food safety proposal should visit https://www.centerforproducesafety.org/grant_opportunities.php.
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PROGRAM PRIORITIES

1. Q. Are proposals that address multiple program priorities given additional consideration?
A. All proposals must address at least one program priority and at least one of the priorities must be associated with the funding category selected. The number of priorities addressed is not a factor in the scoring criteria.
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PROJECT PURPOSE

No questions at this time.

PRIOR-YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS

1. Q. **Revised October 16, 2019:** Does Question 5, Prior-Year SCBGP Projects, apply to prior projects submitted by the applicant organization? If a proposal will build upon a SCBGP project by another organization, such as a cooperator or contractor, how should the applicant respond to this question?
 - A. Generally, Question 5 refers to prior year projects by the applicant organization that are directly related to the current proposal. However, if a proposal will build directly on a project by a cooperator, information about the prior-year project should be included in the response to Question 5. This allows CDFA to ensure there is no duplication of project costs and provides technical reviewers adequate information to assess the proposal.

New Questions: October 8, 2019

2. Q. How do CDFA and USDA distinguish between the expectation of project sustainability and the ability to submit a proposal that builds upon a previous SCBGP project?
 - A. All SCBGP proposals should either include project activities that can continue beyond the duration of the grant or provide an ongoing benefit to the specialty crop industry. Proposals should not anticipate indefinite reliance upon grant funding in order to sustain the project. Proposals that build upon a prior SCBGP project must differ from and build upon the previous project and cannot duplicate project activities or costs.
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PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

New Questions: October 8, 2019

1. Q. How can applicants demonstrate project sustainability? Is it necessary to continue to commit resources to the project beyond the grant duration to demonstrate sustainability?
 - A. Proposals should adequately demonstrate that project activities can continue beyond the grant duration, or that the project will continue to benefit the specialty crop industry after the grant has ended. It is not necessary to continue to commit resources to a project beyond the grant duration; however, depending on the nature of the project, this may be the most appropriate way to ensure ongoing sustainability.
2. Q. Are one-time projects allowable?
 - A. One-time projects are allowable; however, one-time projects should still be able to demonstrate sustainability in the form of continuing benefit to the specialty crop industry beyond the grant duration.

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PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

1. Q. How can an applicant estimate the number of beneficiaries that will be impacted by a project?
 - A. The number of beneficiaries indicated in the Project Beneficiaries response should be a reasonable, trackable, and reportable estimate of the direct or primary beneficiaries of the project results. For example, stating that a project will benefit the entire specialty crop industry is likely not an appropriate response for this question.
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OUTCOME MEASURES

1. Q. What is the difference between data collected for the project objectives and the data that needs to be collected for Outcome Measures?
 - A. The description section of the Outcome Measures template should provide only content that pertains to how the selected outcome measure(s) and indicator(s) will be measured, monitored, and reported. These sections should not include information regarding how work plan objectives or other aspects of the project will be measured, monitored, or reported that are not related to the outcome measure(s). If a grant is awarded, recipients will be required to report on selected outcome measures separately from the work plan objectives.

New Questions: October 8, 2019

2. Q. Are there specific requirements for data collection methodology or standards for monitoring/reporting on activities for Outcome Measures, indicators, and sub-indicators?
 - A. USDA does not describe specific requirements for the methodology for data collection or standards to monitor and report on outcomes. Generally, methodology should be appropriate to the nature and level of complexity of the project. When sampling will be used, the sample size should be adequate to obtain a confidence level appropriate to other, similar work. Note that for Outcome Measure 1, the sales increase must be measured using actual sales data. Other methods of measuring a sales increase, such as a survey of consumer intent to purchase specialty crops, are not adequate.

New Questions: October 11, 2019

3. Q. For Outcome Measure 1, if a sales baseline has not yet been established, are applicants required to enter dollar amounts for indicator 1?
 - A. If a baseline is not yet established, applicants may provide an estimate. It is also acceptable to enter "TBD" in the dollar fields; however an estimation of the percentage increase should be entered to give reviewers an expectation of the impact of the project.

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4. Q. The RFCP states that Outcome Measures cannot be altered, amended, or replaced. What is considered altering or amending the Outcome Measures template?
- A. Outcome measures were developed by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Federal Office of Management and Budget and cannot be changed in any way. Changing any of the wording on the Outcome Measures, Indicators and Sub-Indicators would be considered altering or amending the template. To ensure compliance with this requirement, applicants should only check the boxes for their selected outcome(s), indicator(s), sub-indicator(s) and enter data in the fillable fields of the form. Applicants may also delete indicators that have not been selected for their proposal; however, this is not required or encouraged.
5. Q. Are applicants required to select specific outcomes based on the funding category or program priorities in their proposal?
- A. Proposals that are submitted to the Grown in California Funding Category or otherwise involve marketing and promotional activities must select Outcome Measure 1. No other funding categories have specific requirements for the selection of outcome measures; however, all outcome measures selected should be appropriate to the project objectives.
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WORK PLAN AND OUTREACH

No questions at this time.

BUDGET TEMPLATE

1. Q. If the USDA allows an indirect cost rate of 8 percent of total direct costs for the SCBGP, why is the indirect cost rate for applicants only 8 percent of total personnel costs?
- A. The indirect cost rate for the SCBGP is established in Federal statute. The statutory limitation of 8 percent of total direct costs is the maximum which state departments of agriculture may claim in their applications to USDA, including the state's administration and any indirect passed through to subrecipients. The USDA gives State Departments of Agriculture broad discretion whether and how much, if any, indirect will pass through to sub-recipients with many states not allowing applicants to collect any indirect. While it is CDFA's intent to allow applicants to receive the maximum amount of available funding, CDFA must retain a portion of the allowed indirect in order to carry out the activities needed to administer the program.
2. Q. **Revised October 11, 2019:** Can SCBGP funds be used to purchase incentives to ensure participation in workshops, trainings, surveys, etc.?
- A. Incentives to participate in workshops, trainings, survey and other project specific events are typically considered participant support costs and are generally allowable so long as the cost is reasonable and necessary to the success of the project. Note that SCBGP funds may not be used to purchase giveaways such as gifts, prizes, memorabilia, or souvenirs.

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3. Q. Where can organizations access the Federal cost principles?
A. The Federal cost principles can be accessed online. For the Federal cost principles that apply to state, local, or Indian tribal governments, non-profit organizations, colleges and universities applicants should access the [2 CFR 200](#). For the Federal cost principles that apply to for-profit organizations, applicants should access the [48 CFR subpart 31.2](#). Links to both can also be found on page 23 of the [2020 RFCP](#). In addition, program specific cost requirements can be found in the RFCP and the [Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table](#).
4. Q. What is program income, and how can it be used?
A. Program income is any income generated during the grant period by a supported project activity or as a direct result of the award. Program income cannot be used as income or net profit and program income generated during the grant period must be used toward allowable activities in accordance with the [Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table](#). As an example, program income can be used to supplement approved grant activities such as conducting additional workshops or training programs that were not budgeted in the grant.
5. Q. Are lease, rental, or facilities costs allowable using SCBGP funds?
A. Lease, rental, and facilities costs are considered indirect costs. Costs for use of existing facilities, including proportional rental/lease costs cannot be charged directly to the project. Costs for a temporary lease of land or facilities may be allowable as a direct cost when those costs are necessary to support project activities and not already part of an organization's existing costs (e.g., temporary or periodic lease of a commercial kitchen for use in recipe development or facilities costs for use of an off-site laboratory for project specific research). Costs for temporary lease of land or facilities should go under category G. Other within the Budget Template.
6. Q. Is there a maximum percentage or limit to the amount of funds that may be requested within each budget category in the Budget Template?
A. Aside from category H. Indirect Costs, there is no limit to the amount of funds that may be requested within each budget category, as long as the total SCBGP funds requested stays within the allowable grant amount of between \$50,000 and \$450,000 (or \$50,000 and \$100,000 for the Additional Assistance Funding Area). The amount requested for category H. Indirect Costs must not exceed 8 percent of total personnel costs (i.e., Salary and Wages plus Fringe Benefits). Note, CDFA cannot predict how the Technical Review Committee will view proposals with a high percentage of costs in a single budget category.
7. Q. Is there a maximum fringe benefit rate?
A. There is no maximum fringe benefit rate. Applicants should use the fringe benefit rate that follows their organization's established policies. However, fringe benefit rates greater than 50 percent may be questioned by USDA and require additional information about the applicant's fringe benefit policy. In addition, applicants cannot claim a higher fringe benefit rate for Federal funds than ordinary and fringe benefits cannot be increased to offset unrecuperated indirect funds.

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8. Q. What is the compensation limit for individual contractors/consultants?
- A. Compensation for contractual services should be reasonable and consistent with fees in the marketplace for similar services. Salary and wages or fees for professional services for contractors/consultants cannot exceed the GS-15 step 10 for a locality/area without justification. A justification for an individual contractor/consultant may include but is not limited to, a cost/price analysis; an explanation of unique qualifications and/or special expertise due to the complexity of the project/task or limited pool of available or qualified contractors/consultants; or historical data supporting the rate charged by the contractors/consultants. Although a justification is not required for the Concept Proposal phase, it will be necessary should the proposal be selected for the Grant Proposal phase.

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9. Q. What is the General Schedule 15 (GS-15), Step 10?
- A. The GS-15, Step 10 is a pay schedule for hourly wages and salaries set by the Federal government. Applicants should use the GS-15, Step 10 rate for their area when developing contractual cost estimates to ensure rates are reasonable and consistent with fees in the marketplace for similar services. Contractor costs exceeding the GS-15, Step 10 rate must be paid from a source other than SCBGP funds unless a justification is provided and approved by CDFA and USDA. Reference the 2019 General Schedule (GS) Locality Pay Tables (<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2019/general-schedule/>).
10. Q. Can the amount of SCBGP funding requested change from the Concept Proposal Phase to the Grant Proposal Phase?
- A. The amount of SCBGP funding requested in the Grant Proposal Phase may increase or decrease from the Concept Proposal Phase so long as the revised amount requested is not less than the minimum award amount or more than the maximum award amount. However, drastic changes greater than 10 percent may be questioned and CDFA cannot anticipate how substantial changes to a project's scope or budget will be viewed by the Technical Review Committee.
11. Q. Where should travel by individuals who are neither employees of the applicant nor contractors be listed?
- A. Travel for individuals who are neither employees of the applicant nor contractors, such as consultants, should be listed under category C Travel in the Budget Template.
12. Q. Are applicants required to prepare a budget narrative or full accounting of project costs in the Concept Proposal Phase?
- A. For the Concept Proposal Phase, a detailed breakdown of costs is not required. Applicants should provide a reasonable estimate and brief summary of costs for each category. If invited to the Grant Proposal Phase, applicants will provide a more detailed description of the project.

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13. Q. Where would costs for advertisements be listed in the Budget Template?
A. Costs associated with advertising would generally be associated with category G Other. If advertising costs include contracting for services such as content development and placement, those costs would be considered Contractual, category F. Note that projects will not be disqualified if costs are determined to be incorrectly categorized. CDFA will provide applicants feedback on miscategorized costs. Proposals invited to the Grant Proposal phase will have an opportunity to correctly categorize costs.
14. Q. Are contractors allowed to charge indirect costs? If so, is there a maximum amount? Where should these costs be listed in the budget template?
A. Each contractor may claim indirect costs up to 8 percent of their respective total personnel costs. Each contractor's requested indirect costs should be included within the amount requested for category F Contractual. Do not combine contractual indirect with applicant indirect in category H.
15. Q. Can proposals that will not include personnel costs request indirect?
A. Indirect costs are based on a percentage of total personnel costs and as such proposals with no personnel costs are not eligible to claim indirect costs.
16. Q. How should applicants identify contractors within the proposal that have not yet been selected or hired?
A. Applicants can specify that such contractors are to be determined or "TBD". Within the budget template, the summary should include the estimated cost of each contractor and the project activities they will support.
17. Q. Are flat rate contracts allowable using SCBGP funds?
A. Flat rate contracts may be allowable if a competitive bid process was conducted, the amount is reasonable and consistent with fees in the marketplace for similar services and a flat rate structure has been used for equivalent services in the past. The use of a flat rate contract for the purpose of circumventing maximum hourly rates or to disguise unallowable costs such as excessive indirect is unallowable.
18. Q. Are costs associated with a school garden allowable using SCBGP funds?
A. Costs for school gardens may be allowable, if necessary to the success of the project, used to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, and the installation of the school garden does not result in a permanent improvement to the affected land.
19. Q. Are sub-grants or micro grants allowable using SCBGP funds?
A. Applicants may subaward grant funds as long as the funded activities are necessary to carry out the project activities, solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, and benefit the specialty crop industry. When awarding funds as a pass-through entity, organizations must ensure those funds are spent in accordance with CDFA's SCBGP guidelines, USDA's program guidelines, and the cost principles for Federal grants.

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20. Q. Are scholarships allowable using SCBGP funds?
A. Costs of scholarships, fellowships, and other programs of student aid are allowable for Institutes of Higher Learning (generally defined as private or public universities or colleges), when the purpose of the Federal award is to provide training to selected participants.
21. Q. Are transportation costs for school field trips allowable using SCBGP funds?
A. Transportation costs are generally allowable when reasonable and necessary to the project.
22. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to promote a speaking event?
A. Promotion of a speaking event may be allowable if the speaking event is necessary to the project and the primary beneficiary of the event is the specialty crop industry rather than any individual, such as the speaker, or organization, such as the host or event organizer.
23. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used for projects focused on aquaponics?
A. An aquaponics project may qualify for SCBGP funds if the crops being grown are eligible specialty crops and the focus of the project is on the specialty crops and not the fish.
24. Q. Would a project that promotes specialty crop consumption through recipe development be eligible for SCBGP funding?
A. Such a project may be eligible if the primary purpose of the recipe development and any associated promotion is to increase the sales or consumption of the eligible specialty crop. However, if the proposal is focused on the promotion of the processed product that is the result of the recipe(s) developed, the processed product must constitute greater than 50 percent of a specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water.

New Questions: October 16, 2019

25. Q. What are the differences between unallowable gifts or donations and allowable participant support costs?
A. A gift, contribution, or donation includes cash, property or services provided to an organization or individual using federal funds. Gifts do not require any exchange of reciprocation. In all circumstances gifts are unallowable. A participant support cost in the form of a stipend offsets or defrays the expenses of a participant in a project who is not also an employee of the applicant or a contractor/consultant. Participant support costs may be allowable when reasonable and necessary to the success of the project.

COST SHARE

1. Q. Is cost share required and is there a recommended percentage of cost share? Or is cost share required to show industry support for the project?
A. Cost share is not required and therefore there is no recommended level of cost share. Note that CDFA funds projects every year that do not have cost share. However, the Technical Review Committee may view cost share as an indicator of industry support for a project.

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2. Q. Can applicants include cost share that is not yet secured, or is it contingent upon grant funding in the Concept Proposal application?
- A. In the Concept Proposal phase, applicants can estimate cost share, including anticipated, but not yet secured cost share. Note that cost share is not a requirement of the SCBGP and is not a factor in the scoring criteria.

New Questions: October 8, 2019

3. Q. Can applicants with a Federally negotiated indirect cost rate greater than the 8 percent of total personnel costs treat unrecovered indirect costs as cost sharing?
- A. Organizations with a Federally negotiated indirect cost rate greater than 8 percent of total personnel costs may treat unrecovered indirect as cost sharing.

New Questions: October 11, 2019

4. Q. Can applicants use cost share to pay for unallowable costs and activities?
- A. Applicants may use matching funds or in-kind contributions to cover any costs and activities that are not allowable under the SCBGP. In the Concept Proposal Phase, only describe costs and activities that will be paid for with SCBGP funds; do not include any unallowable costs or activities that will be paid for with matching funds or in-kind contributions. If the proposal advances to the Grant Proposal Phase, applicants will be asked to provide additional detail about funding sources and activities that will be paid for with matching funds.
5. Q. If applicants will use their own resources, such as staff, farm equipment, facilities, research equipment, etc. toward project activities without cost to the grant, is this considered cost share?
- A. Use of an applicant's own resources toward project activities at no cost to the grant would be considered cost share in the form of an in-kind contribution.

New Questions: October 16, 2019

6. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used as match for another state or federal grant?
- A. Funding paid by the Federal Government under one Federal award may not be used as cost share or matching funds for another award, except as authorized by statute. As the Farm Bill does not include such a provision for this program, SCBGP funds may not be used as match for another award. Reference 2 CFR §200.306 Cost sharing or matching: (https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=54be8eaaf6d5d8757e0253e035856b8f&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1306&rqn=div8) for additional information.
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REVIEW PROCESS

1. Q. Do multiple grants submitted for the same specialty crop area or industry compete against each other in the review process?
A. Each proposal is reviewed on its own, individual merits. The scoring criteria for proposals does not factor for competition between projects that have commonalities or are for the same commodity. Similarly, CDFA does not utilize a formula to allocate funding by commodity, applicant organization, funding category, or funding area.

New Questions: October 8, 2019

2. Q. Does the Technical Review Committee have access to an applicant's prior SCBGP applications?
A. The Technical Review Committee does not have access to an applicant's prior SCBGP proposals. Each proposal should stand alone, without reliance on information or content of a past proposal.

GRANT MANAGEMENT

New Questions: October 16, 2019

1. Q. If selected for funding, can recipients request an advance payment or are grant funds available on a reimbursement basis only?
A. Recipients may be eligible to receive an advance payment to cover anticipated project expenditures up to 10 percent of the total award. Reference the current SCBGP Grant Management Procedures Manual:
(http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/2018_Grant_Management_Procedure_Manual.pdf) page 13, Invoicing for additional information.
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