

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 21, 2020

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. Can an individual participate in multiple proposals?
A. Yes, individuals can participate in multiple proposals. While there is no limit on the number of proposal in which an individual can participate, they should ensure that they have adequate capacity to effectively participate in multiple Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) projects and that the combined time will not exceed 100 percent full time equivalent (FTE) if all proposals are awarded funds.
2. Q. What is a cooperating entity?
A. Cooperating entities are individuals and/or organizations an applicant will work with to plan and/or implement the proposed project, and who may receive a portion of the SCBGP funds and/or contribute cost share. Cooperating entities that will receive grant funds if a proposal is awarded funding should also be listed as contractors in the budget template.
3. Q. Is there a limit to the number of active SCBGP grants that one organization can have at a given time? Can current SCBGP grant recipients apply for funding in multiple grant years?
A. There is no limit on the number of active SCBGP grants that can be held by a single organization. However, before submitting multiple proposals, applicants should ensure their organization will have adequate capacity to effectively execute multiple SCBGP grants, if additional proposals are awarded funds.
4. Q. Can applicants submit additional attachments to the Concept Proposal phase like a letter of support?
A. No, only the required attachments as specified in the [Request for Concept Proposals \(RFCP\)](#) should be included in the concept proposal application. Projects that advance to the Grant Proposal phase may provide letters of support with their concept proposal application.
5. Q. Will recordings of the solicitation webinars be available to applicants?
A. Yes, links to the recordings of the webinar will be uploaded to [CDFA's SCBGP website](#) by Friday, October 9, 2020. PDF versions of the PowerPoint slides are also available upon request by sending an email to grants@cdfa.ca.gov.
6. Q. Can new project personnel be added to the project in the grant proposal phase?
A. Yes, project personnel including the Project Director, Project Manager, Principal Investigators, cooperators, contractors, and other staff may be added in the grant proposal phase.
7. Q. Is there a minimum or maximum acreage requirement in order to qualify for the SCBGP?
A. No, SCBGP proposals do not have a minimum or maximum acreage requirement.

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 21, 2020

8. Q. Is there a page limit for the Concept Proposal Budget and Outcome Measures Templates?
A. No, the Concept Proposal Budget and Outcome Measures Templates do not have page limits. However, applicants should be concise and the content provided should be appropriate, necessary, and responsive to the template.
9. Q. Where can applicants access the Outcome Measures and Budget Templates?
A. The required templates can be downloaded on the [CDFA SCBGP website](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) or from the application questionnaire in FFAST.

New Questions: October 21, 2020

10. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to promote California specialty crops outside of California?
A. Yes, so long as the proposal focuses on promoting California specialty crops.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. How can applicants determine whether a project is appropriate for the SCBGP?
A. To be appropriate for the SCBGP, projects must enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops, address at least one funding category priority identified in the [RFCP](#), and accomplish one outcome measure and indicator within the grant duration.
2. Q. What is the System for Award Management? How do applicants check for an active exclusion?
A. The System for Award Management (SAM) is a federal system in which organizations register to do business with the U.S. government. To receive federal grant funds, applicant organizations must be registered in SAM at <https://sam.gov/>. Organizations with an active exclusion in SAM may have their projects disqualified. To check an organization's status, applicants will need to search the SAM database using the organization's name or Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number.

New Questions: October 21, 2020

3. Q. What is the difference between a for-profit organization and an individual?
A. For the purpose of this program, an individual is a person applying for funding on their own behalf (e.g. a person requesting SCBGP funds to improve their farming operation). A for-profit organization is an entity such as a sole-proprietorship or corporation. As with individuals, for-profits cannot apply for SCBGP funds that will provide a direct benefit to their organization.

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 21, 2020

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED ORGANIZATIONS

1. Q. Is a school district eligible to apply to the Additional Assistance for Historically Underrepresented Organizations (Additional Assistance) program?
A. No, public school districts and individual public schools are typically considered local government agencies and are therefore not eligible to apply directly to the Additional Assistance program. However, an individual school could participate as a collaborator, partner, or contractor on an application from an eligible organization. A public middle school or school district would also be eligible to submit a conventional grant proposal.
 2. Q. Can organizations represented by a fiscal agent or fiscal sponsorship apply for the Additional Assistance funding categories? What if the fiscal agent or sponsor has already received SCBGP funding?
A. Yes, organizations represented by a fiscal agent or fiscal sponsor can apply to the Additional Assistance funding categories if the sponsored organization has not previously received funding and meets all other requirements for the Additional Assistance Program, even if the fiscal agent or sponsor has already received SCBGP funding.
-

FAAST APPLICATION

1. Q. Are applicants required to enter the project latitude/longitude in FAAST?
A. No, applicants are not required to enter the project latitude/longitude in FAAST. However, applicants must provide the county where the majority of project work will be done.
2. Q. Can applicants add additional users to a proposal in FAAST?
A. Yes, applicants can add users to a proposal by entering their username(s) in the box provided on the "Add User" tab. Individuals added via the "Add User" tab will only have access to that specific proposal.

New Questions: October 21, 2020

3. Q. What should an applicant indicate for a statewide project in the FAAST application?
A. Applicants should enter the county where the majority of project activities will take place. If applicable, applicants can select 'statewide' or 'multiple counties' from the Counties drop down menu in FAAST.
-

FUNDING AREA AND FUNDING CATEGORY

1. Q. Can an applicant submit proposals to multiple funding areas and funding categories?
A. Yes, applicants can submit multiple proposals to different funding areas or categories as well as within the same funding area or category so long as each proposal is unique.
-

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 21, 2020

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

New Questions: October 21, 2020

1. Q. Do the priorities need to be entered verbatim in the program priorities response?
A. Yes, all priorities should be entered verbatim regardless of how many priorities are selected. The character limit for this question is 1,500 characters which should provide enough space to list several priorities and provide a brief explanation for how each will be addressed.
-

PROJECT PURPOSE

No questions at this time.

PRIOR-YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS

1. Q. Do applicants need to indicate that their proposal builds upon a prior-year SCBGP project, even if that project was completed several years ago?
A. Yes, if a proposal builds upon any previously funded SCBGP project, the applicant must reference the project number and include a description of how this project builds upon the previous project without duplicating costs or activities.
 2. Q. Where can applicants find information on previously awarded projects?
A. Applicants can view previously awarded projects on the SCBGP website at: http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/PastGrantAwards.html.
-

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

1. Q. How can applicants demonstrate project 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. If a project will create a new program for example, explain how the program will continue to exist after the end of the grant period. Likewise, if a project will not continue beyond the grant duration, the proposal should explain how the results of the project will benefit the industry after the project is complete. For example, a research project may post findings on a website that will continue to be accessible after the grant duration.
-

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 21, 2020

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

1. Q. How should applicants 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 realistic, reasonable, trackable, and reportable estimate of the direct or primary beneficiaries of the project results that will be impacted within the grant duration. For example, stating that a project will benefit the entire specialty crop industry is likely not an appropriate response for this question.

 2. Q. How are project beneficiaries defined? How should the number of beneficiaries be determined?
A. Project beneficiaries are the people, groups, commodities, etc. that will directly benefit from a project. The number of project beneficiaries should include only the number of individuals, groups, commodities, etc. that will receive a benefit from the project that is direct, measurable, trackable, and reportable within the project duration. Generally, growers, producers, groups, commodities, etc. that will directly benefit from a project should be counted individually. Employees of these organizations who may receive an ancillary benefit from the project results are not typically considered project beneficiaries. However, if employees of an organization will receive a direct benefit from the project activities, such as training, then they could be counted as direct project beneficiaries.
-

OUTCOME MEASURES

1. Q. Have there been updates to the Outcome Measures template this year?
A. Yes, for the 2021 SCBGP grant cycle, there is only one description box required for each outcome measure instead of two. CDFA has removed the "Description of Activities to Monitor and Report on Outcomes" textbox. Any activity to monitor and report on outcomes can be included in the "Description of Data Collection Methods" section.

2. Q. Do applicants need to address all indicators and sub-indicators for a selected outcome measure?
A. No, applicants must select at least one indicator and/or sub-indicator for each outcome selected but are not required to address all indicators and/or sub-indicators for each outcome.

3. Q. When do projects need to select Outcome Measure 1: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales?
A. Outcome Measure 1 must be selected for any project with a marketing and promotion component, defined as involving efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, and generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue. This includes projects that focus on educating consumers about the nutritional benefit of a specialty crop for the purpose of increasing awareness or sales.

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 21, 2020

New Questions: October 21, 2020

4. Q. How can applicants identify appropriate data collection methods for outcome measures?
A. Applicants have some discretion when developing methods to collect data; however, the methodology should be appropriate to the nature of the project and comparable to similar work. Applicants should not use a methodology that is less stringent for work performed on the SCBGP grant than would be acceptable otherwise. Note that a survey of a customer intent to purchase specialty crops is not appropriate data collection method to demonstrate an increase in sales for Outcome Measure 1.
5. Q. For Outcome Measure 1, are applicants required to have an established baseline of sales prior to submitting a proposal?
A. No, applicants are not required to have an established sales baseline prior to submitting a proposal. In such instances, “to be determined” or “TBD” may be entered in place of a dollar amount for outcome measure one. Applicants should still estimate a percentage of sales increase as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities and the description of data collection methods should describe the activities to be undertaken to establish a sales baseline.
-

WORK PLAN AND OUTREACH

New Questions: October 21, 2020

1. Q. Is there an example or template for the Work Plan (Question 10)?
A. No, there is no example or template for the Work Plan. Please refer to the 2021 RFCP for guidance in answering the questions.
-

BUDGET TEMPLATE

1. Q. Can equipment that is typically considered general purpose be purchased with grant funds if it will be used for research purposes?
A. Generally, only equipment that is research, scientific, or technical in nature, with a cost per unit that equals or exceeds \$5,000 is considered scientific research equipment and considered an allowable cost. However, it may be possible to purchase general purpose equipment using grant funds if that equipment is used solely for research purposes. Eligibility will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, more than one single commercial organization, commercial product, or individual must benefit from the use of the equipment. Applicants are also able to rent general purpose equipment when costs are reasonable and necessary to the project. For more information regarding general purpose and scientific research equipment, please reference pages 3-5 of the [2021 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table](#).

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 21, 2020

2. Q. Is computer software considered scientific research equipment?
A. No, computer software with a cost of \$5,000 or more per unit is considered general purpose equipment and is unallowable. Computer software with a cost of less than \$5,000 per unit is typically considered a supply and is allowable if costs are reasonable and the software is necessary for the completion of a project. Please reference pages 6-7 of the [2021 Allowable and Unallowable Cost and Activities Table](#) for more information.
3. Q. What is considered program income?
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 [2021 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.
4. 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.
5. Q. Can applicants follow their own organization's established travel policy guidelines?
A. In developing a travel budget, applicants should apply the lesser of the rates established by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) or the applicant's established travel policy.
6. Q. How can applicants determine if specific costs are allowable under the SCBGP?
A. Costs must be necessary and reasonable for the performance and administration of the grant and be in conformance with the applicable federal cost principles and award terms and conditions. To determine the allowability of a cost, applicants should reference the federal cost principles appropriate to their organization type. Information about and links to the federal cost principles can be found in the [RFCP](#). In addition, applicants can reference the [2021 Allowable and Unallowable Cost and Activities Table](#) which provides overall guidance for the handling of common costs and includes requirements specific to the SCBGP.

New Questions: October 21, 2020

7. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used for micro-grants or subawards? Where should subawards be included in the Budget Template?
A. Yes, if the costs associated with the subaward are otherwise allowable, reasonable and necessary to conduct project activities. Subawards are typically included under category F. Contractual or category G. Other. Note that subawards cannot be used to facilitate donations or to purchase goods or services in a manner which circumvents procurement requirements.

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 21, 2020

8. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to cover translation services?
A. Yes, applicants are encouraged to make materials available in multiple languages. This type of expense should be listed under budget category G. Other.
9. Q. Is a budget breakdown required for budget category F. Contractual?
A. No, in the concept proposal phase applicants should only estimate the total cost of work on the project that will be performed by contractors or consultants. In the description column, applicants should identify the contractors (if known) and briefly describe the services to be provided.
10. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to cover pre-award costs?
A. No, pre-award costs are not allowable using SCBGP funds. Applicants may incur pre-award costs or engage in pre-award activities as a form of cost share but costs incurred for activities which occur prior to November 1, 2021 are not eligible for reimbursement and will be incurred by the applicant at the risk that their proposal will not ultimately receive funding.
-

COST SHARE

New Questions: October 21, 2020

1. Q. Can funding from another federal award be used as matching funds? Do matching funds need to be secured?
A. No, 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. Any matching fund detailed in the proposal should be available and committed by the project start date. Note that cost share is not a requirement of the SCBGP program.
2. Q. Can applicants with an established indirect rate greater than eight percent of total personnel costs include unrecovered indirect as cost share?
A. Yes, the difference between the applicant's indirect cost rate and the program limit of eight percent of personnel costs can be considered cost sharing.
-

REVIEW PROCESS

1. Q. When will applicants find out if their proposal has been selected to move forward to the Grant Proposal phase?
A. Applicants will be notified whether or not their proposal will advance to the Grant Proposal Phase in January 2021.

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 21, 2020

2. Q. Is there a potential for the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to release a new Request for Applications (RFA) with different requirements than that current program criteria?
- A. CDFA does not anticipate any major changes to the program with the release of the 2021 RFA by USDA, however, if necessary, CDFA will attempt to prepare, and make available a supplement to the RFCP to advise applicants of any changes to the program upon publication of the new RFA. CDFA and all applicants will be subject to the terms and conditions of the new RFA, and substantial changes could potentially affect the feasibility of proposals.
-

GRANT MANAGEMENT

New Questions: October 21, 2020

1. Q. What are the acquisition requirements that recipients must follow when selecting contractors?
- A. Recipients must establish and follow a documented procurement policy which conforms to applicable federal law and reflects applicable state, local and tribal laws and 2021 SCBGP regulations. Reference [2 CFR 200.318](#) for additional information on general procurement standards.
2. Q. Are applicants allowed to make changes to the budget narrative if a project receives funding?
- A. Yes, if selected for funding recipients many make changes to their project budget with prior approval from CDFA, and in some instances USDA. Note that neither the total budget nor the indirect costs can increase for projects awarded SCBGP funds.
-