

2022 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 5, 2021

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. Will there be a significant difference in the length of the application between the Concept and Grant Proposal phases?
A. If invited to the Grant Proposal phase, applicants will be asked to submit a full grant proposal. The full grant proposal is more comprehensive and mirrors the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) proposal template. All questions in FFAST will contain character limits where applicable, and it will still be encouraged to be concise and only provide the necessary and relevant information on the templates required.
2. Q. Where are the webinar recordings located?
A. A link to the presentations is available on the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) website listed under the heading Webinar Recordings
https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/.
3. Q. Who is considered a project collaborator?
A. Project collaborators, also referred to as cooperating entities, are organizations that the applicant organization will work with to plan and or implement the proposed project. There are no restrictions on what types of organizations may serve as cooperating entities, provided that the organization will have a role in project activities and has agreed to participate as a cooperator.
4. Q. Can project collaborators be located in states with active discriminatory laws as described in AB 1887?
A. There is not specific prohibition against including collaborators located in states subject to AB 1887 or conducting activities in those states. However, costs related to travel to or within those states are considered unallowable expenses and cannot be paid for with SCBGP funds.
5. Q. Can letters of support be submitted with the Concept Proposal application?
A. Letters of support are not required in the Concept Proposal phase. Attachments other than the required attachments detailed in the Request for Concept Proposals (RFCP) are highly discouraged and may be seen as an attempt to circumvent the character limits. In addition, Technical Review Committee members are not required to review extraneous attachments. However, letters of support can be provided in the Grant Proposal phase.
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/textidx?SID=54be8eaaf6d5d8757e0253e035856b8f&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1306&rqn=div8) for additional information.

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7. Q. Are applicant location, project scope, applicant type, commodity, etc. factors in project scoring?
A. No, each proposal is reviewed and scored on its individual merit. The location, scope, applicant type and commodity are not factors in scoring criteria.
 8. Q. Can grant funds be used to purchase specialty crop for resale or distribution?
A. Grant funds can only be used to purchase specialty crops if they will be used as part of a demonstration program, recipe development, or sampling. Specialty crops cannot be purchased for resale, distribution, or donation.
 9. Q. Are applicants required to meet specific revenue or return on investment (ROI) targets?
A. While there are no firm revenue or ROI targets for the SCBGP, CDFA's goal is to maximize the benefit to California specialty crop producers relative to each dollar spent. Limited benefit or ROI relative to funds requested may reduce the likelihood a project receives funding.
 10. Q. Can expenses related to the grant project be incurred before November 1, 2022?
A. Costs incurred before an award has been announced and a grant agreement has been executed are considered pre-award costs and are unallowable using SCBGP funds. Reference the Allowable and Unallowable Costs and activities table for more information: https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/Allowable-and-UnallowableCosts-and-Activities.pdf. Applicants may conduct pre-award activities and incur pre-award costs through cost share; however, such costs would be incurred at the risk that the associated proposal may not be funded.
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H.R. 133 FUNDING

1. Q. If a proposal was submitted to the 2021 SCBGP under the H. R. 133 funding, can applicants submit the same proposal to the 2022 SCBGP?
A. Yes, applicants may submit the same proposal to the 2022 SCBGP that was submitted to the 2021 SCBGP H.R. 133 stimulus funding so long as that project was not selected for funding.
 2. Q. **Revised October 1, 2021:** When will final selections be made regarding the 2021 SCBGP H.R. 133 stimulus funding?
A. Applicants can expect to hear whether their 2021 SCBGP H. R. 133 project has received funding by November 2021. All applicants with a pending H. R. 133 proposal are encouraged to apply for the 2022 SCBGP Farm Bill funding.
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ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. How can an applicant determine whether a specific plant species is considered an eligible specialty crop?
A. Applicants should reference the USDA's "Eligible and Ineligible Specialty Crops List" <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>. If it is still unclear, applicants may email the list of species to grants@cdfa.ca.gov.
2. Q. Are specialty crop seeds considered an eligible specialty crop?
A. Yes, seeds from plants listed on USDA's 'Eligible and Ineligible Specialty Crop List' are also considered eligible specialty crops.
3. Q. Is there a limit to how many proposals can be submitted per organization? Is there a limit to how many proposals a Principal Investigator can submit?
A. An organization may submit more than one proposal if the proposals are for unique projects. Applicants to the Additional Assistance Program, however, may only submit one proposal. There is also no limit on the number of projects in which a Principal Investigator can participate. Principal Investigators should ensure they have adequate capacity to effectively participate in multiple SCBGP grants and that the combined time will not exceed 100 percent full time equivalent (FTE) if all proposals are awarded funds.
4. Q. Are sole proprietors considered an individual or an organization?
A. Sole proprietors would be considered an eligible for-profit organization are eligible to apply for SCBGP funds. However, applicants must demonstrate that their proposal will benefit the specialty crop industry, rather than their organization.
5. Q. Are sub-grants allowed under the SCBGP?
A. Sub-grants are generally considered an allowable expense so long as they are consistent with the purpose of the program and the associated costs are otherwise considered allowable.
6. Q. What is the definition of farmers and producers in the SCBGP funding program? Are other individuals (i.e., farm workers) included in that definition?
A. The terms farmers and producers generally refer to anyone involved in growing or producing specialty crops. Farmworkers could potentially be included, so long as the project ultimately seeks to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

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7. Q. Can an individual partner with an eligible organizations to submit a SCBGP proposal?
A. Yes, individuals may partner with eligible organizations to submit an application. Note that in this case, the proposal should still provide a general benefit to the specialty crop industry, rather than the individual.

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8. Q. Is cannabis a specialty crop?
A. No, cannabis is not a specialty crop and not eligible under this program.
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ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED ORGANIZATIONS
No questions at this time.

FAAST APPLICATION

1. Q. What sections of the Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) need to be completed as part of the application?
A. Please complete all the tabs and sections in FAAST to the best of your ability. Pay special attention to the Questionnaire tab and answer all the application questions.
2. Q. Are there special system requirements to use FAAST?
A. To ensure concept proposals and attachments are submitted successfully, applicants are strongly encouraged to comply with the computer system recommendations provided by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) cannot guarantee that the FAAST system or the required templates will be compatible with other browsers or operating systems. Use of other browsers or operating systems will limit the ability of CDFA and SWRCB staff to provide applicants with technical assistance, should any issues arise.

For questions about the FAAST system, please contact FAAST customer services at (866) 434-1083, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PT or via email at faast@waterboards.ca.gov.

3. Q. Where should contractors be listed in FAAST, if known?
A. Cooperating entities and any known contractors can be listed on the Cooperating Entities tab in FAAST. If they will receive grant funds, these contractors should also be included in the Concept Proposal Budget Template under F. Contractual along with a brief description of the services that will be provided. Cooperating entities are not required and not a factor in the scoring criteria.
4. Q. What is the purpose of the "Copy an Existing Application" link in FAAST?
A. This link allows the user to copy over some information from a previously submitted application into a new application for an active RFCP in FAAST. Please ensure that special attention is paid to any changes/differences in the new RFCP before submitting and update the copied application accordingly.
5. Q. How should the project location be determined?
A. The project location is defined by the physical location of the applicant. The legislative information should include the project location, and any areas that will benefit from the project efforts.

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6. Q. Can more than one person be authorized to work on a proposal? Can more than one person work on a proposal in FFAST simultaneously?
- A. Individuals can be added to a FFAST proposal using the "add people" tab. Applicants are discouraged from having more than one person working on a single application at a time as changes made by one person could be overridden by another.

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7. Q. Who should be listed in the cooperating entities tab in FFAST?
- A. Anyone collaborating on the project (i.e., contractors or individuals/entities providing in-kind/matching funds and services) should be listed on the cooperating entities tab in FFAST.
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FUNDING AREA AND FUNDING CATEGORY

1. Q. Can the Funding Category be changed after an application is submitted?
- A. Funding Categories cannot be changed after the application has been submitted.
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PROGRAM PRIORITIES

New Questions: October 5, 2021

1. Q. Can applicants select more than one program priority?
- A. Applicants must select at least one program priority from their chosen funding category and can select multiple program priorities; however, the number of priorities selected is not part of the scoring criteria.
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PROJECT PURPOSE

No questions at this time.

PRIOR-YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS

1. Q. Where can applicants view previously funded projects?
- A. Project abstracts for past grant awards can be found on the CDFA SCBGP website https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/PastGrantAwards.html. Program requirements change year to year, so past projects may not necessarily conform to current program requirements.
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PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

No questions at this time.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

1. Q. How should the number of project beneficiaries indicated be determined?
A. The number cited in the Project Beneficiaries response should be a reasonable estimate that can be documented and reported on during the duration of the grant, if the proposal is selected for funding.

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2. Q. What is the relationship between the project beneficiaries and the figures listed in the Outcome Measures?
A. Project beneficiaries are the specialty crop stakeholders that will directly benefit from project activities. The figures within the outcome measures template are not necessarily directly related to beneficiaries and multiple outcome measures do not include a metric that relates to individuals or specialty crop stakeholders (e.g. outcomes related to sales increases or research goals accomplished). In developing project beneficiaries and outcome measures, applicants should ensure that both metrics are reasonable and reportable within the grant duration.
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OUTCOME MEASURES

1. Q. Does Indicator 1.5 have to be selected for Outcome Measure 1?
A. Outcome Measure 1.5 is required for all proposals submitted to the Grown in California funding category and all marketing and promotion projects. However, only one of the sub-indicators must be selected.
2. Q. How should the percent increase for Outcome Measure 1, Indicator 1.5b be presented?
A. Outcome Measure 1, Indicator 1.5b should indicate the percent dollar change while Indicator 1.5c is a volume-specific increase. Please note that marketing and promotion proposals must include at least one sub indicator (a, b, c) for Outcome Measure 1.5.
3. Q. What methodology should be used to measure progress towards achieving the selected Outcome Measures?
A. CDFA does not have established rules on the methodology used to measure the Outcome Measures. The methodology selected however, should be appropriate to the nature and level of complexity of the project.

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4. Q. Can marketing and promotion projects focus on awareness of a product as a result of a marketing campaign instead of a sales increase?
A. All marketing proposals must select Outcome Measure 1, Indicator 1.5 and at least one sub indicator (a, b, c). Marketing and promotion proposals can also result in increased awareness, but this must occur in addition to the projected sales increase.
5. Q. How should applicants estimate indicators and sub-indicators on the Outcome Measures template?
A. Estimates should be appropriate to the project work, the applicant's capacity, reasonable, and achievable within the grant duration.
6. Q. Is there a character limit in the "Description of data collection methods" section on the Outcome Measures template?
A. No, there is no character limit; however, responses should be concise and relevant to the data collection methods. Additional, unrelated content that circumvents character limits elsewhere in the application may result in disqualification of a proposal.
7. Q. What information should be reported for Indicator 1.5c?
A. Please indicated the appropriate unit of volume (ton, bottle, etc.) for the commodity/commodities the project will benefit, and the dollar amount change in average price.
8. Q. If a project involves working with public school districts, would a school site or the school district be considered a new market access point for Outcome 2, Indicator 2.3d?
A. A school district, or individual school site may be considered a new access point if there is no current market for the purchase of specialty crops.
9. Q. For Outcome Measure 1, Indicator 1.4, what would be considered "business transactions"?
A. Business transactions refers to new wholesale or retail purchases of specialty crops.
10. Q. If a proposal will promote multiple specialty crops, should the sales increase for each commodity be tracked separately?
A. It is not necessary to track sales increases for each commodity separately. Data can be aggregated if appropriate to the project work.

WORK PLAN AND OUTREACH

1. Q. Should Co-Principal Investigators be listed in project oversight? Are Co-Principal Investigators considered collaborators?
A. Yes, applicants should list the Co-Principal Investigators within the project oversight in FFAST. All personnel who will receive SCBGP grant funds, including contractors must be included in the Work Plan. Co-Principal Investigators and other collaborators are considered cooperating entities.

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2. Q. What is the difference between a Project Director and a Project Manager? Can the Project Director and the Project Manager be the same person?
- A. For the purposes of the SCBGP, the Project Director is the authorized representative for the applicant organization and will be responsible for executing the agreement if the project is awarded SCBGP funds. The Project Manager typically oversees the day-to-day activities of the project. It is up to the applicant to determine who should be listed as the Project Director and the Project Manager.
3. Q. Do applicants need to know whom they will contract with in the Concept Proposal phase?
- A. It is not expected that all contractors be determined in the Concept Proposal phase. Applicants can specify that contractors are to be determined or "TBD". Within the budget template, the summary should include the estimated cost for each contractor and the project activities they will support. When selecting a contractor, applicants must, at a minimum, demonstrate that procurement transactions for contractors will be conducted in a manner that provides full and open competition and is consistent with the standards described in 2 CFR 200.318-200.326 (www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200/subpart-D).

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4. Q. Where should information about the Work Plan be entered on the application? Is there a template to complete?
- A. There is no Work Plan template for Phase 1. Please answer question 10 in FFAST that relates to the project's Work Plan and Outreach. Proposals that advance to Phase 2 will complete a work plan template which will include substantially more detail.

BUDGET TEMPLATE

1. Q. How much detail is needed in the Concept Proposal budget?
- A. In the Concept Proposal phase, applicants are asked to provide a description of costs or activities with enough detail to determine if costs are allowable and appropriate for the program. Applicants invited to the Grant Proposal phase, will be asked to provide more detailed descriptions and breakdowns of costs requested.
2. Q. How much detail is required for F. Contractual within the 'Description of Costs or Activities' on the Budget Template?
- A. Applicants should provide a general description of the costs that will be incurred and/or the activities that will be conducted by the contractors. While a detailed breakdown of costs for each contractor is not required, the description should provide enough detail to determine if the costs and/or activities are allowable and appropriate for the program. In the Concept Proposal Phase, it is not necessary to justify contractual wages or describe the competitive process used to select contractors.

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3. Q. Is a justification required if employee salaries exceed GS-15 Step 10?
A. Generally, a justification is only required for contractors with rates that exceed GS-15 Step 10 and is not required until Phase 2 of the process. Note that applicants may not charge a billable rate for employees, only actual wages and benefits. Additionally, applicants may not charge a higher salary rate for employees when compensated using grant funds.

 4. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to host a conference?
A. Costs for a conference may allowable when part of a larger project and when costs are reasonable and necessary to the project. The proposal should describe the conference, including the anticipated costs, the general purpose of the conference and the target audience.

 5. Q. Are scholarships an allowable cost?
A. Scholarships are an allowable cost if the applicant organization is an institute of higher learning, please reference 2 CFR § 200.466 for additional information.
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COST SHARE

1. Q. Does having cost share prove beneficial in the consideration of a proposal?
A. Cost share is not a requirement for SCBGP and is not considered part of the scoring criteria for grant proposals.

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2. Q. If an applicant's established indirect cost rate exceed eight percent of total personnel costs, can unrecovered indirect be reported as cost share?
A. Yes, if an applicant has a federally negotiated indirect cost rate that exceeds eight percent of total personnel costs, the difference can be documented as an in-kind contribution. However, organizations without a federally negotiated indirect cost rate, for example nonprofits that utilize the de minimus rate, cannot claim the difference between the de minimus rate and the maximum for this program as an in-kind contribution. Note that cost share is not a requirement of this program, is not a factor in proposal scoring, and any cost share included in the application will have reporting requirements throughout the duration of the grant if a proposal is awarded funds.
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REVIEW PROCESS

1. Q. Can an employee of an applicant organization also serve on the Technical Review Committee?
 - A. Yes, all Technical Review Committee members are recused from reviewing and discussing any proposals where the appearance of a conflict of interest may occur.
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GRANT MANAGEMENT

No questions at this time.
