

2026 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE II, GRANT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
January 8, 2026

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. Where can Applicants find more information about completing the Grant Proposal Application?
A. The [Grant Proposal Instructions](#) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/2026_SCBGP_Grant_Proposal_Instructions.pdf) detail the proposal questions and scoring criteria on pages 4 - 12, and include examples of the required templates in the appendices.
2. Q. How can Applicants receive an invitation to apply during the Phase II, Grant Application stage?
A. The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) is a two-phase annual funding opportunity. Applicants must first submit a Concept Proposal during Phase I, which typically opens in late summer each year with the release of the *Request for Concept Proposals*. Concept Proposals are reviewed by the Technical Review Committee (TRC), and selected Applicants are invited to participate in Phase II, which involves submitting a full Grant Proposal. To stay informed about when Phase I opens for an upcoming funding cycle, please sign up for the [SCBGP mailing list](#) (<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CADFA/subscriber/new>) to be informed when Phase I opens for the next year's funding opportunity.
3. Q. Can project staff, including a Principal Investigator (PI) or co-PI, be changed from the Concept Proposal phase?
A. Yes; however, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) cannot predict how the TRC will respond to substantial changes in project personnel.
4. Q. Where can Applicants view examples of past successful projects?
A. Project descriptions for projects awarded in past SCBGP funding cycles can be viewed on the [SCBGP Awards website](#) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/PastGrantAwards.html).

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5. Q. Are Grant Proposals or supplementary documents confidential?
A. With limited exceptions, the content of a Concept Proposal, Grant Proposal, or selected project is subject to Public Records Act (PRA) requests and is not considered confidential. CDFA recommends Applicants avoid including any information they consider confidential in submitted documents.

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ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. Can SCBGP projects be used to provide direct assistance to farmers?
A. Providing direct assistance to farmers may be allowable under SCBGP, as long as the assistance does not give selected individual farmers an unfair competitive advantage over those not selected or constitute an unallowable giveaway. Examples of allowable activities include providing technical assistance, training, or business or marketing guidance; other educational activities are generally allowable. Direct financial assistance, such as funding on-farm supplies or equipment, providing capital improvements, subsidizing labor costs, directly promoting an individual farm or farmer, or similar activities are not allowable. Applicants are encouraged to describe the criteria and process used to select how those to receive assistance will be selected.

FAAST

1. Q. What should an Applicant do if they are having issues with FAAST?
A. Applicants should reach out to the FAAST Help Desk via telephone or email at either 1-866-434-1083 or FAAST_ADMIN@waterboards.ca.gov.
2. Q. What attachments are required for the Grant Proposal phase in FAAST?
A. The required attachments can be found in the Grant Phase (Phase 2) application in FAAST. After logging in, Applicants should navigate to the Attachments tab in their application to view the list of required attachments. Applicants must submit the following templates: the Project Objectives and Work Plan, the Outcome Measures, the Budget Narrative, and, if applicable, Cost Sharing.

PRIOR-YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS

1. Q. How can a proposed project build upon a previous project, without duplicating activities?
A. Proposed projects may build upon a previous project by expanding activities, focus, target audience, geographic location, scope, etc.
2. Q. Are Applicants required to include all previous SCBGP projects?
A. CDFA recommends including all previous SCBGP projects, as Applicants should have learned valuable lessons related to managing an SCBGP grant from those projects. CDFA recognizes that some projects will be more closely related to, and thus have more influence upon, the proposed project than others.

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3. Q. The Prior Year SCBGP Projects section has been updated and now includes these questions, 1) "Describe how lessons learned from the prior project will be implemented including potential improvements." and 2) "Describe how lessons learned and improvements will be incorporated into the project to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes." How should Applicants respond to these two questions?
A. This question was modified based on recent USDA guidance. Please speak to specific lessons learned in one response, and to how those specific lessons learned impacted the overall design, goals, and/or activities of the proposed project in the other response.
4. Q. If a proposal was awarded funding and didn't expend some or all of the SCBGP funds, should this prior project be included?
A. CDFA recommends including all previous SCBGP projects. In this case, Applicants should explain why those funds were not spent and what steps the applicant organization has taken to ensure the success of the proposed project.
5. Q. Can a proposal include tasks that were included in past SCBGP grants?
A. Activities funded under the SCBGP cannot duplicate activities funded by another federal or state grant program, including previous SCBGP awards. Proposals should build upon and differ from previous work.

PROJECT OVERSIGHT

1. Q. Who is eligible to lead a project?
A. Applicants are responsible for designating the appropriate individual as the Principal Investigator, Project Director, or Project Manager in their application. Resumes or CVs must be uploaded to FAAST for all key project personnel.

OTHER SUPPORT FROM FEDERAL OR STATE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

No questions at this time.

FUNDING AREA AND FUNDING CATEGORY

1. Q. Can the funding category be changed from the Concept Proposal application?
A. No, changes to the funding category selected during the Concept Proposal phase are not permitted.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

No questions at this time.

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PROJECT PURPOSE

No questions at this time.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN

1. Q. Where should activities conducted by cooperating entities or contractors be listed?
A. Activities conducted by cooperating entities or contractors, including outreach efforts, should be included in the Work Plan under the appropriate objective.
2. Q. Can activities in the work plan be combined if they are repeated monthly or annually?
A. Yes, Applicants may list repeating activities in a single row across multiple months or years. For example: "Activity 1: Mar-May 2027; Mar-May 2028." CDFA encourages Applicants to carefully review work plans to ensure they are clear and understandable to a lay reader.
3. Q. Should Applicants include the activities of individuals providing in-kind contributions in the work plan? And if so, how should Applicants clarify that their contributions are in-kind?
A. Any individual or entity performing work that is essential to the success of the project should be included in the Work Plan.

Costs and contributions covered through in-kind or matching funds must be described in the Cost Share template. Cost Share is not a requirement of SCBGP and is discouraged by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA); CDFA recommends only including costs or activities that are essential to the success of the project as Cost Share. Note that costs or activities covered with Cost Share are subject to the same requirements as those covered with grant funds.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

1. Q. How are project beneficiaries defined?
A. Project beneficiaries are specialty crop stakeholders who will directly benefit from project activities but will not receive grant funds. The estimated number of project beneficiaries should be reasonable, trackable, and reportable within the duration of the grant. Individuals such as employees of the applicant organization, contractors, individuals receiving stipends, or anyone otherwise directly receiving grant funds should not be included as project beneficiaries.

SPECIALTY CROP ENHANCEMENT

No questions at this time.

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PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

No questions at this time.

EXTERNAL PROJECT SUPPORT

1. Q. What is the difference between a cooperating entity and a collaborator, and how is that different from a contractor?
A. A contractor is an individual or organization that receives grant funds to carry out specific project-related activities or services. Cooperating entities and collaborators are organizations or individuals that will contribute to the project but do not necessarily receive grant funding; CDFA does not differentiate between the terms. Applicants should list all collaborators on the "Cooperating Entities" tab in FAAST.

OUTCOME MEASURES

1. Q. What section of the application should address procedural details, including research methodology?
A. Experimental design should be described in the Work Plan. The Outcome Measures section should include a description of the data collection methods, specifying how data will be collected, measured, and analyzed to evaluate project outcomes.

BUDGET SECTION

1. Q. Where can Applicants find information about which costs are allowable or unallowable?
A. The Code of Federal Regulations; federal SCBGP and USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, requirements; applicable federal, state, local, and Tribal laws and regulations; and other programmatic requirements determine which costs are allowable or unallowable.

CDFA has created the [Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) to summarize this information.

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2. Q. Which template is required for the Budget Narrative?
A. The required template is linked in the *Grant Proposal Instructions* (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/2026_SCBGP_Grant_Proposal_Instructions.pdf) and in FAAST (<https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov/>). It is also available on the SCBGP website (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) as of December 8, 2025, at https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/form_1-6-2-2_scbgp_budget_narrative.docx.

The top lines include "Budget Narrative" and "Form 1.6.2.2".

3. Q. Should individuals that work at a different University campus from the Applicant or PI be included in A. Personnel or F. Contractual?
A. For the purposes of SCBGP, these individuals and/or organizations are considered contractors.

4. Q. In which budget category should printing costs be included?
A. Printing costs are typically included in G. Other. More detail on each budget category can be found in the *Request for Concept Proposals* (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/2026_request_for_concept_proposals.pdf).

5. Q. Is it a requirement that Applicants provide quotes for requested equipment, supplies, or other costs?
A. While Applicants are encouraged to research all costs to estimate as accurately as possible, it is not a requirement to upload substantiating documentation as part of the Grant Proposal.

6. Q. What is the threshold for information technology systems to be considered equipment?
A. The threshold for information technology systems, as for all equipment, is defined by the 2CFR ([https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-200/section-200.1#p-200.1\(Equipment\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-200/section-200.1#p-200.1(Equipment))) and is currently \$10,000.

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7. Q. When fringe benefits vary from year to year, what is the best way to report this in the Fringe Benefits section of the Budget Narrative?
A. Applicants should average the fringe benefits over the entire grant duration and provide one numerical value per individual.

8. Q. For personnel salaries working on the grant, does the LOE (level of effort) need to total 100 percent across all roles, or can it exceed 100 percent if it reflects multiple roles?
A. LOE represents the percentage of time an individual dedicates to the grant relative to their total available work time. The LOE for a single individual should not exceed 100 percent for any and all roles in the proposed project. Please note that all staff should be listed individually in the Budget Narrative.

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PROCUREMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES

1. Q. Where can Applicants find information about the requirements for selecting a contractor?
A. Information regarding the requirements for selecting a contractor can be found in the Code of Federal Regulations. CDFA has created a reference document titled [Procuring Goods and Services](#) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/SCBGP_Procuring_Goods_and_Services.pdf), which summarizes these federal procurement requirements.
2. Q. Should Applicants attach a CV, resume, statement of qualifications, etc. for contractors that have not been procured but may be selected for project work?
A. Applicants should not attach resumes or any other documents that evidence qualifications for contractors yet to be selected. However, Applicants may briefly describe the intended competitive process or expected qualifications of prospective contractors in the contractual justification section of the Budget Narrative.
3. Q. Is it possible for contractors to use a flat-rate fee structure, but still itemize some costs?
A. No. Contractual services may utilize one of three fee structures: Salaries and Wages (itemized costs), Fees for Professional Services, or Flat-Rate Compensation. Combining fee structures is not allowable.

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4. Q. Can a contractor be changed at this time?
A. Yes, contractors may be changed prior to Grant Proposal submission.

COST SHARE

No questions at this time.

REVIEW PROCESS

1. Q. Will the individuals who review the Grant Proposal application be the same as those who reviewed the Concept Proposal application?
A. Reviewer teams remain consistent within each funding category. While CDFA makes every effort to ensure that the same individuals review a project throughout both phases of the application process, projects may be reassigned to different reviewers to balance reviewer workloads.

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GRANT MANAGEMENT

1. Q. If a grant is awarded, how often will progress reports be due, and when are they required?
A. Recipients are required to submit a progress report no later than 30 days after each six-month reporting period ends. The progress report is used to identify milestones, results achieved, success stories, potential concerns, and other pertinent information, such as program income. Recipients will receive a progress report template from CDFA staff approximately one month prior to each reporting due date, generally in April and October.

While details may vary year-to-year, Applicants can find more information on Grant Management, including the current *Grant Management Procedures Manual*, at the [SCBGP Recipient Resources webpage](#) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/RecipientResources.html).

2. Q. If a project is awarded funding, will actual costs be expected to match the amounts estimated in the Grant Proposal Budget Narrative?
A. While CDFA encourages Applicants to estimate costs as accurately as possible, it is understood that costs may vary somewhat between the estimates included in the Grant Proposal and the actual expenditure. Reasonable Scope of Work Revisions are allowed and expected during the life cycle of a grant, including to update costs. Note that the total grant amount and the Indirect subtotal may not increase after the Grant Agreement is signed.

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

1. Q. Where can Applicants find the application for the Additional Assistance Program?
A. The application for the Additional Assistance Program is available on the California Department of Food and Agriculture's [SCBGP website](#) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/). Interested Applicants are encouraged to email grants@cdfa.ca.gov to request the application and to begin receiving one-on-one technical assistance.