2027 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Additional Assistance for Limited Resource Applicants

Request for Concept Proposals

FEDERAL ASSISTANCE LISTING 10.170

Released:
November 10, 2026

Concept Proposals Due:
By 5:00 p.m. PT on January 11, 2027
Late submissions will not be accepted.

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About the Program

Purpose

The California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds projects that enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. The SCBGP is designed to support all sectors of California's specialty crop industry and improve the performance of California specialty crops within local, domestic, national, and international markets. Specialty crops are fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. Visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) What is a Specialty Crop website (https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop) for a list of eligible and ineligible commodities and a comprehensive definition of specialty crops.

The intent of the Additional Assistance for Limited Resource Applicants (Additional Assistance) Program is to provide additional support to small and/or limited resource applicant organizations to successfully apply for SCBGP funding, administer grant funds, and implement projects that enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops.

This program will provide:

- Application assistance and guidance to submit a proposal to the program, including personalized assistance offered in the applicants' preferred method (one-on-one phone calls, emails, or virtual meetings).
- One-on-one technical assistance throughout the proposal and project as needed via email, phone call, or virtual meeting, per the applicant's preference.
- Opportunities for direct feedback and support for successful project implementation and grant management.
- Networking opportunities with other grant recipients in this category to foster informal support networks among grantees.

Applicants that plan to submit a proposal to the Additional Assistance Program should complete the inquiry form (https://forms.cloud.microsoft/g/UKN2q5kUDt) as soon as possible. If applicants are unable to complete the form, they should email grants@cdfa.ca.gov. One-on-one technical assistance will be available for up to 20 eligible applicants.

Funding and Duration

Grant amounts range from $75,000 to $250,000. The maximum grant duration is two (2) years, eight (8) months, project activities and expenditures cannot begin before November 1, 2027, or before execution of the grant agreement, whichever occurs later or after June 30, 2030. CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount different than the amount requested.

Funding is contingent on available funding from the USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

Eligibility

Non-profit organizations, Tribal governments (federally and non-federally recognized), and K-12 school districts are eligible to apply to the Additional Assistance Program if they have not previously received SCBGP funding, do not have technical expertise in grant writing*, and work directly to support limited resource and/or beginning farmers** or provide nutrition education and/or access to specialty crops in limited resource communities.

Applicants that are not formally established as legal entities may apply through an eligible fiscal sponsor. The fiscal sponsor must be an eligible applicant organization under this program and will serve as the legal recipient of grant funds and be responsible for compliance with all applicable grant requirements. Fiscal sponsorship may not be used to circumvent program eligibility requirements, including restrictions related to prior SCBGP funding, grant writing expertise, or organizational eligibility.

Individuals; for-profit organizations; local, state, and federal government entities (excluding K-12 school districts and tribal governments); and public or private colleges and universities are not eligible to apply. University affiliated non-profit organizations are also not eligible to apply.

*Technical expertise with grant writing includes demonstrated experience or organizational capacity to independently prepare and submit competitive grant applications, including through established staff, partnerships, and/or contracted grant writing services. Organizations that have received multiple state or federal grants in recent years are considered to have technical expertise with grant writing. Likewise, organizations that are headed or staffed by individuals that have demonstrated the ability to apply to the conventional SCBGP or other state and federal grants are considered to have technical expertise with grant writing.

**A beginning farmer is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

Additional notes to help determine eligibility:

- Projects must enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. Projects benefiting non-specialty crops will not be selected for funding.
- Organizations that have been awarded SCBGP funding in the past are not eligible to apply. Organizations that unsuccessfully applied in previous solicitations are eligible to apply.
- Organizations that have successfully submitted Concept Proposals for the 2027 SCBGP through the CDFA's Grant Opportunity and Administration and Tracking System (GOATS) under other funding categories are not eligible to apply.
- Organizations may submit no more than one proposal to the Additional Assistance Program.
- Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that directly benefit or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. For example, the program will not fund a project to start or expand a non-profit, farm, or business venture or to provide donations to individuals.
- Grant funds cannot be used to compete unfairly with private companies that offer equivalent products or services.
- Projects must address one or more of the program priorities identified by CDFA. To view these priorities, reference pages 8-9 of the Additional Assistance Program Request for Proposals (RFP).

For a list of examples of eligible and ineligible project types, please view Appendix C: *Proposal Tips*.

Executive Order N-6-22 – Russia Sanctions

On March 4, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-6-22 regarding Economic Sanctions against Russia and Russian entities and individuals. “Economic Sanctions” refers to sanctions imposed by the U.S. government in response to Russia’s actions in Ukraine, as well as any sanctions imposed under state law. By submitting a proposal or application, Applicant represents that it is not a target of Economic Sanctions. Should the State determine Applicant is a target of Economic Sanctions or is conducting prohibited transactions with sanctioned individuals or entities, that shall be grounds for rejection of the Applicant’s proposal/application any time prior to agreement execution, or, if determined after agreement execution, shall be grounds for termination by the State.

Conventional SCBGP Program

Applicants who successfully applied to the conventional SCBGP program are not eligible to apply to the Additional Assistance Program in the same year. More information on the conventional SCBGP program, including eligibility restrictions, is outlined in the 2027 SCBGP Request for Concept Proposals (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/2027_RFCP.pdf).

Other Grant Programs

Projects submitted to the SCBGP must increase the competitiveness of California specialty crops and cannot benefit an individual entity or organization. CDFA offers several grant programs that address nutritional education, improve access to and consumption of healthy California foods, and provide direct assistance to California farmers and ranchers.

For a comprehensive list of CDFA's Grant Programs, please visit https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/. A complete list of California grant and loan programs can also be found on the State Library's California Grants Portal: https://www.grants.ca.gov/.

Solicitation Process and Timeline

Proposal

Additional Assistance applicants will not participate in the conventional SCBGP application process, and timelines and requirements for the Additional Assistance Program will differ from the conventional SCBGP application. The application consists of a two-stage process. During the first stage, applicants must submit a Concept Proposal through CDFA's Grant Opportunity and Administration and Tracking System (GOATS) (https://applications.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/s/e). Applicants whose Concept Proposals are selected will be invited to complete a Scope of Work during the second stage.

To receive technical assistance on the application prior to the submission deadline, please complete the inquiry form (https://forms.cloud.microsoft/g/UKN2q5kUDt); if unable to complete the inquiry form please email grants@cdfa.ca.gov. CDFA will advise all applicants as to the outcome of the Proposal review. Note that receiving technical assistance does not guarantee an invitation to complete a Scope of Work.

Scope of Work

Applicants whose Proposals are selected will work with a CDFA grant analyst to develop a Scope of Work (i.e., a more detailed version of their Proposal) for submission to USDA for approval. CDFA will provide one-on-one assistance along with the specific requirements for filling out the Scope of Work. CDFA will advise all applicants as to the outcome of the submission to USDA. All funding decisions are at the discretion of USDA.

Schedule for Proposal

Proposal	Date
Release Request for Proposals	November 10, 2026
Webinar	November 18, 2026
Proposals Due	January 11, 2027 5:00 p.m. PT

Schedule for Scope of Work (by invitation only)

Scope of Work	Date
Invitation to Submit Scopes of Work	March 2027
Scopes of Work Due	April 2027
Scopes of Work to USDA for Approval	May 2027
Announce and Award Funding	Fall 2027

Please note award announcement is contingent upon permission to do so by USDA, AMS, and should not be anticipated before October 2027.

How to Apply

Please complete the inquiry form (https://forms.cloud.microsoft/g/UKN2q5kUDt) to request technical assistance with the Proposal application. Due to staff limitations, the Additional Assistance Program will prioritize providing technical assistance to the first 20 eligible applicants who request application assistance. If unable to complete the inquiry form, please email grants@cdfa.ca.gov for assistance.

Applicants must complete and submit their Proposals online through GOATS (https://applications.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/s/). Proposals submitted outside of the system will not be considered.

Applicants must create a user account in GOATS, then create a Concept Proposal. GOATS is organized into various tabs and pages utilizing a question-and-answer format. Questions are given in various formats: a drop-down menu, a text box with predetermined character limitations, yes/no, single-choice, multiple-choice, or an attachment. All questions must be answered in the manner and format required by GOATS without exception.

The CDFA SCBGP website (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) contains a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document and other helpful resources.

For questions about the GOATS system, please contact CDFA by emailing grants@cdfa.ca.gov or calling (916) 657-3231. Salesforce's help page can be found at https://help.salesforce.com/s. In addition, CDFA has created a GOATS User Guide

(https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/Salesforce_User_Guide.pdf).

Note: In GOATS, a green section button with a check mark means the section was saved; it does not confirm that every required response is complete or correct. Applicants must review each section carefully to ensure all responses are complete, correct, and in the desired location.

Program Priorities

Proposals should focus on improving the competitiveness of California specialty crops through improving access to and consumption of California specialty crops, providing nutritional education for consumers in order to increase consumption, and/or providing training for producers and growers to equip them for current and future challenges in specialty crop agriculture. In addition to conducting outreach to encourage participation in project activities, all SCBGP projects must include an outreach component that communicates project results to specialty crop stakeholders.

Proposals should:

- Demonstrate a high likelihood of success.
- Benefit the California specialty crop industry.
- Identify the specific and existing issue, problem, or need the project will address.
- Demonstrate industry need and support.
- Include an outreach component addressing how project results and conclusions will be extended to specialty crop growers.

CDFA will consider proposals that improve access to and consumption of California specialty crops and/or improve the public's knowledge and understanding of specialty crop agriculture and its beneficial importance to the health and well-being of all Californians. CDFA will also consider proposals that benefit all current and future California specialty crop farmers by providing education and training, including providing education and training for small or beginning farmers in areas including business development and regulatory compliance. This may include food safety training, which is essential to helping small and mid-size farmers meet the requirements for selling to schools and other institutions, an increasingly important market for supporting viable, local food systems. Expanding access to food safety education will reduce barriers to entry and create new opportunities for limited resource farmers. Engagement may include increasing small farmer engagement with the agricultural industry, including outreach and education to small and beginning farmers to increase knowledge and participation in state, local, and federal resources.*

*Note that SCBGP funds may not be used to increase participation in another state or federal grant program.

All proposals must address at least one of the following program priorities:

1) Increasing knowledge of how to produce, prepare, or preserve specialty crops.
2) Increasing the awareness of and demand for locally sourced specialty crops.
3) Increasing specialty crop production, availability, and/or distribution capacity in urban and rural communities, homes, schools, the workplace, hospitals, prisons, and other limited resource communities.
4) Increasing consumption of healthy California specialty crops in schools by developing connections between farmers and school nutrition directors/officials that include tools and resources for building strong partnerships.
5) Introducing and recruiting young and beginning farmers to the variety of specialty crop career opportunities.
6) Providing support to specialty crop producers in adopting the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act and/or increasing the safety and security of the specialty crop food system.
7) Providing technical assistance and training to better equip farmers to protect and conserve natural resources, adapt to extreme weather through on-farm practices, and/or adopt methods to improve water efficiency.
8) Developing networking and training opportunities on agronomic, economic (farm business and marketing skills), plant health, and/or pest management skills for limited resource, small, and/or beginning California specialty crop producers.
9) Highlighting and encouraging awareness of less commonly known and/or recognized specialty crops and/or cultivation practices for farmers and/or consumers.
10) Supporting market opportunities through regional aggregation and distribution for small to medium sized specialty crop farmers and limited resource California producers and farmers.

Proposal Questions and Scoring

Complete the inquiry form (https://forms.cloud.microsoft/g/UKN2q5kUDt) to request technical assistance with the application for the Additional Assistance Program. If unable to complete the inquiry form, please email grants@cdfa.ca.gov for assistance.

Failure to answer one or more application questions, including unscored questions, will result in disqualification. The following questions and descriptions are provided as a preview of the application. All questions are required unless otherwise noted, including unscored questions.

Page 1. General Information Details

Disclosures

Disclosure acknowledgement of the potential of future cost share requirements (not scored question):

In the 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), USDA announced an intent to include a cost share requirement for all awards, stating that each project would be required to provide a cost share from non federal sources in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions equal to 25 percent of the amount of federal funds being requested.

As of the date of publication of the Request for Concept Proposals, USDA has not provided CDFA or any other state department of agriculture with the NOFO or Terms and Conditions for the 2027 SCBGP. If necessary, CDFA will prepare, and make available, a supplement to the Request for Concept Proposals to advise applicants of any changes to the program upon receipt of USDA's NOFO. CDFA and all applicants will be subject to the terms of USDA's NOFO and Terms and Conditions, including any match requirements.

Carefully review the disclosure, acknowledge the disclosure, and select "yes" or "no."

Disclosure acknowledgement of changes to the Code of Federal Regulations that may impact the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) or Terms and Conditions for the 2027 SCBGP (not a scored question):

On May 29, 2026, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in coordination with USDA and many other federal agencies, announced sweeping changes to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) that would substantially impact the administration of federal grants and cooperative agreements. CDFA continues to monitor developments on these changes.

As of the date of publication of the Request for Concept Proposals, USDA has not provided CDFA or any other state department of agriculture with the NOFO or Terms and Conditions for the 2027 SCBGP. If necessary, CDFA will prepare, and make

available, a supplement to the Request for Concept Proposals to advise applicants of any changes to the program upon receipt of USDA's NOFO. CDFA and all applicants will be subject to the terms of USDA's NOFO and Terms and Conditions, including any match requirements.

Carefully review the disclosure, acknowledge the disclosure, and select "yes" or "no."

Organization Details

Demographic Survey Questions (not scored questions):

This survey is optional. Completing the survey will not affect any applications, licenses, or certifications you have with CDFA.

Applicant Organization Information:

Name of Organization (not a scored question):

Provide the legal name of the organization that will serve as lead for the project and will receive and oversee the use of grant funds. If applicable, also provide the name of the relevant division of the organization. (maximum of 255 characters)

Other Organization Information (not a scored question):

As directed in GOATS, provide the phone number, website, and address of the organization that will serve as lead for the project in the text boxes provided.

California Senate and Assembly Districts (not a scored question):

Using the number box, provide the districts where the applicant and project are located. More than one district can be provided, if needed. If the project covers all of California, write "Statewide." If the program/project is outside of California, write "00".

Organization Type (not a scored question):

Using the drop-down menu, select the organization type that best describes the applicant. If "Other," specify the legal or functional nature of the organization such as "K-12 School District," "Other Non-profit Organization," or "Tribal Government." (maximum of 255 characters)

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI):

Enter the applicant's UEI number, if known. To obtain a UEI, please visit System for Award Management website (https://sam.gov/content/home). If awarded SCBGP funds, recipients will need to obtain a UEI before a grant agreement can be executed. *This question is not required.*

Taxpayer Identification Number:

Enter the applicant's 9-digit taxpayer identification number in the format 12-1234567.

Contact Information:

Project Director and Project Manager Contact (not a scored question):

As directed in GOATS, please enter the name and contact information for the individual who is authorized to execute a funding agreement and receive grant funds (Project Director). Please provide a backup if that individual should be unreachable (Project Manager). These individuals should be familiar with the proposed project; two separate individuals should be provided. (maximum of 255 characters for each field)

Page 2. Project Information Details

Project Overview

Project Title (not a scored question):

Provide the title of the project.

Other Applicant Details (not a scored question):

As directed in GOATS, respond to the applicant demographic and geographic location questions. These questions will not be scored.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Information

Project Description (not a scored question):

Summarize the need for the project and describe the anticipated goals and outcomes. All projects must also briefly describe the plan for evaluating and measuring the success of the project. This section should be specific to the proposed project, rather than the applicant organization as a whole. (maximum of 1,000 characters)

Description of Applicant Organization (not a scored question):

Briefly describe the applicant organization, the services it provides, and/or the purpose of the organization. This section should identify the applicant organization's qualifications to demonstrate the likelihood of successful project implementation. (maximum of 500 characters)

Organizational Support (not a scored question):

List the applicant organization's supporters and/or regular partners. This list will be used to identify potential conflicts of interest during the review process. (maximum of 500 characters)

Program Priorities (not a scored question):

Using the checkboxes, select one (or more) of the Additional Assistance Program priorities as described on pages 8-9 of the RFP. Selecting more than one program priority is not required.

Project Purpose (15 points):

This section should focus on the proposed project rather than the general activities of the applicant organization. All of the following must be addressed within the text boxes provided:

- Identify the specific and existing issue, problem, or need the project will address. (maximum of 500 characters)
- Explain why the proposal is important and timely for the specialty crop industry. (maximum of 500 characters)
- Explain how the project addresses the selected priority or priorities from the Project Priorities section above. The program priorities are described in the Request for Proposals. (maximum of 1,500 characters)

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on how clearly the proposal states the specific issue, problem, or need the project will address, as well as the timeliness and relevance to the specialty crop industry (10 points). Scoring will also be based on the extent to which the project demonstrates a link to the program priorities identified in the 2027 RFP (5 points).

Project Sustainability (10 points):

SCBGP projects should have a long-term impact without relying indefinitely on grant funding. In this section, describe:

- The activities that will be implemented to ensure that the project becomes self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on SCBGP funds, and/or;
- The benefit(s) to California's specialty crop industry resulting from the project that will continue beyond the grant duration. (maximum of 1,000 characters)

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the extent to which the proposal demonstrates the project will become self-sustaining and/or that the benefit of the project will continue beyond the grant duration without relying indefinitely on SCBGP or other grant funding.

Project Beneficiaries (10 points):

All of the following must be addressed within the text boxes provided:

- Estimate the number of project beneficiaries. The number cited should be a reasonable estimate of the number of individuals that could realistically be **directly impacted** by the results of the project during the grant duration. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that the number of beneficiaries is trackable and reportable **within the project duration**.
- Identify and quantify the project beneficiaries and describe how they will directly benefit from the project objectives (list the specific specialty crops that will be affected, if possible). Describe how you will track and measure project beneficiaries over the life of the project. (maximum of 1,000 characters)
- Succinctly address how the proposal benefits the broader California specialty crop industry, rather than primarily benefiting a single individual or organization, such as the applicant or the communities it serves. (maximum of 1,000 characters)

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on how clearly the proposal identifies and quantifies the beneficiaries and explains how they will directly benefit, as well as the relevance and significance of the anticipated project benefit(s) to the specialty crop industry.

Project Duration (not a scored question):

Within the text boxes provided, enter a start and end date for the project. Projects cannot start before November 1, 2027, or continue beyond June 30, 2030. Failure to provide a project start and end date within the allowable duration may result in disqualification.

Page 3. Project Workplan and Objectives

Work Plan and Objectives (15 points):

Within the text boxes provided, all of the following must be addressed:

- **Objective:** Identify the main objectives the project is seeking to accomplish. All projects must have at least one objective. Select “Add Row” to add additional objectives and activities.
- **Objective Activities:** In the text boxes provided, describe the activities necessary to accomplish each of the identified project objectives. Each activity should include the personnel responsible for its implementation and an approximation of the start and end dates for when it will be implemented (formatted as MON, DAY, YYYY, e.g., May 20, 2028 – Jun 20, 2028).
    - Include tasks for all personnel responsible for carrying out project activities. Note that all personnel, including contractors and any

associated personnel, listed in the budget must be involved in at least one activity described in the Work Plan.
- Include activities that explain how the project results will be shared with the target audience, stakeholders, and other interested parties beyond those directly involved in the project. Examples of such activities include presentations at professional conferences or producer meetings, or the agricultural press, educational brochures, websites, etc.

For a preview of the Project Objectives and Work Plan components in GOATS, reference Appendix B on page 28.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the clarity of the work plan, the relevance of the specific project activities to the project purpose, and how well the project outlines a plan to disseminate project results.

Page 4. Budget Narrative

Budget (15 points):

All budget items should support enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops and correlate to the goal(s) of the project. Before completing the Budget, review the Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf).

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the extent to which the budget is reasonable and appropriate to achieve the project goals.

Page 5. Attachments

Specialty Crop Stakeholder Endorsement (10 Points):

All projects must submit at least one letter or statement of support from a specialty crop stakeholder. This letter or statement should identify the stakeholder, make clear their relationship to the specialty crop industry, and explain why they believe the project is important and timely. Upload letter(s) to the Attachments page in GOATS.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the relevance and timeliness of the project as demonstrated by the support for and commitment to the project from California's specialty crop industry.

Total number of points achievable in the Proposal: 75 Points

Proposal Budget

For each budget category listed below, enter the amount of SCBGP funds requested (rounded to the nearest whole dollar) and a brief description of the costs or activities covered. The description should describe the costs, the items involved, and their use in the project. A description is required for each budget category in which funds are requested, except for category *Indirect Costs* and category *Total SCBGP Funds Requested*. A preview of the budget is available in Appendix A.

Salary and wages, fringe benefits, travel, special purpose equipment, supplies, other, and indirect costs for individuals not employed by the applicant organization must be listed under category *Contractors*.

Salary and Wages (Under *Labor* Budget Category)

Estimate the total cost of salary and wages for time spent on the project by individuals employed by the applicant organization. Note that administrative costs associated with personnel are typically considered indirect costs; these individuals should not be included.

Each individual should be listed separately. For salaried individuals, use the *Salary* subcategory. For hourly individuals, use the *Wages* subcategory.

In the text box "Name" provide the name of each individual. In the text box "Role Title," provide the title and a brief description of that individual's activities in support of the project's goals.

For salaried individuals, 1) in the text box "estimated effort as percent full time equivalent," provide a percent full time equivalent (FTE) worked*; 2) in the text box "annual base salary," provide that individual's annual base salary; and 3) in the text box "year," provide the years that individual will work on the project **. The calculated amount will autopopulate.

For hourly individuals, 1) in the text box "number of hours," provide the total number of hours to be worked by that individual; 2) in the text box "hourly wage," provide that individual's annual base salary; and 3) in the text box "year," provide the years that individual will work on the project. The calculated amount will autopopulate.**

*To calculate a percent FTE, divide the average number of hours an individual will work weekly by 40. For example, an individual who dedicates 10 hours per week to the project will have a 25 percent FTE (10 / 40 = 0.25 x 100 = 25%).

**Years refers to calendar year. For this funding cycle, individuals can work in 2027, 2028, 2029, and/or 2030. Numbers may be expressed as a range, such as "2028-2029."

Fringe Benefits

Estimate the total cost of fringe benefits for time spent on the project by individuals employed by the applicant organization in accordance with the applicant organization's established fringe benefits policy. In the table provided, list the fringe benefits rate, calculated as a percentage of the individual salary/wages.

Travel

Estimate the total cost of project related travel for all individuals except contractual personnel. In the description section, briefly describe how the travel will help accomplish the goals and objectives of the project. Use the rates established by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) available on the GSA website (https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates) to develop the travel cost estimate. Reference pages 12-13 of the Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table. (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/allowable_and_unallowable_costs_activities.pdf) for restrictions on travel costs.

Supplies

Estimate the total cost to purchase supplies necessary to achieve project objectives. Supplies are items with an acquisition cost less than $10,000 per unit that are used exclusively for the objectives of the project. In the description section, list the types of supplies to be purchased and their use in the project. General use office supplies (paper, printer ink, pens, etc.), facilities costs (telephone, internet, etc.), and administrative costs are generally considered indirect and should not be included under category *Supplies*. Reference pages 21-22 of the RFP for more information about direct and indirect costs.

Equipment

Estimate the total cost to purchase any special purpose equipment necessary to achieve project objectives. Special purpose equipment is nonexpendable, tangible personal property with a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds $10,000 to be used only for research, scientific, or other technical

activities. In the description section, list the special purpose equipment to be purchased. Reference pages 3-4 of the Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) for restrictions on special purpose equipment.

Contractors

Estimate the total cost of work on the project that will be performed by individuals/organizations other than the applicant (e.g., consultants, contractors, partner organizations, etc.). This amount should include all associated salary and wages, fringe benefits, travel, special purpose equipment, supplies, other, and indirect costs. In the description section, list the services to be provided by each contractor that will work on the project and be paid with grant funds and provide a brief breakdown of costs. Contractor costs should provide sufficient detail to demonstrate costs are project-related and necessary to achieve project objectives. Reference pages 2-3 of the Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) for restrictions on contractual costs.

Subrecipients

Leave this section of the budget template blank, as subrecipients are not allowable under this program.

On-Farm Practices

Leave this section of the budget template blank, as it is not allowable under this program.

Other Direct Costs

Estimate the total cost of all other project-related expenses. Expenses typically listed under category *Other* include registration fees to attend professional conferences, speaker/trainer fees or stipends, fees to publish in academic journals, fees for data collection and laboratory analysis, meeting space or equipment rentals, subscriptions, etc. In the description section, provide a brief breakdown of the specific expenses necessary to accomplish the goals and objectives of the project.

Program Income

Estimate the amount of income (if any) that may be generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the award (e.g., sale of crops purchased with grant funds or ticket sales for events). In the text box, explain how the program income will be generated and how it will be reinvested into the project to enhance specialty crops. Program income

cannot be used as a net profit and must be spent before the end of the grant period in accordance with restrictions on allowable and unallowable costs and activities. Proposals using program income for unallowable costs will be disqualified.

Match/In-Kind

All projects must include a cost share equivalent to 25 percent of the total grant funds requested. Match costs are subject to the same requirements as grant funds: costs must be allowable, reasonable, and sufficiently justified. Note that federal sources of funding, including pass-through funding, may not be used as match.

In the text boxes, for each type of cost share, 1) describe the source or nature of the cost share, 2) how it will be used in support of project goals, and 3) estimate the total value. Add additional line items as necessary.

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are facilities and administrative costs that cannot easily be tied directly to the activities of the grant. Examples of common indirect costs include administrative/clerical services, rent, utilities, internet and telephone service, maintenance, and general office supplies. The maximum amount of indirect costs allowable is 8 percent of total personnel costs (category *Salary and Wages* plus category *Fringe Benefits*). Reference pages 21-22 of the RFP for more information about indirect costs. *Formula: (Salary and Wages + Fringe Benefits) x 0.08 = Maximum Indirect Costs*

Total SCBGP Funds Requested

Total SCBGP funds requested will automatically be calculated based on the applicable budget categories in GOATS. The total amount requested must be between $75,000 and $250,000.

Requirements and Limitations

Farm Bill and USDA Guidance

Authorization for this program was established under the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 and continues under authorization from the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (commonly referred to as the “Farm Bill”). The 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill Act contains provisions for the continuation of this program beginning with the 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity and each fiscal year thereafter.

In the 2026 NOFO, USDA announced an intent to include a cost share requirement for all awards, stating that each project would be required to provide a cost share from nonfederal sources in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions equal to 25 percent of the amount of federal funds being requested. Funds from other state or federal grant programs are not considered matching funds.

On May 29, 2026, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in coordination with USDA and many other federal agencies, announced sweeping changes to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) that would substantially impact the administration of federal grants and cooperative agreements. CDFA continues to monitor developments about these changes.

As of the date of this publication, USDA has not provided CDFA or any other state department of agriculture with the NOFO or Terms and Conditions for the 2027 SCBGP. If necessary, CDFA will prepare, and make available, a supplement to this document to advise applicants of any changes to the program upon receipt of USDA’s NOFO. CDFA and all applicants will be subject to the terms of USDA’s NOFO and Terms and Conditions, including any match requirements or changes to the CFR.

Federal Cost Principles

Federal cost principles are regulations based on organization type used to determine allowable costs and ensure consistent treatment of costs. Applicants are responsible for identifying the federal cost principles appropriate to their organization, consistent application of cost principles to the SCBGP grant funds and ensuring contractors and/or consultants comply with federal cost principle requirements.

Indian tribal governments; non-profit organizations; and K-12 school districts will be subject to 2 CFR 200 (https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=898fdaa0b947dd0bf8c962a137d230dd&node=pt2.1.200&rgn=div5).

Unallowable Costs

CDFA has developed an Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) to assist applicants in preparing their proposal budget. The table provides overall guidance for the handling of common costs and includes USDA and CDFA requirements specific to this program. Proposals with unallowable costs may be subject to disqualification as described below.

Indirect Costs

The indirect cost rate for the SCBGP is limited by federal statute. The rate published in this solicitation document ensures conformity to the federal statute. Applicants that might ordinarily be eligible to receive a higher indirect rate from other state or federal programs are responsible for ensuring that their organization/institution will allow an exception for this program before applying.

The maximum indirect cost rate is 8 percent of total personnel costs (budget category *Salary and Wages* plus category *Fringe Benefits*).

Applicants are responsible for presenting costs incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances consistently and must not include costs associated with an established indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, applicants cannot allocate a cost as a direct cost if it is also incurred as an indirect cost for the same purpose and vice versa.

Direct costs are costs that can be identified specifically with a particular award, project, program, service, or other organizational activity or that can be directly assigned to such an activity relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy. Typically, direct costs include, but are not limited to, compensation of employees who work directly on the award to include salaries and fringe benefits, travel that is necessary for the project, equipment and supplies used for the project to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, and the hiring of qualified contractors to achieve project objectives.

Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”) are costs incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be identified specifically with a particular project, program, or organizational activity. Below are typical indirect costs. The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should normally be treated as indirect costs. Direct charging of these costs may be appropriate where all of the following conditions are met:

- administrative or clerical services are integral and directly related to a project or activity;
- individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;
- such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the federal awarding agency; and
- the costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

The following are considered indirect and should not be included in the Budget template as direct costs:

- Information technology services.
- Rent.
- Utilities and internet service.
- Telephone service (mobile and landline).
- General office supplies.
- Insurance.
- Maintenance.

Travel

Travel reimbursement rates may not exceed the applicable rates established by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), available on the GSA website (https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates). Applicants should apply the current government mileage rate for personally owned vehicles used for travel related to the project; this rate is available on the IRS website (https://www.irs.gov/Tax-Professionals/Standard-Mileage-Rates).

Consideration should be given to the use of alternative technologies such as teleconferencing or videoconferencing if they are available, appropriate for the project, and less costly, particularly for international travel.

Note: International travel must comply with the Fly America Act, 49 U.S.C. 40118 (https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title49/pdf/USCODE-2011-title49-subtitleVII-partA-subparti-chap401-sec40118.pdf) *and Foreign Travel Per Diem Allowances* (https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp).

Review and Notification

Review Criteria

CDFA's intent is to fund projects that can produce the highest degree of measurable benefits to California specialty crop producers in relation to each dollar spent. Applicants' Proposals will be evaluated on the criteria set forth in the Proposal Questions and Scoring section on pages 10-19.

Review Process

CDFA will conduct two levels of review during the Proposal process. The first level is an administrative review to determine whether Proposal requirements are met. The second level is a technical review to evaluate the merits of the Proposals.

The CDFA SCBGP Technical Review Committee will perform the technical review. The Technical Review Committee is comprised of growers and representatives from industry, universities, public agencies, and non-profits with an interest and expertise in specialty crops and agricultural systems.

Notification and Feedback

Proposals that are disqualified utilizing the criteria below will be notified within 21 days of the Proposal due date. All other applicants will be notified regarding the status of their Proposals no later than March 31, 2027. Successful applicants will be invited to complete a Scope of Work and will receive instructions for submission. Applicants not invited to complete a Scope of Work will receive feedback on their Proposal within 60 days after receiving notification.

To ensure all communications are received, points of contact listed in the application should add grants@cdfa.ca.gov to their email safe senders list, address book, or contact list.

Disqualifications

The following may result in the disqualification of a project proposal:

- Proposals from individuals; for-profit organizations; local, state, and federal government entities (excluding K-12 school districts and tribal governments); public or private colleges and universities; and organizations with the capacity to hire, partner, and/or contract with a grant writing organization, consultant, or staff member.

- Proposals from organizations that have successfully submitted a Concept Proposal to the 2027 SCBGP through GOATS.
- Incomplete proposals: proposals with one or more unanswered questions or only minimal responses.
- Proposals that include activities outside the grant duration.
- Proposals for less than the minimum award amount or more than the maximum award amount.
- Proposals with unallowable costs or activities necessary to complete the project objectives.
- Proposals with indirect costs that exceed the limit set forth in this document.
- Proposals that were submitted outside of the GOATS submission platform.
- Proposals that benefit a single individual, individuals, or organization rather than the California specialty crop industry.
- Proposals that do not fit program guidelines and/or do not primarily benefit limited resource farmers and/or limited resource communities.

APPEAL RIGHTS: Any discretionary action taken by the Office of Grants Administration (OGA) may be appealed to the CDFA's Office of Hearings and Appeals within ten (10) calendar days of receiving a notice of disqualification from CDFA. Email notification shall serve as the date of service. The appeal must be in writing and signed by the responsible party named on the grant application or their authorized agent. It must state the grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documents and a copy of the OGA decision being challenged. The submission must be sent to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Office of Hearings and Appeals, 1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 or emailed to CDFA.LegalOffice@cdfa.ca.gov. If submissions are not received within the time frame provided above, the appeal will be disqualified from consideration.

Assistance and Questions

Proposal Webinars

CDFA will conduct a webinar on the 2027 SCBGP solicitation process and the Proposal application on November 18, 2026. Please visit the CDFA SCBGP website (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) for dates, times, and links. All applicants are encouraged to participate in a webinar.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The Additional Assistance Program FAQ can be accessed on the CDFA SCBGP website (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/).

Personalized Assistance Available

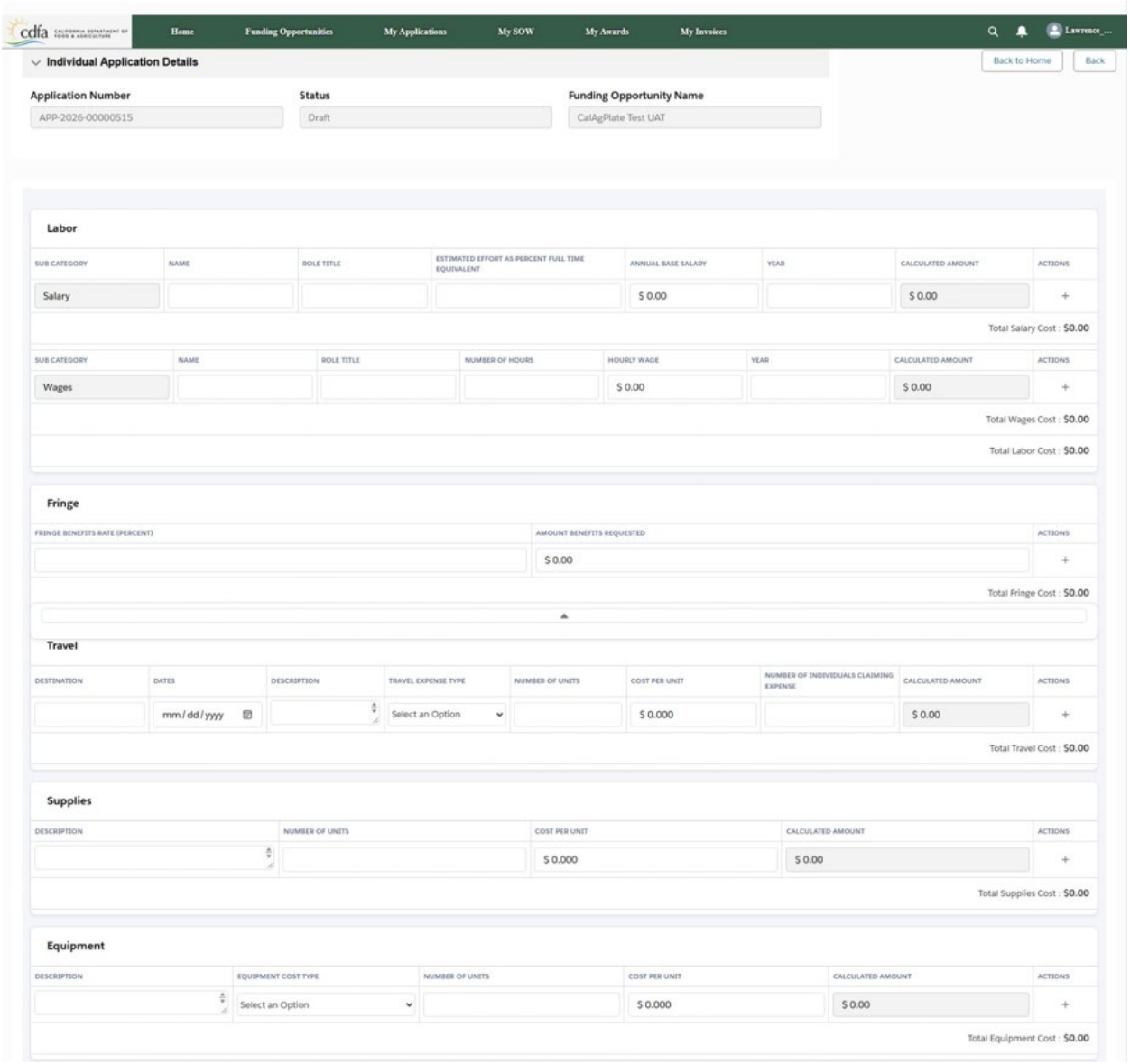
CDFA is able to provide the assistance that best fits applicants' needs. For example, in addition to the Webinars and FAQ, one-on-one assistance is available at your request in your preferred format. Please complete the inquiry form (https://forms.cloud.microsoft/g/UKN2q5kUDt) or email grants@cdfa.ca.gov to:

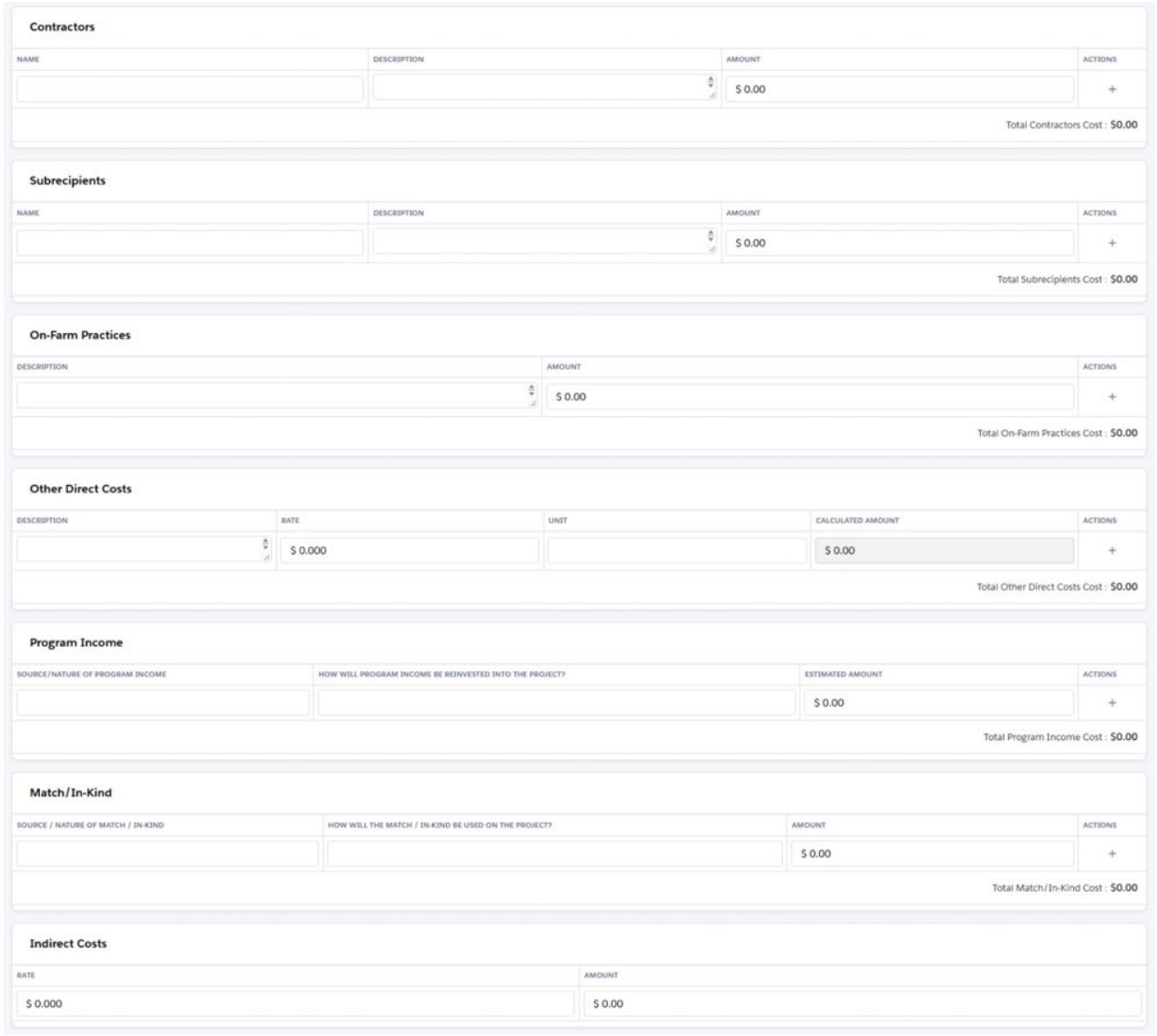
- Schedule a phone call;
- Schedule a virtual meeting;
- Submit individual questions;
- Request feedback on the proposed project, Proposal, or any sections thereof; or
- Receive a more detailed walk-through of the Solicitation Process or Grant Management (should funds be awarded).

There is no deadline to receive personalized assistance prior to the Proposal due date of January 11, 2027; however, due to limited staff capacity, one-on-one technical assistance will be available to the first 20 eligible applicants who request assistance. Applicants are encouraged to submit their requests as early as possible.

CDFA is available Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PT and will be assisting multiple proposals. Applicants are encouraged to request assistance as soon as possible; CDFA cannot guarantee assistance will be available immediately prior to the Proposal due date.

Appendix A: Budget Template Preview





Contractors

NAME	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	ACTIONS
		$ 0.00	+

Total Contractors Cost : **$0.00**

Subrecipients

NAME	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	ACTIONS
		$ 0.00	+

Total Subrecipients Cost : **$0.00**

On-Farm Practices

DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT	ACTIONS
	$ 0.00	+

Total On-Farm Practices Cost : **$0.00**

Other Direct Costs

DESCRIPTION	RATE	UNIT	CALCULATED AMOUNT	ACTIONS
	$ 0.000		$ 0.00	+

Total Other Direct Costs Cost : **$0.00**

Program Income

SOURCE/NATURE OF PROGRAM INCOME	HOW WILL PROGRAM INCOME BE REINVESTED INTO THE PROJECT?	ESTIMATED AMOUNT	ACTIONS
		$ 0.00	+

Total Program Income Cost : **$0.00**

Match/In-Kind

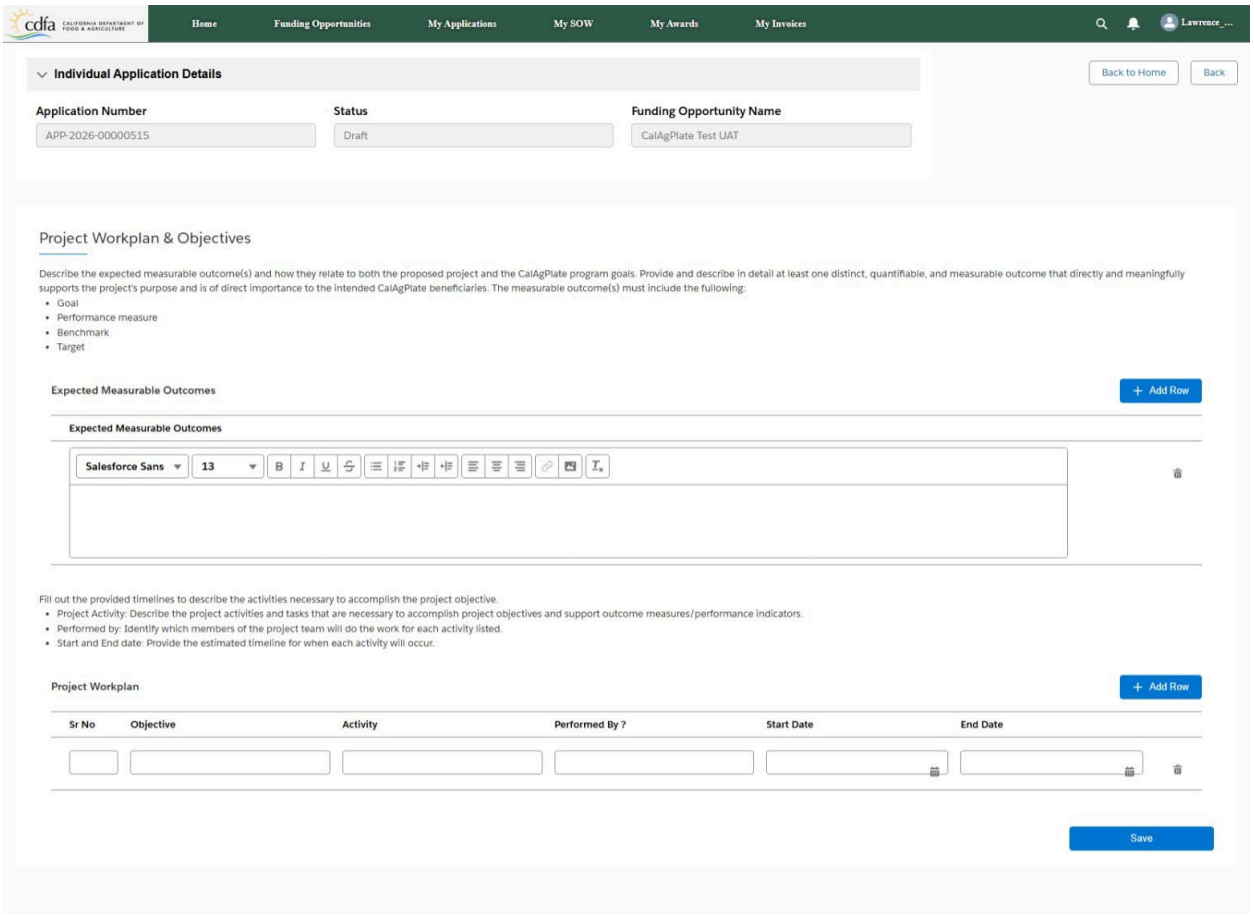
SOURCE / NATURE OF MATCH / IN-KIND	HOW WILL THE MATCH / IN-KIND BE USED ON THE PROJECT?	AMOUNT	ACTIONS
		$ 0.00	+

Total Match/In-Kind Cost : **$0.00**

Indirect Costs

RATE	AMOUNT
$ 0.000	$ 0.00

Appendix B: Work Plan Preview



Appendix C: Proposal Tips

To help ensure that a proposal is accurately submitted and well-received by the Technical Review Committee, please consider the following advice when composing the Proposal:

- Contact grants@cdfa.ca.gov with questions or to request technical assistance as soon as possible.
- Do not wait until the last minute to prepare or submit the Proposal. Allow ample time for composition, research, review, and submittal.
- Compose answers to questions in a word processing document so they can be checked for grammar, spelling, syntax, and overall clarity before entering them into the application template.
- Keep answers clear and concise.
- Double-check the project against the Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/Allowable-and-UnallowableCosts-and-Activities.pdf) and Grounds for Disqualification in Appendix D. Significant unallowable costs or activities will result in disqualification.
- Check that the total award requested is between $75,000 and $250,000.

Examples of Eligible Projects

- Increasing child nutritional knowledge and interest in specialty crops through education in the classroom or experiential learning, such as school gardens.
- Strengthening the local food system by supporting production, distribution, access points, and consumption of specialty crops to be sold in a rural or tribal community.
- Improving knowledge of the health benefits of specialty crops among children, seniors, and caregivers.
- Developing training or demonstrations to educate families on increasing consumption of specialty crops in their diets.
- Assisting small family farmers by providing trainings to support adoption of Good Agricultural Practices, Good Handling Practices, and Good Manufacturing Practices.
- Implementing training on sustainable farming practices and beneficial management practice tools that improve farm viability and the agricultural economy, as well as the environment.

Examples of Ineligible Projects

- Requesting grant funds to plant, grow, or purchase produce that will ultimately be donated, e.g., plants for a community garden that delivers free meals or vouchers at a farmers' market for free vegetables from local farmers. Grant funds cannot be used for donations or giveaways, including personnel, travel, supply, or any costs associated with donations or giveaways.
- Covering the operational costs of doing business, such as requesting grant funds to pay for farmers' market fees, sales management software, ongoing staffing costs, or delivery costs. Grant funds must be used solely in support of the proposed project.
- Purchasing starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop to make a profit, or to expand production of one or more single business or organization.
- Purchasing produce to sell to other entities at cost or at a price lower than the fair market value while competing with other private companies who sell produce in the area.
- Marketing a single organization so that it can increase its membership, e.g., requesting funds to increase members in a co-op for disadvantaged farmers. Grant funds cannot be used to promote a single organization, brand, or individual.
- Making notable improvements or modifications to an existing building or property, e.g., requesting grant funds to renovate a community kitchen or to build a greenhouse in a community garden. Small improvement activities necessary for the success of a project may be allowable, such as minor costs associated with irrigation in a community garden, seeds or starters for crops grown for educational purposes, educational signage at a farmers' market, etc.
- Providing training stipends to individuals in exchange for the individuals receiving education or training on specialty crop related topics. Small stipends designed to offset the cost of attending training may be allowed with sufficient justification. Stipends may not be provided solely or primarily for the benefit of the individual(s) receiving the stipend.

Appendix D: Grounds for Disqualification

Please see below for a list of reasons a project will be disqualified from the SCBGP. Note that examples provided are not all-inclusive.

Application is not a fit for the SCBGP or the Additional Assistance Program.

- Ineligible applicant entity, including applicants with grant writing expertise as defined in the RFP.
- Ineligible project type; projects must work directly to support limited resource and/or beginning farmers or provide nutrition education and/or access to specialty crops in limited resource communities.
- Ineligible commodity.
- Project does not demonstrate a benefit to the California specialty crop industry. Examples include, but are not limited to:
    - A project will benefit job trainees but does not demonstrate this benefit will extend to the specialty crop industry.
    - A project will benefit students but does not demonstrate it will benefit specialty crop growers or processors.
    - A project will complete research but does not demonstrate how this research will benefit the specialty crop industry.
- Project will primarily benefit the applicant organization or individuals. Examples include, but are not limited to:
    - A project will benefit a small number of farms or organizations by providing them with services that allow them to compete unfairly with other farms or organizations in their area.
    - A project will promote individual farms, farmers, or organizations.
    - A project will fund the operational costs (the day-to-day costs of doing business) for one or more organizations, including personnel costs.
    - A project will only provide services, education, or assistance to members of its organization.
- Project that has been funded in full by another funding source, including previous SCBGP projects.
- Project does not include outreach of project results to the specialty crop industry.

Incomplete or incorrect application

- Proposal submitted outside of the required GOATS platform.
- Proposal with unanswered questions, including unscored questions and questions on required attachments.
- Proposal with answers lacking in sufficient detail as to evaluate the project.
- Proposal with missing, incorrect, or incomplete attachments.
- Proposal with extraneous attachments; no documents may be included in the proposal beyond letters or statements of support.
- Modification of required forms or templates, including submission of hyperlinks, images, figures, tables.

- Attempts to circumvent length or character limits, such as including links or responding to a question in the space provided for a different question.

Unallowable costs necessary to meet project goals

- Costs that have been or will be funded by another grant program.
- Costs and supplies requested for capital improvements on privately-owned land (building, grading, installing irrigation systems, etc.).
- Operational costs (regular costs of doing business not specific to the project activities, including personnel costs).
- Costs that will provide a direct benefit to individual(s) or organization(s) without primarily benefiting the California specialty crop industry. These include, but are not limited to:
    - Planting crops on privately-owned land that will be sold to increase the profits of one or more organizations.
    - Improving privately-owned land to increase the profits of one or more organizations.
    - Growing, expanding, or otherwise improving an organization to increase its profits or membership.
- Donations, including cash, property, and services, from the recipient to others. Note that personnel, supplies, travel, other, or indirect costs that are part of carrying out donations are also unallowable.
- Giveaways (memorabilia, prizes, souvenirs, gifts, swag, t-shirts, tote bags, awards, etc.).
- Costs associated with alcohol, except when used exclusively for verifiable scientific research purposes. This includes, but is not limited to, costs related to tasting, sampling, shipping, and associated personnel, supplies, travel, other, and indirect costs.
- Special Purpose Equipment requested for non-research activities.
- General Purpose Equipment requested, including as demonstration equipment or for use in equipment sharing programs.
- Indirect costs charged as direct costs. This includes but is not limited to:
    - Information technology services, rent, utilities, general office supplies, insurance, maintenance, etc.
    - The salaries of administrative, clerical, maintenance, or other staff without sufficient justification.
- The indirect cost rate requested exceeds the maximum 8.0 percent of the total personnel costs.
- Note that using program income generated by SCBGP activities for unallowable costs is also unallowable.

Unallowable activities necessary to the project goals

- Lobbying or similar efforts.
- Providing an unfair advantage to one or more individual(s) or organization(s) to offer a competitive advantage over other individuals or organizations that offer similar products or services.

- Creating, growing, or improving an organization or increasing membership in an organization.
- Promotion of the applicant or partner's organization, products, and/or services.
- Promotion of individual farms, farmers, or organizations.
- Donations (giving away or selling at below-market cost produce grown, harvested, distributed, or purchased with SCBGP funds).
- Activities that occur outside of the grant duration.