2027 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Request for Concept Proposals

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August 24, 2026

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Webinar and Office Hour dates corrected (page 27)

Revised August 26, 2026

Language updated in "Program Income" (page 21)

Concept Proposals Due:
By 9:00 a.m. PT on September 21, 2026
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 for a list of eligible and ineligible commodities and a comprehensive definition of specialty crops. (https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop)

Funding and Duration

CDFA expects that up to $28 million will be awarded. Grant amounts range from $100,000 to $600,000. The maximum grant duration is two (2) years, eight (8) months. Grant funds cannot be expended before November 1, 2027, or after June 30, 2030.

CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount different from the amount requested. Separate of the competitive process, CDFA may award up to $4 million for proposals that address urgent or critical issues affecting California specialty crop agriculture. Funding is contingent upon available funding from the USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

Eligibility

The following organizations are eligible to apply:

- Non-profit and for-profit organizations;
- Local, state, and federal Government entities;
- Tribal governments (federally and non-federally recognized);
- Public or Private colleges and universities.

Individuals are **not** eligible to apply. There is no limit on the number of Concept Proposals applicants may submit. Each Concept Proposal must be for a unique project.

Additional notes to help determine eligibility:

- Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that directly benefit or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. The program will not fund a project to start, expand, or improve a farm, business venture, non-profit organization, or cooperative association.

- Grant funds cannot be used to compete unfairly with private companies that offer equivalent products or services.
- Projects must benefit the California specialty crops industry. Projects may not benefit non-specialty crops.
- Projects must address one or more of the program priorities identified by CDFA. To view these priorities, see pages 6-11 of the Request for Concept Proposals (RFCP).

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. (https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/3.4.22-Russia-Ukraine-Executive-Order.pdf)

This order 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 affirms that it is not a target of Economic Sanctions. If the State determines an Applicant is a target of Economic Sanctions or conducting prohibited transactions with sanctioned individuals or entities, the Applicant's proposal will be rejected. If determined after agreement execution, the State will terminate the grant.

SCBGP Additional Assistance for Limited Resource Applicants

The goal of the 2027 SCBGP Additional Assistance for Limited Resource Applicants (Additional Assistance) Program is that small and limited resource applicant organizations can participate in the SCBGP and successfully implement their projects. Non-profit organizations, tribal governments, and K-12 school districts that have not received SCBGP funding before and do not have technical expertise with grant writing are eligible to apply to this program. Projects must work directly in either supporting limited resource and/or beginning farmers or providing nutrition education and/or access to specialty crops in low resource communities. Applicants to the Additional Assistance Program are eligible to receive one-on-one technical assistance.

Applications to the Additional Assistance Program have their own funding categories, program priorities, deadlines, and submission requirements. Organizations that have successfully submitted Concept Proposals to the conventional SCBGP through CDFA's Grant Opportunity and Administration and Tracking System (GOATS) under other funding categories are not eligible to apply. The Additional Assistance Program Request for Proposals will be released in November 2026. Please email grants@cdfa.ca.gov for more information.

Other Grant Programs

CDFA offers many grant programs that address nutritional education, improve access to and consumption of healthy California foods, and provide direct assistance to California growers.

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

Solicitation Process and Timeline

Phase I: Concept Proposal

CDFA's SCBGP consists of a two-phase process. During Phase I, applicants must submit a Concept Proposal online using CDFA's Grant Opportunity and Administration and Tracking System (GOATS). CDFA will advise applicants as to the outcome of the Concept Proposal review.

Phase II: Grant Proposal

For Phase II, successful Concept Proposal applicants will be invited to submit a more detailed Grant Proposal using GOATS. CDFA will provide applicants with specific Grant Proposal requirements and instructions along with the invitation to submit Grant Proposals. CDFA will advise applicants as to the outcome of the Grant Proposal review.

Schedule for Phase I: Concept Proposal

Phase I	Date
Release Request for Concept Proposals	August 24, 2026
Webinars & Office Hours	August 31, 2026 – September 10, 2026
Concept Proposals Due	September 21, 2026, 9:00 a.m. PT

Schedule for Phase II: Grant Proposal (by invitation only)

Phase II	Date
Invitation to Submit Grant Proposals	December 2026
Grant Proposals Due	January 2027
Grant Proposals to USDA for Approval	May 2027

Schedule for Awards

Awards	Date
Announcement and Award Funding	Fall 2027

How to Apply

Applicants must complete and submit both their Concept Proposals and Grant Proposals online using 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).

Funding Areas, Funding Categories, and Program Priorities

CDFA has developed three funding areas, with one to three categories within each area. Concept Proposals may address elements from multiple funding areas and funding categories. However, applicants **must** select the one funding category that meets the primary focus of their Concept Proposal. Selecting a funding category ensures that Concept Proposals are scored by reviewers with the appropriate area of expertise. Applicants may not submit multiple Concept Proposals for a single project or submit the same Concept Proposal to multiple funding categories.

Concept Proposals should:

- Demonstrate a 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, research findings, and conclusions will be extended to specialty crop growers. In developing the outreach component, applicants are strongly encouraged to include outreach to limited resource and beginning farmers.

For examples of project types appropriate for each funding category, see Appendix A on page 28.

Funding Area I: Market Enhancement

Proposals in this funding area will focus on increasing sales of California specialty crops through promotion of the unique qualities of specialty crops grown in California. They will develop new markets, increase opportunities in existing markets, improve availability, and increase demand. In addition to advertising or conducting outreach to encourage increased consumption, all SCBGP projects **must** include an outreach component that communicates project efforts and results to specialty crop stakeholders.

Market Enhancement Category A: Grown in California

In this funding category, CDFA will consider proposals that enhance the marketability and long-term competitiveness of specialty crops in California. These proposals should seek to increase the awareness and consumption of specialty crop products through the development of markets (local, regional, institutional, national, and international) for all California producers through cooperative promotion and partnerships.

All proposals submitted to Market Enhancement Category A must address at least one of the following program priorities:

1) Increasing marketing opportunities for California specialty crops by leveraging the California grown identity.
2) Expanding opportunities for specialty crop producers, marketing orders, and other specialty crop stakeholders through innovative marketing and promotional activities that incorporate multiple specialty crop products leveraging the unique qualities of specialty crops grown in California.
3) Creating economic opportunities for specialty crop producers, including organic producers, through specialty crop market development activities that focus on local, regional, institutional, national, and international markets by leveraging the unique qualities of specialty crops grown in California.
4) Emphasizing the quality, food safety, and healthy lifestyle benefits of specialty crops grown in California.
5) Increasing the marketability of California specialty crops by educating consumers about the stewardship efforts of California specialty crop farmers.
6) Increasing awareness and sales of California grown specialty crops through marketing efforts that highlight California's specialty crop farmers, their unique histories, and their contributions to California agriculture.
7) Supporting market opportunities through regional aggregation and distribution for small to medium sized specialty crop farmers and low resource California producers and farmers.

Funding Area II: Access, Education, and Training

Proposals in this funding area will improve the competitiveness of California specialty crops by improving access to and consumption of California specialty crops. These proposals will provide nutritional education for consumers to increase consumption, and training for producers and growers to equip them for current and future challenges in specialty crop agriculture. In addition to advertising or conducting outreach to encourage participants to participate in project-related activities, all SCBGP projects **must** include an outreach component that communicates project efforts and results to specialty crop stakeholders.

Access, Education, and Training Category A: Healthy Specialty Crops for All Californians

In this funding category, CDFA will consider proposals that improve access to and consumption of California specialty crops and improve the public's knowledge and understanding of specialty crop agriculture. These proposals will highlight specialty crops beneficial importance to the health and well-being of all Californians. Proposals submitted to the Healthy Specialty Crops for All Californians category should seek to improve access to and consumption of healthy, safe California specialty crops for improved nutrition and overall health.

All proposals submitted to Access, Education, and Training Category A must address at least one of the following program priorities:

1) Education to increase specialty crop consumption through healthy eating habits.
2) Increasing knowledge of how to produce, prepare, or preserve specialty crops.
3) Increasing the awareness of and demand for locally sourced specialty crops.
4) Increasing the availability of specialty crops in homes, schools, the workplace, hospitals, prisons, and other low resource communities.
5) Increasing specialty crop production and/or distribution capacity into low resource urban and rural communities.
6) 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.

Access, Education, and Training Category B: Opportunity and Education for All California Specialty Crop Farmers

In this funding category, CDFA will consider proposals that benefit all current and future California specialty crop farmers by providing education, including improving opportunities through education for low resource 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 local food systems. Expanding access to food safety education will reduce barriers to entry and create new opportunities for low resource farmers. Proposals submitted to the

Opportunity and Education for All California Specialty Crop Farmers category should ensure the viability of California specialty crops by investing in training for growers/producers/operators to address current and future challenges.

All proposals submitted to Access, Education, and Training Category B must address at least one of the following program priorities:

1) Introducing and recruiting young and beginning farmers to the variety of specialty crop career opportunities.
2) Providing support to specialty crop producers in adopting the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act.
3) Providing training to support specialty crop producers in adopting methods to reduce water use and improve water efficiency.
4) Creating and implementing workforce training programs to develop and maintain the technical skills required to keep the California specialty crops sector competitive.
5) Providing technical assistance and training to better equip farmers to protect and conserve natural resources and adapt to extreme weather through on-farm practices.
6) Conducting outreach to increase the safety and security of the specialty crop food system.
7) Providing education, technical assistance, and training to specialty crop farmers to understand and adapt to evolving packaging, waste reduction, and sustainability requirements, including single-use plastics and packaging materials.

Funding Area III: Research

Proposals in this funding area will focus on improving the competitiveness of California specialty crops through projects that invest in specialty crop research, including research that focuses on conservation and environmental outcomes, pest and disease control, and organic and sustainable production practices. While research may be the primary objective of proposals in this funding area, all SCBGP projects should demonstrate that they are supported by specialty crop farmers and make clear how they will strengthen the California specialty crop industry. Projects **must** also include an outreach component that communicates project efforts to specialty crop stakeholders, particularly farmers and farm organizations. In developing the outreach component, applicants are strongly encouraged to include outreach to low resource farmers.

Research Category A: Environmental Stewardship, Conservation, and Sustainable Agriculture

In this funding category, CDFA will consider proposals that address specialty crop agriculture's potential to mitigate and/or adapt to extreme weather, contribute to conservation of agricultural land and water, waste reduction and sustainable post-production practices, and/or enhance soil health. Proposals submitted to the Environmental Stewardship, Conservation, and Sustainable Agriculture category should seek to expand stewardship practices and natural resource conservation to improve the environmental and financial performance of California specialty crop growers.

All proposals submitted to Research Category A must address at least one of the following program priorities:

1) Developing strategies and tools to help specialty crop farmers address environmental challenges.
2) Developing strategies and tools to enable specialty crop farmers to adapt to natural disasters.
3) Developing innovations in both water usage and drought resilience.
4) Improving soil health by identifying specific specialty crop management practices that build the soil organic matter content.
5) Research to develop new methods to expand organic and/or environmentally sustainable and conservation driven production practices, including mechanization of methods to enhance environmental and agricultural sustainability.
6) Conducting research and/or outreach projects to assist growers with improved irrigation and/or nutrient management practices.
7) Conducting research to develop, evaluate, and advance packaging, materials, and practices for California specialty crops, including alternatives that reduce single-use plastics and packaging waste while maintaining product quality, food safety, and shelf life for specialty crop growers.

Research Category B: Plant Health and Pest Management

In this funding category, CDFA will consider proposals that address pests, invasive species, and diseases that affect the production of California's specialty crops. Proposals submitted to the Plant Health and Pest Management category should include research related to the probability and impact of invasive pest, disease, and weed

threats to specialty crops. They will also provide research to develop tools to detect, eradicate, and control pests, weeds, and diseases.

All proposals submitted to Research Category B must address at least one of the following program priorities:

1) Conducting research and grower trials into biological solutions for pest management.
2) Addressing threats through the use of innovative solutions such as integrated pest management techniques, biologically integrated farming systems, or other engineering or cultural solutions.
3) Developing new tools to detect, eradicate, and control pests and diseases, including invasive plant and pest species.
4) Preventing and managing pests, weeds, and diseases to minimize economic and environmental harm to specialty crop farmers.
5) Enhancing speed and reliability of detection methods.

Research Category C: Food Safety (Separate proposal solicitation)

CDFA will continue its partnership agreement with the Center for Produce Safety Foundation (CPS) to use the technical expertise of their grant reviewers in food safety. CPS will release a separate food safety proposal solicitation. Please contact CPS at (530) 554-9706 or visit the CPS website (http://www.centerforproducesafety.org) for the solicitation timeline and proposal requirements.

Concept Proposal Questions and Scoring

Applicants must apply in GOATS (https://applications.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/s/). Failure to answer one or more application questions, including unscored questions, as directed will result in disqualification. The following questions and descriptions are provided as a preview of the application, accessible only in GOATS.

Some information will be provided when creating an account in GOATS, such as the name of the submitting organization. Grant writers, technical assistance providers, or similar should provide their own information when creating an account.

Page 1. General Information Details

Organization Details

Applicant Organization:

Match Requirement Disclosure (not a scored question):

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

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. (255 characters max)

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, end the districts where the applicant and project are located. More than one district can be selected, if needed. If the project covers all of California, select "Statewide." If the program/project is outside of California, choose "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 “For-profit organization,” “Other Non-profit organization,” or “Tribal Government.” (255 characters max)

Contact and Funding Information

Contact Information:

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

Please enter 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. (255 characters max for each field)

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Information

Prior Year SCBGP Projects (not a scored question):

Please indicate if the applicant organization has received previous SCBGP funding. If none, please indicate "None." If "Yes," please indicate if the previous projects are "Active," "Complete," or both. If there are previous projects, the following must be addressed within the text boxes provided:

- Provide the project titles and agreement number(s) (e.g., SCB13090, 17-0275-001-SC, or 22-0001-001-SF). Please provide agreement number(s) for all prior SCBGP grants. (1000 character max)
- Describe how the project differs from and/or builds upon the previous work. (1500 character max)
- Provide a summary of the outcomes of the previous efforts. (1500 characters max)
- *If the previous project(s) have finished:* Describe the lessons learned from previous projects that will inform potential project improvements in the proposed project. (1500 characters max)
- *If the previous project(s) have not finished:* Please address how the proposed project's goals and/or planned activities differ from those of the recently-started projects. (1500 character max)

Federal or State Grant Programs Submissions (not a scored question):

Select "Yes" or "No" depending on if this project has also been submitted to any other federal or state grant programs.

Activities funded under the SCBGP cannot duplicate activities funded by another federal or state grant program. If the project has been or will be submitted to or funded by another federal or state grant program, the following must be addressed in the text and number boxes provided:

- Identify the federal or state grant program and the agency administering the program. (250 characters max)
- List the amount of grant funds requested or awarded by the program. (1250 characters max)

- Describe how this proposed project supplements rather than duplicates the efforts funded by the other federal or state grant program. (1500 characters max)

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

Project Partners (not a scored question):
This section is provided for proposals that include other entities that may also be supporting or participating in the project. In this section, indicate their role and contribution to the project or describe their support of the project. While direct project partners are not required, each project should demonstrate support from the specialty crop industry. Organizations included in the budget or cost share sections should **not** be included in this section. (1500 characters max)

Page 2. Project Information Details

Applicant Eligibility Information

Project Overview

Project Title (not a scored question):
Describe the project in 15 words or less, with a descriptive title. (255 characters max)

Project Description (not a scored question):
State where the project will take place, 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. (1500 characters max)

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Information

Funding Area and Funding Category (not a scored question):
Using the radio button and check boxes, select the most appropriate funding area and funding category for the project.

Program Priorities (5 points):
Select at least one of the 2027 SCBGP program priorities for the chosen funding category as described on pages 6-11 of the RFCP and briefly explain how the project addresses the priority or priorities identified. CDFA recommends limiting selection to no more than three priorities so that adequate description can be provided. (1500 characters max)

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the extent to which the project demonstrates a link to the program priorities identified in the 2027 RFCP.

Project Purpose (5 points):

The following must be addressed within the text boxes provided:

- Identify the specific and existing issue, problem, or need the project will address. (2500 characters max)
- Explain why the proposal is important and timely for the California specialty crop industry. (2500 characters max)

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on how clearly the proposal states the issue, problem, or need the project will address, as well as the timeliness and relevance to the California specialty crop industry.

Project Sustainability (5 points):

SCBGP projects should have a long-term impact without relying indefinitely on grant funding. Within the text box, please describe:

- The likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not 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. (1500 characters max total)

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 (5 points):

The following must be addressed within the text and number boxes provided:

- Clearly identify, quantify, and describe the project beneficiaries and how they will benefit from the project objectives. (1500 characters max)
- Clearly address how the proposal benefits the California specialty crop industry. If possible, list the specific specialty crops that will be affected. (1000 characters max)
- Estimate the number of project beneficiaries. The number should be a reasonable estimate of the number of people that could realistically be **directly impacted** by the results of the project **during the project duration**.

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

Outcome Measures

Outcome Measures (10 points):

For more information on the Outcome Measures, see Appendix C on page 32.

The following must be addressed in the Outcome Measures section:

- Outcome: Using the check boxes provided, select one or more of the seven Outcome Measures.
- Indicator: Using the boxes provided, identify at least one indicator for each selected outcome. Complete the fillable text fields for each indicator selected. If there are multiple sub-indicators under a selected indicator, enter a value for one or more. Provide numbers only.
- Description: Within the provided text box, describe the data collection methods for the outcome(s) and indicator(s) selected. The description of data collection methods must apply specifically to the Outcome Measure selected and not to other aspects of the project. A description of data collection methods must be included for each selected outcome. Inclusion of extraneous text in this section will result in disqualification. (2000 characters max)

Please note that all selected Outcome Measures and indicators/sub-indicators must be achievable during the grant duration. Applicants are only required to select one indicator and, if applicable, sub-indicator. CDFA recommends selecting no more than three (3) indicators so that adequate description can be provided.

USDA and the Office of Management and Budget developed the Outcome Measures and the associated indicators; they cannot be altered or amended in any way.

Note: All marketing and promotion projects **must** include Outcome 1, Indicator 1.5: Increasing Consumption and Consumer Purchasing of Specialty Crops. Failure to do so will result in disqualification.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the significance of the anticipated project outcome, the relevance to the project activities, soundness of data collection methods, and likelihood of success.

Project Duration (not a scored question):

Using the provided date boxes, select the calendar day and year for the start and end date for the project. Projects cannot start before November 1, 2027, or continue beyond June 30, 2030. Providing dates outside the allowable duration will result in disqualification.

Page 3. Budget Narrative Details

Budget (10 points):

Using the provided number and text fields, complete the budget in GOATS. All budget items should support the goal(s) of the project and enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. In the provided textbox for budget category, provide a reason for the cost provided. Before completing the Budget template, review the Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf). (255 characters per budget item)

For more information on the concept proposal budget narrative, see Concept Proposal Budget on Page 19.

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

Page 4. Project Work Plan and Objectives

Work Plan and Outreach (10 points):

Within the text box provided, the following must be addressed:

- Briefly describe the project activities that are necessary to accomplish project objectives and support Outcome Measures. Each project activity should include an approximation of when it will occur, formatted as MON YYYY (e.g., Dec 2027 or May 2028 - Jun 2028).
- Include tasks for all personnel. Every individual listed in the budget, including contractors and any associated personnel, **must** be involved in at least one activity described in the Work Plan. Only grant-funded activities occurring during the timeframe of the proposed project should be included. Do not include activities funded with matching funds or in-kind contributions.
- Describe how the project results will be shared with the target audience, farmers, producers, stakeholders, and other interested parties beyond those directly involved in the project. Examples of such activities include on-farm demonstrations, presentations at professional conferences, producer or commodity group meetings, publication of articles in professional journals or the agricultural press, educational brochures, websites, etc. In developing the outreach component, applicants are strongly encouraged to include outreach to limited resource and beginner farmers.
  (4000 characters total)

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 it outlines a plan to disseminate project results.

Total number of points achievable in the Concept Proposal: 50 Points

Page 5. Attachment Details

The attachments section has two sub-sections. The Opportunity Attachments sub-section includes reference documents provided by CDFA that may be useful while completing the application. Please do not upload any additional attachments; they will not be considered by the TRC and will not improve the viability of the application in any way.

Concept 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 each cost. A description is required for each budget category in which funds are requested, except for category *Indirect Costs*. A completed sample budget is available in Appendix B on page 31. Failure to provide sufficient detail in the budget will result in disqualification.

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 *Contractual*.

Salary and Wages

Estimate the total cost of salary and wages for time spent on the project by individuals employed by the applicant organization. In the description column, for each employee, list:

- Their title.
- The approximate amount of time they will spend on the project (number of hours or percent full time equivalent).
- Their activities in support of project goals.

Fringe Benefits

Estimate the total cost of fringe benefits for time spent on the project by individuals employed by the applicant organization. Follow the applicant organization's established fringe benefits policy. In the description column, list the approximate fringe benefit rate and the types of benefits included in the applicant organization's established fringe benefits policy.

Travel

Estimate the total cost of project related travel for all individuals employed by the applicant organization. In the description column, describe the planned travel and 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. See pages 12-13 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 travel costs.

Special Purpose 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 column, list the special purpose equipment to be purchased and how it will be used in the project. See pages 3-5 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. General purpose equipment, including demonstration equipment or equipment for use in equipment sharing programs, is not allowable.

Supplies

Estimate the total cost to purchase supplies necessary to achieve project objectives. Supplies are items with a net acquisition cost that is less than $10,000 per unit that are used exclusively for the objectives of the project. In the description column, 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 considered indirect cost and should not be included in category *E. Supplies*. See page 23 of the RFCP for more information about direct and indirect costs.

Contractual

Estimate the total cost of work on the project that will be performed by individuals or 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 column, for each contractor, list the cost, the services to be provided, and how these services will support the project goals.

See 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. CDFA has also prepared a Procuring Goods and Services document (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/SCBGP_Procuring_Goods_and_Services.pdf) summarizing Contractual requirements.

Other

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

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 allowed is 8.0 percent of total personnel costs (category *A. Salary and Wages* plus category *B. Fringe Benefits*).

See page 22 of the RFCP for information about indirect costs. Note that contractors are subject to the same limitations on indirect costs.

Total SCBGP Funds Requested

Total SCBGP funds requested will automatically be calculated using the amounts requested for categories A through H. This total cannot be less than $100,000 or greater than $600,000.

Program Income

Estimate the amount of income (if any) that may be generated by a supported activity or earned because of the award. In the text box, explain how the program income will be generated and how it will be used to further support the project objectives. Program income must be spent on activities that support the goals and objectives of the project. Program income must be expended during the grant duration and must comply with rules on allowable and unallowable costs and activities.

Cost Share

Estimate the total value and identify the source of all anticipated cost share. CDFA includes a section for applicants to identify cost share in their proposals to demonstrate that SCBGP grant funds will not be used to support unallowable costs or activities, including costs associated with activities that also benefit non-specialty crops. Cost share is not required as of the release date of this RFCP and this question is not scored. However, applicants are encouraged to identify anticipated cost share, as USDA guidance may require cost share information at a later date.

If a project will utilize cost share, it **must** be described in this section of the proposal. Cost share may include, for example, the value of in-kind services provided by individuals who are not included in the project budget but who will support activities necessary to achieve the project's goals.

Requirements and Limitations

USDA Guidance

Authorization for this program was established under the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004. The 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill Act contains provisions for the continuation of this program beginning with the 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) 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 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.

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. Applicants must ensure contractors or consultants comply with federal cost principle requirements.

- State, local, or Tribal governments, non-profit organizations, and colleges and universities will be subject to 2 CFR 200 (https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=898fdaa0b947 dd0bf8c962a137 d230dd&node=pt2.1.200&rgn=div5).
- For-profit organizations will be subject to 48 CFR Subpart 31.2. (https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-48/chapter-1/subchapter-E/part-31/subpart-31.2).

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 notable unallowable costs will be disqualified.

Indirect Costs

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

The maximum indirect cost rate is 8.0 percent of total personnel costs (budget category *A. Salary and Wages* plus category *B. Fringe Benefits*). *Formula: (A. Salary and Wages + B. Fringe Benefits) x 0.080 = Maximum Indirect Costs.*

Applicants are responsible for ensuring costs are charged consistently. Applicants must not include costs associated with an established indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, applicants cannot include 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 with a particular award, project, program, service, or other organizational activity or that can be directly assigned to such an activity relatively easily with accuracy.

Direct costs include, but are not limited to:

- Compensation for employees who work directly on the award, to include salaries and fringe benefits.
- Travel that is required for the project.
- Equipment and supplies that are required for the project.
- Hiring of qualified contractors to reach project objectives.

Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”) are costs incurred for objectives that cannot be identified with a particular project, program, or organizational activity. Below are typical indirect costs which should not be included in the Budget as direct costs:

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

The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should normally be treated as indirect costs. Direct charging of these costs may be appropriate where all the following conditions are met:

- Administrative services are needed and directly related to an activity.
- Individuals involved can be identified with the activity.
- Such costs are included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the federal awarding agency.
- The costs are also not recovered as indirect costs.

Travel

The maximum travel rates allowable are the lower of the rates in effect at the time of travel as established by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) or the Recipient's established travel policy. This information is 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).

Consider using 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 Allowance (https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp).

Review and Notification

Review Criteria

CDFA's goal 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' Concept Proposals will be scored on the criteria set forth in the Concept Proposal Questions and Scoring section on pages 12-18.

Review Process

CDFA will conduct two levels of review during the Concept Proposal process. The first level is an administrative review to determine whether Concept Proposal requirements are met and, if applicable, assess an applicant's past CDFA grant performance. The second level is a technical review to evaluate the merits of the Concept Proposals.

The CDFA SCBGP Technical Review Committee will perform the technical review. The Technical Review Committee is made of growers and experts from industry, universities, public agencies, and non-profits with an interest and expertise in specialty crops and agricultural systems. To learn more about the Technical Review Committee, please visit the CDFA SCBGP website (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/).

Notification and Feedback

Proposals that are disqualified utilizing the criteria below will be notified within 21 days of the Concept Proposal due date. All other applicants will be notified regarding the status of their Concept Proposals in December 2026. Successful applicants will be invited to Phase II and will receive instructions for submitting a Grant Proposal.

To make sure 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

For a list of reasons for disqualification, review Appendix E on page 37.

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

- Proposals that do not meet the rules and requirements of the SCBGP.
- Incomplete proposals: proposals with unanswered or minimally answered questions or missing attachments.
- Proposals for less than the minimum award amount or more than the maximum award amount.

- Proposals with unallowable costs or activities needed to complete the project objectives, including activities outside the grant duration.
- Proposals with indirect costs that exceed the limit provided in this document.
- Proposals submitted outside of the GOATS system.
- Proposals that primarily benefit one or more individuals or organizations, rather than the California specialty crop industry.

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 notice of disqualification from CDFA. Email notification will 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

Concept Proposal Webinars

CDFA will conduct a webinar and office hours on the 2027 SCBGP solicitation process, the Concept Proposal application, and use of GOATS between August 31, 2026 – September 10, 2026. Please visit the CDFA SCBGP website (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) for dates, times, and locations.

All applicants are encouraged to participate in a webinar. Those who are unable to attend live can view the presentation at the CDFA SCBGP website.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

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

Questions and Answers (Q&A)

CDFA will conduct three rounds of Q&A to address general questions about the Concept Proposal phase. Email all questions about the solicitation process to: grants@cdfa.ca.gov. Responses to all questions received during the webinars or by email will be posted to the CDFA SCBGP website according to the following schedule:

Schedule for Q&A

Questions Received by:	Responses Posted by:
September 1, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. PT	September 3, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. PT
September 8, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. PT	September 10, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. PT
September 15, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. PT	September 17, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. PT

September 15, 2026, at 12:00 p.m. (noon) PT is the final deadline to submit questions for the Concept Proposal phase. Please note that SCBGP staff are available to assist Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

To keep the integrity of the competitive grant process, CDFA is unable to advise and provide individuals with any information about specific proposals during the solicitation process.

Appendix A: Project Examples

Market Enhancement Category A: Grown in California

- Development of cooperative marketing activities that leverage the unique qualities of specialty crops grown in California such as quality, food safety, and lifestyle benefits.
- Increase the sales of specialty crops through multi-commodity promotions that leverage the unique qualities of specialty crops grown in California.
- Create economic opportunities for specialty crop producers through commodity content development and social media activities leveraging the unique qualities of specialty crops grown in California.
- Support specialty crop marketing concepts that target the unique characteristics of California specialty crops in domestic and international markets.
- Develop marketing concepts that promote the healthy lifestyle benefits of specialty crops grown in California.

Access, Education, and Training Category A: Healthy Specialty Crops for All Californians

- Increase child nutritional knowledge through education in the classroom.
- Increase interest in specialty crops through experiential learning (such as school gardens).
- Develop training or demonstrations to educate families on increasing consumption of specialty crops in their diets.
- Improve knowledge of the health benefits of specialty crops among children, seniors, and caregivers.
- Strengthen the local food system in low resource communities by supporting production, distribution, access points, and consumption of specialty crops.
- Address “food deserts” with improved access to specialty crops at farmers' markets, corner stores, grocery stores, food hubs, or other systems.
- Utilize regional, local, or native crops to address disparities in access.

Access, Education, and Training Category B: Opportunity and Education for All California Specialty Crop Farmers

- Assist specialty crop farmers in adopting Good Agricultural Practices, Good Handling Practices, and Good Manufacturing Practices.
- Design and conduct business skills training for low resource farmers.
- Recruit and train new specialty crop farmers in the skills for sustainable food production.

- Develop and implement sustainable farming practices and beneficial management practice tools that improve farm viability and the agricultural economy, as well as the environment.
- Accelerate Best Management Practices implementation in specialty crop production for water conservation and efficiency.

Research Category A: Environmental Stewardship and Conservation

- Research and develop new technologies to improve water usage and drought resiliency (such as improving the water holding capacity of soil) in specialty crop production.
- Improve the sustainability of specialty crop products through developing innovative farming or processing methods.
- Assist communities in implementing sustainable agriculture planning for specialty crops in California.
- Development of tools and programs that improve environmentally sustainable farming practices for specialty crop growers in California.

Research Category B: Plant Health and Pest Management

- Enhance the speed and reliability of detection methods for pests affecting specialty crops.
- Develop new tools for eradication of pests affecting specialty crops.
- Develop specialty crops resistant to pests and diseases.
- Develop secondary inspection and detection capacity for pests affecting specialty crops.
- Conduct pest surveys to ascertain the threat and/or spread of threat to specialty crops.
- Develop pest protocol programs for a subsector of specialty crops.

Examples of Unacceptable Projects

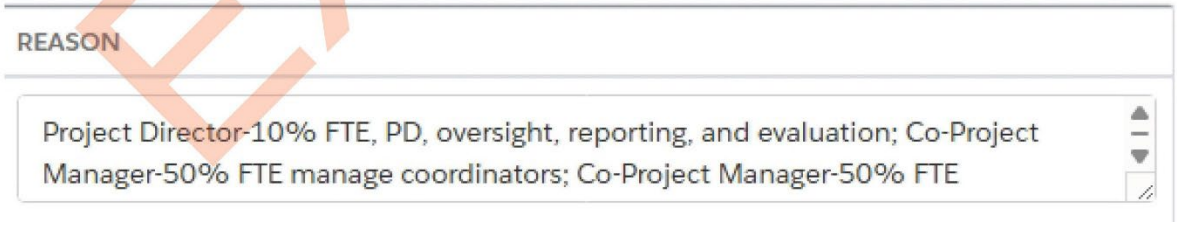
- Request grant funds to purchase land, seeds, starter plants, or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop to make a profit or to expand production of a single business or organization.
- Request grant funds to make grants to specialty crop businesses to promote their individual business.
- Request grant funds to purchase produce to sell to other entities at cost or a higher price than the purchase price while competing with other private companies who sell produce in the area.

- Request grant funds to redesign a business's logo to make their specialty crop value-added product stand out at the local farmers' market.
- Request grant funds to market an organization so that it can increase its membership.
- Request grant funds to plant, grow, or purchase produce that will ultimately be donated.
- Request grant funds to purchase general purpose equipment to use in demonstrations or to establish an equipment-sharing system.
- Request grant funds to pay for the day-to-day costs of its business. This includes general personnel costs, supplies required for its current business activities, etc.
- Request grant funds to provide 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 for the benefit of the individual(s) receiving the stipend.

Appendix B: Budget Example

CATEGORY	PLANNED AMOUNT	REASON
Salaries and Wages	$270,866.00	Project Director-10% FTE, PD, oversight, reporting, and evaluation; Co-Project Manager-50% FTE manage coordinators; Co-Project Manager-
Fringe	$70,425.00	The fringe benefit rate at this organization is 26% for all employees.
Travel	$24,577.00	Includes travel to ABCD conference and EFGH conference for Co-PM ($19,577), and travel from headquarters to various sites ($5,000).
Equipment	$0.00	
Supplies	$21,000.00	Includes laptop computers for program staff ($2,700); supplies for soil, irrigation, plant and IPM courses ($4,800); program banners ($2,500);
Contractual / Subawards / Subgrants	$74,500.00	Instructor for courses ($22,000); Curriculum Advisor ($35,000); Evaluator ($9,500); Videographer ($8,000)
Other	$10,900.00	Conference registration $5,000) and program brochure design ($4,000) and printing ($1,900).
Indirect	$27,303.00	8% of Salaries and Wages + Fringe
Program Income	$0.00	
Cost Share	$0.00	
Total Direct Costs:	**$472,268.00**	
Total Fund Requested:	**$499,571.00**	

EXAMPLE



Shown here is an example of the budget template in GOATS and a close up of the *Salaries and Wages* description box.

Appendix C: Outcome Measures Supplement

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Services, and the Office of Management and Budget developed the standardized outcome measures and performance indicators that apply to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). The reason for the system is to compile data across all states, making it easier to see the effect the program has on the California specialty crop industry. This strengthens the need for continued funding.

Applicants submitting proposals to the SCBGP must select at least one of the seven outcomes and at least one of the indicators listed underneath the selected outcome(s). If there are sub-indicators under the selected indicator(s), applicants must select at least one. All selected outcome measures and related indicators/sub-indicators must be achievable during the grant duration.

2027 Updates to the Outcome measures

- Outcome Measure 2: Indicator 2.6b has been removed.
- Outcome Measure 2: “Total number of new individuals who went into specialty crop production because of marketing.” Subindicator 2.9b, “Of those, the number who are first time specialty crop producers” has been revised to “For the new individuals in specialty crop production, the number who are first-time specialty crop producers.”

Common Issues to Avoid

- The Description of Data Collection Methods section must be filled out to describe each selected Indicator and/or Sub-indicator. Failure to fill out this section will result in disqualification.
- All selected Indicators and/or Sub-indicators will require continuous tracking throughout the project duration. Please limit selected Indicators to ensure they are trackable and achievable. Applicants are suggested to select no more than three (3) Indicators to allow for adequate description of data collection methods.
- Some Indicators require reporting on knowledge gained. Please note that attendance at an event, receipt of materials, webpage views, or similar are not sufficient to track knowledge gained. This must be directly measured via surveys, interviews, quizzes, etc.
- All activities, including publications and citations, must occur during the grant duration to be counted.

Indicator Specific

Indicator 1.5 and at least one associated sub-indicator (1.5a, 1.5b, 1.5c) is mandatory for all proposals submitted to the Grown in California funding category and all marketing and promotion projects. Failure to select this indicator for marketing and promotion projects will result in disqualification.

Marketing and promotion projects are efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue. These include, but are not limited to:

- Uses of social media to market and promote.
- Specialty crop local, regional, and national campaigns.
- Specialty crop specific tradeshows.
- Website promotion and development.
- Use/development of billboards, radio, television, magazine, email ads, and marketing materials, such as direct mail and brochures.
- Agritourism.
- Export market development.
- Retail promotions, including point of purchase items, labels, packaging, etc.
- Promotion of specialty crops at farmers' markets.
- Marketing and promotion campaigns with an education component directed to consumers.

Additional Information:

The difference between "jobs" and "careers": jobs are net gain of paid employment; new businesses created or adopted can indicate new careers.

A "beginning farmer" or "first-time farmer" is defined as one who:

- Has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years.
- Does not own a farm or ranch greater than 30 percent of the average size farm in the county as determined by the most current AgCensus (https://www.nass.usda.gov/Publications/AgCensus/2017/).
- Participates substantially in the operation.

Sample: Outcome Measures Example

Select one or more of the applicable outcome measure(s), indicators(s) and, if applicable, sub-indicator(s). Within the description section for each outcome selected, describe the data collection methods for the outcome(s) and indicator(s) selected. The description of data collection methods must apply specifically to the Outcome Measure selected and not to other aspects of the project.

- [ ] Outcome 1: Increasing Consumption and Consumer Purchasing of Specialty Crops
- [x] Outcome 2: Increasing Access to Specialty Crops and Expanding Specialty Crop Production and Distribution
- [ ] Outcome 3: Increase Food Safety Knowledge and Processes
- [ ] Outcome 4: Improve Pest and Disease Control Processes
- [ ] Outcome 5: Develop New Seed Varieties and Specialty Crops
- [ ] Outcome 6: Expand Specialty Crop Research and Development
- [ ] Outcome 7: Improve Environmental Sustainability of Specialty Crops

Outcome 2: Increasing Access to Specialty Crops and Expanding Specialty Crop Production and Distribution

2.1 Number of stakeholders that gained technical knowledge about producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing specialty crops.

600

2.2 Number of stakeholders that reported producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing more specialty crops.

2.3 Total number of market access points for specialty crops developed and expanded.

2.3.a Of the market access points, the number of new online portals created to sell specialty crops.

2.3.b Of the market access points, the number of expanded seasonal availability.

2.3.c Of the market access points, the number of existing market access points that expanded specialty crop offerings.

2.3.d Of the market access points, the number of new market access points that established specialty crop offerings.

2.4 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about more efficient and effective distribution systems

2.5 Number of stakeholders that adopted best practices or new technologies to improve distribution systems

2.6 Total number of partnerships established between producers, distributors, and/or other relevant intermediaries related to distribution systems

2.6.a Of those partnerships established, the number formalized with written agreements (i.e., MOUs, signed contracts, etc.)

2.7 Total number of new/improved distribution systems developed

EXAMPLE

2.7.a Of the new/improved systems, the number that stemmed from new partnerships

2.7.b Of the new/improved systems, the number that increased efficiency

2.7.c Of the new/improved systems, the number that reduced costs

2.7.d Of the new/improved systems, the number that increased specialty crop grower participation

2.7.e Of the new/improved systems, the number that expanded customer reach

2.7.f Of the new/improved systems, the number that increased online presence

2.8.a Number of specialty crop-related jobs created.

2.8.b Number of specialty crop-related jobs maintained.

2.9 Total number of new individuals who went into specialty crop production as a result of marketing.

2.9.a For the new individuals in specialty crop production, the number who are beginning farmers or ranchers.

2.9.b For the new individuals in specialty crop production, the number who are first-time specialty crop producers.

2.10.a Number of market access points that reported increased revenue.

2.10.b Number of market access points that reported increased sales.

2.10.c Number of market access points that reported increased cost-savings.

*Outcome 2: Description of Data Collection Methods

The project proposes holding at least 20 cooking demonstrations at farmers' markets and community events and at least 20 in-person workshops on the benefits of consuming specialty crops, including sampling of local, in-season produce. It is anticipated that each event will host at least 30 attendees, for a total of 1,200 unique participants. The project team will issue simple paper surveys before and after each event that ask questions to measure participants' increases in knowledge on the availability of specialty crops, how to access them, and how they can be prepared in simple, culturally-relevant recipes. It is expected that at least 50 percent of participants will report an increase in knowledge.

EXAMPLE

Appendix D: Concept Proposal Tips

The Office of Grants Administration receives hundreds of grant applications every funding cycle. To ensure that a proposal is accurately submitted and well-received by the Technical Review Committee, please follow this advice when composing the Concept Proposal:

- Do not wait until the last minute to prepare or submit the Concept Proposal. Allow plenty of time for composition, research, review, and submittal.
- Compose answers to questions in a word processing program so they can be checked for grammar, spelling, and clarity before entering them into GOATS.
- Keep answers clear and concise.
- Check the project budget against the Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf).
  Significant unallowable costs listed in the budget may result in disqualification.
- Review the FAQ and Q&A posted on the CDFA SCBGP website. (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) prior to submission.
- Check that the most correct funding category has been selected for the proposal. Identifying the most correct category ensures proposals are scored by reviewers with the right expertise. The selected funding category cannot be changed once the Concept Proposal is submitted.
- Ensure the total award requested on the Budget tab matches the total listed in the Total Overall Budget Costs listed on the Budget template.

Appendix E: 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.

I. Application is not a fit for the SCBGP.

- Ineligible applicant entity.
- 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.

II. 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.
- Modification of required forms or templates, including submission of hyperlinks, images, figures, or 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.
- Marketing projects that did not select Outcome Indicator 1.5.

III. 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 the applicant organization.
    - Improving privately-owned land to increase the profits of the applicant organization.
    - 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, 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, supply, travel, 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.

IV. 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.