

2027 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
September 3, 2026

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. Where can applicants find more information about the 2027 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)?
A. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)'s [SCBGP website](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) has many resources for prospective applicants, including the [Request for Concept Proposals \(RFCP\)](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/2027_RFCP.pdf) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/2027_RFCP.pdf), supplemental documents designed to help with proposal development, and the schedule of upcoming office hours.
2. Q. Can multiple projects take place at the same location or on the same land?
A. There are no restrictions against multiple activities, including those funded by multiple funding sources, taking place at one location provided the proposal clarifies the mechanisms in place to ensure there is no duplication of costs.
3. Q. Can proposals that were not selected for funding in previous funding cycles be resubmitted for 2027?
A. There are no restrictions against submitting previously submitted proposals. However, please note that all proposals must meet the requirements for this funding cycle; character counts, questions, templates, allowability of costs, etc. may have changed since the proposal was originally submitted.
4. Q. How can an applicant demonstrate that their project benefits the California specialty crop industry, rather than the applicant organization or a single entity?
A. Applicants should clearly demonstrate that their project benefits the California specialty crop industry throughout the full scope of the proposal. All activities should directly support an industry-level need or objective, rather than enrich the applicant organization or a limited group. Project costs must be reasonable and limited to those necessary to execute project activities. Profit and overhead beyond the allowable indirect rate cannot be included in personnel costs, and participant support costs should align with the participants' actual level of involvement. Outcome measures should focus on benefits to the industry rather than improvements to the applicant's internal operations or circumstances. Outreach efforts should be designed to engage the broader industry and must not be restricted in ways that primarily benefit the applicant, its partners, or affiliated organizations.
5. Q. Why is the RFCP released ahead of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)?
A. USDA typically releases its NOFO in spring each funding year, with proposals due to USDA six to eight weeks later. Since CDFA's application process has two phases, each with administrative and technical review, CDFA releases the RFCP ahead of the USDA NOFO to allow time for the full solicitation process.
6. Q. What questions can CDFA staff answer regarding proposals to the conventional SCBGP program?
A. While CDFA staff cannot provide one-on-one support to applicants to the conventional SCBGP, nor advise on how to best answer questions in the proposal, CDFA can provide

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answers on general questions around allowability of costs and activities, eligibility requirements, program requirements, etc. through the Question-and-Answer (Q&A) process described in the RFCP.

7. Q. Where can applicants find the SCBGP Concept Proposal questions? Is the application available as a PDF or Word document?
- A. The SCBGP Concept Proposal questions, including character limits, are listed in the RFCP beginning on page 12. There is no alternative version of the application, and all 2027 SCBGP Concept Proposals must be submitted using GOATS (<https://applications.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/s/>). Other submission methods will not be accepted and will result in disqualification of the proposal.
8. Q. Is it a requirement that the program director or project manager be an employee of the applicant organization, or can this role be held by a contractor?
- A. A contractor may be the program director or project manager of a proposal; it is not required that either role be held by an employee of the applicant organization. For all contractors, the applicant should ensure that the contractor is adequately qualified for the work and selected through a competitive process that follows a documented procurement policy which conforms to applicable federal law and reflects applicable state, local, and tribal laws and regulations. Reference 2 CFR 200.318 (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/subtitle-A/chapter-II/part-200#200.318>) for additional information on general procurement standards.
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ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. Are applicants required to be physically located in the state of California?
- A. There is no requirement that applicants be physically located in California, provided the proposal sufficiently demonstrates that the primary benefit of the project will be to California specialty crops.
2. Q. Is there a limit to the number of proposals that can be submitted by a single organization or Principal Investigator (PI)?
- A. There is no limit to the number of proposals that may be submitted by a single organization or PI, so long as each proposal submitted is for a unique project. Please ensure that the applicant organization and/or the PI has adequate capacity to effectively participate in multiple SCBGP grants. The combined time for the PI should not exceed 100 percent full time equivalent, should all projects be awarded funding, including projects funded by other sources.
3. Q. Can an organization serve as the lead on one project and as a contractor on another project?
- A. There are no restrictions against working on multiple projects, as long as each organization and individual has adequate capacity to effectively participate in the SCBGP grants.

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4. Q. Are non-profit organizations required to have formalized their non-profit status to submit a Concept Proposal?
- A. No. However, all applicants must have their organization paperwork complete at the time of submitting a Grant Proposal, if invited to participate in Phase II. CDFA is unable to include proposals by organizations that are not recognized by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in their submission to USDA. If an applicant is not able to complete their organization paperwork by Phase II, they may consider applying through a fiscal sponsor.
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ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR LIMITED RESOURCE APPLICANTS (ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE) PROGRAM

1. Q. Can an organization that previously received an SCBGP grant through a fiscal sponsor apply to the Additional Assistance Program?
- A. No. The use of a fiscal sponsor cannot be used to circumvent eligibility or previous recipient status to qualify for the Additional Assistance Program.
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GRANT OPPORTUNITY AND ADMINISTRATION TRACKING SYSYTEM (GOATS)

1. Q. Have there been any updates to the GOATS application form?
- A. The GOATS application form had an incorrect character limit in the Prior Year SCBGP Projects section. The prompt "Provide a summary of the outcomes of the previous efforts" was erroneously capped at 255 characters. CDFA has updated the form to allow 1,500 characters as described in the RFCP. All applicants who had created an application were notified via email on August 31, 2026; they may return to and edit this response if desired.
2. Q. Can multiple individuals work on the same proposal in GOATS?
- A. GOATS does not currently support more than one person editing an application. While several accounts may view an application, only the account that created the application may make edits.
3. Q. Should grant writers or technical assistance providers create their own account in GOATS?
- A. Grant writers, technical assistance providers, and similar should provide their own information when creating an account. They can then create individual applications for individual clients and provide their clients' information at that time.
4. Q. Does the GOATS platform support saving a proposal prior to submission?
- A. Yes. CDFA encourages applicants to save their progress regularly. To do so, navigate to the last page of any application section and select the "Save" button in the lower-right corner. The [GOATS User Guide](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/Salesforce_User_Guide.pdf) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/Salesforce_User_Guide.pdf) provides more detail.
5. Q. Should applicants upload attachments to GOATS?
- A. No attachments should be uploaded in Phase I; any attachments uploaded will not be considered by the TRC, will not improve the viability of the application, and may result in

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disqualification if it is determined that the uploaded documents serve to circumvent character limits.

FUNDING AREA AND FUNDING CATEGORY

No questions at this time.

PROGRAM PRIORITIES

No questions at this time.

PROJECT PURPOSE

No questions at this time.

PRIOR-YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS

1. Q. If an organization served as a contractor on a previous SCBGP project, are they required to respond to the Prior Year SCBGP Projects section?
A. Previous contractors may answer this question as "no." However, if the applicant previously served as a contractor but was the main responsible party for project activities, or if the applicant is building on a project where they previously served as a contractor, the response should be "yes," and appropriate responses should be provided.

Note that if a prior SCBGP project was awarded to the fiscal sponsor of a current applicant, with the current applicant as the responsible party for the project, then this response should be "yes," and appropriate responses should be provided.

2. Q. Can a proposal build upon a previous SCBGP project?
A. Yes. Applicants should detail how the proposed project builds upon, rather than duplicates, the previous SCBGP project.
 3. Q. Can an organization submit a proposal that builds upon a currently active SCBGP project?
A. Yes. Applicants should indicate the project is "active" in the GOATS system when completing the Prior Year SCBGP Projects section of the application and detail how the proposed project's goals and/or planned activities differ from those of the active project(s).
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PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

No questions at this time.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

No questions at this time.

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OUTCOME MEASURES

No questions at this time.

WORK PLAN AND OUTREACH

No questions at this time.

BUDGET SECTION

1. Q. What is the difference between Project Partners and Contractors?
A. Contractors will receive SCBGP funds and should be described in the Budget section. Note that if contributors will play a specialized role in the project and are included in the work plan but will not receive grant funds, this is an in-kind donation of services and must be included in the cost share summary in the Budget section.

Project partners will not receive SCBGP funds or provide an in-kind donation of goods or services. They will support or participate in the project in other ways and should be described in the Project Partners section.
2. Q. Is there a maximum allowable percentage of total project costs that may be allocated to any one budget category?
A. No. All costs must be reasonable, allowable, and necessary for the successful completion of the project's goals.
3. Q. Are projects that include cost share scored higher or more likely to receive funding?
A. Cost share may be useful in demonstrating industry support for a proposal but is not a factor in scoring criteria. While cost share is presently not a requirement of the program, it may be necessary to cover costs that would otherwise be unallowable. If cost share is anticipated, it should be included in the Concept Proposal.
4. Q. Can some costs be covered by other sources of funding?
A. Yes, costs can be covered by cost share, including from other state or federal grants. If costs will be covered by other grants, this should be addressed in the Support from Other Federal or State Grant Programs section. Applicants must ensure that costs are not used to meet cost share requirements for more than one federal program and are not charged to multiple grants (i.e., that there is no duplication of costs).
5. Q. How much detail is required for the budget?
A. The budget section should provide a reasonable estimate for all costs, then detail the costs requested and explain why they are necessary for the project goals in the text boxes provided.
6. Q. Is providing meals at a training allowable?
A. Providing meals at a training may be allowable if costs are reasonable (no higher than U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) locality maximums) and a justification is provided

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that such activity maintains the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the meeting participants.

7. Q. Are land rental costs allowable?
A. Land rental costs may be allowable, provided costs are reasonable and justification is provided that land rental is necessary for the successful completion of project goals and activities. Note that rent-to-own agreements are not allowable; the rental agreement or lease must terminate at the end of the grant cycle.
 8. Q. Are costs associated with donations allowable?
A. No, costs associated with donations, including cash, property, and services, from the recipient to other entities are not allowable. Note that personnel, supply, indirect, or any other costs associated with carrying out donations are likewise unallowable.
 9. Q. Is selling specialty crops below market value allowable?
A. No, this is considered a donation and is unallowable.
 10. Q. Are projects required to include costs in each budget category?
A. No. Proposals should include only those costs that are necessary to complete the project's goals and activities. Note that it is the applicant's responsibility to comply with their organization's policies around personnel, fringe benefit, travel, and indirect costs.
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REVIEW PROCESS

1. Q. Are proposals reviewed by the same Technical Review Committee (TRC) members in Phase I and Phase II?
A. Reviewer teams remain consistent within each funding category. While CDFA makes every effort to ensure that the same individuals review a project throughout both phases of the application process, projects may be reassigned to different reviewers to balance reviewer workloads.
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GRANT MANAGEMENT

1. Q. Are projects subject to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) or California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)?
A. All activities funded by SCBGP must comply with any applicable state, local, federal, or tribal laws for the location where the project will take place. Note that construction and other capital improvements are not allowable with SCBGP funds.
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