

2027 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
September 17, 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.
9. Q. Can a project support both specialty crops and non-specialty crops?
- A. No, projects must benefit the California specialty crop industry and may not directly benefit non-specialty crops. If a project includes activities that benefit non-specialty crops, the costs associated with these activities must be covered through cost share.
10. Q. What is a block grant and how does SCBGP funding work?
- A. A block grant is a form of grant funding where a single entity awards funding to multiple other entities to support activities within a defined program purpose. Those entities then have a level of discretion to implement the program, again within the defined program purpose. Block grants are awarded by a formula meant to create a fair distribution of available funds amongst eligible participants. For SCBGP, USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), provides funding to state departments of agriculture and US territories, including California/CDFA, based on each state or territory's acreage and yield of specialty crops. Each state then manages its own solicitation process to distribute that funding to selected organizations through subawards.
11. Q. In the Concept Proposal phase, should project partners be listed if they have not yet confirmed their support?
- A. It is recommended that support be confirmed before listing a project partner in the Concept Proposal. All proposal questions should be answered as accurately as possible.

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12. Q. How can an applicant know if their project is appropriate for the SCBGP?
A. Appendix A of the 2027 RFCP includes a list of acceptable and unacceptable project types. Appendix E of the RFCP has a list of costs and activities that are grounds for disqualification of SCBGP proposals. Please note that these lists are not intended to be all inclusive.

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13. Q. Can SCBGP funding be used to support propagation activities?
A. Propagation activities, except as part of scientific research activities, are typically not allowable. Some limited propagation activities may be allowable as part of an educational project; the proposal should detail how these activities will benefit the specialty crop industry.
14. Q. Does CDFA have any restrictions or disclosure requirements regarding the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted writing tools for organizing, editing, researching, or preparing a proposal?
A. No. CDFA does not currently restrict the use of generative AI or AI-assisted writing tools in preparing an application, nor are applicants required to disclose their use.
15. Q. Can applicants review past successful Concept Proposals online?
A. While full proposals are not available online as they may contain private personal information, abstracts of successful projects can be viewed at https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/PastGrantAwards.html.
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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.
- Updates September 17, 2026:*** Note that applicants outside the United States may be unable to complete some application fields, such as address or phone number, exactly. These applicants should complete these fields to the best of their ability; these questions are not scored and will not impact the likelihood of a project to receive funding.
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.

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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.
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.
5. Q. Is it possible to apply to the SCBGP without a Federal Employer Identification Number (FEIN) or Social Security Number (SSN)?
A. It is possible to create an account in GOATS without either a FEIN or SSN; these fields are not mandatory. However, organizations without a FEIN or SSN at the time of Grant Agreement execution cannot be awarded funding as the State Controller's Office is unable to issue payments to recipients without either a FEIN or an SSN. For this reason, a FEIN will be required for applicants invited to submit a Grant Proposal in Phase II. Please note that individuals are not eligible to apply to the SCBGP.
6. Q. Are for-profit organizations eligible to apply?
A. Yes, for-profit organizations are eligible to apply. Note that all proposals must demonstrate that the project will primarily benefit the California specialty crop industry, rather than the applicant organization.

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7. Q. Are crops grown through aquaculture eligible?
A. Crops grown through aquaculture are eligible specialty crops if they are farmed/cultivated. Note that foraging activities are not eligible for SCBGP funding. Fish, shellfish, etc. are not eligible specialty crops. Please refer to [What is a Specialty Crop?](https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop) (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>) for more information on eligible specialty crops, including the more detailed [USDA Definition](https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/USDA%20SpecialtyCropDefinition.pdf) (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/USDA%20SpecialtyCropDefinition.pdf>) for more information on cultivation as defined by USDA.

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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2. Q. How can an applicant learn more about the Additional Assistance Program?
A. The 2027 Additional Assistance Program will open in November 2026. Interested applicants may review the [2026 Additional Assistance RFCP](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/2026_SCBGP_RequestForConceptProposals_AAP.pdf) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/2026_SCBGP_RequestForConceptProposals_AAP.pdf) to learn more about the program; note that the program may change somewhat year-to-year.

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3. Q. Is it required that organizations which intend to apply through the Additional Assistance Program submit a notice of intent to apply prior to the September 21, 2026, deadline for submissions to the conventional SCBGP?
A. The Additional Assistance Program has a separate solicitation, which will open in November 2026. No notice of intent is required, and no applications can be received or reviewed prior to the release of the Additional Assistance Request for Proposals (RFP) in November.
4. Q. What will the due date be for the 2027 Additional Assistance Program?
A. The 2027 Additional Assistance Program timeline is still being finalized. While no dates are set, the RFP will likely be released in mid-November, with proposals due in mid-January. Prospective applicants may view the 2026 Additional Assistance RFCP linked above to learn more about the typical timeline for this program.

GRANT OPPORTUNITY AND ADMINISTRATION TRACKING SYSTEM (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.

Update September 10, 2026: The GOATS system has been updated to allow a response between 1 and 80 for the California Assembly District. Applicants may return to and edit this section, 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.

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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 in GOATS?
A. No attachments should be uploaded in Phase I; any attachments uploaded will not be considered by the Technical Review Committee (TRC), will not improve the viability of the application, and may result in disqualification if it is determined that the uploaded documents serve to circumvent character limits.
6. Q. Should members of large organizations, such as the University of California system, register as individuals or as the organization?
A. Members of large organizations should create their account in GOATS as an individual. Then, when applying for the 2027 SCBGP, applicants should list their organization, such as "The University of California, Davis," in the Organization Details section. Note that the status of the GOATS account used to create a proposal will not impact how an SCBGP proposal is reviewed or scored.
7. Q. There is a technical issue with the GOATS application. Who should be contacted to report this issue?
A. Technical issues and feedback regarding the GOATS application can be reported or provided by emailing grants@cdfa.ca.gov with a detailed description. If reporting a technical issue, screenshots are also helpful.

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8. Q. If there is variance in the wording of a question between the RFCP and GOATS, which should applicants follow?
A. The current RFCP is the document of record. If wording differs slightly between the RFCP and GOATS, applicants may respond based on either version and will not be disqualified or scored negatively because of the difference.
9. Q. Do notifications from GOATS solely go to the primary account holder or will other positions, such as the Project Director and Project Manager, receive notifications as well?
A. Currently, notifications only go to the primary account holder in GOATS; however, CDFA will also send notifications via email to all contacts provided.
10. Q. How long does GOATS allow applicants to be in the application before logging them out?
A. Applicants can remain in the application for two hours before the systems logs them out. CDFA recommends all applicants save progress frequently.

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11. Q. Is it possible to create more than one GOATS account? For example, if an applicant loses access to an email account, is it possible to create a new account with a different email address?
- A. Yes, this is possible. However, it is recommended to contact CDFA at grants@cdfa.ca.gov regarding any issues accessing an account in GOATS. The CDFA IT department may be able to provide resolutions without having to create a new account, such as updating the existing account's email address.
12. Q. GOATS seems to have a bug where removing text is not possible. How should applicants proceed?
- A. The CDFA IT department has been made aware of this issue and is working on a solution. If an applicant accidentally enters text into a response field and is unable to delete or remove it, they can replace this text with "0" or "n/a" as appropriate. This will not impact scoring of the proposal.
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FUNDING AREA AND FUNDING CATEGORY

1. Q. Is it possible to select more than one funding category for a proposal?
- A. 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. It will not be possible to change that category once an application has been submitted.
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PROGRAM PRIORITIES

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1. Q. How can a proposal demonstrate that a project supports a particular program priority?
- A. Applicants should clearly explain how the proposed project addresses the priority or priorities identified throughout the proposal, including in the program priority response, work plan objectives and activities, and expected program outcomes. For this reason, CDFA recommends limiting selection to no more than three priorities so that adequate description can be provided and connections to the priorities demonstrated.
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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

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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).

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

No questions at this time.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

No questions at this time.

OUTCOME MEASURES

1. Q. Is a percentage change an acceptable measure to track progress against Outcome Measure 1, Indicator 1.5?
A. Yes. This indicator can be expressed in the following ways, 1) a dollar value, 2) a percent change, or 3) a combination of volume and average price. Projects should compare baseline sales to sales data following their marketing and promotion activities to determine the increase in sales. If a marketing and promotion project does not yet have one of these baselines established, one of the project objectives should include determining the baseline. Note that Indicator 1.5 is required for all marketing and promotional projects, regardless of the funding category selected.
2. Q. Is it allowable to include only a subset of project beneficiaries when tracking progress against selected indicators and/or subindicators?
A. Yes. Depending on the project's goals and activities, it may be appropriate to track progress using a subset of project beneficiaries. For example, a project serving 4,000 students may choose to survey 400 students to measure changes in specialty crop consumption. However, results from the surveyed subset should not be extrapolated to the entire population served. For example, if 90 percent of the 400 students surveyed report an increase in specialty crop consumption, the project should report 360 students as

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demonstrating the increase, not extrapolate to 3,600 based on the total 4,000 students served.

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3. Q. Do projects that contain marketing and promotion activities, but which are not submitted to the Grown in California Funding Category, require an answer to Indicator 1.5?
A. Yes, all projects that contain a notable marketing or promotional component must provide a response to Indicator 1.5. Marketing and promotion activities include efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue. More details can be found in the RFCP, Appendix C.
 4. Q. Can applicants use Outcome Measures other than those provided to evaluate proposals?
A. The Outcome Measures are developed by USDA, AMS and the Federal Office of Management and Budget, and may not be modified in any way. All proposals must be able to meet at least one outcome, indicator, and, if indicated, sub-indicator. Other means of tracking project success may be discussed in other sections of the proposal.
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WORK PLAN AND OUTREACH

1. Q. How detailed and finalized must the activities included in the Work Plan be? For example, should experimental design be fully realized?
A. CDFA understands that a Concept Proposal is preliminary and may not include a fully developed Work Plan. If an applicant is invited to submit a full Grant Proposal in Phase II, CDFA cannot predict how the Technical Review Committee (TRC) will score a proposal that lacks detailed activities or plans at that stage. The TRC's evaluation will depend on the completeness and clarity of the information provided in the full proposal.
 2. Q. Is there a preferred template to follow when completing the Work Plan and Objectives section in GOATS?
A. For the Concept Proposal phase of the application, there is no preferred or required template for submitting the workplan and objectives section in GOATS. Please ensure all aspects of the workplan and objectives are clear; proposals should, 1) state all project objectives, 2) provide a brief description of the planned activities, 3) state who will perform each task (if known), and 4) provide approximate dates for when each activity will occur.
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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.

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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., 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 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.

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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.
11. Q. Are stipends allowable?
A. Stipends or subsistence allowances, including travel reimbursements, that offset the costs of participating in training or other program activities for participants may be allowable. Note that these costs should be reasonable and designed to offset costs incurred or services provided by trainees or participants, rather than to provide an additional benefit to these individuals. Stipends may be distributed as makes most sense for the applicant organization, such as through checks or gift cards.
12. Q. Can gift cards be distributed to consumers to promote purchasing specialty crops?
A. SCBGP projects cannot support donations, nor may they compete with an existing USDA, CDFA, or other government program. Providing gift cards to encourage purchasing of local produce is not allowable. Some uses of gift cards may be allowable; for example, providing stipends to participants via gift cards is allowable, as described above, provided that the cost is reasonable and necessary for the project's goals.
13. Q. Are translation services an allowable cost?
A. Translation services are allowable costs, if reasonable and necessary for the success of the project's goals. This could include in-person interpretation services, document translation, and/or providing captioning in different languages on recorded media. Translation-related costs are typically included in section G. Other of the budget.
14. Q. Will submitting a proposal without a 25 percent cost share impact the project's likelihood of receiving funding?
A. USDA has not yet provided CDFA, or any other state agency, with information regarding the proposed 25 percent cost share requirement for the 2027 SCBGP. Proposals will continue to be reviewed as submitted. If USDA makes this requirement official, all applicants will be notified and given an opportunity to revise their budget, including cost share, to reflect these new requirements.
15. Q. Is renting or contracting for the use of equipment allowable?
A. Renting or contracting for the use of equipment is allowable, provided costs are reasonable and necessary for the success of the project's goals. Please refer to the Equipment section 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) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) for more information, including restrictions on rent-to-own agreements and drone use.
16. Q. How should collaborators from different branches of the same organization be differentiated in the Concept Proposal?
A. For the purposes of the SCBGP, all individuals employed by the applicant organization and receiving grant funds should be listed in the budget under A. Personnel. Other individuals

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receiving grant funds, but not employed by the applicant organization, should be listed in F. Contractual.

17. Q. What is the cost threshold for an item to be considered equipment?
A. Items costing \$10,000 or more per unit, net, are considered equipment. Items with a lower cost per unit, net, are considered supplies.
18. Q. Is it allowable to purchase supplies or other items to provide to local specialty crop businesses or organizations?
A. This is unallowable. Providing supplies or other items to individual businesses or organizations would constitute an unallowable giveaway or donation to those businesses; this would offset the cost of doing business for those organizations and allow them an unfair competitive advantage against other organizations in their area.

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19. Q. Are there any restrictions on which organizations may be selected as contractors?
A. Applicants may not contract with any entity on the Office of Foreign Asset Control sanctions lists (<https://ofac.treasury.gov/sanctions-list-service>). Otherwise, SCBGP does not prohibit a particular organization type from serving as a contractor. However, 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. Additionally, all contractor costs must be reasonable, allowable, and necessary to complete the goals of the project. 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.
20. Q. What should applicants include in the Reason fields of the budget section?
A. A description is required for each budget category in which funds are requested, except for category H. Indirect Costs. The required description varies per budget category; refer to the Concept Proposal Budget section starting on page 19 of the RFCP for more details.
21. Q. Are costs associated with alcoholic beverages allowable?
A. Costs associated with alcoholic beverages are unallowable. This includes any costs to support tasting or sampling, including any educational, promotional, or research activities that involve tasting or sampling. Unallowable associated costs could include costs for personnel, travel, conference registration, supplies, indirect, or any other costs that directly or indirectly support tasting or sampling.

Alcohol costs are allowable only when used exclusively for verifiable scientific research purposes, such as quantitative, laboratory, or regulatory testing of e.g., smoke taint in grapes or hops, composition, salinity, pH, etc.

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22. Q. Are sponsorships allowable?
A. No. Sponsorships are unallowable because they are considered contributions or donations. This includes using grant funds to associate an organization's name and/or logo with an event when the recipient does not control how the funds are used.
23. Q. Is graduate student tuition an allowable cost?
A. Yes, tuition remission and other forms of compensation paid as, or in lieu of, wages to students are typically allowable. More detail can be found in the Scholarships and Student Aid Costs section of the Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table linked above.
24. Q. What is the Blue List as relates to the allowability of drones and unmanned aircraft systems?
A. The *Blue UAS Cleared List* is the U.S. Department of Defense's official catalog of secure, approved commercial drones and components. It can be found at https://tyrionprod.servicenowservices.com/gsp?id=gsp_index. Only drones from the Blue List may be purchased, rented, or used with SCBGP funds, including associated personnel and indirect costs. All projects using drones will be required to certify that the drones to be used are included on the Blue List, if invited to submit a Grant Proposal.
25. Q. Are solar panels or other agrivoltaic elements allowable?
A. Solar panels and other agrivoltaics elements may be allowable for research purposes; note that capital improvements and construction are generally unallowable. However, applicable domestic sourcing requirements must be met and proposals must demonstrate that the primary benefit is to the specialty crop or specialty crop industry rather than, for example, reducing an individual operation's energy costs.
26. Q. If a work force training project takes place on an existing farm, but does not provide a notable benefit to the farm, are crops otherwise grown by the farm subject to requirements around program income?
A. No. It is understood that, despite hosting the workshop, the host farm will continue to operate as normal. Note that projects that would provide a notable benefit to a single for-profit or non-profit organization through offsetting their production costs would not be allowable.

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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2. Q. Are some organization types favored over others in scoring?
A. No organization type is favored over another in scoring. The organization type question is unscored during both the administrative and technical review of each proposal.

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3. Q. Is serving on the TRC a paid opportunity?
A. No, serving on the TRC is not paid. TRC members may be reimbursed for travel-related expenses.
4. Q. Is the applicant identified in Phase I required to remain the same throughout Phase II and, if awarded, for the duration of the grant?
A. The applicant organization may change between the Concept Proposal and Grant Proposal phases; however, CDFA cannot anticipate how a change to the applicant will be considered by the TRC. After a grant agreement is executed, changing the recipient organization requires termination of the original agreement and execution of a new agreement.
5. Q. Is a scoring rubric available for 2027 Concept Proposals?
A. CDFA does not publish a scoring rubric. However, the RFCP states which questions are scored, the points available for each question, and the scoring criteria in the Concept Proposal Questions and Scoring section beginning on page 12.
6. Q. Will the members of the TRC be publicized?
A. No, the TRC is anonymous to ensure fair and equal scoring of all proposals.
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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.
2. Q. Are reporting, record keeping, and tracking requirements the same for all organization types?
A. Reporting, record keeping, and tracking requirements are not dependent on organization type. Each project is required to submit invoices at least quarterly, but not more frequently than monthly, in arrears. Bi-annual reports will track spending across all budget items, including but not limited to, cost share, work plan achievements, and progress against the Outcome Measures. Please note that all SCBGP projects are subject to a minimum of one performance site visit, as well as a financial compliance audit, desk review, and/or Agreed Upon Procedure (AUP).

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3. Q. Are advances available for SCBGP Grant Recipients?
- A. Recipients may be eligible to receive advance payments to cover anticipated project expenditures. Multiple advances can be requested during the project duration; advances should be spent down within 90 days.

Advance payments are not allowed under the following circumstances: an existing advance is not completely liquidated; the advance will reduce the project balance below 10 percent of the award amount; there is an invoice dispute; there is a pending resolution of an audit or desk review finding of overpayment, unallowable costs, inadequately supported, or unsupported costs; the project is not current in invoicing or reporting; the project is in the final three months of the project duration; and/or additional conditions imposed prohibit an advance payment. Note that SCBGP is federally funded and not subject to 2023 Assembly Bill 590.

4. Q. For successful projects, what is the typical interval between claim submission and payment when invoicing?
- A. It may take up to 45 days from the date the invoice or advance payment request is received for a check to be issued by the California State Controller's Office on behalf of CDFA.
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