

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Applicant Guide for the GOATS Online Application Platform

California Department of Food & Agriculture
Office of Grants Administration

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Introduction

About the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds projects that enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. The program supports all sectors of California's specialty crop industry and strengthens the performance of California specialty crops in local, domestic, national, and international markets. Specialty crops include fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.

Who Can Apply

Eligible applicants include nonprofit and for-profit organizations; local, state, and federal government entities, including federally and non-federally recognized Tribal governments; and public or private colleges and universities. Individuals are not eligible to apply. Projects must benefit California's specialty crop industry as a whole and may not be designed primarily to benefit a single individual or organization.

Application Process

CDFA conducts an annual competitive solicitation with two phases:

Phase I - Concept Proposal: Eligible organizations submit a concise project concept in GOATS in response to the current Request for Concept Proposals (RFCP). CDFA completes an administrative review, and the SCBGP Technical Review Committee (TRC) reviews eligible proposals.

Phase II - Grant Proposal (by invitation only): Applicants selected from Phase I are invited to submit a more detailed Grant Proposal. After review, CDFA submits recommended projects to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA AMS) for final approval.

General Resources & Contact Information

- **[GOATS Application Portal](https://applications.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/s/)** (<https://applications.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/s/>) - Create an account, view funding opportunities, and submit an application.
- **[SCBGP Program Page and Current Solicitation](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/)** (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) - Review the current RFCP, program guidance, deadlines, and applicant resources.
- Program Contact - CDFA Office of Grants Administration, (916) 657-3231, grants@cdfa.ca.gov.

Preparing to Apply

Please carefully read the information below and take the required actions to prepare for the application process.

Confirming Eligibility and Application Phase

Review the current SCBGP solicitation before beginning. Confirm that the applicant organization and proposed project are eligible, then select the opportunity for the correct phase. Phase I is the Concept Proposal. Phase II is the Grant Proposal and is available only to applicants invited by CDFA.

Accessing SCBGP Application Resources

Before drafting, review the [current SCBGP program page and solicitation](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/). Download required templates from the GOATS Opportunity Attachments area or the official SCBGP webpage. (Note: The Concept Proposal Phase does not have any templates or attachments.) The current RFCP or invitation controls if any instruction in this platform guide differs from the solicitation.

Phase-specific priorities, deadlines, required forms, file formats, page limits, and character limits may change. Use only the documents posted for the current solicitation; do not reuse a prior solicitation's template or guidance document.

The SCBGP webpage also provides FAQs, webinar materials, allowable and unallowable cost guidance, and other applicant resources. For program questions, contact grants@cdfa.ca.gov.

The Application Process

Registering a GOATS Account

Applications are developed and submitted through CDFA's Grant Opportunity and Administration and Tracking System (GOATS). Open the [GOATS portal](https://applications.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/s/) (<https://applications.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/s/>), "Log in" in the upper right corner, and select "Create a GOATS account" if you do not already have one.

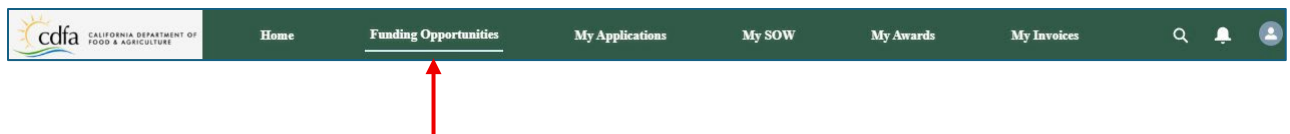


Note: Required fields are marked with a red asterisk. FEIN and SSN are not required account-registration fields and do not need to be entered.

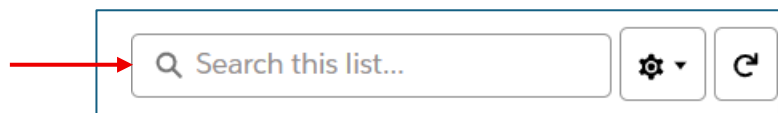
Navigating to the SCBGP Opportunity

CDFA's online portal system hosts several grant program opportunities. Once you are logged in to your account, select the "Funding Opportunities" tab in the navigation bar at the top of the page.

On the Funding Opportunities tab, locate the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program opportunity.



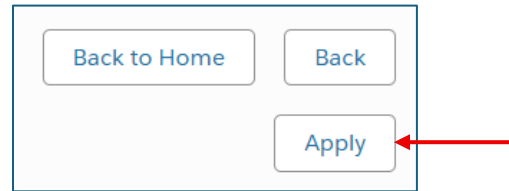
You may also use the search box in the upper-right corner.



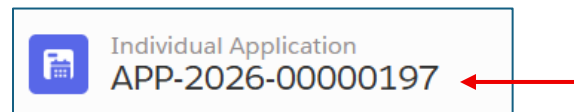
Selecting the opportunity opens a page with general information about the SCBGP solicitation.

Beginning the Application

Select “Apply” in the upper right corner to create a new application and begin the application process.



The application will automatically be assigned a unique Application Number or PIN, which can be viewed in the upper left corner.



Navigating within the Application

The application includes five sections:

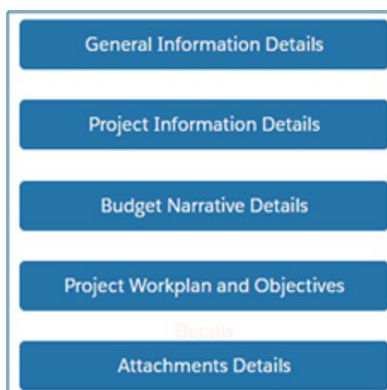
1. General Information Details
2. Project Information Details
3. Budget Narrative Details
4. Project Workplan and Objectives Details
5. Attachments Details

Select one of the buttons on the right side of the page to open an application section.

SCBGP applicants must follow the current solicitation and the help text displayed in GOATS. Required questions, templates, and sections may differ between the Concept Proposal and Grant Proposal phases. If the solicitation directs you to submit a budget or work plan using a downloadable template, complete and upload that template rather than entering duplicate information in a standardized GOATS section. Open and save every section that GOATS identifies as required.

GOATS is a standardized platform used by multiple CDFA grant programs. The current SCBGP solicitation defines the questions, scoring criteria, and attachments for each application phase. Read the solicitation and all GOATS help text before entering information.

To toggle between application sections without losing progress, applicants must save the application section before entering a new one (see Saving the Application, below).



Do not select the “Back” or “Back to Home” buttons in the upper right corner to toggle between application sections (unless no changes have been made). Applicants will be directed to a new page without saving progress.

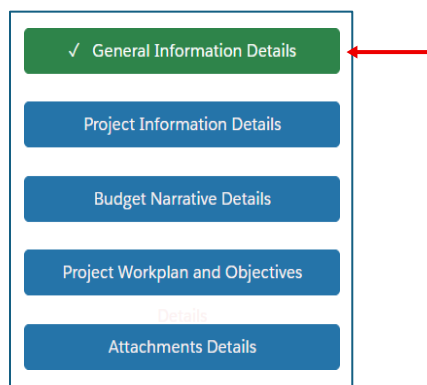


Saving the Application

CDFA encourages applicants to save their progress regularly. Navigate to the last page of any application section and select the "Save" button in the lower-right corner.



Once an application section has been saved, the section will turn green with a check mark.



Important: this does not mean the section is complete. Applicants may return to the saved application section and make edits at any time.

Returning to the Application

Log in to the application portal and select the “My Applications” tab in the navigation bar at the top of the page.



Select the application using its unique Application ID and Application Number. Selecting the Application ID opens the application.

Reviewing the Solicitation and Preparing Materials

Draft narrative responses and prepare attachments before entering them in GOATS. (Note: Please pay attention to the character limits listed in the RFCP and in the GOATS platform.) This supports a faster entry process and gives your team a separate copy for review. Use the current solicitation or invitation as the authoritative checklist.

Depending on the phase and current solicitation, GOATS may provide templates for:

- Project objectives and work plan
- Outcome measures
- Budget narrative
- Cost sharing, if applicable

Other uploads may include, when required or permitted:

- Resumes or curricula vitae for key project personnel
- Letters of support from eligible specialty crop stakeholders
- Additional documents identified in the current RFCP or invitation
- Documents demonstrating required organizational or project information
- Required application templates listed under Opportunity Attachments in GOATS

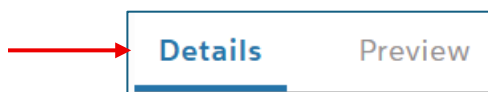
If uploads are required, only current-cycle SCBGP templates should be uploaded; prior-cycle forms should not be used.

Before Entering Information in GOATS:

- Confirm the applicant organization's legal name and primary contacts.
- Draft and review narrative responses outside GOATS.
- Gather organization and project identifiers requested by the system.
- Verify required file types, naming conventions, and character/page limits.
- Use the same project title and applicant organization name in GOATS and every attachment.

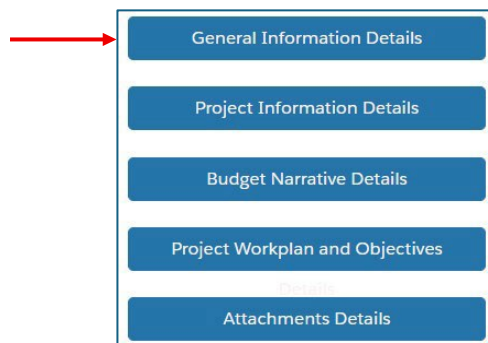
Entering Information in GOATS:

To begin, ensure that the “Details” tab in the upper left corner is selected.



General Information Details

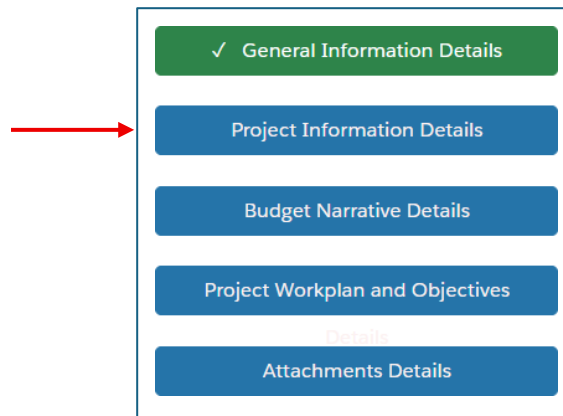
1. Select the "General Information Details" button on the right side of the page. This section collects information about the applicant organization, application contacts, and other standardized details.



2. Complete every required question. Use "Not Applicable" only when the current solicitation or GOATS help text permits it.
 - a. Select an Organization Type; do not leave the field set to "No Value."
 - b. Use the applicant organization's legal name consistently. If GOATS requests a Project Director, Project Manager, Principal Investigator, or Authorized Official, identify the individuals who will hold those responsibilities for the proposed project.
 - c. Identify a cooperating entity, collaborator, contractor, or subrecipient only when applicable and as defined by the current solicitation.
3. When the section is complete or if the applicant wishes to exit and return to the section, select the “Save” button in the bottom right corner of the second page.

Project Information Details

1. Select the “Project Information Details” button on the right side of the page.



2. Complete all questions displayed for the current SCBGP phase. The Concept Proposal and invitation-only Grant Proposal may request different levels of detail.
3. SCBGP questions and character limits are cycle- and phase-specific. GOATS displays the applicable limit for each response when the limit is reached, as does the current RFCP. Draft responses outside the system and confirm the count before pasting them into GOATS. Common SCBGP topics may include:
 - a. Project title and public project description
 - b. Applicant organization and submitting organization, if different
 - c. Funding area, funding category, and program priority
 - d. Project purpose, need, importance, and timeliness
 - e. Project beneficiaries and industry-wide specialty crop benefits
 - f. How the project enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops
 - g. Prior SCBGP projects and lessons learned
 - h. Other federal or state support and avoidance of duplicate funding
 - i. Project objectives, activities, work plan, and timeline
 - j. Outreach, education, and dissemination of project results
 - k. Project sustainability beyond the grant period
 - l. External specialty crop industry support
 - m. Outcome measures and data-collection methods
 - n. Budget, funds requested, and cost sharing, when applicable

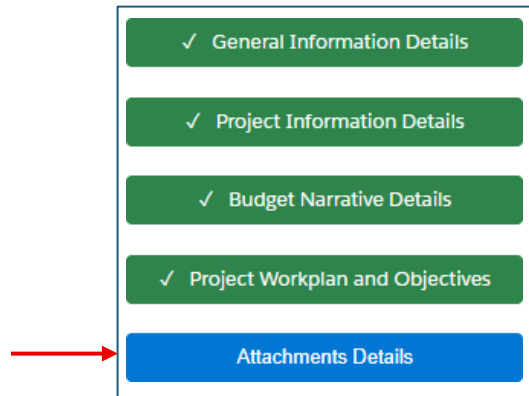
4. When the section is complete, or when you need to exit and return later, select the "Save" button in the lower-right corner of the page.

Budget Narrative Details and Project Workplan and Objectives

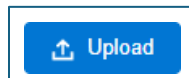
Follow the current SCBGP solicitation and GOATS help text for these sections. If GOATS directs you to use downloadable budget or work plan templates, complete and upload the templates in Attachments Details and open and save the corresponding standardized sections as directed. Otherwise, complete all required fields shown in GOATS.

Attachments Details

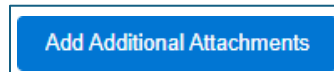
1. Select the "Attachments Details" button on the right side of the page.



2. Under "Opportunity Attachments," GOATS provides the current templates and forms associated with the funding opportunity. Download and complete each required SCBGP template. Some required or optional attachments may not have a template; follow the current solicitation for those documents.
3. After completing the required attachments, upload them in this section. Successfully added files appear under "Uploaded Attachments."
 - a. For a template listed under Opportunity Attachments, use the blue "Upload" button on the same line to upload the completed project-specific version. Confirm that it then appears under Uploaded Attachments.



- b. For a required or permitted attachment that has no template and is not listed under Opportunity Attachments, such as an optional letter of support, select "Add Additional Attachments." Enter a short description, select Upload Files or drag and drop the file, and then select Submit. Confirm that the file appears under Uploaded Attachments.



4. You may need to press  to refresh the page to view your newly uploaded files.

Additional Guidance and Reminders for Attachments:

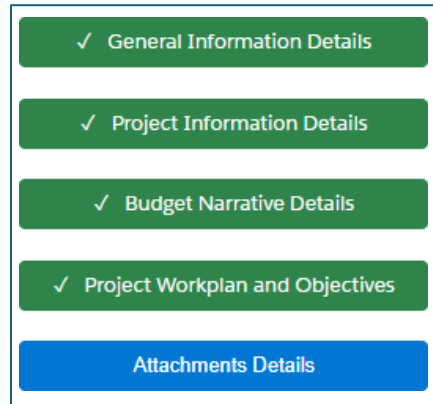
- Verify that all documents are legible, complete and uncorrupted, and correctly uploaded before submitting the application.
- Name files clearly. Include the attachment type plus the applicant organization or Application ID (for example, WorkPlan_OrganizationName).
- Confirm that every attachment required by the current SCBGP solicitation or invitation has been uploaded.

Preparing to Submit

Please follow the steps below to complete, review, and submit the application.

Completing the Application

Review each application section and select "Save" at the end. A green section button with a check mark means the section was saved; it does not confirm that every required response is complete or correct. The Attachments Details button may remain blue even after files are uploaded.



Reviewing the Application

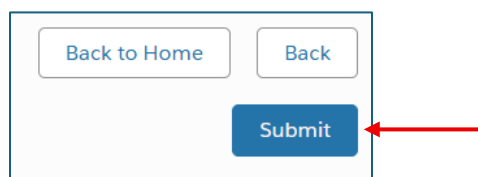
To review all of the application contents in a read-only form, select the "Preview" tab in the upper left corner of the application's main page (next to the "Details" tab).



Take a moment to ensure that all of the fields are complete and that the information provided is correct.

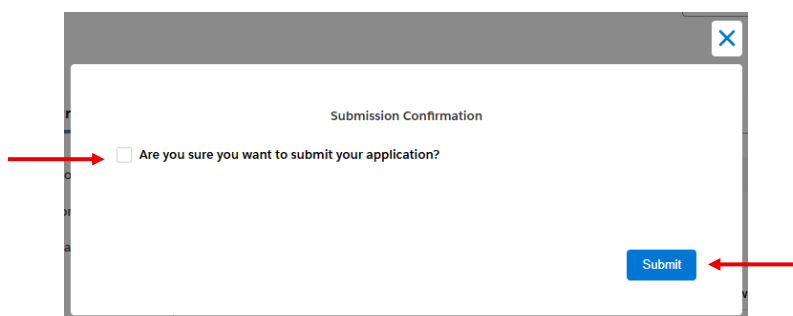
Submitting the Application

Select the "Submit" button in the upper right corner.

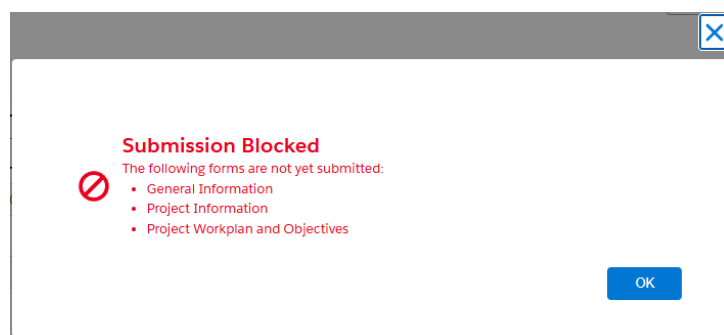


Applicants will be prompted to confirm submission. Check the box, then select "Submit" again.

Submit before the deadline stated in the current SCBGP solicitation and displayed in GOATS. GOATS may remain accessible after the application period closes, but the Submit function will no longer be available for that opportunity.



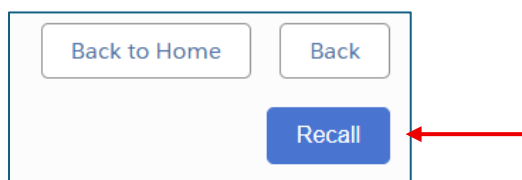
The application system considers an application incomplete if one or more of the required application sections are not saved. Attempting to submit an incomplete application will prompt a message that specifies which sections must be saved.



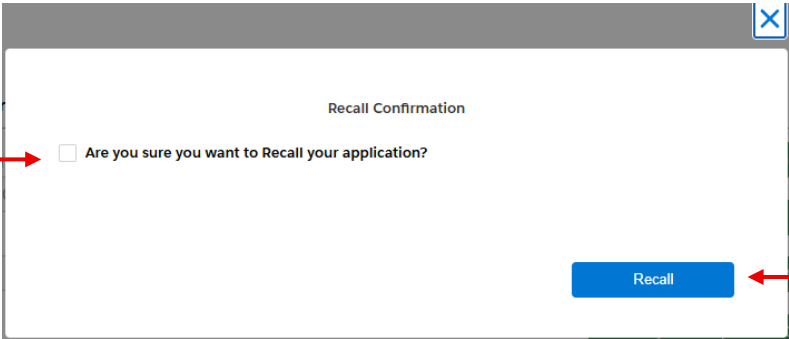
Once submission is successful, applicants will receive a confirmation email from the system. The “Application Status” for the application will also change from Draft to Submitted.

Recalling the Application

Applicants may recall their application at any time before the opportunity’s application period closes. Once submission is complete, applicants will be able to access the “Recall” button in the upper right corner of the page up until the submission deadline.



Applicants will be prompted to confirm the recall. Check the box and select “Recall” again to confirm and finalize the recall.

A screenshot of a web browser window showing a "Recall Confirmation" dialog box. The dialog box has a title bar with a close button (X) in the top right corner. Inside the dialog, the text "Recall Confirmation" is centered at the top. Below it, there is a checkbox followed by the text "Are you sure you want to Recall your application?". A red arrow points to the checkbox. At the bottom right of the dialog, there is a blue button labeled "Recall". Another red arrow points to this button.

Once recalled, applicants may edit any section of the application. The “Application Status” will show up as Recalled. **Any edits made must be saved, and the application must be re-submitted before the application period closes.** There is not a limit to the number of times an application can be recalled and re-submitted.

Help Text and Technical Assistance

Additional instruction and guidance may show up as smaller read-only text embedded within the application sections and questions. Help text for some questions may also be present as a pop-up information box – where available, hover over the **i** icon next to each application question to view the text.

For assistance with an SCBGP application in GOATS, contact grants@cdfa.ca.gov. Include the applicant organization, funding opportunity, and Application ID when available. Never send passwords or sensitive personal information.

Next Steps

CDFA will notify applicants by email after the applicable review is complete. Following Phase I, selected applicants are invited to submit a Grant Proposal in Phase II. Following Phase II, CDFA submits recommended projects to USDA AMS for final approval before awards are announced. Monitor the applicant email account and the SCBGP webpage for updates.