



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF  
FOOD & AGRICULTURE

**2012**  
**Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**

**NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY  
REQUEST FOR CONCEPT PROPOSALS**

**CATALOGUE OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE 10.170**

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## PURPOSE

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is pleased to announce a competitive solicitation process to award 2012 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds for proposals that *solely* enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. CDFA expects the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to make up to \$17 million available for SCBGP grant awards.

Specialty crops are defined by USDA as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). Please visit the USDA website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/scbgp> to view a comprehensive list of eligible and ineligible specialty crops under the SCBGP.

## ELIGIBILITY

CDFA is seeking Concept Proposals from eligible non-profit organizations, for-profit organizations, local, state and federal government entities, including tribal governments, and public and private colleges and universities for proposals that solely benefit the production of, and access to, California specialty crops.

***NOTE: Grant funds will not be awarded for proposals that directly benefit or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.***

Those entities that are non-profit or for-profit may be required to provide either verification of their non-profit status or a copy of a valid California Business License if invited to submit a Grant Proposal

## FUNDING

### **Funding Availability:**

CDFA projects that up to \$17 million will be awarded in grant amounts ranging from \$50,000 to \$400,000 per project. Grant funds will be available for two (2) years, nine (9) months and cannot be expended before October 1, 2012 or after June 30, 2015.

## SOLICITATION PROCESS

### **Phase I, Concept Proposal:**

In Phase I, applicants submit Concept Proposals for projects that enhance the competitiveness of California's specialty crops. Applicants will use an electronic submission system to respond to a series of questions regarding their organization and their proposal.

### **Phase II, Grant Proposal:**

Applicants will be **invited** to participate in Phase II, Grant Proposal. CDFA will advise all applicants whether or not they are invited to submit a Grant Proposal.

Specific requirements and instructions regarding Grant Proposals will be included in the “Invitation to Submit Grant Proposals” notification.

**TIMELINE**

|                             |                                    |  |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| Phase I<br>Concept Proposal | November 14, 2011                  | Release Notice of Funding Availability – Request for Concept Proposals   |
|                             | November 15 – 18, 2011             | SCBGP Workshops & Webinars: Please visit CDFA’s website for details <a href="http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants">www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants</a> |
|                             | December 12, 2011<br>5:00 p.m. PST | Concept Proposals Due  |
| Phase II<br>Grant Proposal  | February 2012                      | Invitation to Submit Grant Proposals   |
|                             | March 26, 2012<br>5:00 p.m. PDT    | Grant Proposals Due  |
|                             | July 2012                          | Grant Proposals to USDA for Approval   |
| Award                       | October 2012                       | Announce & Award SCBGP Funding   |

**FUNDING AREAS**

CDFA is soliciting Concept Proposals that address any of the Funding Areas described in this section. Also listed are Areas of Emphasis within each Funding Area which outline potential types of projects and approaches to consider. Please note that the Areas of Emphasis are suggestions and should not be considered exclusive.

Although Concept Proposals may address multiple Funding Areas, applicants must select a single Funding Area that is the focus of their proposal. CDFA does not impose a limit on the number of proposals that an applicant may submit. Eligible applicants can submit multiple Concept Proposals so long as each submission represents a unique project. Each Concept Proposal must be submitted separately.

**Funding Areas:**

- I. Research
- II. Marketing
- III. Nutrition

**I. Research**

Within the Research Funding Area, there are three sub-areas: Plant Health and Pest Challenges, Environmental Concerns and Conservation, and Food Safety.

Applied research projects should address good agricultural practices for food safety that will benefit California's Specialty Crop industry within five years from project implementation. Projects should include an element that extends science-based information to specialty crop growers and other key stakeholders.

### **A. Plant Health and Pest Challenges**

Protecting California's specialty crop agriculture from the relentless invasion of exotic pests and diseases is a critical effort. California agricultural losses to exotic pests exceed \$3 billion annually. Pest and disease prevention and management programs that will effectively protect California's specialty crop agriculture and horticulture in an economically and environmentally sound manner must be implemented to prevent further losses, retain marketability of products, and retain export markets. Invasive species include noxious weeds, insect pests, plant diseases, and vertebrate pests.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider proposals that address pests and diseases that affect the production of California's specialty crops. This includes applied research related to the probability and impact of invasive pest, disease and weed threats to specialty crops, and research to develop tools to detect, eradicate and control pests and disease. Projects are encouraged that address new pests or disease threats to California specialty crops, particularly pests or disease threats with significant negative potential economic impact.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Enhance the speed and reliability of detection
- Develop new tools for eradication
- Develop plants resistant to pests and disease
- Develop secondary inspection and detection capacity
- Conduct pest surveys to ascertain threat and spread of threat
- Develop pest protocol programs for a subsector of specialty crops

### **B. Environmental Concerns and Conservation**

Agriculture has a fundamental relationship with the natural resources – land, air, and water to produce food and other ecosystem services. California's farmers and their allied organizations are undertaking many innovative steps to improve the environmental performance of their farming operations and new stewardship opportunities are being created. Sustainability programs are becoming common in many companies and commodity groups.

In this Funding Area, CDFA is soliciting projects that enhance soil health and the conservation of agricultural land, water, habitat, and biodiversity as well as proposals that address agriculture's specialty crop contribution to adaptation and/or mitigation of climate change. Improvement of air and water quality with respect to specialty crop agriculture will also be considered.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Integrate resource base issues (i.e. improve both air and water resources)

- Address regulatory challenges for California’s specialty crop growers
- Assist communities and/or decision makers in planning for specialty crop agriculture
- Assist growers “in adapting to” climate change by conducting research and implementation of strategies where technologies are already available - especially water use efficiency and invasive pest detection, control and management
- Accelerate Best Management Practices (BMP) implementation for water conservation and efficiency, including development of a BMP manual for specific specialty crops

### **C. Food Safety**

*Please Note:* CDFA has entered into a partnership agreement with the University of California, Davis’ Center for Produce Safety (CPS) to utilize the technical expertise of their grant reviewers in the area of food safety. CPS will release a separate food safety proposal solicitation. Please contact CPS at (530) 757-5777 or visit the CPS website at <http://cps.ucdavis.edu> for the solicitation timeline and proposal requirements.

### **II. Marketing**

Within the Marketing Funding Area, there are three sub-areas: Agriculture Education/Outreach, International Trade and Market Enhancement and Promotion.

Marketing projects should include an element that promotes the “California Grown” banner, which reinforces the message that buying California’s specialty crops are good for Californians and good for California’s economy.

#### **A. Agriculture Education/Outreach**

Education and Outreach has always been, and continues to be, a fundamental cornerstone of the strength of California’s agricultural system. *Educational* projects should target students of all ages; K-12 and post-secondary. *Outreach* projects typically target adult audiences – depending on the project, targets of “outreach” could be farmers, retailers, or consumers.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider projects that improve the public’s knowledge and understanding of specialty crop agriculture and its beneficial importance to the health and well-being of all Californians.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Strengthen specialty crop agricultural career technical education for specialty crop sustainability through access to critical job training skills for beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers.
- Educate consumers about California’s specialty crops
- Reconnect communities with specialty crops production
- Educate the public about the identity and threat of invasive species to California specialty crops

#### **B. International Trade**

California's specialty crops are found in markets worldwide as California is a dominant exporter for many specialty crop items. Approximately one-third of California's specialty crops are exported and many of these products are highly dependent upon foreign markets to sustain their economic vitality.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider innovative projects that enhance the international marketing and trade of California's specialty crops including, but not limited to, the development and dissemination of market information and innovative marketing activities focusing on healthy eating and nutrition to international audiences.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Promote export training and development with an emphasis on small, medium, and/or new enterprises
- Support innovative consumer/trade promotions in foreign markets
- Advance public/private partnerships in the international marketing of California's specialty crops
- Identify and document the impact of foreign trade barriers on exports of California specialty crops
- Identify and propose innovative solutions that address international consumer perception barriers
- Identify and propose innovative solutions to transportation and storage logistics barriers in delivering California specialty crops to international markets

### **C. Market Enhancement and Promotion**

California's specialty crops are sold across the nation and California is a key supplier of much of the nation's fruits, vegetables, nuts, and horticultural products.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider projects that promote the California Grown message and increase or develop long-term sales and competitiveness of specialty crop products.

Areas of Emphasis

- Support statewide market promotion and awareness of specialty crops
- Support specialty crop marketing concepts that target the unique characteristics of local and regional areas such as culture, geography, history, and types of agricultural production
- Increase customers and sales of California specialty crops at Certified Farmers' Markets
- Support cooperative marketing and promotions such as cross-menu promotions of specialty crops

### **III. Nutrition**

Within the Nutrition Funding Area, there are two sub-areas: Food Security and Healthy Eating.

#### **A. Food Security**

Far too many people in California's urban, suburban and rural communities suffer from food insecurity or have poor access to healthy and nutritious foods. Malnutrition, whether

manifested through hunger or obesity, compromises both individual and community health. Ensuring access to healthy foods in underserved low-income areas of California is a key strategy to improve public health. Improvements in health, increasing consumption of horticultural products, and increasing food access to healthy foods are linked.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider projects that improve access and consumption of specialty crops.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Increase participation in under-utilized federal nutrition assistance programs
- Develop community and school gardens, urban farms, and other innovative projects that support local and regional food systems
- Improve access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in ways that foster self-reliance, enhance dignity, and assure environmental sustainability

## **B. Healthy Eating**

Increasing Californians' access to and consumption of fruits, vegetables and tree nuts is a key strategy to improve human health. The health benefits of specialty crop consumption, which are well documented, include a reduced risk of chronic diseases.

In this Funding Area, CDFA will consider projects that integrate human health and nutrition with specialty crops.

Areas of Emphasis:

- Increase consumption of specialty crops among all populations through vigorous marketing, promotion and public/private partnerships
- Implement school initiatives that link cafeterias, classrooms, gardens, parents, worksites, and communities with local farmers
- Develop farm-to-fork networks that include schools, worksites, retail, and restaurant outlets to connect local agriculture with nearby communities
- Promote and/ or demonstrate the health benefits of California specialty crops

## **POLICIES AND REQUIREMENTS**

### **Matching Funds and In-Kind Contributions:**

Matching funds and in-kind donations are not required, but are *strongly* encouraged. Match documentation will be required in Phase II – Grant Proposal of the solicitation process. However, applicants are encouraged to develop those partnerships now and provide the estimated amount in the Concept Proposal. Cash and in-kind contributions will be given the same consideration (no preference for cash verses in-kind).

### **Indirect Costs:**

Indirect costs are those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved.

Indirect costs may not exceed five percent (5%) of the total Personnel Services (Salaries and Wages plus Fringe Benefits). Project costs include all subcontract funds.

**Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act:**

Recipients of 2012 SCBGP funds must comply with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA). This includes obtaining a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) numbers and maintaining a current registration in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database.

Please visit <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> to obtain a DUNS number and/or <https://www.uscontractorregistration.com/> to register on the CCR database. For a complete listing of additional data fields that may be required under the FFATA, please refer to <https://www.fsrs.gov/>. All data field information must be provided to CDFA when proposals are submitted under Phase II – Grant Proposal. Specific instructions will be included in the Invitation for Grant Proposals.

**Administrative Requirements:**

Federal administrative requirements and cost principles are policies used to determine which costs an activity, project, or program should be borne by the Federal Government. These policies ensure the consistent treatment of costs, regardless of whether reimbursement is received directly from the State Government or through another recipient of Federal funds.

For each organization type, there is a set of Federal requirements. The following chart lists the type of organization and the applicable administrative requirement and cost principles.

| <b>Federal Cost Principles Summary Table</b>   |                                    |                        |
|--|------------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Organization Type</b>   | <b>Administrative Requirements</b> | <b>Cost Principles</b> |
| State, local or Indian tribal government   | 7 CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3016          | 2 CFR 225              |
| Private nonprofit organization other than an (1) institution of higher education, (2) hospital, or (3) organization named in OMB Circular A-122 as not subject to that circular. | 7 CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3019          | 2 CFR 230              |
| Colleges and Universities  | 7 CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3019          | 2 CFR 220              |

|  |                           |   |
|--|---------------------------|---|
| For-profit organization other than a hospital and an organization named in OMB Circular A-122 as not subject to that circular. | 7 CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3019 | Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 31.2. Contract with Commercial Organizations, codified at 48 CFR 31.2. |
| <b>CONCEPT PROPOSAL SUBMISSION</b>   |                           |   |

CDFA has entered into a service agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to host a web-based Concept and Grant Proposal solicitation process.

Applicants must register and receive a logon account to the Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) in order to submit Concept Proposals. FAAST can be accessed through the SWRCB website at: <https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov>. FAAST can also be accessed on the CDFA website at: <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants>.

Internet Explorer version 6.0 or above is required to utilize the FAAST system. Computer pop-up blocker software must be disabled while accessing FAAST.

The FAAST system utilizes a question and answer format. The first section requires general applicant information. The second section is the application questionnaire. The Concept Proposals are equivalent to approximately three (3) pages in length due to character limitations imposed on question responses.

*General Information:*

1.     Applicant Organization  
Legal name of organization who will receive funding
  
2.     Submitting Organization  
Name of organization submitting proposal
  
3.     Project Title  
A clear, concise and brief proposal title
  
4.     Project Description  
Abstract which summarizes the proposal
  
5.     Project Budget  
Funds requested and anticipated matching funds

*Concept Proposal Application Questionnaire:*

1. Organization Type

Select organization type that correctly reflects the nature of your organization.

2. Funding Area

Select one funding area which most accurately aligns with the nature of the proposal.

3. Project Duration

Estimate the 'Start Date' and 'End Date' for the proposal in mm/yyyy format.

4. Project Purpose

Identify the specific issue, problem or need that the proposal will address, and explain why the proposal is important and timely. Identify the objectives of the proposal.

5. Prior-Year SCBGP Projects

Indicate if the proposal builds on a proposal that was approved in a prior year. If 'YES,' provide the Grant Agreement number and clearly explain how the new proposal compliments previous work.

6. Potential Impact

Identify the beneficiaries. Provide the number of beneficiaries, and explain how the beneficiaries will be impacted.

7. Expected Measurable Outcome

Describe at least one distinct, quantifiable and measurable outcome that directly and meaningfully supports the proposals purpose and is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries.

8. Work Plan

Briefly describe the activities that will be performed to accomplish the objectives of the proposal.

*Only grant funded activities occurring during the timeframe of the proposed project should be included. Do not include activities funded with match and/or in kind contributions.*

9. Budget

Within the FFAST system click on the link titled "[Budget](#)" to download and complete the budget template.

Budget must be saved as Excel 97-2003 Workbook (\*.xls).

*Note: The budget should only include grant funds – not match and/or in-kind contributions.*

The FFAST system is the only acceptable method for applicants to submit Concept Proposals. CDFA strongly encourages all applicants to submit Concept Proposals in advance of the due date to allow sufficient time to complete the process in FFAST and avoid any unforeseen technical issues.

## REVIEW CRITERIA AND PROCESS

### Review Criteria:

CDFA's intent is to fund projects that can produce the highest degree of measurable benefits to California specialty crop producers in relation to each dollar spent. Applicants' Concept Proposals will be evaluated on the criteria set forth in the [Concept Proposal Review Criteria](#).

### 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 (Technical Review Committee) will perform the Technical Review. The Technical Review Committee is made up of growers, industry, universities, public agencies and representatives from non-profits with an interest and expertise in specialty crops and agricultural systems.

## FEEDBACK

CDFA will provide feedback to all applicants who were *not* invited to participate in Phase II – Grant Proposal within 60 days after receiving notification.

## ASSISTANCE AND QUESTIONS

During the week of November 15, 2011, CDFA will conduct Specialty Crop Block Grant Workshops/Webinars on the 2012 SCBGP solicitation process, use of the FFAST system and grant writing tips. Please visit CDFA's SCBGP web site at <http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants> for date, times, and locations.

E-mail all questions about the solicitation process to: [grants@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:grants@cdfa.ca.gov). Responses to all questions received during the workshops, webinars or by e-mail will be posted to CDFA's SCBGP web site according to the following schedule:

Questions Received by:

11/22/11 – 5:00 PM PST

11/29/11 – 5:00 PM PST

12/06/11 – 5:00 PM PST

Responses Posted by:

11/23/11 – 5:00 PM PST

11/30/11 – 5:00 PM PST

12/07/11 – 5:00 PM PST

December 6, 2011 at 5:00 PM PST is the final deadline to submit questions for the Concept Proposal phase.

In order to maintain the integrity of the competitive grant process, CDFA is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with any information regarding specific proposals during the solicitation process.

The SWRCB web site at: <https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov> contains a Frequently Asked Questions section and a User's Manual for the FFAST system. If after reading the information available on the web site, you have questions about the FFAST System, please contact FFAST customer service at (866) 434-1083, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or contact the SWRCB staff via e-mail at: [faast\\_admin@waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:faast_admin@waterboards.ca.gov).