

2016 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
NOVEMBER 25, 2015

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. Is there a limit on the number of concept proposals an applicant organization can submit?
A. CDFA does not impose a limit on the number of concept proposals that an applicant can submit; however, each concept proposal should be for a unique project. Submitting the same concept proposal over multiple funding categories is prohibited.
2. Q. **Revised November 25, 2015:** I would like to submit a proposal to begin growing specialty crops on my property. Is that allowable under this program?
A. No, applicants may not use SCBGP funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop to make a profit, or to expand production of a single business or organization. USDA has developed a web tool designed to connect farm entrepreneurs with programs and resources available to help get started. The [site](#) features advice and guidance for new farm business owners and includes a personalized [Discovery Tool](#) that builds a customized set of recommendations of USDA programs and services based on your needs. You can also browse <http://www.start2farm.gov/>, which is a database of programs and resources for beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States.
3. Q. Does the SCBGP offer grants to support persons with disabilities?
A. Although there is not a funding category within the SCBGP that specifically focuses on persons with disabilities, CDFA welcomes all proposals that enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops, including among individuals with disabilities. Please refer to [the 2016 Request for Concept Proposals \(RFCP\)](#) for more information on the types of projects the program is seeking. For information on other grant programs that may specifically support persons with disabilities, please visit the [California state grants website](#) and the [federal grants website](#).
4. Q. How likely is a project to receive funding if many of the crops involved are not listed on the eligible crops list? Are some types of specialty crops more likely to receive funding than others?
A. The eligible crops list provided by USDA is not intended to be all-inclusive. Crops that meet the criteria outlined in [USDA Definition of Specialty Crops](#) are eligible to receive funding. All proposals are evaluated on their merit and potential to benefit the specialty crop industry; there is no preference assigned to certain specialty crops.
5. Q. If an organization submits more than one project, is only one eligible to advance to the next round?
A. There is no limit on the number of projects from a single organization that can advance to the next round. Whether or not a proposal advances to the next round of competition depends on the merit of the individual proposal.
6. Q. How can applicants show partnerships, cooperators, and industry support for their projects? Should letters of support be included?
A. There is a section in FFAST where applicants can list cooperating entities. Cooperating entities can include organizations that may receive a portion of the SCBGP funds and/or provide matching funds or in-kind contributions. There is no minimum or maximum number of cooperating entities required. It is not necessary to provide letters of support during the concept proposal phase. Successful applicants will have an opportunity to submit letters of support during the grant proposal phase.
7. Q. Does the organization type question in FFAST refer to the applicant or submitting organization?
A. Please specify the organization type for the applicant organization.

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8. Q. If I am applying on behalf of a large government agency, who should be listed as the applicant - the agency or the department? Where should other agencies working on the project be listed?
A. The department should be listed as the applicant. Other agencies that will be working on the project should be listed as cooperating entities.
9. Q. Is the material covered during the webinars the same as the workshops?
A. Yes, the same information is covered in the workshops and webinars. However, the questions that are asked may be different. We encourage all applicants to visit our website at www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants to review the questions and answers received during the workshops and webinars.
10. Q. How can applicants that have applied unsuccessfully in the past follow up on the feedback they received on their proposals?
A. Applicants can view feedback received for previous proposals by logging into the FAAST system. CDFA encourages applicants to utilize technical and administrative feedback on prior submissions to build stronger proposals. However, please keep in mind that requirements change from year to year; be sure to follow the instructions provided in the [2016 RFCP](#).
11. Q. What attachments are required to be submitted with the concept proposal application?
A. The budget template is the only required attachment in the concept proposal phase. Because this is the only required attachment, the Technical Review Committee is not required to review/consider any additional documents attached to the concept proposal application. For this reason, applicants are discouraged from relying on additional attachments to support or explain their concept proposal.
12. Q. Can a concept proposal address more than one type of specialty crop?
A. Yes, a concept proposal can address more than one type of specialty crop, but it is not required. Benefiting multiple specialty crops does not necessarily increase the chances of a project proposal receiving a SCBGP award.
13. Q. Can nutrition education and research take place in domestic and/or export markets?
A. Yes, but the end result of the project must benefit California specialty crops.
14. Q. Is USDA's guidance and allowable/unallowable costs for 2016 available yet?
A. USDA's allowable/unallowable costs for 2015 are [available online](#). CDFA will update applicants as soon as USDA's 2016 guidance is available; however, this will likely occur sometime between the concept and grant proposal phase. CDFA does not anticipate many significant changes and will notify applicants when USDA's guidance is released.
15. Q. Will the webinar materials or a recording be available online for those who were unable to attend?
A. Yes, CDFA will publish a recording of the webinar and PDF versions of the presentations during the week of November 16. This information will be available on the SCBGP website, www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants.
16. Q. Do certain organization types or commodities receive higher priority for funding than others?
A. There is no consideration given to organization or commodity type in the scoring of proposals. CDFA ensures the review process has no conflicts of interest and reviewers are required to review each project on its individual merits.

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17. Q. Are proposals that benefit federally designated promise zones given additional consideration?
A. There is no additional consideration given to proposals that benefit promise zones in the scoring of proposals. However, in USDA's 2015 request for applications, improving food access in underserved communities is considered an issue affecting the specialty crop industry.
18. Q. Are a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and registration on the System for Award Management (SAM) required prior to submitting a concept proposal?
A. A DUNS number and registration on the SAM is not required prior to submitting a concept proposal. However, if advanced to the grant proposal phase and ultimately awarded SCBGP funds, recipients will need to obtain a DUNS number and register on the SAM before SCBGP funds are awarded. Therefore, applicants are encouraged to begin the registration process early.
19. Q. Can an organization hire new staff or select a contractor to serve as a project director or project manager?
A. Yes, an applicant organization may hire new staff or select a contractor to serve as the project manager or project director for a project. However, we ask that applicants provide contact information for staff already employed by the organization in the FAAST application. The contact information listed in FAAST is how CDFA will contact you regarding the status of your concept proposal. If new staff are hired, applicants may update the project manager or project director contact information.

New Questions: November 18, 2015

20. Q. Will CDFA provide answers to specific questions regarding the eligibility of concept proposals or assist applicants in selecting a funding category, program priority and/or outcome measure and indicator(s)?
A. To maintain the integrity of the competitive grant process, CDFA is unable to advise and/or provide individuals with feedback on specific proposals during the solicitation process. CDFA cannot provide guidance on the most appropriate funding category, program priority and/or outcome measure and indicator(s) for a concept proposal and will not move a proposal submitted under one funding category to a more appropriate category.
21. Q. Can a temporary structure be purchased under the SCBGP?
A. Purchase of a temporary structure may be allowable under the SCBGP if it is necessary for the completion of your project and solely enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops. However, SCBGP funds cannot be used to purchase a permanent structure or land, as these are considered capital expenditures.
22. Q. Are projects that solely consist of a conference eligible under the SCBGP?
A. Projects that solely consist of a conference may be eligible if the project addresses the program requirements and its primary purpose is the dissemination of technical information solely benefiting the specialty crop industry.
23. Q. Are proposals submitted by veterans given additional consideration?
A. There is no additional consideration given to proposals submitted by veterans in the scoring of proposals; however, CDFA welcomes all proposals that enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops, including among individuals who are veterans.

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24. Q. Where do applicants obtain a copy of the 2016 Request for Concept Proposals?
A. Applicants can obtain a copy of the [2016 Request for Concept Proposals](#) on [CDFA's grants website](#).
25. Q. Is the content of a concept proposal application confidential?
A. Concept and grant proposals are reviewed by CDFA and the members of the Technical Review Committee. Also, the recipient name, award amount and project abstracts for proposals awarded funds are published on the web sites of CDFA and USDA. While the full concept or grant proposal is not published publically, all applications are subject to the California Public Records Act. If a request for a proposal is received, CDFA will comply with the request, redact proprietary or confidential information and notify the applicant.
26. Q. If a proposal builds upon preliminary work funded by another organization, should this be listed somewhere in the application and should that organization be listed as a partner?
A. While it isn't specifically required, information about the work of the other organization may be useful in developing a concept proposal. The other organization should only be listed as a cooperator or partner if they will actively participate in the project in some way.
27. Q. Are costs associated with accommodating individuals with disabilities eligible for funding under the SCBGP? Would this be considered special purpose equipment?
A. Costs associated with accommodating individuals with disabilities may be allowable if they are necessary to the success of the project and support the goal of enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops. Special purpose equipment is research related or scientific in nature, so it is unlikely this is the appropriate cost category for costs to assist individuals with disabilities. Within the budget template, account for any costs associated with accommodating individuals with disabilities consistent with the organization's established policies and the definition of each cost as described in the RFCP and budget template.
28. Q. Is there a certain level of involvement required for cooperating entities?
A. No, there is no required level of involvement for cooperators. Cooperating entities are typically organizations that will be working on the project and will be receiving grant funds (contractors) or organizations that will be providing matching funds or in-kind contributions.
29. Q. Are applicants allowed to resubmit projects that were submitted in previous years?
A. Yes; however, the concept proposal questions and program requirements change from year to year, so please ensure that your submission meets all of the 2016 requirements.
30. Q. Is it a requirement for education projects to teach people about what specialty crops are?
A. Specialty Crop Nutrition Education projects should improve the public's understanding of specialty crop agriculture and its beneficial importance to the health and well-being of all Californians. It may not be necessary to specifically explain the definition of specialty crops within a project.
31. Q. Are projects to educate and train future farmers in the development of specialty crops allowable?
A. Yes, projects that benefit current and future specialty crop farmers through education and training and address at least one of the program priorities listed are allowable.

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32. Q. If an organization acts as an advisor to another entity, can the original organization utilize the entity as a contractor using SCBGP funds?
A. This may be allowable if it is consistent with the original organization's policies, a competitive process was utilized and the organization can demonstrate the process is free from conflicts of interest.
33. Q. Are the qualifications of a contractor considered in the scoring of a proposal? Should applicants submit contractor resumes and/or work history?
A. While not specifically a factor in the scoring criteria of concept proposals, the qualifications of contractors may be considered by the technical review committee. In the concept proposal phase, only the name of the contractor (if known) and the nature of the work to be done should be included in the budget template. Proposals invited to the grant proposal phase will need to provide additional details on the contractors selected, including a resume or curriculum vitae.
34. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used for greenhouse construction?
A. No, greenhouse construction is considered a capital improvement and is unallowable using SCBGP funds. Capital improvements are expenditures to acquire capital assets or expenditures to make additions, improvements, modifications, replacements, rearrangements, reinstallations, renovations, or alterations to capital assets that materially increase their value or useful life.
35. Q. Can project activities occur outside of the grant period of October 1, 2016 through March 31, 2019, and if so, can the costs of those activities be charged to the grant?
A. Grant funds cannot be expended prior to October 1, 2016. However, it is possible to fund activities that occur prior to that date utilizing matching funds or in-kind contributions. Note that activities undertaken before awards have been announced are done at the applicant's own risk. CDFA is not responsible for reimbursing applicants for costs incurred if no award is received.
36. Q. Can specialty crops be purchased for nutrition education projects which involve food preparation demonstrations and tastings?
A. Yes, specialty crops can be purchased for food preparation demonstrations and tastings if the primary purpose of the project is education rather than giving away food.
37. Q. Are costs associated with incentives allowable?
A. No, incentives are not an allowable cost of this program.
38. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to purchase seeds and seedlings for school gardens?
A. Seeds and seedlings for school gardens may be an allowable cost, if necessary to the success of the project and used to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.
39. Q. Can cooperators outside the state of California be involved in project activities?
A. Yes, project cooperators outside the state of California can be involved in project activities as long as the applicant demonstrates that the primary benefit of the project will be to California specialty crops.
40. Q. Is the construction of an educational garden an allowable cost?
A. Costs to build an educational garden may be allowable if necessary to the success of the project and the educational garden will solely benefit specialty crops. Applicants should review the appropriate cost principles for their organization to verify the allowability of individual costs.

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41. Q. Where can applicants obtain data regarding the number of growers for each specialty crop?
A. Applicants can obtain data regarding the number of growers for each specialty crop on USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service (NASS) website, <http://www.nass.usda.gov/>.

New Questions: November 25, 2015

42. Q. May applicants submit the same project for funding to more than one award program?
A. Applicants may submit the same project for funding to multiple State or Federal award programs. If the proposal is selected for funding by another State or Federal award program after the proposal is submitted to the SCBGP, the applicant must inform CDFA immediately and withdraw the SCBGP proposal. Applicants are allowed to receive SCBGP funds to support activities within a project funded through multiple grant sources. However, SCBGP funds may not be used to support activities funded by another grant source. If a project will be funded through multiple grant programs, the proposal should clearly delineate exactly what activities the SCBGP funds will support.
43. Q. Does CDFA provide samples applications or examples of responses to the concept proposal application from past recipients?
A. The SCBGP funding categories, program priorities, allowable costs, application questions, technical review committee, and general terms and conditions are subject to change from year to year. Additionally, the responses to each question given by an applicant should be specific to the applicant and their unique project. For these reason, CDFA does not provide sample applications

ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. Can an organization apply to the 2016 SCBGP if they have an ongoing SCBGP project?
A. Yes, organizations previously awarded SCBGP funds are eligible to apply for 2016 SCBGP funds. This includes organizations with ongoing SCBGP projects.
2. Q. Are marijuana and hemp considered specialty crops?
A. No, neither marijuana nor hemp are considered specialty crops. Marijuana is ineligible because it is federally controlled as an illegal drug. Hemp is ineligible because it is a fiber crop. Oil seed, field and grain, forage, and fiber crops are not considered specialty crops. Please reference [USDA's list of eligible specialty crops](#).
3. Q. Is it possible to submit a concept proposal on behalf of an organization that has not yet been established? The organization does not yet have a business name or federal tax ID.
A. No, it is not possible to submit a concept proposal on behalf of an organization that has not yet been established. Applicants must have a legal business name and a federal tax ID in order to submit a concept proposal. You may begin an application in FFAST prior to receiving a federal tax ID number; however, you must enter a federal tax ID number prior to submitting your concept proposal.
4. Q. How do I determine if my proposal is appropriate for SCBGP?
A. All proposals must solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, meet at least one of the program priorities as described in the [RFCP](#) and be able to achieve at least one outcome measure and indicator to be eligible for this program. Please refer to the [RFCP](#) to determine if your proposal is appropriate.

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5. Q. Are limited liability companies (LLCs) eligible to apply?
A. Limited liability companies that operate as a for-profit, or not-for-profit are eligible to apply for the SCBGP.
6. Q. If an organization is currently receiving funds from another source, can the organization apply for SCBGP funding?
A. Yes; however, SCBGP funds cannot duplicate activities funded by another state or federal grant program. If invited to the grant proposal phase, any organization that is currently receiving funding from another state or federal grant program will be required to provide a detailed description that differentiates the activities of the current funding from SCBGP funding.

New Questions: November 18, 2015

7. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used by an individual organization for the purpose of developing an apprenticeship program?
A. Generally, apprenticeships are an allowable cost under this program. However, the apprenticeship program must benefit the broader specialty crop industry rather than a single organization. For example, an apprenticeship that trains recent college graduates for careers in the specialty crop industry is allowable; an apprenticeship that trains recent college graduates for specific positions within the applicant organization is unallowable.
8. Q. Are miscanthus rhizomes and switch grass blends eligible specialty crops under the SCBGP?
A. Currently USDA does not define miscanthus and switchgrass as either an eligible specialty crop, or an ineligible commodity. However, commodities can only be considered specialty crops if cultivated or managed and used by people for food, medicinal purposes, and/or aesthetic gratification. If used as a biofuel, these commodities would be considered ineligible and applicants should consider applying to the funding opportunities available on the USDA energy website at <http://www.usda.gov/energy/matrix/home>.
9. Q. Are projects that involve donating produce to underprivileged communities eligible for SCBGP if they include an education component?
A. Using SCBGP funds to purchase produce to donate to other entities and individuals is an unallowable cost and activity. Both the cost of the produce and the personnel costs associated with facilitating the donation are unallowable costs. Education is allowable, but must be the main focus of the project, rather than donations. Projects that focus primarily on donating or distributing donated food may want to consider alternative funding opportunities described in the [RFCP](#) and on the [CDFA grants web site](#).

FIXED AMOUNT AWARDS

1. Q. Do fixed amount award proposals use the same application as the other concept proposals?
A. Yes, fixed amount award proposals should be submitted using the same application as the other concept proposals in FFAST. Fixed amount award proposals will have a separate application form if advanced to the grant proposal phase.

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2. Q. Is it necessary to submit the budget template for a fixed amount award proposal? How should the budget for fixed amount awards be determined?
A. Yes, the budget template is a required attachment for all concept proposals. Submitting a concept proposal without a completed budget template will result in disqualification. Although fixed amount awards will be reimbursed based on outcomes achieved rather than costs incurred, it is still necessary to submit a completed budget template attachment as a basis for your estimated project costs. Budgets for fixed amount awards must be developed in compliance with the federal cost principles, USDA program requirements and CDFA program requirements.
3. Q. Is it necessary to use Product Safety Alliance or other Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recognized curriculum for Food Safety Modernization Act Fixed Amount Award projects, or can applicants develop their own curriculum?
A. Applicants may develop their own food safety curriculum when applying to the Food Safety Modernization Act Fixed Amount Award, and the use of previously recognized curriculum is not required. However, applicants that develop new curriculum are strongly encouraged to submit their training to FDA for recognition.
4. Q. Can an organization apply for a fixed amount award as well as to one of the other funding categories?
A. Yes, but all projects submitted must be unique. Applicants cannot submit the same project to multiple funding categories.
5. Q. Do fixed amount awards have the same start date as the other awards?
A. Yes, the earliest start date for all 2016 SCBGP projects, including fixed amount awards, is October 1, 2016. Projects are allowed to start later than October 1, 2016 but must be completed by March 31, 2019. Please note that fixed amount awards can only be two years in duration.

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6. Q. Can an Adaptation to Drought fixed amount award project fund equipment or supplies to improve water efficiency on an individual farm or agriculture operation?
A. No, SCBGP funds cannot benefit a single individual or organization. In addition, supplies and/or equipment necessary to improve water efficiency are typically considered capital improvements and are unallowable under the program. Adaptation to Drought fixed amount awards should focus on training and education for specialty crop farmers to reduce water use or improve efficiency.

FAAST APPLICATION

1. Q. What are the character limits for each question in the concept proposal? Are spaces included in the character count?
A. The character limit for each question is listed in the FAAST application. Applicants may enter up to 2,000 characters for the work plan response and up to 1,000 characters for all other responses in the concept proposal application. Character limits include spaces and special characters.

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2. Q. In the project budget tab in FFAST, what is the difference between funds requested, local cost match, and total budget?
A. Funds requested is the amount of SCBGP funding requested from CDFA and must be between \$50,000 and \$450,000 (or between \$50,000 and \$150,000 for fixed amount awards). Local cost match is the amount of matching funds and in-kind contributions committed to your project. Total budget is the sum of funds requested and local cost match.
3. Q. Is the SCBGP concept proposal application available as a Word document? Is there a page limit?
A. No, the concept proposal application is not available as a Word document. All applicants must complete and submit the concept proposal application using the FFAST system. As a result, there is no page limit. However, each question in FFAST is assigned a character limit; reference FFAST Application Q&A #1 above.
4. Q. Is information about the project location required?
A. Applicants are not required to enter information about their project's location in FFAST. However, it is helpful for applicants to provide the county because it assists CDFA in determining where to conduct outreach.

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5. Q. On the general information tab in FFAST, if the applicant and submitting organization are the same, should the organization name be listed twice?
A. Yes, if the applicant and submitting organizations are the same, the applicant organization must be listed in both sections of the general information tab in FFAST.
6. Q. Is it necessary to create a separate FFAST account for each application?
A. No, applicants may submit more than one proposal using the same FFAST account.
7. Q. Can the amount listed under total budget in FFAST exceed \$450,000?
A. Yes, the amount listed under total budget in FFAST may exceed \$450,000. This is the sum of funds requested plus local cost match. However, the amount listed under funds requested cannot exceed \$450,000.

FUNDING AREA AND FUNDING CATEGORY

1. Q. Can an organization submit two projects to the same funding category?
A. Yes, an organization may submit more than one proposal to a single funding category as long as the proposals are for unique projects.
2. Q. For projects that will increase access by getting more specialty crops into stores, is it a requirement to show that they are California grown specialty crops?
A. It is not explicitly a requirement that projects increasing access to specialty crops use exclusively California grown specialty crops. SCBGP funds awarded to California should benefit California grown specialty crops to the extent possible, however it is not a requirement.

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3. Q. Can projects emphasize local or regionally grown specialty crops or must all projects benefit California grown specialty crops statewide?
A. Projects that emphasize local or regionally grown specialty crops are acceptable. A statewide California grown emphasis is not required and projects can be region-specific. Please ensure that the project addresses at least one of the program priorities listed for the funding category identified.
4. Q. The training and education category references introducing and recruiting young people to specialty crop careers. Would projects to fund positions be allowable under this category?
A. Apprenticeships and internships are allowable within the program, however, the purpose of SCBGP funding is not to subsidize the costs of staffing or fund positions in the specialty crop industry. Applicants may train interns or apprentices, but should only hire new staff using SCBGP funds when the position is necessary to successfully complete the activities of the project. Hiring new staff solely for the purpose of creating a new position in the specialty crop industry is not appropriate. Proposals submitted to the Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers funding category should include programs to introduce or prepare young people for specialty crop careers. Reference the [list of 2015 awarded projects](#) for examples of the types of training projects that have been funded.
5. Q. What if a project addresses program priorities from multiple funding categories? Which category should the project be submitted to?
A. It is up to the applicant to determine the most appropriate funding category for their project.
6. Q. Do projects submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category have to incorporate the CA GROWN logo? Is it required?
A. No, use of the use of the CA GROWN logo is not required for projects that are submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category. Leveraging California grown messaging and promoting multiple commodities has proven to be an effective way to maximize return on projects. Projects submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category should focus on highlighting specialty crops grown in California.
7. Q. Are examples available of projects that would be eligible under each funding category?
A. Yes, there are examples of possible projects for each funding category provided in the [2016 RFCP](#). Please note that these examples are not intended to be all inclusive.
8. Q. Will proposals submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category be reviewed separately by Buy California Marketing Agreement (BCMA)? Does membership in BCMA impact whether proposals will be approved?
A. Proposals submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category will go through the same administrative and technical review process as proposals submitted to the other funding categories. However, BCMA will provide additional guidance on proposals submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category. Applicants do not have to be a member of BCMA and CDFA will work with BCMA to ensure this process is free from any conflicts of interest.
9. Q. Are all proposals concerning food safety issues required to be submitted as fixed amount awards?
A. No, proposals concerning food safety are not required be submitted as fixed amount awards - it depends on the nature of the project. Fixed amount awards include training and education projects that will assist California specialty crop farmers in meeting the standards developed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Highly technical projects on food safety research should be submitted to the [Center for Produce Safety](#) as part of a separate solicitation process.

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10. Q. Does CDFA allocate a set amount of funding or number of projects per funding category?
A. No, CDFA does not allocate a set amount of funding or number of projects per funding category.

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11. Q. Can projects submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category use the phrase "California Grown" without being a member of BCMA?
A. The phrase "California Grown" can be used by applicants to this funding category whether or not they are a member of BCMA. However, use of the CA GROWN name and logo do require membership in BCMA.
12. Q. If an applicant selects the wrong funding category, will they be disqualified?
A. Applicants will not be disqualified for selecting the wrong funding category. However, the Technical Review Committee is comprised of subject matter experts who may not be qualified to review proposals submitted to an inappropriate funding category. This may affect the probability of success for a given project. For this reason, applicants are strongly encouraged to carefully review the program priorities and select the funding category that most closely aligns with their project.
13. Q. Can an applicant submit one proposal that contains two different projects within the same funding category?
A. Each unique project should be submitted as a separate proposal in FAAST. Do not combine multiple unique projects into one proposal.
14. Q. Can a project address more than one funding category?
A. Although it may be possible for a project to address more than one funding category, only one funding category can be selected for each unique project. It is up the applicant to determine the most appropriate funding category for their project.

PROJECT PURPOSE

No questions posted at this time.

PRIOR YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS

1. Q. Is a preference given to proposals that build upon prior year SCBGP projects?
A. No. All proposals are reviewed on their individual merits.
2. Q. Can an organization submit a proposal that builds on a prior year SCBGP project submitted by a different organization?
A. There is no prohibition against submitting a proposal that builds upon a prior year project by another organization. However, the applicant must have sufficient access to the prior project to demonstrate how their proposal differs from and builds upon the prior project.
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SUSTAINABILITY

1. Q. The RFCP states that proposals should demonstrate that the project will become self-sustaining beyond the grant duration and/or that the benefit of the project to California's specialty crop industry will continue beyond the grant duration. How can applicants determine the sustainability of their projects?
A. It depends on the nature of the individual project. It is possible for projects to demonstrate either or both types of sustainability. For example, a project may generate income that will allow project activities to continue after the grant duration. Other projects may not need to become self-sustaining after the end of the grant duration, in which case applicants should outline a plan to ensure the results of the project will continue to benefit the industry after the grant is complete.

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2. Q. How should the question regarding sustainability be answered if the applicant organization has not secured a funding source?
A. CDFA cannot provide guidance on how an organization should answer specific concept proposal questions; however, it is expected that all applicants will develop a sustainability plan for their proposal.
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POTENTIAL IMPACT

1. Q. The RFCP states that applicants must include the estimated economic impact of their project. What is an example for how an education project could impact the economy?
A. Discussion of potential economic impact may be less direct in projects involving training and education. In this situation, discuss the big picture impact to the industry over time as a result of your project. One possible example could be industry cost savings due to reduced food safety risk as a result of grower education.
2. Q. Are proposals required to benefit the entire specialty crop industry?
A. All proposals must benefit the specialty crop industry by solely enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops, but it is not expected that any given proposal will benefit the entire industry. Applicants should estimate the number of specialty crop stakeholders that their project will benefit.

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3. Q. Should applicants quantify both the specialty crop beneficiaries and the potential economic impact of the proposed project?
A. Yes, applicants must quantify (numeric values) both the specialty crop beneficiaries (how many people, producers, growers, etc.) and the potential economic impact (e.g. increase in sales) of the proposed project.
4. Q. When estimating the number of individuals impacted, should applicants estimate an unduplicated count (the number of unique individuals reached) or a duplicated count (the total number of individual's reached, even if the same people were reached more than once)?
A. When estimating the number of individuals impacted, applicants should provide the unduplicated count. This means that individuals reached should not be counted more than once as part of the project's impact.

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5. Q. Should applicants determine the number of growers that could be impacted by their project?
A. Yes, applicants should estimate the number of growers impacted by their project.
 6. Q. Is the total value of a specific crop in California representative of all growers affected?
A. The total value of a specific crop in California may be representative of all growers affected; however, the proposal must have an anticipated benefit to all growers of that crop.
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OUTCOME MEASURES

1. Q. Can applicants create their own outcome measures and indicators?
A. No, applicants must select at least one outcome measure and associated indicator from the [Proposed Outcome Measures Supplement](#).
2. Q. What if there is no existing baseline for a proposal's identified indicator? Is it a requirement to establish a baseline as a part of the project?
A. Establishing a baseline is only a requirement for proposals that seek to increase specialty crop sales as result of marketing and/or promotion activities. Projects must establish the current level of sales as a part of their project if it does not already exist. There is no baseline required for the other outcome measures. Refer to the [Proposed Outcome Measures Supplement](#) for more specific information on outcomes and indicators.
3. Q. How many outcome measures and indicators are required? Are applicants allowed to choose more than one?
A. All projects must result in at least one outcome measure. Yes, applicants are allowed to identify more than one outcome measure. For each outcome measure identified, applicants must specify at least one associated indicator.
4. Q. Where can I access a copy of the Proposed Outcome Measures Supplement?
A. The Proposed Outcome Measures Supplement is available here: http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/2016SCBGP_OutcomeMeasuresSupplement.pdf

New Questions: November 18, 2015

5. Q. Is there potential for projects to be disqualified due to changes in USDA's 2016 SCBGP proposed outcome measures?
A. CDFA does not anticipate significant changes to the final outcome measures as determined by USDA for the 2016 SCBGP. However, if final outcome measures are published after the conclusion of the grant proposal phase it is possible for changes to the outcome measures to affect the probability of a project receiving funding.
6. Q. How should an increase in sales be expressed?
A. An increase in sales must be expressed using a dollar value (not percentage) of one or more specialty crops as a result of marketing and/or promotion.
7. Q. Q: How can applicants determine the anticipated dollar-amount increase in sales prior to beginning project work?
A. The increase in sales (dollar value) should be a goal/estimate for what the applicant expects to achieve as a result of the project.

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8. Q. For indicators that involve demonstrating an increase in knowledge, what measures can applicants use to demonstrate an increase in knowledge?
A. One possible option for determining whether participants' knowledge has increased would be to conduct a survey or pre- and post-test during a training activity.
9. Q. What should applicants include under outcome measures?
A. At this phase, applicants should identify at least one outcome measure and one indicator appropriate to that outcome measure. Applicants should also explain how the project will accomplish the outcome measure(s) and indicator(s) identified. Additional information will be required for those invited to the grant proposal phase.

New Questions: November 25, 2015

10. Q. Should applicants quantify the indicator(s) identified for their chosen outcome measure(s)?
A. During the concept proposal phase, applicants are asked to identify the outcome measure(s) and indicator(s) of success, and to explain how the project will accomplish the outcome measure(s) and indicator(s) identified. If known, applicants are encouraged to provide a quantified estimate for each indicator identified. If invited to submit a grant proposal, applicants will be asked to provide more detail.
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OUTREACH PLAN

1. Q. Can activities discussed in the outreach plan be included in the budget?
A. Yes, applicants may include costs for outreach activities in the budget template, provided the costs are allowable and comply with the federally required rates.
2. Q. If a project will create a website for project outreach, is it necessary to restrict access to the website to California only?
A. No, it would not be necessary to restrict access to the website as long as the project demonstrates that the primary focus and beneficiary is specialty crops in California.
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PROJECT DURATION

1. Q. Are projects required to last for two years and six months?
A. No, projects are not required to last for two years and six months. As long as projects do not start before October 1, 2016 or end after March 31, 2019, any duration is allowed. However, please note that fixed amount awards must not exceed two years in duration.

New Questions: November 18, 2015

2. Q. If a project submitted to the 2016 concept proposal phase is advanced to the grant proposal phase and ultimately selected for funding, when will work on the project actually begin?
A. Concept proposals submitted to the 2016 SCBGP that are ultimately selected for funding will begin no earlier than October 1, 2016.

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3. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to support costs or activities before or after the grant duration?
A. The SCBGP cannot fund costs or activities that start before October 1, 2016 or continue beyond March 31, 2019. Failure to provide a project start and end date within the allowable duration (two years, six months) will result in disqualification. However, it is possible to fund activities that occur prior to October 1, 2016 or after March 31, 2019 utilizing matching funds and/or in-kind contributions.
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WORK PLAN

New Questions: November 18, 2015

1. Q. Should personnel responsible for carrying out project activities and time frames for each task be included in the work plan narrative?
A. Yes, personnel that will contribute to project activities supported by the SCBGP should be included in the work plan narrative using position title as well as an estimate of when each task will be completed.

New Questions: November 25, 2015

2. Q. In what format should the work plan be submitted?
A. The work plan should be in narrative form and should not exceed 2,000 characters (including spaces). Within the work plan, explain what activities will be conducted to accomplish project objectives, identify the individuals responsible for each activity, and provide an estimate of when each activity will occur. Only include activities that will be paid for with grant funds.
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BUDGET

1. Q. Is the budget template an Excel spreadsheet?
A. No, the budget template for 2016 is a fillable PDF form available here: http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/2016SCBGP_CP_BudgetTemplate_RE.pdf.
2. Q. In 2015, CDFA awarded one project more than \$1,000,000. Why is the maximum award amount \$450,000?
A. A significant majority of SCBGP funds are awarded through the competitive process described in the [RFCP](#). All applicants must request funding of no more than \$450,000. However, CDFA may award funds to projects outside of this process if it determines those projects address urgent priorities recognized by California's specialty crop industry.
3. Q. Could a proposal be denied if the Technical Review Committee thought that the budget was too high?
A. Reasonableness of a project's budget may be a factor the Technical Review Committee considers in their evaluations. An unreasonably high budget may be a contributing factor in a proposal not moving forward to the grant proposal phase; however, it is not typically the sole issue to keep a proposal from advancing.

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4. Q. The RFCP states that proposals will be disqualified for unallowable costs or activities. Should unallowable costs and activities be left out of the concept proposal entirely? Does that mean that proposals must be 100% funded by the SCBGP?
- A. No, projects are not required to be 100% funded by the SCBGP. Applicants are allowed to use matching funds or in kind contributions to cover any costs and activities that are not allowable under the SCBGP. In the concept proposal, only describe costs and activities that will be paid for with SCBGP funds; do not include any unallowable costs or activities that will be paid for with matching funds or in-kind contributions. Proposals in which a substantial portion of costs or activities necessary to complete your project are unallowable will be disqualified. If your proposal advances to the grant proposal phase, you will be asked to provide additional detail about funding sources and activities that will be paid for with matching funds.
5. Q. Would renting booth space at a trade show that is not specific to specialty crops be considered an allowable cost?
- A. The cost would only be allowable if the applicant's booth at the trade show is solely used to promote specialty crops.
6. Q. What is the General Schedule 15 (GS-15), Step 10?
- A. The GS-15, Step 10 is the maximum pay allowed annually and hourly for contractors and consultants by the federal government. Applicants should use the GS-15, Step 10 rate for their area when developing contractual cost estimates to ensure rates are reasonable and consistent with fees in the marketplace for similar services. Contractor costs exceeding the GS-15, Step 10 rate must be paid from a source other than SCBGP funds unless a justification is provided and approved by CDFA and USDA. The 2015 General Schedule (GS) Locality Pay Tables are available here: <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2015/general-schedule/>.
7. Q. If an applicant uses contractual rates that are within the federal guidelines, is it still necessary to conduct a competitive bid process?
- A. Yes, applicants must conduct a competitive bid process even for contractual rates that are in compliance with GS-15, Step 10.
8. Q. Where should travel costs for contractors be included in the budget - under travel or under contractual?
- A. All costs associated with a contractor should be listed under the contractual category. Proposals advanced to the grant proposal phase will be asked to provide a detailed breakdown of contractual costs.
9. Q. Can the total grant funds requested change if the project advances to the grant proposal phase?
- A. Yes, the total grant funds requested can change if the project advances to the grant proposal phase. There are no requirements regarding the maximum amount that the budget may change; however, drastic changes (+/- 20%) may be questioned. Please note that CDFA cannot guarantee how the Technical Review Committee will view significant changes in budgeted costs.
10. Q. Is there a minimum or maximum cost for special purpose equipment?
- A. To be considered special purpose equipment, an item must be scientific or technical in nature and have an acquisition cost greater than \$5,000 per item. The amount that can be charged for special purpose equipment cannot exceed the maximum award amount, \$450,000.

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11. Q. If a project involves leasing general purpose equipment, is it allowable to continue leasing the equipment after the end of the grant period?
A. Yes, it is allowable to continue leasing the general purpose equipment. There is no restriction on continuing to lease general purpose equipment after the end of the grant period; however, another funding source must be secured for the equipment lease, as SCBGP funds cannot be expended after March 31, 2019.
12. Q. How can an applicant determine if a piece of equipment is considered special purpose equipment?
A. Special purpose equipment is defined as equipment which is used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities. Applicants should utilize the RFCP and the Allowable and Unallowable Costs Table to determine whether equipment meets the definition of special purpose equipment.
13. Q. What does the RFCP mean by "Program income cannot be used as profit for an organization and must be reinvested back into the project?" Can you give an example of how program income could be reinvested back into the project and what specifically this means? What should program income be used for after the grant is complete?
A. Any program income generated as a result of project activities cannot be used as a net profit. The income must be spent on activities that support the goals and objectives of the project and must comply with restrictions on allowable and unallowable costs and activities. For example, if a project creates a training program that will generate income from registration fees, that income should be used to allow the training program to continue after the end of the grant period.
14. Q. Is there a guide available to help organizations determine reasonable rates for salary and wages?
A. Salary and wages should be based on your organization's established policy. The amounts listed under salary and wages in the budget template should only reflect the portion of time an employee will spend working on the grant. For example, if a full time employee with an annual salary of \$100,000 spends 5% of their time working on grant activities, only \$5,000 should be charged to the grant to cover their time spent on grant activities.
15. Q. What types of costs should be listed under supplies?
A. Supplies include items that cost less than \$5,000 per unit and are necessary to complete the objectives of your project. For example, a research project may include costs for lab supplies such as glassware, pipettes, reagents, etc. A project that will host a workshop may include supply costs to create folders for attendees. All supply costs must be tied directly and exclusively to the activities of the project. General use office supplies such as pens, paper, printers, and toner that may be used for general office activities are considered an indirect expense and should not be included under supplies.
16. Q. Where should mileage expenses be listed and what rate should be used?
A. List project-related mileage expenses under travel. Please use the IRS approved standard mileage reimbursement rate, currently at \$0.575 per mile for business travel (<https://www.irs.gov/Tax-Professionals/Standard-Mileage-Rates>).
17. Q. Is promoting an organization's image, logo, or brand name allowable?
A. No, SCBGP funds must be used to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops rather than to promote an organization's image, logo, or brand name. Projects submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category should focus on promoting the specialty crop identified rather than promoting the CA GROWN logo.

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18. Q. Is maintenance on existing equipment allowable?
A. Costs incurred for utilities, insurance, security, necessary maintenance, janitorial services, repair, or upkeep of buildings and equipment (including federal property unless otherwise provided for) which neither add to the permanent value of the property nor appreciably prolong its intended life, but keep it in an efficient operating condition, are allowable.
19. Q. ***Revised November 25, 2015:*** Can SCBGP funds be used to purchase or lease land?
A. SCBGP funds cannot be used for the acquisition of buildings, facilities, or land or to make additions, improvements, modifications, replacements, rearrangements, reinstallations, renovations, or alterations of an existing building or facility (including site grading and improvement, and architecture fees). Costs for leasing land using SCBGP funds to fulfill grant funded activities may be allowable if the applicant is able to demonstrate that the land lease is necessary to carry out the activities of the project and will be used solely to enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops rather than directly benefit or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.
20. Q. Can a project have multiple co-PIs from different organizations? If so, how should this be reflected in the budget template?
A. Yes, a project can have multiple co-PIs from different organizations. All costs for project personnel employed by organizations other than the applicant must be listed under contractual. At this phase, it is only necessary to enter the total estimated contractual cost for each grant year and list the organizations that will be participating in the description column. In the grant proposal phase, an additional breakdown of contractual costs will be required.
21. Q. Is it allowable for contractors to charge a flat fee for work to be performed on the grant or is it a requirement to use the GS-15, Step 10 hourly rate?
A. Yes, it may be allowable for a contractor to charge a flat fee as long as a competitive bid process was conducted and the amount is reasonable and consistent with fees in the marketplace for similar services. However, it is not necessary to include these details regarding contractors during the concept proposal phase. Applicants that advance to the grant proposal phase will be required to provide more detail regarding contractors.
22. Q. Where should employer taxes be accounted for?
A. Employer taxes should be accounted for under fringe benefits in the budget template.
23. Q. What happens to program income that has not been spent by the end of the grant period?
A. It is expected that program income generated during the grant will be spent on project related activities that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops before the end of the grant duration.
24. Q. Are applicants required to report program income that is generated after the end of the grant period?
A. No, applicants are only required to report program income that is generated during the grant period.
25. Q. If a project will start later than October 1, 2016, should budgeted costs in grant year one reflect federal fiscal year October 1, 2016 through September 30, 2017?
A. Yes, all budgets must align with the federal fiscal year regardless of the project start date.

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26. Q. Does SCBGP impose a maximum fringe benefit rate?
A. There is no maximum fringe benefit rate and applicants should follow their organization's established policies. However, fringe benefits greater than 50% may be questioned by USDA.
27. Q. Is lumber to build raised beds for a school garden an allowable cost?
A. Lumber to build raised beds may be considered an allowable cost as long as the raised beds are necessary to complete the objectives of the project and solely benefit the specialty crop industry.
28. Q. Is program income considered net income after expenses?
A. Yes, program income is net income that occurs as a result of project activities.
29. Q. What is the maximum amount of indirect costs an organization is allowed?
A. The maximum amount of indirect costs an organization is allowed is six percent of the total personnel costs (salary & wages plus fringe benefits).

New Questions: November 25, 2015

30. Q. Are costs to pay for organic certification fees for specialty crop growers allowable?
A. Costs to pay for organic certification fees are unallowable, as these costs benefit the individual rather than the specialty crop industry. In general, costs for certification fees are unallowable. However, participant support costs, defined as costs for items such as stipends, subsistence allowances, travel allowances, or registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with approved conferences, training projects, and focus groups, are allowable. SCBGP funds may be used to pay for training registration fees, for example, that result in certification, but certification fees alone are unallowable. Applicants looking for organic certification support should visit USDA's Organic Certification Cost Share Programs, <http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/occsp>.
31. Q. What should be included within the description column of the budget template?
A. Refer to the SCBGP RFCP, pages 15 and 16, for detail regarding what to include in the description column. Keep in mind that the budget template includes limited space to provide a brief description of the costs or activities associated with each budget category. Applicants will be asked to provide greater detail if invited to submit a grant proposal.

GRANT PROPOSAL PHASE

1. Q. Will there be technical assistance for applicants before the grant proposal phase?
A. Yes, CDFA will host webinars and conduct Q&A for the grant proposal phase.
2. Q. How does the review process work between CDFA and USDA for projects that receive funding?
A. CDFA's administrative and technical review process helps to ensure that the projects recommended to USDA for funding are timely and important for California specialty crops and comply with all program rules and regulations. USDA has the final say regarding which projects receive funding. USDA may approach CDFA with questions on specific projects, in which case CDFA will work with the applicant to resolve any issues. In some cases, USDA may ultimately elect to decline a project.
3. Q. What division at USDA are proposals submitted to?
A. CDFA submits grant proposals to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

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4. Q. Does USDA decline proposals submitted to SCBGP?
A. Historically, USDA has not declined SCBGP proposals submitted by CDFA. However, USDA does have final decision making authority, so it is possible for a proposal submitted by CDFA to be declined.
 5. Q. Is it possible to notify applicants whether or not they have been awarded funds in July when proposals are submitted to USDA?
A. No. Because USDA has final decision making authority for this program, CDFA cannot notify applicants of the results of their project until final approval is received and awards are announced by USDA.
 6. Q. Does SCBGP award partial funding?
A. CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested. This occurs in situations where a project has budgeted unallowable costs.
 7. Q. Can the applicant organization change from the concept proposal phase to the grant proposal phase?
A. Yes, if you are invited back to the grant proposal phase, it will be possible to change the applicant organization by contacting the FFAST help desk at (866) 434-1083 or faast_admin@waterboards.ca.gov; however, CDFA cannot anticipate how this would be viewed by the Technical Review Committee.
 8. Q. What is the process for reporting project outcomes?
A. If your project is awarded funding, you will be required to submit biannual progress reports to account for project activities as well as expenditures. The progress report is used to identify milestones, results achieved, success stories, potential concerns, and other pertinent information, such as program income. Recipients will receive a progress report template prior to the end of each reporting period. For more information, please view most recent [Grant Management Procedures Manual](#).
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MATCHING FUNDS AND IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Q. What is the difference between matching funds and in-kind contributions?
A. Matching funds refers to a dollar amount committed to your project from a source other than the SCBGP. An in-kind contribution is time, property, or supplies donated to your project.
2. Q. Are matching funds viewed more favorably than in-kind contributions?
A. No, there is no preference given to matching funds or in kind contributions. During the concept proposal phase, applicants are only asked to report a total amount.
3. Q. Are matching funds or in-kind contributions required?
A. Matching funds and in-kind contributions are not a factor in scoring; however, the Technical Review Committee may view matching funds or in-kind contributions as an indicator of industry support.
4. Q. Can funds from other state or federal grants be used as matching funds?
A. No, funds from other state or federal grant programs are not considered matching funds.

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5. Q. Where should matching funds and in-kind contributions be listed? Are there requirements for documenting committed matching funds and in-kind contributions?
- A. Matching funds and in-kind contributions must be listed under Local Cost Match in the project budget tab in FFAST. Because matching funds are not a requirement of this program, they should not be listed in the budget template. If invited to the grant proposal phase, applicants must evidence sources of matching funds and in-kind contributions and describe how they will support the project.
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REVIEW PROCESS

1. Q. What is the Technical Review Committee and how does the review process work?
- A. The Technical Review Committee is a group of 50-60 volunteers with knowledge and expertise regarding the California specialty crop industry. This committee is broken up by funding category and reviews, evaluates, and makes recommendations to CDFA on proposals submitted for funding to California's SCBGP. The reviewers review and score proposals individually then meet to have an open discussion. The committee's recommendations are then presented to CDFA.
2. Q. How does CDFA handle the issue of interested parties serving on the Technical Review Committee and evaluating applications?
- A. CDFA has a process in place to ensure that the review process is free from conflicts of interest. Technical Review Committee members are recused from reviewing any proposals for which they or their organization are listed as an applicant, submitter, or cooperator.
3. Q. Does the Technical Review Committee consider whether proposals are from economically disadvantaged communities or areas that have not received funding in the past when evaluating proposals?
- A. No, economic status and geographic location are not a factor in the scoring process for proposals. However, in USDA's 2015 request for applications, improving food access in underserved communities is considered an issue affecting the specialty crop industry.

New Questions: November 18, 2015

4. Q. Where do individuals interested in serving on the Technical Review Committee (TRC) obtain a copy of the TRC application?
- A. Individuals interested in serving on the Technical Review Committee can obtain a copy of the [TRC application](#) on [CDFA's grant website](#). Applications and resumes are to be submitted to grants@cdfa.ca.gov before 5 p.m. on December 10, 2015.
5. Q. If an organization submits multiple proposals, how is that viewed by the Technical Review Committee?
- A. All proposals are treated independently and will be evaluated on their individual merits.

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GRANT MANAGEMENT

New Questions: November 18, 2015

1. Q. For proposals that receive funding, are recipients required to document how matching funds are being spent on the invoices they submit to CDFA?
 - A. If awarded funding, applicants with matching funds will have to include the amount of matching funds and the activities funded with match on progress reports that are submitted to CDFA.