

2016 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

Request for Concept Proposals

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE 10.170

Released:
October 28, 2015

Concept Proposals Due:
By 5:00 pm PST on December 4, 2015
No late submissions accepted.



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About the Program

Purpose

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is pleased to announce a competitive solicitation process to award 2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds for projects *solely* enhancing the competitiveness of California specialty crops.

Specialty crops are fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture). Visit <http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop> for a comprehensive list of eligible and ineligible commodities.

Funding and Duration

CDFA anticipates that up to \$19 million will be awarded to projects solely enhancing the competitiveness of California specialty crops. Grant amounts range from \$50,000 to \$450,000. The maximum grant duration is two (2) years, six (6) months and grant funds cannot be expended before October 1, 2016, or after March 31, 2019. CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.

Eligibility and Exclusions

Non-profit and for-profit organizations; local, state, and federal government entities, including tribal governments; and public or private colleges and universities are eligible to apply. Individuals are not eligible to apply. There is no limit on the number of concept proposals applicants may submit; however, each concept proposal should be for a wholly unique project. Applicants should not submit multiple concept proposals for a single project or submit the same project over multiple funding categories.

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

Other Federal Grant Programs

Projects More Relevant to Other Grant Programs

Projects that support the increase of fruits and vegetables in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing incentives at the point of purchase and/or include technologies for benefit redemption systems should consider submitting those projects to the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grants Program at <http://nifa.usda.gov/program/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentive-fini-grant-program>.

Projects that support domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities, local and regional food business enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, or store locally or regionally produced food products should consider submitting those projects to the Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fmpp>.

Projects that support biobased products and bioenergy and energy programs, including biofuels and other alternative uses for agricultural and forestry commodities (development of biobased products), should see the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) energy website at <http://www.usda.gov/energy/matrix/home> for information on how to submit those projects for consideration to the energy programs supported by the USDA.

Solicitation Process and Timeline

Phase I: Concept Proposal

Applicants must submit concept proposals online using the Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) to answer all concept proposal questions. CDFA will advise all applicants as to the outcome of the concept proposal review.

Phase II: Grant Proposal

Successful concept proposal applicants will be invited to submit grant proposals online using FAAST to answer all grant proposal questions. CDFA will provide applicants with specific grant proposal requirements and instructions along with the invitation to submit grant proposals. CDFA will advise all applicants as to the outcome of the grant proposal review.

Phase I: Concept Proposal	
Release Request for Concept Proposals	October 28, 2015
Workshops and webinars	November 2–13, 2015
Concept proposals due	December 4, 2015, 5:00 pm PST
Phase II: Grant Proposal <i>(by invitation only)</i>	
Invitation to submit grant proposals	February 2016
Grant proposals due	March 20, 2016, 11:59 pm PST
Grant proposals to USDA for approval	July 2016
Award	
Announce and award funding	October 2016

Funding Areas, Funding Categories, and Program Priorities

CDFA has developed three funding areas, with two to three categories within each area. Funding areas, funding categories, and program priorities are intended to clearly define the 2016 SCBGP priorities and help prospective applicants both to develop their projects and submit their projects to the most appropriate category.

In practice, concept proposals might seem to address elements from multiple funding areas and funding categories. However, applicants must select one of the three funding areas described below as well as the appropriate funding category to identify the primary focus of their concept proposal. Identifying a funding category ensures that concept proposals are evaluated by reviewers with the appropriate area of expertise. The selected funding area and funding category may not be changed once the concept proposal is submitted.

Concept proposals should:

- Demonstrate a high likelihood of success.
- Describe the specialty crop grower benefit and grower connection to the project.
- Be scalable to the larger community.
- Demonstrate industry need and support.
- Illustrate a sustainable funding source beyond the life of the proposed grant.
- Include an outreach component addressing how project results, research findings, and conclusions will be extended to specialty crop growers.

Funding Area I: Market Enhancement

Projects in this funding area will focus on increasing sales of California specialty crops through promotion of the California Grown identity, developing new markets, increasing opportunities in existing markets, improving availability, and increasing demand.

Market Enhancement Category A: California Grown Promotion

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that enhance the marketability and long-term competitiveness of specialty crops by leveraging the California Grown identity. Projects submitted for the California Grown Promotion category should seek to increase the awareness and consumption of specialty crop products through the development of markets (local, domestic, and international) for all California producers by expanding the California Grown identity through cooperative promotion and partnerships. *Entities submitting projects under this category may wish to coordinate with the Buy California Marketing Agreement (BCMA).*

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Expanding opportunities for specialty crop producers, marketing orders, and other specialty crop stakeholders through innovative marketing and promotional activities that incorporate multiple specialty crop products.
- Creating economic opportunities for specialty crop producers through specialty crop market development activities that focus on local, regional, and international markets by leveraging the California Grown identity.
- Emphasizing the quality, food safety, and healthy lifestyle benefits of specialty crops leveraging the California Grown identity.
- Developing environmental stewardship educational initiatives that expand the consumer marketability of California specialty crops leveraging the California Grown identity.

Projects submitted for the California Grown Promotion category will be evaluated by a committee designated by the board of BCMA. This committee will make funding recommendations to CDFA.

Examples:

- *Development of cooperative marketing activities that leverage the California Grown identity to emphasize quality, food safety, and lifestyle benefits of California specialty crops.*
- *Increase the sales of specialty crops through multi-commodity promotions that leverage the California Grown identity.*
- *Create economic opportunities for specialty crop producers through commodity content development and social media activities leveraging the California Grown identity.*
- *Support specialty crop marketing concepts that target the unique characteristics of California Grown specialty crops in domestic and international markets.*
- *Develop marketing concepts that promote the healthy lifestyle benefits of California Grown specialty crops.*

Market Enhancement Category B: Market Expansion and Access

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that increase the competitiveness of California specialty crops by expanding the specialty crop consumer market or improving availability of specialty crops to California consumers. Projects submitted for the Market Expansion and Access category should seek to increase the consumption of specialty crops by increasing consumer demand or the overall availability of specialty crops.

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Increasing the availability of specialty crops in homes, schools, the work place, and underserved communities.

- Increasing capacity for small-scale specialty crop production and distribution into urban communities.
- Increasing demand for specialty crops through targeted market efforts.
- Examining the feasibility of commercially managing or cultivating native food plants.

Examples:

- *Improving efficiency and reducing costs of specialty crop distribution systems.*
- *Engaging underserved communities in the planning and production of specialty crops in the local food system.*
- *Addressing “food deserts” with improved access to specialty crops at farmers' markets, corner stores, grocery stores, food hubs, or other systems.*
- *Utilizing regional, local, or native crops to address disparities in access.*

Funding Area II: Training and Education

Projects in this funding area will focus on improving the competitiveness of California specialty crops through training for producers and growers to equip them for current and future challenges in specialty crop agriculture, and nutritional education for consumers to promote increased consumption.

Training and Education Category A: Specialty Crop Nutrition Education

In this funding category, 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. Projects submitted for the Specialty Crop Nutrition Education category should seek to increase consumption of healthy, safe California specialty crops for improved nutrition and overall health.

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Improving awareness among adults and seniors of the health benefits of California specialty crops.
- Education to promote increased specialty crop consumption among children to develop lifelong healthy habits.
- Increasing consumption of California specialty crops through education that furthers integration of specialty crops into a healthy diet.
- Increasing knowledge of how to produce, prepare, or preserve specialty crops.

Examples:

- *Increasing child nutritional knowledge through education in the classroom.*
- *Increasing interest in specialty crops through experiential learning (such as school gardens).*

- *Training or demonstrations that educate families on increasing consumption of specialty crops in their diets.*
- *Improving knowledge of the health benefits of specialty crops among children, seniors, and caregivers.*

Training and Education Category B: Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that benefit current and future specialty crop farmers through education and training. Projects submitted for the Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers category should seek to ensure the viability of California specialty crops by investing in training for operators to address current and future challenges.

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Training and equipping the next generation of young, beginning, and urban farmers in agronomic, economic, and environmental stewardship skills.
- Creating and implementing workforce training programs to maintain the technical skills required to keep the California specialty crops sector competitive.
- Introducing and recruiting young people to the variety of specialty crop career opportunities.
- Develop and implement training to support specialty crop producers in adopting the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act.
- Support research to spur innovation and solve production issues.

Examples:

- *Strengthen agricultural job training skills for beginning specialty crop farmers.*
- *Assisting in developing Good Agricultural Practices, Good Handling Practices, and Good Manufacturing Practices for specialty crop farmers.*
- *Recruit and train new specialty crop farmers in the skills for sustainable food production.*
- *Develop and implement sustainable farming practices and beneficial management practice tools that improve farm viability and the agricultural economy as well as the environment.*
- *Accelerate Best Management Practices implementation in specialty crop production for water conservation and efficiency.*

Funding Area III: Research

Projects in this funding area will focus on improving the competitiveness of California specialty crops through projects that invest in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes, pest control and disease, and organic and sustainable production practices. While research may be the primary objective of projects in this funding area, all SCBGP projects are required to include an outreach component.

Research Category A: Environmental Stewardship and Conservation

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that enhance soil health and 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. Projects submitted to the Environmental Stewardship and Conservation category should seek to expand stewardship practices, natural resource conservation, and the development of ecosystem services to improve the environmental and financial performance of California specialty crop growers.

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Develop strategies and tools to enable specialty crop growers to adapt to climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and sequestering carbon.
- Develop innovations in water use efficiency and drought resilience.
- Improve soil health and nutrient management.
- Expand organic and sustainable production practices.

Examples:

- *Improve air and water resources in specialty crop farming to further the environmental sustainability and marketability of products.*
- *Assist communities in climate smart agriculture and planning for specialty crops in California.*
- *Research and develop new technologies to improve water use efficiency in specialty crop production.*
- *Development of sustainable farming practice tools and programs for specialty crop growers in California.*

Research Category B: Plant Health and Pest Management

In this funding category, CDFA will consider projects that address pests and diseases that affect the production of California's specialty crops. Projects submitted to the Plant Health and Pest Management category should include applied research related to the probability and impact of invasive pests, disease, and weed threats to specialty crops, and research to develop tools to detect, eradicate, and control pests and diseases.

Projects must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- Developing new tools to detect, eradicate, and control pests and diseases.
- Preventing and managing pests and diseases to minimize economic and environmental harm to specialty crop growers.
- Enhancing speed and reliability of detection methods.

- Utilizing innovative solutions to address threats, including engineering or cultural solutions.

Examples:

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

Research Category C: Food Safety (*Separate proposal solicitation*)

CDFA will continue its partnership agreement with the Center for Produce Safety Foundation (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) 554-9706 or visit the CPS website at <http://www.centerforproducesafety.org/> for the solicitation timeline and proposal requirements.

Fixed Amount Awards

Fixed amount awards are a type of agreement under which CDFA would provide a specific level of funding for projects that address time-sensitive needs of California's specialty crop industry. Accountability for fixed amount awards is based primarily on performance and results, rather than actual costs incurred. For the 2016 SCBGP, CDFA will consider fixed award amount projects that address two urgent priorities in California specialty crop agriculture:

Food Safety Modernization Act

CDFA will consider practical on the farm projects that assist California specialty crop farmers in meeting the standards developed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's [Food Safety Modernization Act](#) (FSMA).

Example:

- A project to develop curriculum for small and mid-size specialty crop farmers to train them in the Produce Safety requirements of FSMA and assist them in implementation of appropriate on-farm practices.

Adaptation to Drought

CDFA will consider practical on the farm projects that assist specialty crop farmers in adapting to California's historic drought with methods that reduce water use or improve efficiency.

Example:

- A project to train specialty crop farmers on practical water efficiency practices and assist them in implementing those practices on the farm.

Additional Information on Fixed Amount Awards

Fixed amount awards include the following additional requirements:

- Projects submitted for fixed amount awards cannot request funding that exceeds \$150,000.
- Projects submitted for fixed amount awards cannot have a timeframe that exceeds two years.
- Fixed award amounts are developed based on the federal cost principles and there must be sufficient historical, adequate cost, or unit pricing data available to establish a fixed amount award based on a reasonable estimate of actual cost.
- Fixed amount awards will be paid in one of two ways:
 - In several partial payments, the amount of each agreed upon in advance, and the “milestone” or event triggering the payment also agreed upon in advance, and set forth in the award; or,
 - In one payment upon completion.

How to Apply

Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST)

CDFA has entered into an agreement with the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) to host a web-based concept and grant proposal solicitation process. In both phases of the process, applicants will utilize the SWRCB's Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST). FAAST can be accessed through the SWRCB website at <https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov>.

Applicants must create a user account in FAAST in order to submit concept proposals. The FAAST system is organized into various tabs and utilizes a question and answer format. Questions are answered in one or more of the following formats: a drop down menu, a text box with predetermined character limitations, or a document attachment. Responses to all questions must be submitted in the manner and format required by the concept proposal application questionnaire in FAAST without exception.

The SWRCB website contains a Frequently Asked Questions section and a User's Manual for the FAAST system. If after reading the information available on the website, you have questions about the FAAST System, please contact FAAST customer service at (866) 434-1083, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm or via email, faast_admin@waterboards.ca.gov.

Concept Proposal Questions, Scoring, and Review Criteria

Applicants must respond to the following questions under the General Information, Project Budget, and Application Questionnaire tabs. Failure to answer one or more application questions will result in disqualification.

Applicant Organization:

Legal name of the organization that will be the lead applicant, serve as lead for the project, and will receive grant funds.

Submitting Organization:

Name of the organization submitting the concept proposal on behalf of the applicant.

Project Title:

Concisely describe the project in 15 words or less.

Project Description:

Summarize the need for the project, describe the goals and outcomes, and present a plan for evaluating and measuring the success of the project.

Project Budget:

Under "funds requested," enter the total amount of SCBGP funds requested for this project; this number must match the amount listed on line J in the project's budget template. Funds requested must range from \$50,000 to \$450,000. Under "local cost match," enter the total amount of matching funds and/or in-kind contributions committed to this project from other sources, if applicable. Under "total budget," enter the sum of funds requested plus local cost match.

Please note that matching funds are not a requirement of the SCBGP and are not a factor in the scoring of the budget. However, matching funds are encouraged and may serve as evidence to demonstrate industry commitment to, or support for, the project.

1. Organization Type (not a scored question):

Select the organization type that best describes the applicant.

2. Funding Area and Funding Category (not a scored question):

Select the most appropriate funding area and funding category for the project. Failure to select a Funding Area and Funding Category will result in disqualification.

3. Project Purpose (10 points):

Identify the specific and existing issue, problem, or need the project will address, and explain why the proposal is important and timely for the specialty crop industry.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on how clearly the proposal states the specific issue, problem, or need the project will address, as well as the timeliness and relevance to the specialty crop industry.

4. Prior-year SCBGP Projects (not a scored question):

If this project builds upon a prior-year project, provide the specialty crop block grant agreement number(s) and describe how the project differs from, complements, or builds upon the previous work.

5. Sustainability (5 points):

Describe how the project will become self-sustaining beyond the grant duration and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the extent to which the proposal demonstrates the project will become self-sustaining beyond the grant duration without relying on additional SCBGP funding and/or that the benefit of the project to California's specialty crop industry will continue beyond the life of the project.

6. Potential Impact (10 points):

Identify and provide the projected number of specialty crop beneficiaries. Describe the estimated economic impact on the specialty crop industry. List the specific specialty crops that will be affected, if possible.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on how well the proposal identifies and quantifies the potential positive impact and describes how the project will impact the specialty crop beneficiaries.

7. Outcome Measures (5 points):

In anticipation of proposed USDA outcome measures expected to be in place beginning in federal fiscal year 2016, proposals must result in at least one of the following outcomes:

- Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales (***mandatory for all proposals submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category***).
- Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access.
- Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption.
- Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through enhancing or improving the economy as a result of specialty crop development.
- Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through greater capacity of sustainable practices of specialty crop production resulting in increased yield, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and/or conservation of resources.
- Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems.

- Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety.
- Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of the ecology of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources.

Identify the outcome measure(s) the project will achieve and the indicator of success for each outcome. Explain how the project will accomplish the outcome measure(s) and indicator(s) identified. See the [Outcome Measures](#) supplemental document for additional information on the required outcomes and indicators.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the project outcome's likelihood of success, technical feasibility, and relevance to the program priorities. Outcomes are measurable changes in behavior or conditions that reflect a positive impact to the specialty crop industry.

8. Outreach Plan (5 points):

Describe how the project results will be shared with the target audience, stakeholders, and other interested parties beyond those directly involved in the project. Examples of such activities include presentations at professional conferences or producer meetings, publication of articles in professional journals or the agricultural press, educational brochures, websites, etc.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the how well the project outlines a plan to disseminate project results electronically and in-person to the target audience, stakeholders, and interested parties beyond those directly served by the project.

9. Project Duration (not a scored question):

Select a start and end date for the project. Projects cannot start before October 1, 2016 or continue beyond March 31, 2019. Failure to provide a project start and end date within the allowable duration will result in disqualification.

10. Work Plan (10 points):

Describe project activities that are necessary to accomplish project objectives and support outcome measures. Include tasks for all personnel responsible for carrying out project activities.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the clarity of the work plan and the relevance of the specific project activities to the project purpose.

11. Budget (5 points):

[Download](#), complete, and attach the budget template. All budget items should solely support enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops and correlate to the goal(s) of the project.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the extent to which the budget is reasonable and consistent with the project goals.

Total number of points in the concept proposal: 50 Points

Budget Template

Download the budget template from FFAST or from the [CDFA SCBGP website](#). The budget template is the only required attachment in the concept proposal phase. Complete each budget category by entering the amount of grant funds budgeted for each category and corresponding grant year. The budget template includes limited space to provide a brief description of the costs or activities associated with each budget category. Failure to submit the required budget template or submission of an alternate template/file type may result in disqualification.

A. Salary and Wages

Estimate the salary and wage costs for individuals employed by the applicant organization for each grant year. Within the description column, indicate the title of each individual from the applicant organization that will receive grant funding. Note: Salary and wage costs for individuals not employed by the applicant organization must be listed under line F. Contractual.

B. Fringe Benefits

Estimate the fringe benefit costs for individuals employed by the applicant organization for each grant year in accordance with an established fringe benefits policy. Within the description column, indicate the types of benefits included in the applicant organization's established fringe benefits policy. Note: Fringe benefit costs for individuals not employed by the applicant organization must be listed under line F. Contractual.

C. Travel

Estimate the project related travel costs for individuals employed by the applicant organization for each grant year. Within the description column, provide a brief explanation of the type of travel that will be necessary to accomplish the goals and objectives of the project. Reference the [Allowable and Unallowable Cost Table](#) on page 12 for restrictions on travel costs. Note: Travel costs for individuals not employed by the applicant organization must be listed under line F. Contractual.

D. Special Purpose Equipment

Estimate the costs for any special purpose equipment to be purchased. Special purpose equipment is an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000 to be used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities. Within the description column, indicate the type of special purpose equipment to be purchased. Reference the [Allowable and Unallowable Cost Table](#) on page three for restrictions on special purpose equipment.

E. Supplies

Estimate the costs for supplies to be purchased. Supplies are items with an acquisition cost less than \$5,000 per unit that are used exclusively for the objectives of the project. Within the description column, provide a brief explanation of the types of supplies needed for the project. Note: General use office supplies (paper, printer ink, pens, etc.) are considered indirect costs under the SCBGP and should not be included under line E. Supplies. Reference the [Allowable and Unallowable Cost Table](#) on page 11 for more information about direct and indirect costs.

F. Contractual

Estimate the costs for any work on the project that will be performed by individuals not employed by the applicant organization (e.g. consultants, contractors, partner organizations, etc.). Within the description column, list the individuals or organizations that will be paid with grant funds. Reference the [Allowable and Unallowable Cost Table](#) on page one for restrictions on contractual costs.

G. Other

Estimate all other costs for each year of the project, such as conferences or meetings, speaker/trainer fees, publication costs, data collection, and other budgeted costs associated with the project. Within the description column, specify the types of expenses included.

H. Total Direct Costs

Total direct costs for the project (sum of lines A - G) will total automatically.

I. Indirect Costs

Indirect costs cannot exceed 6% of total applicant personnel costs (line A. Salary and Wages + B. Fringe Benefits). Reference the Requirements and Limitations section on page 17 for more information about indirect costs.

J. Total Grant Funds

Total grant funds (line H + I) will total automatically. The amount listed on line J. Total Grant Funds must match the amount listed under funds requested in FAAST.

K. Program Income

Estimate the amount of income (if any) that may be generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the award. Within the description column, explain how program income may be generated. Note: Program income cannot be used as profit for an organization and must be reinvested back into the project.

Requirements and Limitations

2016 USDA Guidance

As of the date of this publication, USDA has not provided CDFA or any other state department of agriculture with a Request for Applications or Terms and Conditions for the 2016 SCBGP. If necessary, CDFA will prepare a supplement to this document to advise applicants of any changes to the program upon receipt of USDA's Request for Applications. The supplemental document will be provided to all applicants via email. CDFA and all applicants will be subject to the terms of USDA's Request for Applications and, Terms and Conditions.

Federal Cost Principles

Federal cost principles are regulations based on organization type used to determine allowable costs and ensure consistent treatment of costs. Applicants are responsible for identifying the federal cost principles appropriate to their organization and consistent application of cost principles to the SCBGP grant funds, and ensuring contractors or consultants comply with federal cost principle requirements.

- State, local or Indian tribal governments, non-profit organizations, colleges and universities will be subject to [2 CFR 200](#).
- For-profit organizations will be subject to [48 CFR Subpart 31.2](#).

Unallowable Costs

CDFA has developed an [Allowable and Unallowable Costs Table](#) to assist applicants in preparing their proposal budget. The table provides overall guidance for the handling of common costs and includes USDA and CDFA requirements specific to this program. Proposals with unallowable costs may be subject to disqualification as described below.

Indirect Costs

The maximum indirect cost rate is six (6) percent of total personnel costs (salary and fringe benefits).

Applicants are responsible for presenting costs incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances consistently and must not include costs associated with an established indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, applicants cannot allocate a cost as a direct cost if it is also incurred as an indirect cost for the same purpose and vice versa.

Direct costs are costs that can be identified specifically with a particular award, project, program, service, or other organizational activity or that can be directly assigned to such an activity relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy. Typically, direct costs include, but are not limited to, compensation of employees who work directly on the award to include salaries and fringe benefits, travel that is necessary for the project, and equipment and supplies used solely for the project to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”) are costs incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be identified specifically with a particular project, program, or organizational activity. Below are typical indirect costs for specific types of organizations. The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should normally be treated as indirect costs. Direct charging of these costs may be appropriate where all of the following conditions are met:

- administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity;
- individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;
- such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the federal awarding agency; and
- the costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

The following are considered indirect and should not be included in the Budget Template as direct costs:

- Information Technology services.
- Rent.
- Utilities and internet service.
- Telephone service (mobile and land-line).
- General office supplies.
- Insurance.

Disqualifications

The following will result in the disqualification of a project proposal:

- Proposals from individual applicants.
- Proposals from applicants with an active exclusion on the federal System for Award Management (SAM). Visit www.sam.gov for additional information, to register your organization or to verify the status of your organization.
- Incomplete proposals, including proposals with one or more unanswered question and/or missing, blank, unreadable, corrupt, or otherwise unusable attachments.
- Proposals that include activities outside the grant duration.
- Proposals for less than the minimum award amount or more than the maximum award amount.
- Proposals with unallowable costs or activities necessary to complete the project objective(s).

APPEAL RIGHTS: Any discretionary action taken by the Office of Grants Administration (OGA) may be appealed to the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture within ten (10) days of receiving this notification. The appeal must be in writing and signed by the responsible party named on the grant application or his/her authorized agent. It must state the grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documents and a copy of the OGA decision you are challenging. The submissions must be sent to the California Department of Food and Agriculture Office of Hearings and Appeals, 1220 N Street, 4th Floor, Sacramento 95814. If your submissions are not received within the time frame provided above, the appeal will be denied.

Review and Notification

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 Questions, Scoring, and Review Criteria section.

Review 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 (TRC) will perform the technical review. The TRC is comprised of growers and representatives from industry, universities, public agencies, and non-profits with an interest and expertise in specialty crops and agricultural systems.

Notification and Feedback

Projects that are disqualified utilizing the criteria above will be notified within three weeks of concept proposal due date. All other applicants will be notified regarding the status of their concept proposals in February. Successful applicants will be invited to Phase II and will receive instructions for submitting a grant proposal. Applicants not invited to participate in Phase II will receive feedback on their concept proposal within 60 days after receiving notification.

Assistance and Questions

Concept Proposal Workshops and Webinars

CDFA will conduct workshops and webinars on the 2016 SCBGP solicitation process, the concept proposal application, use of the FAAST system, and USDA outcome measures during the weeks of November 2-13, 2015. Please visit CDFA's SCBGP website, www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants, for dates, times, and locations. All applicants are encouraged to participate in a workshop or webinar.

Questions and Answers (Q&A)

CDFA will conduct four rounds of Q&A to address general questions about the concept proposal phase. Email all questions about the solicitation process to: grants@cdfa.ca.gov. Responses to all questions received during the workshops, webinars, or by email will be posted to CDFA's SCBGP website according to the following schedule:

Questions Received by:	Responses Posted by:
November 9, 2015 at 8:00 am PST	November 12, 2015 at 5:00 pm PST
November 16, 2015 at 8:00 am PST	November 18, 2015 at 5:00 pm PST
November 23, 2015 at 8:00 am PST	November 25, 2015 at 5:00 pm PST
November 30, 2015 at 8:00 am PST	December 2, 2015 at 5:00 pm PST

November 30, 2015, at 8:00 am 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.