

**2016 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program  
Technical Review Committee**

**Public Meeting Minutes**

May 26, 2016, 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM  
California Department of Food and Agriculture Auditorium  
1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

**Committee Members Present**

William Matthews, Chair  
Dana Harvey  
Valerie Brown  
Cathy Carlson  
Steve Shaffer  
Donald Henry

**CDFA Staff**

Jim Houston	Gagan Gill	James Spencer
Melissa Bowler	Faye Ison	Stephen Tachiera
Jacqueline Castro	Kyle Montero	
Erika Lewis-Ortega	Nadine Scarbrough	

**Introductions and Opening Remarks**

Mr. Jim Houston, California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Undersecretary, opened the meeting and welcomed those in attendance. Undersecretary Houston thanked the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) Technical Review Committee (TRC) and staff for participating in the review process, stating that their time and effort serves to greatly enhance the value and competitiveness of California's specialty crop industry. Undersecretary Houston explained that he looks forward to reviewing proposals submitted to the 2016 program and is proud of the SCBGP. Undersecretary Houston proceeded to mention the three funding areas of the SCBGP - Market Enhancement, Training and Education, and Research - and listed the funding categories that comprise each funding area: California Grown Promotion, Market Expansion and Access, Specialty Crop Nutrition Education, Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers, Environmental Stewardship and Conservation, Plant Health and Pest Management, and Food Safety.

Undersecretary Houston stated that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is expected to award \$63 million in SCBGP funds nationally, with an estimated \$22 million allocated for California for its SCBGP. In 2016, CDFA received 292 concept proposals in Phase I, totaling \$85 million. Of these, 135 advanced to Phase II as applicants were invited to submit grant proposals, for a total of \$40.3 million. Undersecretary Houston explained that the TRC works diligently during the review process and their insights assist CDFA in identifying important issues within the agriculture industry.

Undersecretary Houston introduced the 2016 SCBGP TRC Chair, Dr. William Matthews. Dr. Matthews is a Research Economist with the University of California Agricultural Issues Center (UC AIC). He has been part of the AIC team since 2008. Dr. Matthews received his M.S. and Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics from the University of Missouri. Since joining AIC, Dr. Matthews' research efforts have contributed to various projects ranging from the economic implications of

policy changes on California agriculture, assessing the value of international exports of California produced commodities, and providing economic analysis to various agricultural industry groups within California. He is currently involved in research projects that examine issues related to the economic contributions of the wine industry, policy changes in the shell-egg industry, and the California forage crops industry. Dr. Matthews has served two years on the TRC for the SCBGP.

Dr. Matthews briefly introduced himself to the group and then provided an overview of the SCBGP review process. Dr. Matthews explained that the TRC was comprised of six subcommittees that reviewed both concept and grant proposals in accordance with their expertise. After scoring each proposal online using predetermined criteria, the TRC met to discuss each project and arrive at scoring consensus. Dr. Matthews stated that his TRC subcommittee, Market Expansion and Access, was extremely diverse and each member offered a unique perspective during the review. Dr. Matthews proceeded to ask the subcommittee representatives to comment on their own subcommittee review processes and to submit their subcommittee grant proposal recommendations to CDFA.

### **Specialty Crop Block Grant Subcommittee Reports**

Each subcommittee representative presented a brief summary, commented on the review process, and submitted the following Subcommittee Grant Proposal recommendations to the TRC Chair:

- **California Grown Promotion** - Ms. Dana Harvey introduced herself as the subcommittee chair for the California Grown Promotion funding category in its inaugural year. Ms. Harvey is the Executive Director of Mandela Marketplace, an organization that partners with local residents, businesses, and farmers to improve health and create wealth in low-income communities. Ms. Harvey stated that her organization is a past SCBGP recipient, which enabled the creation of a distribution center to increase small farmer income and specialty crop consumption. Ms. Harvey explained that during the proposal review process, her subcommittee scored each proposal based on its own merits ensuring a non-biased process. The California Grown Promotion subcommittee reviewed 23 concept proposals totaling \$7.5 million and 15 grant proposals totaling \$4.88 million.
- **Specialty Crop Access and Nutrition Education** – Ms. Valerie Brown introduced herself as the subcommittee chair for the Specialty Crop Access and Nutrition Education funding category. Ms. Brown stated that she is the former Deputy Secretary of CDFA and was involved in the creation of the SCBGP. Consequently, Ms. Brown feels strongly about the program and has enjoyed seeing its evolution over the years. Ms. Brown explained that proposals submitted within her category featured strong community involvement and laudable outcomes. The Specialty Crop Access and Nutrition Education subcommittee reviewed 46 concept proposals totaling \$12.36 million and 18 grant proposals totaling \$4.84 million.
- **Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers** - Ms. Cathy Carlson introduced herself as the subcommittee chair for the Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers funding category. Ms. Carlson is a food safety consultant within the agriculture industry who collaborates with organizations to ensure updated food safety practices make it to farms. Ms. Carlson stated that it was an honor to serve in her second year as a TRC member and that her subcommittee was comprised of diverse members both

geographically as well as professionally, leading to in-depth discussions about each proposal. The Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers subcommittee reviewed 53 concept proposals totaling \$13.09 million and 24 grant proposals totaling \$5.97 million.

- **Environmental Stewardship and Conservation** - Mr. Steve Shaffer introduced himself as the subcommittee chair for the Environmental Stewardship and Conservation funding category. Mr. Shaffer is an independent consultant within the agriculture industry and spent 33 years at CDFA first as a Biologist and Analyst and second as the Director of Agriculture and Environmental Stewardship. Mr. Shaffer thanked CDFA staff for providing the necessary support and guidance to the TRC to ensure an efficient review process. Mr. Shaffer explained that he has served on the committee for seven years and that each year he learns more about the diversity of California agriculture and the issues facing the industry. The Environmental Stewardship and Conservation subcommittee reviewed 59 concept proposals totaling \$18.36 million and 28 grant proposals totaling \$8.42 million.

**Plant Health and Pest Management** - Mr. Donald Henry introduced himself as the subcommittee chair for the Plant Health and Pest Management funding category. Mr. Henry is currently an independent consultant, spent 31 years at CDFA, and oversaw agricultural quarantine programs for the Department of Homeland Security. Mr. Henry stated that it was his second year serving on the TRC and that CDFA staff has been professional and diplomatic, helping to ensure an objective review process. Mr. Henry noted that the applications for the 2016 program were very technical and well written, leading to deep discussions about each proposal. The Plant Health and Pest Management subcommittee reviewed 46 concept proposals totaling \$14 million and 22 grant proposals totaling \$7.25 million.

- **Market Expansion and Access** - Dr. William Matthews reintroduced himself as the subcommittee chair for the Market Expansion and Access funding category. The Market Enhancement and Access subcommittee reviewed 45 concept proposals totaling \$13.38 million and 23 grant proposals totaling \$7.29 million.

### **Final Motion**

Dr. Matthews moved to submit the SCBGP TRC recommendations from the six subcommittees to CDFA for review. The motion was seconded by Ms. Harvey. Motion was opened for discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

### **Public Comment**

The meeting was opened for public comments. No comments were voiced.

### **Closing Remarks**

Undersecretary Houston accepted the recommendations of the TRC subcommittees. CDFA will submit the proposals to USDA in early July and announcements are expected in October. Undersecretary Houston thanked all reviewers and CDFA staff for their time, commitment, and hard work in supporting California specialty crops. Mr. Shaffer added that the feedback CDFA provides to applicants of the SCBGP regarding areas of proposal improvement has helped to improve the program.