



## 2017 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Technical Review Committee

### Public Meeting

April 26, 2017  
10:30 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.

California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA)  
Auditorium  
1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

#### Committee Members Present

Valerie Brown  
Cathy Carlson  
Dan Glusenkamp  
Christian Nansen  
Karli Quinn  
Steve Shaffer

#### CDFA Staff

Stacy Alridge  
Jacqueline Castro  
Garrett McCord  
Sheila Morco

Satoshi Okuno  
Annika Paulson  
Karen Ross  
Stephen Tachiera

Nadine Scarbrough  
Erica Smith

#### Introductions and Opening Remarks

**Karen Ross - Secretary, CDFA**

**Steve Shaffer, Chairman, Specialty Crop Technical Review Committee (TRC)**

Mr. Shaffer welcomed the audience and celebrated the 10th year of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program with the California Department of Food and Agriculture. There were nearly 80 reviewers this year and they were a part of the two-step process that consisted of an initial Concept Proposal followed by a formal Grant Proposal. Both steps were given an administrative review by the Solicitation Team before going to the Technical Review Committee subcommittees for review and response.

This year 252 Concept Proposals were submitted and from those 147 Grant Proposals were submitted. Mr. Shaffer noted that this was his 8th year working with the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and was excited at the level of sophistication and diversity of the grants this year.

Ms. Ross thanked the staff and TRC volunteers for their work. Ms. Ross then expressed to the subcommittee chairs that she knows that reviewing these grants is no easy task and thanked them for their work. Ms. Ross then elucidated on the values of the various funding categories and their importance to the state's agricultural prowess.

Ms. Ross then explained the two primary goals that she looks forward to this program accomplishing:

- To assist California specialty crop growers and help them remain competitive leaders in their industry, and;
- Allow the state to be responsive to the local needs of California food and agricultural workers that might not otherwise be addressed by other states or at the federal level.

Mr. Shaffer then introduced the panel consisting of the funding category subcommittee chairs.

### **Specialty Crop Block Grant Subcommittee (SCBGP) 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. Quinn introduced herself as the subcommittee chair for the California Grown Promotion funding category. Ms. Quinn marveled at the sheer amount of work that applicants have to put in to their concept and grant proposals, as well as the complexity of the review process. She noted that each project held intrinsic value and the committee could see the thought and hard work that went into each one. The subcommittee reviewed 27 Concept Proposals for \$9 million, and 18 Grant Proposals totaling \$6.8 million. **Motion to submit the California Grown Promotion subcommittee recommendations to the Chairman of the 2017 SCBGP Technical Review Committee made by Ms. Brown. Seconded by Ms. Brown. Motion is unanimous.**
- **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. Ms. Brown was able to participate in the first year of this program and was pleased to participate in the current process. She noted how streamlined the process has become and the level of expertise that triages the grants. The subcommittee reviewed 27 concept proposals totaling \$7.3 million, and 17 grant proposals totaling \$4.4 million. **Motion to submit the Specialty Crop Access and Nutrition Education subcommittee recommendations to the Chairman of the 2017 SCBGP Technical Review Committee made by Ms. Brown. Seconded by Ms. Carlson. Motion is unanimous.**
- **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 fifth 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. About a quarter of the subcommittee members were new reviewers. Ms. Carlson commended staff for their responsiveness and professionalism. The subcommittee reviewed 38 concept proposal totaling \$11.9 million, and 17 grant proposals totaling \$5.4 million. **Motion to submit the Equipping Current and Next Generation Specialty Crop Farmers subcommittee recommendations to the Chairman of the 2017 SCBGP Technical Review Committee made by Ms. Carlson. Seconded by Ms. Quinn. Motion is unanimous.**

- **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. He was happy to see such interest in this funding category, and noted that each year the number, diversity, and quality of the submissions continues to grow. The subcommittee reviewed 60 concept proposals totaling \$19.3 million, and 33 grant proposals totaling \$10.9 million. **Motion to submit the Environmental Stewardship and Conservation subcommittee recommendations to the Chairman of the 2017 SCBGP Technical Review Committee made by Mr. Shaffer. Seconded by Ms. Carlson. Motion is unanimous.**
- **Plant Health and Pest Management** - Mr. Christian Nansen introduced himself as the subcommittee chair for the Plant Health and Pest Management funding category. He is a faculty member at University of California, Davis and a professor in Insect Ecology in the Department of Entomology and Nematology. He noted that he would like to see in the future of the review process attention towards seeing how this program can promote interest in agriculture towards students. He recommended that the SCBGP staff look at how this program or how applicants can engage students, develop capacity, and promote interest in research, farming, and agriculture. The subcommittee reviewed 55 concept proposals totaling \$17.1 million, and 25 grant proposals totaling \$8 million. **Motion to submit the Plant Health and Pest Management subcommittee recommendations to the Chairman of the 2017 SCBGP Technical Review Committee made by Mr. Nansen. Seconded by Mr. Shaffer. Motion is unanimous.**
- **Market Expansion and Access** - Dr. Gluesenkamp reintroduced himself as the subcommittee chair for the Market Expansion and Access funding category. He was impressed by the sheer amount of work that is required to carefully review each and every project that comes in at either the Concept or Grant proposal phase. Dr. Gluesenkamp thanked the staff for their dedication and hard work. The subcommittee reviewed 29 concept proposals totaling \$9.6 million, and 18 grant proposals totaling \$5.9 million. **Motion to submit the Market Expansion and Access subcommittee recommendations to the Chairman of the 2017 SCBGP Technical Review Committee made by Mr. Gluesenkamp. Seconded by Ms. Brown. Motion is unanimous.**

#### **Final Motion**

Motion to submit the SCBGP Technical Review Committee recommendations from the six subcommittees to California Department of Food and Agriculture via Secretary Ross for review was made by Mr. Shaffer. The motion was seconded by Ms. Brown. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **Public Comment**

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

#### **Closing Remarks**

Secretary Ross accepted the recommendations of the TRC subcommittees. She then asked that any future recommendations for the proposal and grant process be brought to her office or to the SCBGP solicitation team.

Ms. Ross highlighted that this program is funded through the federal USDA Farm Bill which is up for renewal in 2018. The future of this program is currently unknown but interest in the program has spawned across the country and, thus, fueled interest in the program. She expressed that there is a huge value in the program and interest in telling the stories of its success and how it can protect and grow California agriculture to representatives who vote on the Farm Bill at the federal level. Secretary Ross 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.

**Motion to adjourn by Mr. Shaffer, second by Ms. Quinn. Unanimously approved.**