

2019 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE I, CONCEPT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
OCTOBER 18, 2018

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. How many concept proposals did CDFA receive in 2018? What percentage received funding?
A. In 2018, CDFA received approximately 250 concept proposals, and 29 percent of those received grant funds. Historically, CDFA has funded 23 percent of proposals submitted. These percentages vary year to year and depend on the individual grant requests and CDFA's SCBGP allocation.
2. Q. Where can applicants find information about projects that have received SCBGP funding?
A. Applicants can view project abstracts for award recipients on the [Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Information](#) page. The [2018 Project Descriptions](#) lists award recipients by Funding Area and Funding Category, and includes the applicant organization, funding amount, project title, and project abstract. More detailed information about completed SCBGP projects can be found on the [Final Performance Reports](#) page.
3. Q. Do any particular organization types receive additional consideration when selecting proposals for funding?
A. No. Each project is evaluated on its own merit and no special consideration is given to any type of organization.
4. Q. Do project activities have to start on November 1, 2019 and end April 30, 2022?
A. No. Applicants can choose the start and end date for projects as long as the project dates are within the allowable grant duration (November 1, 2019 – April 30, 2022).
5. Q. Are applicants required to partner with commodity boards or commissions?
A. No. It is not necessary for applicants to partner with a commodity board or commission.
6. Q. Why does the 2019 Request for Concept Proposal ask for different information than the 2018 Request for Concept Proposal?
A. The 2019 Request for Concept Proposal was designed to provide the Technical Review Committee with additional information to assist them in recommending proposals to advance to the grant proposal phase.
7. Q. What information will applicants be required to provide in the grant proposal application?
A. If invited to the grant proposal phase, applicants will provide a more detailed description of the project. For example, within the Budget Template, applicants will provide a line by line breakdown of all costs and activities that will be paid for with grant funds.
8. Q. Is there a template for the concept proposal?
A. No. There is no template for the concept proposal and all applications must be submitted electronically using FFAST.
9. Q. Is there a page limit for the concept proposal budget and outcome measures templates?
A. No. There is no page limit for the concept proposal budget and outcome measure templates, however, CDFA asks that applicants be concise.

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10. Q. How many rounds of Questions and Answers (Q&A) will be held? Where can the Q&A schedule be found?
A. CDFA will conduct three 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. The full Q&A schedule can be found on page 24 of the [2019 RFCP](#). Note that the final deadline to submit questions is October 29, 2018 at 8:00 am PDT.
11. Q. Can CDFA advise applicants on how to promote specific specialty crops?
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.
12. Q. Within the concept proposal, where can applicants identify the project's target audience?
A. There are a number of areas in the concept proposal where applicants may identify the project's target audience. However, it is up to the applicant to determine which section(s) of the concept proposal is best suited for this information.
13. Q. Who owns content or intellectual property developed for a project once the grant ends?
A. Content or intellectual property developed with grant funds are considered capital assets. Ownership of content developed as a result of project activities is retained by the grant recipient organization. However, both CDFA and USDA retain the right to access said content or intellectual property at no cost.
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ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. Are individuals eligible to apply to the SCBGP?
A. No. Individuals are not eligible to apply on their own behalf. However, for-profit businesses, including sole proprietors and partnerships are eligible so long as the proposal does not directly benefit or provide profit to a single organization, institution or individual.
2. Q. Are winegrapes considered a specialty crop?
A. Yes. Winegrapes are considered a specialty crop. For a list of eligible and ineligible specialty crops, reference [USDA's Definition of Specialty Crops](#).
3. Q. Can proposals benefit only one specialty crop?
A. Yes. It is acceptable to submit a project benefiting only one specialty crop, however, applicants must explain how the project meets an important issue pertaining to the specialty crop industry.
4. Q. Can applicants that have applied for or received other grant funding also 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 has applied for or is currently receiving funding from another state or federal grant program will be required

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to provide a detailed description that differentiates the activities of the current funding from the SCBGP.

5. Q. Is marine microalgae (seaweed) considered a specialty crop?
A. Yes. Seaweed may be considered a specialty crop if it is used as a food source and is managed and used by humans.
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FIXED AMOUNT AWARDS

No questions at this time.

FAAST APPLICATION

1. Q. If an applicant wants to make changes to a concept proposal that has already been submitted in FAAST, will the entire application have to be re-written?
A. To make changes to a concept proposal, applicants should contact the FAAST help desk at (866) 434-1038 or mail to: FAAST_ADMIN@waterboards.ca.gov and reference the 2019 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program along with the project PIN. Applicants will obtain access to the original proposal as submitted. It is not necessary to repopulate all the questions; however, applicants are still required to resubmit the revised proposal before the submission deadline.
2. Q. Are spaces included in the character limit for each question in FAAST?
A. The character limit for each question in FAAST includes letters, numbers, punctuation, spaces, and special characters.
3. Q. Are applicants required to use a PC and Internet Explorer to submit a proposal application in FAAST?
A. The use of a PC with Internet Explorer to submit a proposal application in FAAST is strongly recommended. Because FAAST was designed and tested for use on a PC using Internet Explorer 6.0 or greater, the use of a Macintosh or web browsers other than Internet Explorer may impact the ability to save information, navigate within FAAST, upload attachments, or submit an application. If another operating system or web browser, such as Google Chrome, is used, the FAAST help desk may have difficulty trouble-shooting any issues that may arise while working on or submitting an application. In addition, CDFA is not responsible for any submission issues that may arise from use of non-recommended operating systems or browsers and cannot grant deadline extensions.
4. Q. Can applicants use any version of Microsoft Word to submit the required templates?
A. Yes. Applicants may use any version of Microsoft Office as long as the required templates are submitted as Word documents.

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5. Q. If a project spans several counties in California what should applicants enter for “County” on the General Information tab in FAAST?
- A. If a project will span multiple counties within the state, applicants should select the county where the majority of project activities will occur. Applicants may also select either “Multiple Counties” or “Statewide” from the “County” drop down list.
6. Q. If an applicant obtained professional assistance in developing an application, e.g., the services of a grant writing organization, should that organization be disclosed in the FAAST application?
- A. To avoid any potential conflicts of interest in the technical review process, applicants must disclose participation of an outside organization in the development of a proposal. The submitting organization section of the application is the most appropriate section for this disclosure, even if the grant writer does not technically submit the application in the FAAST system.
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FUNDING AREA AND FUNDING CATEGORY

1. Q. How can applicants determine if a project is appropriate for the SCBGP or a given funding category?
- A. Proposals can be appropriate to the SCBGP if they solely enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops and can accomplish at least one outcome measure. Proposals are appropriate to a funding category if the project will address at least one program priority for the chosen funding category.
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PROGRAM PRIORITIES

No questions at this time.

PROJECT PURPOSE

No questions at this time.

PRIOR-YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS

1. Q. If a project builds upon prior work that was not funded by the SCBGP should this be included with the Prior Year SCBGP response?
- A. No. Only include information about past SCBGP funded projects. Applicants may discuss prior work that is relevant to the proposal within other sections of the application.
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PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

1. Q. What is meant by project beneficiaries?
A. Project beneficiaries are the people, groups, commodities, etc. that will directly benefit from a project. Stating that a project will benefit the entire specialty crop industry is not an appropriate response for this question. Applicants should provide a realistic estimate of the actual number of people that may be directly impacted by a project. For example, the number listed in question 7, Project Beneficiaries, could be the number of people receiving training as a result of an education project, or the number of growers of a specific specialty crop that will be impacted by the results of a research project.
 2. Q. Will projects with a small number of project beneficiaries be viewed less favorably?
A. The number of beneficiaries is not a factor in the scoring criteria of proposals. Each project is evaluated on its individual merit and applicants should provide a reasonable estimate of the number of individuals that could realistically be directly impacted by the results of the project.
 3. Q. Should the answer for Project Beneficiaries only include benefits to the California specialty crop industry?
A. The purpose of the SCBGP is to fund projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. Therefore, the Project Beneficiary section should only include benefits to the California specialty crop industry.
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OUTCOME MEASURES

1. Q. For Outcome Measure 1, if a sales baseline has not yet been established, are applicants required to enter dollar amounts for indicator 1?
A. If a project will establish a baseline in sales during the grant period, it is acceptable to enter "TBD" in the dollar fields, but an estimation of the percentage increase should be entered to give reviewers an estimate of the impact of the project.
2. Q. What is the difference between Outcome Measures 2 and 3? Can CDFA provide examples?
A. Outcome Measure 2 refers to projects that are focused on increased consumption, while Outcome Measure 3 refers to increased access and awareness. CDFA is unable to provide examples for specific outcome measures.
3. Q. Is there a character limit for the data collection methods section of the Outcome Measures template?
A. No. There is no character limit for the description of data collection methods on the Outcome Measures template.

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4. Q. Can applicants delete outcome measures that are not selected?
A. While not required, applicants can delete outcomes and indicators that are not applicable to the projects from the outcome measures template.
 5. Q. How is an increase in sales measured?
A. It is necessary to measure actual sales figures resulting from marketing efforts against an established baseline to evidence an increase in sales. An increase in the price of a commodity is not, in itself, a valid indicator of an increase in sales, unless that increase in price also results in an increase in sales overall.
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WORK PLAN AND OUTREACH

No questions at this time.

BUDGET TEMPLATE

1. Q. Can applicants partner with organizations in states with active discriminatory laws as described in [AB 1887](#)?
A. There is no specific prohibition against partnering with an organization in a state subject to [AB 1887](#) or conducting project activities in those states. However, costs related to travel to and within those states is unallowable. When possible, applicants may wish to consider utilizing cost share to cover costs associated with partners or activities in a state affected by [AB 1887](#).
2. Q. What is the difference between program income and matching funds?
A. Program income refers to net income generated during the grant period by a supported project activity or earned as a direct result of the award. Program income must be reinvested back into the project and must comply with restrictions on allowable and unallowable costs and activities. Matching funds refers to a dollar amount committed to a project from a source other than the SCBGP. Matching funds can be used towards any unallowable costs and activities.
3. Q. What are some examples of program income?
A. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed, the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award, registration fees for conferences, etc. If a project will generate program income, applicants must provide a description of how it will be generated and how it will be used to further support the project objectives. Program income cannot be used as a net profit and it must be spent before the end of the grant period in accordance with restrictions on allowable and unallowable costs and activities.

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4. Q. What is the difference between the concept proposal budget and the grant proposal budget?
- A. For the concept proposal, applicants provide a general lump sum for each cost requested. If invited to the grant proposal phase, applicants will provide more detailed information, such as a line by line breakdown of all costs and activities.
5. Q. How should program income be used after the grant period has ended?
- A. If income will be generated by continued project activities after the grant duration it can be used to continue the activities of the project. Applicants invited to the grant proposal phase will be asked to provide details about sustainability within the “Project Sustainability” section where applicants can explain how income generated after the grant duration will be used to sustain the project.
6. Q. Are the design costs of marketing materials such as brochures an allowable cost?
- A. It may be allowable to use SCBGP funds to design a brochure if the primary purpose is to promote the sale of an eligible specialty crop by either stimulating interest in a specialty crop or disseminating technical information or messages for the purpose of increasing market share for the specialty crops. Marketing costs designed solely to promote the image of an organization, general logo, or general brand rather than eligible specialty crops are unallowable.
7. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to increase sales of products containing California specialty crops?
- A. This may be allowable as long as the product(s) being sold contains at least 50 percent of a specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water.
8. Q. If an applicant organization has contract employees who direct the work of the organization, i.e., as the Executive Director, should these costs be included in section A. Salary and Wages or section F. Contractual?
- A. Any work that will be performed by individuals/organizations other than the applicant (e.g., consultants, contractors, partner organizations, etc.) should be listed in section F. Contractual. This includes the work of a contractor who directs the work of an organization in a leadership capacity.
9. Q. Are vouchers for fruits and vegetables an allowable cost?
- A. SCBGP funds cannot be used for vouchers or coupons, but can be used for printing, distributing, or promotional costs associated with these items if they solely promote the specialty crop rather than promote or benefit a program or single organization. Cost share and/or matching funds may be used for the vouchers or coupons.
10. Q. How should applicants determine where to place costs in the concept proposal budget template?
- A. Applicants should use the guidelines and examples provided in the 2019 RFCP to determine which budget categories are best suited for all requested project funds. Note that incorrectly categorized costs will not result in the disqualification of a proposal. Additionally, after the concept proposal phase has ended, applicants will receive feedback if costs are

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included in the wrong budget category. If invited to the grant proposal phase, applicants will be allowed to make changes to the original budget.

11. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to cover the costs for individual farmers to obtain certifications such as a third-party food safety audit or USDA organic certification?
- A. SCBGP funds cannot be used to cover costs for certifications that directly benefit an individual farmer, rather than the specialty crop industry overall. This includes costs such as a third-party food safety audit.
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COST SHARE

1. Q. If an applicant is applying for matching funds, should that be disclosed in the concept proposal application?
- A. In the concept proposal phase, applicants are only required to estimate the total dollar amount of matching funds that are anticipated for the project. This can include other funds applied for, but not awarded. If invited to the grant proposal phase, applicants would provide more detailed information about cost share that has been secured for the project.
2. Q. Can cost share be used to pay for unallowable costs and activities?
- A. 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. If the proposal advances to the grant proposal phase, applicants will be asked to provide additional detail about funding sources and activities that will be paid for with matching funds.
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REVIEW PROCESS

No questions at this time.

GRANT MANAGEMENT

1. Q. If an applicant is awarded funds and the project will utilize a contractor, how will the contractor receive reimbursement for products and services provided?
- A. When awarded funding the organization listed as the "applicant organization" in FFAST is the entity that would enter into an agreement with CDFA and receive the grant funds. The grant recipient will pay the contractor and is responsible for ensuring contractor(s) comply with applicable federal regulations and requirements.
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CALIFORNIA GROWN

1. Q. Does a project submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category have to benefit the entire California specialty crop industry, or can it focus on only one region within California?
A. Projects submitted to the California Grown Promotion funding category can be focused in one specific area/county within California and may emphasize locally grown or regionally-specific specialty crops. A statewide California grown emphasis is not required. However, projects in this funding category should enhance the marketability and long-term competitiveness of specialty crops by leveraging the California Grown identity.