2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE II, GRANT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
February 10, 2021

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. Q. Can the project start and end dates change from the Concept Proposal phase to the Grant Proposal phase?
    A. Yes, the start and end dates may change to expand or shorten the length of the project from the Concept Proposal phase so long as the project does not begin prior to November 1, 2021 or end after April 30, 2024.

2. Q. How many Concept Proposals were advanced to the Grant Proposal phase? How many Grant Proposals are expected to be awarded funds?
    A. This year, 141 Concept Proposals were invited to submit a full Grant Proposal. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) anticipates that 40 to 50 percent of those Grant Proposals will receive funding.

New Questions: February 5, 2021

3. Q. How should applicants document salary rate changes such as annual cost of living increases, that occur during the project duration?
    A. Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds can be used to cover salary rate changes such as annual cost of living wage increases if they are part of an applicant organization's existing policies. These costs should be included as an average over the grant duration.

4. Q. Can applicants include hyperlinks in the proposal to show examples of work?
    A. Applicants are discouraged from including hyperlinks in their proposal. While hyperlinks are not strictly prohibited, technical reviewers are not required to read external content that may be included in a hyperlink. Additionally, a hyperlink that serves to circumvent character limits may result in disqualification of a proposal. Note that links provided in FAAST will appear as text.

5. Q. Are there any criteria for who can be named as a Project Director, Project Manager, and/or Principal Investigator?
    A. Project personnel must be qualified to fill their stated role. It is up to the individual applicant to select the individual(s) best suited for their project.

New Questions: February 10, 2021

6. Q. Can the applicant organization change from the Concept Proposal phase to the Grant Proposal phase?
    A. Yes, it is possible to change the applicant organization by contacting the FAAST 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.

7. Q. Where should prior results (e.g., research) upon which the proposed SCBGP project will build be included in the Grant Proposal?
    A. If the proposed project will build upon a previous SCBGP funded project, this information should be provided in the Prior Year SCBGP Projects section. Otherwise, a description of prior results (e.g., research) may be included in several sections of the proposal (e.g., Project Purpose, Project Objectives and Work Plan, etc.) as appropriate and responsive to the initial question. Applicants may not upload a supplemental document, supersede template page limits, or include such information on templates without character or page limits (such as the Outcome Measures template) as this would be considered circumventing character and page limits and may result in disqualification of a proposal.

8. Q. Can figures, pictures, or tables be included in the proposal?
    A. No, the FAAST system is text based and not designed to facilitate figures, pictures, or tables. Additionally, projects selected for funding must conform with the application formatting requirements developed by USDA for this program so attachments should not be altered.

ELIGIBILITY

1. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to purchase non-specialty crop ingredients for a nutritional education project?
    A. Yes, SCBGP funds can be used to purchase non-specialty crop ingredients; however, the applicant must demonstrate that the costs and amounts are reasonable and that the primary purpose of the project and the associated activities is to benefit the eligible specialty crop(s).

New Questions: February 5, 2021

2. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to cover costs associated with cooking classes and food tastings?
    A. SCBGP funds may be used to cover costs associated with cooking classes and food tastings if the costs are reasonable and necessary to conduct project activities and the primary purpose is to increase the competitiveness of specialty crops. SCBGP funds must be used to benefit the eligible specialty crop, rather than provide a meal to participants.

New Questions: February 10, 2021

3. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to provide participant support costs (i.e., incentives) for participants in data collection activities such as surveys, interviews, or assessments?
    A. Participant support costs for participation in data collection activities may be allowable when the costs are reasonable and necessary for the success of the project.

4. Q.   Are costs associated with capital expenditures allowable?
    A.   No, costs associated with capital expenditures including purchasing, improving land, or site grading are unallowable. Capital expenditures are costs to acquire capital assets (e.g., buildings or land) or expenditures to make additions, improvements, modifications, replacements, rearrangements, reinstallations, renovations, or alterations to capital assets that materially increase their value or useful life. Reference 2 CFR 200, Subpart E. section 439 (https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=2:1.1.2.2.1.5&rgn=div6#se2.1.200_1439) and page 2 of the 2021 Allowable/Unallowable Costs and Activities Table.

5. Q.   Are costs for greenhouses, hoop houses, storage sheds, etc. allowable using SCBGP funds?
    A.   These costs are typically unallowable but may be allowable if all of the following conditions are met: 1) the costs are reasonable and necessary to the success of the project; 2) the structure is not permanent and does not meet the definition of a building or a capital expenditure; 3) the structure does not have a total cost that can be capitalized according to the applicant organization's established policies and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles. Reference 2 CFR 200, Subpart E. section 439 (https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=2:1.1.2.2.1.5&rgn=div6#se2.1.200_1439) and page 2 of the 2021 Allowable/Unallowable Costs and Activities Table for additional information.

FAAST APPLICATION
No questions at this time.

FUNDING AREA AND FUNDING CATEGORY
No questions at this time.

PROJECT PURPOSE

1. Q.   Does selecting multiple program priorities increase the likelihood that a project will be selected for funding?
    A.   The number of program priorities a project will address is not a factor in the scoring criteria. Proposals must identify at least one program priority from the selected funding category and scoring is based on the extent to which the project demonstrates a link to the program priority or priorities identified.

New Questions: February 5, 2021

2. Q.   Do the program priorities need to be stated verbatim within the Project Purpose response?
    A.   While applicants are not required to cite the full program priority verbatim in the Grant Proposal phase; the applicant's response to this question must clearly identify the specific priority or priorities their proposal will address.

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE II, GRANT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
February 10, 2021

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND WORK PLAN
No questions as this time.

PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

1. Q. How are project beneficiaries defined?
    A. Project beneficiaries are the specialty crop stakeholders, including individual growers, producers, groups, commodities, etc. that will directly benefit from a project. Employees of the applicant, contractors and/or individuals who may receive a direct benefit from the project are typically not considered project beneficiaries. The number cited in the Project Beneficiaries response should be a reasonable estimate that can be documented and reported upon during the duration of the grant, if selected for funding. For these reasons, stating that a project will benefit the entire specialty crop industry is not an appropriate response for this question.

SPECIALTY CROP ENHANCEMENT
No questions at this time.

PRIOR YEAR SCBGP PROJECTS
No questions at this time.

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY
No questions at this time.

OTHER SUPPORT FROM FEDERAL OR STATE GRANT PROGRAMS

1. Q. If the project submitted to the SCBGP is part of a larger program receiving other federal or state funding but the costs and activities submitted to the SCBGP are not duplicated, are applicants required to disclose this support as support from other federal or state grant programs?
    A. Yes, projects that are part of a larger program that includes other federal or state funding sources must address how the proposed SCBGP project supplements rather than duplicates activities including detail of the tracking mechanisms in place to ensure the SCBGP does not fund duplicate costs and activities.

EXTERNAL PROJECT SUPPORT

1.   Q.   What types of organizations are considered specialty crop stakeholders for the purpose of external project support?

    A.   Individuals or organizations involved in the specialty crop industry such as growers, companies, certified crop advisors (CCAs) and pest control advisors (PCAs), commodity boards or commissions, trade associations, or any other organizations or individuals with a direct interest in the industry are considered stakeholders. The general public, legislators, elected officials, or any organizations not directly affiliated with the specialty crop industry are not.

New Questions: February 5, 2021

2.   Q.   Are letters of support required? Who should submit letters of support?

    A.   Letters of Support are not a requirement of the SCBGP and are not a factor in the scoring criteria for proposals. Letters of support may come from specialty crop stakeholders, individuals, or organizations that are supportive of what the project will accomplish. The applicant should determine which entities are the most suitable or appropriate to demonstrate support for their project. Letters of support should not be submitted from the applicant, cooperators, contractors, or any other entity that will participate in project activities, receive project funding, or contribute cost share, as their participation in the project already demonstrates support.

OUTCOME MEASURES

1.   Q.   For Outcome Measure 2, Indicator 4, how are "new specialty crops and/or specialty crop products introduced to consumers" defined? Is it appropriate to measure this by identifying which crops/products are new to individual consumers?

    A.   The focus of Outcome Measure 2, Indicator 4 is increasing the varieties of specialty crops offered to consumers. This is typically done through expanding the varieties offered at existing locations (stores, etc.). However, it may be appropriate to measure the number of new specialty crops introduced to individuals if the method of evaluation can adequately capture this increase.

New Questions: February 5, 2021

2.   Q.   Is there a character limit for the Description of Data Collection text box in the Outcome Measures template?

    A.   No, there is no character limit for the Description of Data Collection text box or page limit for the Outcome Measures template. All data provided should be relevant to the selected outcome measure. Additional information cannot be included to circumvent the character limits in FAAST.

3. Q. Can activities paid with grant funds (e.g., contractors hired or produce purchased) be counted for the purpose of reporting on outcome measures?
    A. No, project activities directly supported with SCBGP funds are considered outputs, or efforts of the project. Outcome measures should measure the results of these project activities or outputs such as changes in behavior, knowledge, or economic circumstance, as, for example, in the case of jobs created.

New Questions: February 10, 2021

4. Q. Which proposals are required to select Outcome Measure 1, enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales?
    A. Proposals that include the marketing and promotion of specialty crops, including all proposals submitted to the Grown in California funding category must include Outcome Measure 1. For examples of project activities that meet the definition of marketing and promotion, refer to the Outcome Measures supplement.

BUDGET NARRATIVE

1. Q. How should the Level of Effort for full time equivalents (FTE) employees be shown in the Salary and Wages table?
    A. Applicants should list the average yearly FTE salaried employees will work over the course of the project, rather than listing how the FTE may change throughout the project.

2. Q. How should multiple individuals who share job responsibilities be documented in the Budget Narrative?
    A. Generally, each employee of the applicant organization that will be receiving compensation with grant funds should be listed on an individual line within the Salary and Wages and Fringe Benefits tables in the Budget Narrative. However, multiple individuals may be listed together on one, line item if all individuals will be doing the same work with the same salary and title.

3. Q. How should the fringe benefit rate be documented in the Budget Narrative?
    A. Fringe benefits are calculated as a percentage of an individual's salary or wages and should be determined according to the applicant organization's established fringe benefits policy. Each employee of the applicant organization that will receive fringe benefits should be listed individually with their corresponding fringe benefit rate. If the fringe benefit rate will change over the grant duration, applicants should calculate the total cost of fringe benefits and report the average fringe benefit rate that will be applicable for the grant time duration.

4. Q. How should travel costs be estimated for future conferences where the location has not yet been determined? Can the location for the most recent conference be used to estimate travel costs?
    A. Yes, if the location of a conference or meeting is not yet known, the most recent location may be used. Travel costs including airfare, lodging, and per diem should follow the

standard rate for Lodging and Meals and Incidentals set by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA rates https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates). Note that, if selected for funding, travel reimbursement will be limited to actual travel costs, not to exceed allowable rates at the time of travel for that location.

5. Q. What is program income?
    A. Program income is income directly generated by a supported project activity or earned as a result of the award. If a project will generate program income, the applicant must describe how the income will be used to support project activities and further enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Program income generated during the grant award may not be kept as income or profit for the applicant organization/project participants or used toward unallowable costs or activities.

New Questions: February 5, 2021

6. Q. Can SCBGP funds be used to purchase cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, or to pay for cleaning services related to COVID-19?
    A. Cleaning supplies and services are typically considered indirect facilities costs. However, when reasonable and directly necessary to conduct project activities and/or to meet the Department of Public Health guidelines to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, costs of cleaning supplies and personal protective equipment may be covered using SCBGP funds.

7. Q. Where should travel for contractors be listed in the Budget Narrative?
    A. Travel for contractors should be listed within the Travel section under Category F. Contractual. However, if the contractor is only requesting travel costs, it is not necessary to complete the entire Contractual section and those costs may be listed under Category C. Travel.

8. Q. Who should be included in the Work Plan?
    A. All personnel who will receive SCBGP grant funds, including contractors, must be listed in the Work Plan.

9. Q. Are there requirements for how costs should be allocated in the Budget Narrative? Can a project be disqualified for misclassifying costs?
    A. Aside from Category H. Indirect Costs, there are no requirements or limits for how costs should be allocated by budget category so long as the total SCBGP funds requested stays within the allowable grant amounts of $50,000 and $450,000. How costs are allocated is not part of the scoring criteria and projects will not be disqualified for misclassifying costs. Note, CDFA cannot predict how the Technical Review Committee will view proposals with a high percentage of costs in a single budget category.

New Questions: February 10, 2021

10. Q.   Can SCBGP funds be used for project activities in states with active discriminatory laws as described in AB 1887?
     A.   In accordance with AB 1887, SCBGP funds cannot be used to support costs for travel to or within states with active discriminatory laws. However, SCBGP funds may be used to cover travel from a state currently affected by AB 1887 to a state that is not affected by AB 1887. In addition, while there is no specific prohibition against conducting project activities in states affected by AB 1887, applicants should consider utilizing cost share to cover costs associated with activities in a state affected by AB 1887 if possible. More information about AB 1887 can be found on the State Attorney General's website (https://oag.ca.gov/ab1887).

11. Q.   How can applicants determine if specific costs are allowable under the SCBGP?
     A.   Costs must be reasonable and necessary for the performance and administration of the grant and be in conformance with the applicable federal cost principles and award terms and conditions. To determine the allowability of a cost, applicants should reference the federal cost principles appropriate to their organization type. Information about and links to the federal cost principles can be found in the 2021 Request for Concept Proposals. In addition, the 2021 Allowable and Unallowable Cost and Activities Table provides overall guidance for the handling of common costs and includes requirements specific to the SCBGP. A justification along with a description explaining how each item is necessary for the completion of the project's objectives and outcomes should be included in the Budget Narrative in the appropriate category.

12. Q.   Where should fees for services be listed in the Budget Narrative?
     A.   Depending on the nature of the service procured, fees for services should be listed in either Category F. Contractual or Category G. Other. Fees for data collection, lab analysis, or other services of a routine nature that are charged using a simplified fee structure (e.g., cost per service or hourly rate) are typically considered Other costs. However, if the services are provided as part of a broader agreement for products or services related to the grant, or, if the services are unique or specialized in nature, they would typically be considered Contractual costs.

PROCUREMENT OF GOODS AND SERVICES

1. Q.   How should cooperators, collaborators, co-applicants, etc. be identified?
    A.   SCBGP projects are limited to one applicant and, if awarded funds, only one entity may enter into an agreement for the project. All other project partners are considered contractors and subject to the procurement requirements in 2 CFR 200.317-326 (https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?node=sp2.1.200.d&rgn=div6#se2.1.200_1317).

2. Q. Can a contractor be selected to work simultaneously on multiple SCBGP grants?
    A. Yes, the same contractor may be used to simultaneously conduct work on multiple SCBGP grants. The recipient must have a system in place to accurately track the costs for each project separately, should funds be awarded.

3. Q. How does an applicant obtain prior approval as stated in the Procuring Goods and Services Using Federal Funds supplement?
    A. If selected for funding, prior approval may be obtained by submitting a Scope of Work revision to the assigned CDFA project Grant Analyst. Approval must be obtained prior to expending grant funds on the related cost.

New Questions: February 5, 2021

4. Q. Can the procurement process occur within the grant duration?
    A. Yes, the procurement process may occur within the grant duration. Federal procurement policies and the applicant organization's own internal policies must be followed. Prior approval is required from USDA and CDFA for contractors selected after funds are awarded.

5. Q. How can applicants demonstrate that they engaged in a competitive process when selecting a contractor? Should this be included in the Grant Proposal?
    A. Applicants are not expected to have completed the competitive process for all contractors prior to being awarded funding. To demonstrate the competitive process, applicants must establish and follow their own procurement policy which must conform to applicable federal, state, and local laws. In addition, applicants must select a solicitation method appropriate to the amount of the contract. For contracts over $10,000, this includes developing a cost or price analysis, including an estimate of costs prior to soliciting bids. Finally, all records related to these efforts must be maintained for a period of three years after the end of the federal award or until all litigation, claims, or audit findings involving the records have been resolved and final action taken. For additional information on procurement, reference 2 CFR 200.318-327 (https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=&SID=bd6ef515de7a07894875036237f2dd60&mc=true&n=sp2.1.200.d&r=SUBPART&ty=HTML#se2.1.200_1318). For additional information on Record Retention and Access, reference 2 CFR 200.334-338 (https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=&SID=bd6ef515de7a07894875036237f2dd60&mc=true&n=sp2.1.200.d&r=SUBPART&ty=HTML#sg2.1.200_1333.sg4).

COST SHARING

1. Q. Is cost share required for SCBGP Grant Proposals? How is cost share evaluated and how should it be documented in the grant proposal?
    A. Cost share is not a requirement of the SCBGP and is not considered as part of the scoring criteria for grant proposals; however, the Technical Review Committee may view cost share as an indicator of industry support for the project. In addition, cost share may be used to

cover project costs that are unallowable under the SCBGP. Cost share can be provided as either matching funds or in-kind contributions. Applicants should provide the best guess estimate for cost share dollar amounts. If selected for funding, recipients will be required to report on the amounts provided.

2. Q.   Should cost share be include in the Budget Narrative?
    A.   No, cost share does not count toward the overall budget and should not be included in the Budget Narrative. The Budget Narrative should only include costs that will be covered by grant funds, cost share should only be listed in the Cost Sharing template.

3. Q.   Can an individual cost (e.g., salary or value of time worked) be partially covered by both grant funds and cost share?
    A.   Yes, an individual cost may be partially covered by both grant funds and cost share as long as the applicant has a system in place to document and maintain records that adequately account for the funds charged to both the grant and cost share.

4. Q.   Can organizations with an indirect cost rate greater than the eight percent of total personnel costs include unrecovered indirect as cost share?
    A.   Yes, organizations with a federally negotiated indirect cost rate greater than eight percent may treat unrecovered indirect as cost sharing. In the Cost Sharing template, this would be listed as an in-kind contribution rather than matching funds, the source would be the applicant or contractor that would be foregoing the amount between the SCBGP limit and their federally negotiated indirect rate, and administrative costs or unrecovered indirect would be listed under Summary of Activities or Costs.

New Questions: February 5, 2021

5. Q.   Can funds provided by a third-party prior to the start of the project/proposal submission be counted towards cost sharing?
    A.   Pre-award costs cannot be covered by SCBGP funds. Therefore, should the project be awarded funding, pre-award costs may be included as a cost sharing.

6. Q.   *Revised February 10, 2021:* Can funds from pending grants be included in the Cost Sharing template? Can funds from other state or federal grant programs be used as cost sharing for SCBGP proposals?
    A.   No, only secured cost share should be included in the Cost Sharing template. In addition, funds from other federal or state grant programs cannot be used as matching funds or cost sharing. Reference 2 CFR Part 200.306 (b)(5) (https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=bd6ef515de7a07894875036237f2dd60&mc=true&node=se2.1.200_1306&rgn=div 8). This includes federal or state grant funds awarded to project partners, cooperators, or contractors. Applicants must disclose if they have applied for or are receiving state or federal funds for a project submitted to the SCBGP in the "Other Support from Federal or State Grant Programs" question in FAAST.

PROJECT OVERSIGHT

New Questions: February 5, 2021

1. Q. Is there a page limit for resumes/curriculum vitae (CV)?
   A. No, there is no page limit for resumes/CVs.

2. Q. Who should provide resumes or CVs?
   A. Resumes or CVs (whichever is most appropriate) should be provided for the Project Director, Project Manager, Principal Investigator, and any collaborators or contractors responsible for development or execution of the project. The preferred format for resumes or CVs is PDF.

3. Q. If project collaborators are not receiving grant funds, do they need to provide a resume or CV?
   A. Project collaborators who are not receiving funds are not required to provide a resume or CV. However, there is no prohibition against including this documentation for unpaid collaborators. Additionally, this information may be helpful to the Technical Review Committee, particularly if an unpaid project collaborator will significantly contribute to a project.

REVIEW PROCESS

1. Q. Can CDFA provide clarification on the Technical Review Committee and CDFA Administrative Review Feedback for the Concept Proposal in FAAST?
   A. To maintain the integrity and competitiveness of the SCBGP, CDFA is unable to provide applicants with clarification on feedback provided in FAAST.

New Questions: February 10, 2021

2. Q. How should applicants respond to feedback received from the TRC?
   A. It is not necessary to prepare a narrative response that directly addresses feedback received in the Concept Proposal phase. The content of the Grant Proposal questionnaire and/or the required attachments should be responsive to the program requirements and any feedback received. Additionally, applicants may not upload a supplemental document to directly respond to administrative or technical feedback. Similarly, including responses to feedback within attachments that do not have a page limit (such as the Outcome Measures template) when the content is otherwise unnecessary is inappropriate. Such efforts would be considered circumventing character and page limits and may result in disqualification of a proposal.

2021 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM
PHASE II, GRANT PROPOSAL
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (Q&A)
February 10, 2021

GRANT MANAGEMENT

1. Q. Can changes to contractors or collaborators be made after the Grant Proposal is submitted?

   A. Yes, if a proposal is selected for funding, contractors or collaborators may be changed; however, these changes require prior approval from CDFA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

2. Q. Can the grant agreement term be extended if the project experiences unforeseeable delays?

   A. Yes, on a case-by-case basis, a one-time extension of up to 60 calendar days may be granted when the recipient can demonstrate that the project has been delayed due to extraordinary circumstances. The request must be submitted in writing to the assigned CDFA Grant Analyst no later than 30 days prior to the end of the grant agreement term. Additional information can be found in the 2020 Grant Management Procedures Manual (http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/2020_Grant_Management_Procedure_Manual.pdf).