

2025 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Additional Assistance for Historically Underrepresented Organizations

Request for Concept Proposals

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE 10.170

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Late submissions will not be accepted.



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Revisions

August 19, 2024

Updated page 16

The threshold listed for D. Special Purpose Equipment acquisition costs was increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Updated page 16

The threshold listed for E. Supplies was increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Updated page 27

The Appendix B: Budget Example was updated to reflect the increased thresholds in D. Special Purpose Equipment and E. Supplies category descriptions.

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About the Program

Purpose

The California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds projects that enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. The SCBGP is designed to support all sectors of California's specialty crop industry and improve the performance of California specialty crops within local, domestic, national, and international markets. Specialty crops are fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. Visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [What is a Specialty Crop website](https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop) (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>) for a list of eligible and ineligible commodities and a comprehensive definition of specialty crops.

The intent of the Additional Assistance for Historically Underrepresented Organizations (Additional Assistance) Program is to provide a process through which organizations that have been historically underrepresented in the SCBGP to participate and successfully implement their SCBGP projects.

This program will provide:

- Application assistance and guidance to submit a full proposal to the program, including personalized assistance offered in the applicants' preferred method (one-on-one phone calls, emails, or virtual meetings).
- One-on-one technical assistance throughout the proposal and project as needed via email, phone call, or virtual meeting, per the applicant's preference.
- Opportunities for direct feedback and support for successful project implementation and grant management.
- Networking opportunities with other grant recipients in this category to foster informal support networks among grantees.

Applicants that plan to submit a proposal to the Additional Assistance Program should email grants@cdfa.ca.gov as soon as possible if they wish to receive technical assistance ([see pages 23-24](#)) prior to submitting their Concept Proposal application. Concept Proposal applications can be requested via email through grants@cdfa.ca.gov or on [CDFA's SCBGP website](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/).

Funding and Duration

Grant amounts range from \$100,000 to \$250,000. The maximum grant duration is two (2) years, eight (8) months, and grant funds cannot be expended before November 1,

2025, or after June 30, 2028. CDFA reserves the right to offer an award amount different than the amount requested.

Funding is contingent upon passage of a Farm Bill and available funding from the USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

Eligibility

Non-profit organizations, tribal governments (federally and non-federally recognized), and K-12 school districts that have not previously received SCBGP funding, do not have technical expertise with grant writing*, and who work directly in either supporting underserved** and/or beginning farmers*** or providing nutrition education and/or access to specialty crops in underserved communities are eligible to apply to this program.

Individuals; for-profit organizations; local, state, and federal government entities (excluding K-12 school districts and tribal governments); and public or private colleges and universities are not eligible to apply.

*Technical expertise with grant writing includes the capacity to hire and/or contract with a grant writing organization or consultant.

**An underserved farmer is a farmer who is a member of a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

***A beginning farmer is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

Additional notes to help determine eligibility:

- Projects must enhance the competitiveness of California specialty crops. Projects benefiting non-specialty crops will not be selected for funding.
- Organizations that have been awarded SCBGP funding in the past are not eligible to apply.
- Organizations that have submitted Concept Proposals for the 2025 SCBGP through the Financial Assistance Application Submittal Tool (FAAST) under other funding categories are not eligible to apply.
- Organizations may submit no more than one proposal to the Additional Assistance Program.

- Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that directly benefit or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. For example, the program will not fund a project to start or expand a farm or business venture or to provide donations to individuals.
- Grants funds cannot be used to compete unfairly with private companies that offer equivalent products or services.
- Projects must address one or more of the program priorities identified by CDFA. To view these priorities, reference [pages 7-9 of the Additional Assistance Program Request for Concept Proposals \(RFCP\)](#).

Examples of Ineligible Projects

- An organization requests grant funds to plant, grow, or purchase produce that will ultimately be donated, e.g., plants for a community garden that delivers free meals or vouchers at a farmers' market for free vegetables from local farmers. Grant funds cannot be used for donations or giveaways.
- An organization requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop to make a profit, or to expand production of one or more single business or organization.
- A non-profit organization requests grant funds to purchase produce to sell to other entities at cost or a higher price than the purchase price while competing with other private companies who sell produce in the area.
- A single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase its membership, e.g., requesting funds to increase members in a co-op for disadvantaged farmers.
- An organization requests grant funds to make improvements or modifications to an existing building, e.g., requesting grant funds to renovate a community kitchen.
- An organization requests grant funds to provide training stipends to individuals in exchange for the individuals receiving education or training on specialty crop related topics. Small stipends designed to offset the cost of attending training may be allowed with sufficient justification. Stipends may not be provided solely or primarily for the benefit of the individual(s) receiving the stipend.

For more information on eligible projects, please see Appendix A on [page 25](#).

Executive Order N-6-22 – Russia Sanctions

On March 4, 2022, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order [N-6-22](#) regarding Economic Sanctions against Russia and Russian entities and individuals. “Economic Sanctions” refers to sanctions imposed by the U.S. government in response to Russia’s actions in Ukraine, as well as any sanctions imposed under state law. By submitting a

proposal or application, Applicant represents that it is not a target of Economic Sanctions. Should the State determine Applicant is a target of Economic Sanctions or is conducting prohibited transactions with sanctioned individuals or entities, that shall be grounds for rejection of the Applicant's proposal/application any time prior to agreement execution, or, if determined after agreement execution, shall be grounds for termination by the State.

Conventional SCBGP Program

Projects submitted to the conventional 2025 SCBGP will be submitted through the FAAST system and can range from \$100,000 to \$500,000. More information on the conventional SCBGP program, including eligibility restrictions, is outlined in the [2025 SCBGP Request for Concept Proposals](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/2025_SCBGP_RFCP.pdf) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/2025_SCBGP_RFCP.pdf).

Applicants planning to apply through the conventional program are not eligible to receive technical assistance on their projects prior to submission.

Other Grant Programs

Projects submitted to the SCBGP must increase the competitiveness of California specialty crops and cannot benefit an individual entity or organization. CDFA offers several grant programs that address nutritional education, improve access to and consumption of healthy California foods, and provide direct assistance to California farmers and ranchers.

For a comprehensive list of CDFA's Grant Programs, please visit <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/grants/>. A complete list of California grant and loan programs can also be found on the State Library's California Grants Portal: <https://www.grants.ca.gov/>.

Solicitation Process and Timeline

Concept Proposal

CDFA's SCBGP consists of a two-stage grant process. During the first stage, applicants must submit a Concept Proposal (i.e., an overview of their proposal) via email to grants@cdfa.ca.gov. To request a copy of the Concept Proposal application and/or to receive technical assistance on the application prior to the submission deadline, please email grants@cdfa.ca.gov. CDFA will advise all applicants as to the outcome of the Concept Proposal review. Note that receiving technical assistance does not guarantee an invitation to complete a Scope of Work.

Scope of Work

Successful Concept Proposal applicants will be invited to the second stage, and will submit a Scope of Work (i.e., a more detailed version of their proposal). Additional Assistance applicants will not participate in the conventional SCBGP application, and timelines and requirements for the Scope of Work will differ from the conventional SCBGP application. CDFA will provide one on one assistance along with the specific requirements for filling out the Scope of Work. CDFA will advise all applicants as to the outcome of the submission to USDA. All funding decisions are at the discretion of USDA.

Schedule for Concept Proposal

Concept Proposal	Date
Release Request for Concept Proposals	August 12, 2024
Webinars	August 29, 2024 – September 13, 2024
Concept Proposals due	September 27, 2024, 5:00 p.m. PT

Schedule for Scope of Work (by invitation only)

Scope of Work	Date
Invitation to Submit Scopes of Work	December 2024
Scopes of Work Due	April 2025
Scopes of Work to USDA for Approval	May 2025

Schedule for Awards

Awards	Date
Announce and Award Funding	Fall 2025

How to Apply

Please email grants@cdfa.ca.gov to request the Concept Proposal application.

Applications are also available on [CDFA's SCBGP website](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/SCBGP)

(https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/).

The CDFA SCBGP Grants website also contains a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for the Additional Assistance Program

(https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/SCBGP_frequently_asked_questions.pdf).

Funding Categories and Program Priorities

Proposals should focus on improving the competitiveness of California specialty crops through improving access to and consumption of California specialty crops, providing nutritional education for consumers in order to increase consumption, and providing training for producers and growers to equip them for current and future challenges in specialty crop agriculture. In addition to advertising or conducting outreach to encourage participants to participate in project-related activities, all SCBGP projects should include an outreach component that communicates project efforts to specialty crop stakeholders.

Concept Proposals should:

- Demonstrate a high likelihood of success.
- Be scalable to the larger community.
- Identify the specific and existing issue, problem, or need the project will address.
- Demonstrate industry need and support.
- Include an outreach component addressing how project results and conclusions will be extended to specialty crop growers. In developing the outreach component, applicants are strongly encouraged to include outreach to historically underserved and socially disadvantaged farmers.

Access, Education, and Training Category A: Healthy Specialty Crops for All Californians

In this funding category, CDFA will consider proposals that improve access to and consumption of California specialty crops and/or improve the public's knowledge and understanding of specialty crop agriculture and its beneficial importance to the health and well-being of all Californians. Proposals submitted to the Healthy Specialty Crops for All Californians category should seek to improve access to and consumption of healthy, safe California specialty crops for improved nutrition and overall health.

All proposals submitted to Access, Education, and Training Category A must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- 1) Education to increase specialty crop consumption through healthy eating habits.
- 2) Increasing knowledge of how to produce, prepare, or preserve specialty crops.

- 3) Increasing the awareness of and demand for locally sourced specialty crops.
- 4) Increasing the availability of specialty crops in homes, schools, the workplace, hospitals, prisons, and other underserved communities.
- 5) Increasing specialty crop production and/or distribution capacity into underserved urban and rural communities.
- 6) Increasing consumption of healthy California specialty crops in schools by developing connections between farmers and school nutrition directors/officials that include tools and resources for building strong partnerships.
- 7) Increasing the availability of specialty crops in underserved urban and/or rural areas with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables.
- 8) Providing outreach and educational opportunities in underserved communities about growing, purchasing, and/or consuming specialty crops.

Access, Education, and Training Category B: Equity, Opportunity, and Education for All California Specialty Crop Farmers

In this funding category, CDFA will consider proposals that benefit all current and future California specialty crop farmers by providing education and training, including improving equity through culturally appropriate education and training for underserved farmers in areas including business development and regulatory compliance. This also includes increasing underserved farmer engagement with the agricultural industry. Engagement may include outreach and education to underserved farmers to increase knowledge and participation in state, local, and federal resources.*

Proposals submitted to the Equity, Opportunity, and Education for All California Specialty Crop Farmers category should seek to ensure the viability of California specialty crops by investing in training for growers/producers/operators to address current and future challenges.

*Note that SCBGP funds may not be used to increase participation in another state or federal grant program.

All proposals submitted to Access, Education, and Training Category B must address at least one of the following program priorities:

- 1)** Introducing and recruiting young and beginning farmers, as well as members of underserved and underrepresented groups, including women and veterans, to the variety of specialty crop career opportunities.
- 2)** Providing support to specialty crop producers in adopting the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act.
- 3)** Providing training to support specialty crop producers in adopting methods to reduce water use and improve water efficiency.
- 4)** Creating and implementing workforce training programs to develop and maintain the technical skills required to keep the California specialty crops sector competitive.
- 5)** Providing technical assistance and training to better equip farmers to protect and conserve natural resources through on-farm practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, increase carbon sequestration, and adjust to a changing climate.
- 6)** Assisting specialty crop farmers in adapting to ongoing impacts of COVID-19, including addressing workplace health and safety requirements and market uncertainty and by increasing equity in food systems.
- 7)** Conducting outreach to increase the safety and security of the specialty crop food system.
- 8)** Providing culturally appropriate outreach and training on agronomic, economic (farm business and marketing skills), and/or environmental stewardship skills to underserved California specialty crop producers.
- 9)** Providing training on historical or cultural solutions to plant health, conservation practices, and pest management concerns.
- 10)** Highlighting and encouraging awareness of culturally significant specialty crops and/or cultivation practices for farmers and/or consumers.
- 11)** Developing culturally appropriate networking and training opportunities for socially disadvantaged specialty crop farmers to develop business and technical skills to enhance their specialty crop business.

Concept Proposal Questions and Scoring

Email grants@cdfa.ca.gov to request a Concept Proposal application for the Additional Assistance Program. Applications are also available on [CDFA's SCBGP website](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/).

Failure to answer one or more application questions may result in disqualification. The following questions and descriptions are provided as a preview of the application. An asterisk (*) indicates the application question is required.

Contact Information:

Project Title*:

Concisely describe the project in 15 words or less, with a unique and descriptive title.

Primary and Secondary Contact Information*:

Please enter contact information for the individual who is authorized to execute a funding agreement and receive grant funds, as well as a backup if that individual should be unreachable.

Organizational Information:

Applicant Organization*:

Legal name of the organization that will serve as lead for the project and will receive and oversee the use of grant funds.

Organization Type*:

Using the drop-down menu, select the organization type that best describes the applicant.

Description of Applicant Organization*:

Briefly describe the applicant organization, the services it provides, and/or the purpose of the organization.

California Senate and Assembly Districts*:

Using the drop-down menus, select the districts where the applicant and project are located. More than one district can be selected, if needed. If the project covers all of California, select "Statewide." If the program/project is outside of California, choose "00".

Taxpayer Identification Number*:

Enter the applicant's 9-digit taxpayer identification number in the format 12-1234567.

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI):

Enter the applicant's UEI number, if known. To obtain a UEI, please visit [System for Award Management](https://sam.gov/content/home) website (<https://sam.gov/content/home>). If awarded SCBGP funds, recipients will need to obtain a UEI before a grant agreement can be executed.

Submitting Organization:

Legal name of the organization submitting the proposal on behalf of the applicant, if other than the applicant.

Concept Proposal:

Project Description (not a scored question)*:

Summarize the need for the project and describe the anticipated goals and outcomes. All projects must also briefly describe the plan for evaluating and measuring the success of the project. This section should be specific to the proposed project, rather than the applicant organization as a whole.

Cooperating Entities (not a scored question):

This section is provided for proposals that include other entities that may also be participating in the project. In this section, indicate their role and contribution to the project. This question is unscored, and cooperating entities are not a requirement of the SCBGP.

Funding Category (not a scored question)*:

Using the drop-down menu, select the most appropriate funding category for the project. Failure to select a funding category may result in disqualification.

Program Priorities (not a scored question)*:

Using the checkboxes, select one (or more) of the Additional Assistance Program priorities for the chosen funding category as described on [pages 7-9 of the RFCP](#). Selecting more than one program priority is not required.

Project Purpose (15 points)*:

All of the following must be addressed within the text boxes provided:

- Identify the specific and existing issue, problem, or need the project will address.
- Explain why the proposal is important and timely for the specialty crop industry.
- Explain how the project addresses the priority or priorities identified.

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 (10 points). Scoring will also be based on the extent to which the project demonstrates a link to the program priorities identified in the 2025 RFCP (5 points).

Project Sustainability (5 points)*:

SCBGP projects should have a long-term impact without relying indefinitely on grant funding. Within the text box, describe:

- The likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on SCBGP funds, and/or;
- The benefit(s) to California’s specialty crop industry resulting from the project that will continue beyond the grant duration.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the extent to which the proposal demonstrates the project will become self-sustaining and/or that the benefit of the project will continue beyond the grant duration without relying indefinitely on SCBGP or other grant funding.

Project Beneficiaries (5 points)*:

All of the following must be addressed within the text boxes provided:

- Estimate the number of project beneficiaries. The number cited should be a reasonable estimate of the number of individuals that could realistically be **directly impacted** by the results of the project. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that the number of beneficiaries is trackable and reportable **within the project duration**.
- Identify and quantify the project beneficiaries and describe how they will benefit from the project objectives (list the specific specialty crops that will be affected, if possible).
- Succinctly address how the proposal benefits the specialty crop industry, rather than directly benefiting a single individual or organization, such as the applicant.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on how clearly the proposal identifies and quantifies the beneficiaries and explains how they will directly benefit, as well as the relevance and significance of the anticipated project benefit(s) to the specialty crop industry.

Work Plan and Outreach:

Project Duration (not a scored question)*:

Within the text boxes provided, enter a start and end date for the project. Projects cannot start before November 1, 2025, or continue beyond June 30, 2028. Failure to provide a project start and end date within the allowable duration may result in disqualification.

Work Plan and Outreach (10 points)*:

Within the text boxes provided, all of the following must be addressed:

- Briefly describe the project activities that are necessary to accomplish project objectives and support Outcome Measures. Each project activity should include an approximation of when it will occur (formatted as MON YYYY, e.g., Dec 2025 or May 2026 - Jun 2027).
- Include tasks for all personnel responsible for carrying out project activities. Note that all personnel, including contractors and any associated personnel, listed in the budget must be involved in at least one activity described in the Work Plan.
- Describe how the project results will be shared with the target audience, stakeholders, and other interested parties beyond those directly involved in the project. In developing the outreach component, applicants are strongly encouraged to include outreach to historically underserved and socially disadvantaged farmers. Examples of such activities include presentations at professional conferences or producer meetings, or the agricultural press, educational brochures, websites, etc.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the clarity of the work plan, the relevance of the specific project activities to the project purpose, and how well the project outlines a plan to disseminate project results.

Outcome Measures (10 points)*:

Within the Outcome Measures section, select one or more of the applicable Outcome Measure(s), indicators(s) and, if applicable, sub-indicator(s). All of the following must be addressed in the Outcome Measures section:

- **Outcome:** Using the check boxes provided, select one or more of the seven outcome measures.
- **Indicator:** Using the check boxes provided, identify one or more indicators for each selected outcome. Complete the fillable text fields for each indicator

selected. If there are multiple sub-indicators under a selected indicator, enter a value for one or more.

- **Description:** Within the description section for each outcome selected, describe the data collection methods for the outcome(s) and indicator(s) selected. The description of data collection methods must apply specifically to the Outcome Measure selected and not to other aspects of the project. Please note that all selected Outcome Measures and related indicators/sub-indicators must be achievable during the grant duration. Applicants are only required to select one indicator and, if applicable, sub-indicator.

Outcome Measures and the associated indicators were developed by USDA and the Office of Management and Budget and cannot be altered or amended in any way. For additional information on the required outcomes and indicators, reference the [Outcome Measures supplement](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/outcome_measures_supplement.pdf) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/outcome_measures_supplement.pdf).

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the significance of the anticipated project outcome, the relevance to the project activities, soundness of data collection methods, and likelihood of success.

Budget Narrative:

Cost Sharing (not a scored question):

Indicate whether the project will include cost share (cash match or in-kind match contributions), and if applicable list the total amount committed. Cost sharing is allowed but is not a requirement of the SCBGP and is discouraged by USDA. CDFA includes the ability to outline cost share in proposals so that unallowable costs and/or activities (such as projects that also benefit non-specialty crops or include donations) can demonstrate that SCBGP funds will not be used for these costs. Cost share is not required and, as an unscored question, does not impact whether projects will be awarded funding.

Budget Table (5 points)*:

All budget items should support enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops and correlate to the goal(s) of the project. Before completing the Budget Template, review the [Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf).

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

Total number of points achievable in the Concept Proposal: 50 Points

Concept Proposal Budget

For each budget category listed below, enter the amount of SCBGP funds requested (rounded to the nearest whole dollar) and a brief description of the costs or activities covered. The description should be 1-3 sentences in length and describe the costs, the items involved, and their use in the project. A description is required for each budget category in which funds are requested, except for category *H. Indirect Costs* and category *I. Total SCBGP Funds Requested*. A completed sample budget is available in [Appendix B on page 26-27](#).

Salary and wages, fringe benefits, travel, special purpose equipment, supplies, other, and indirect costs for individuals not employed by the applicant organization must be listed under category *F. Contractual*.

A. Salary and Wages

Estimate the total cost of salary and wages for time spent on the project by individuals employed by the applicant organization. In the description column, list the title of each employee, the approximate time spent on the project (number of hours or percent full time equivalent), and the individual's activities in support of project goals. For Personnel costs, please provide an estimated breakdown per individual. Please also describe the activities each individual will participate in, and an approximation of hours worked or percent full time equivalent.

B. Fringe Benefits

Estimate the total cost of fringe benefits for time spent on the project by individuals employed by the applicant organization in accordance with the applicant organization's established fringe benefits policy. In the description column, list the approximate fringe benefit rate and types of benefits included in the applicant organization's established fringe benefits policy.

C. Travel

Estimate the total cost of project related travel for all individuals except contractual personnel. In the description column, briefly describe how the travel will help accomplish the goals and objectives of the project. Use the rates established by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) available on the [GSA website](https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates) (<https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>) to develop the travel cost

estimate. Reference pages 12-13 of the [Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table](#).

(https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/allowable_and_unallowable_costs_activities.pdf) for restrictions on travel costs.

D. Special Purpose Equipment

Estimate the total cost to purchase any special purpose equipment necessary to achieve project objectives. Special purpose equipment is nonexpendable, tangible personal property with a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$10,000 to be used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities. In the description column, list the special purpose equipment to be purchased. Reference pages 3-4 of the [Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table](#)

(https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) for restrictions on special purpose equipment.

E. Supplies

Estimate the total cost to purchase supplies necessary to achieve project objectives. Supplies are items with an acquisition cost less than \$10,000 per unit that are used exclusively for the objectives of the project. In the description column, list the types of supplies to be purchased and their use in the project. General use office supplies (paper, printer ink, pens, etc.), facilities costs (telephone, internet, etc.), and administrative costs are generally considered indirect and should not be included under category *E. Supplies*. Reference [pages 19-20 of the RFCP](#) for more information about direct and indirect costs.

F. Contractual

Estimate the total cost of work on the project that will be performed by individuals/organizations other than the applicant (e.g., consultants, contractors, partner organizations, etc.). This amount should include all associated salary and wages, fringe benefits, travel, special purpose equipment, supplies, other, and indirect costs. In the description column, list the services to be provided by each contractor that will work on the project and be paid with grant funds and provide a brief breakdown of costs. Reference pages 2-3 of the [Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table](#)

(https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) for restrictions on contractual costs.

G. Other

Estimate the total cost of all other project-related expenses. Expenses typically listed under category *G. Other* include registration fees to attend professional conferences, speaker/trainer fees or stipends, fees to publish in academic journals, fees for data collection and laboratory analysis, meeting space or equipment rentals, subscriptions, etc. In the description column, provide a brief breakdown of the specific expenses necessary to accomplish the goals and objectives of the project.

H. Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are facilities and administrative costs that cannot easily be tied directly to the activities of the grant. Examples of common indirect costs include administrative/clerical services, rent, utilities, internet and telephone service, maintenance, and general office supplies. The maximum amount of indirect costs allowable is 8 percent of total personnel costs (category *A. Salary and Wages* plus category *B. Fringe Benefits*). Reference [pages 19 of the RFCP](#) for more information about indirect costs. *Formula: (A. Salary and Wages + B. Fringe Benefits) x 0.08 = Maximum Indirect Costs*

I. Total SCBGP Funds Requested

Total SCBGP funds requested will automatically be calculated using the amounts indicated in the Amount of Funds Requested column for categories A through H. This total cannot be less than \$100,000 or greater than \$250,000. Please ensure that the total matches the award requested amount listed on the Project Information section.

J. 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. In the text box, explain how the program income will be generated and how it will be used to further support the project objectives. Program income must be spent on activities that support the goals and objectives of the project, should be expended before seeking reimbursement of grant funds, and must comply with restrictions on allowable and unallowable costs and activities.

Requirements and Limitations

Farm Bill and USDA Guidance

Authorization for this program was established under the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 and continues under authorization from the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (commonly referred to as the “Farm Bill”). The 2018 Farm Bill contains provisions for the continuation of this program in 2024 and beyond; however, as of the date of this publication, Congress has not passed a new Farm Bill or a continuing budget resolution to reauthorize funding for the program. While CDFA anticipates continued funding for the program as described in the 2018 Farm Bill, grant awards will only be made if continuing authorization for the program is established and funds are made available by USDA, AMS.

As of the date of this publication, USDA has not provided CDFA or any other state department of agriculture with a Request for Applications (RFA) or Terms and Conditions for the 2025 SCBGP. If necessary, CDFA will prepare, and make available, a supplement to this document to advise applicants of any changes to the program upon receipt of USDA’s RFA. CDFA and all applicants will be subject to the terms of USDA’s RFA 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, consistent application of cost principles to the SCBGP grant funds and ensuring contractors and/or consultants comply with federal cost principle requirements.

- Indian tribal governments; non-profit organizations; and K-12 school districts will be subject to [2 CFR 200](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=898fdaa0b947dd0bf8c962a137d230dd&node=pt2.1.200&rgn=div5) (https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=898fdaa0b947dd0bf8c962a137d230dd&node=pt2.1.200&rgn=div5).

Unallowable Costs

CDFA has developed an [Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/allowable_and_unallowable_cost_activities.pdf) 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 indirect cost rate for the SCBGP is limited by federal statute. The rate published in this solicitation document ensures conformity to the federal statute. Applicants that might ordinarily be eligible to receive a higher indirect rate from other state or federal programs are responsible for ensuring that their organization/institution will allow an exception for this program before applying.

The maximum indirect cost rate is 8 percent of total personnel costs (budget category *A. Salary and Wages* plus category *B. 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, equipment and supplies used for the project to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, and the hiring of qualified contractors to achieve project objectives.

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. 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 and directly related 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 page as direct costs:

- Information technology services.
- Rent.
- Utilities and internet service.
- Telephone service (mobile and landline).
- General office supplies.
- Insurance.
- Maintenance.

Travel

The maximum travel rates allowable are the lesser of the rates in effect at the time of travel as established by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), available on the [GSA website](https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates) (https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates). Applicants should apply the current government mileage rate for personally owned vehicles used for travel related to the project; this rate is available on the [IRS website](https://www.irs.gov/Tax-Professionals/Standard-Mileage-Rates) (https://www.irs.gov/Tax-Professionals/Standard-Mileage-Rates).

Consideration should be given to the use of alternative technologies such as teleconferencing or videoconferencing if they are available, appropriate for the project, and less costly, particularly for international travel.

Note: International travel must comply with the [Fly America Act, 49 U.S.C. 40118](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title49/pdf/USCODE-2011-title49-subtitleVII-partA-subparti-chap401-sec40118.pdf) (https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title49/pdf/USCODE-2011-title49-subtitleVII-partA-subparti-chap401-sec40118.pdf) and [Foreign Travel Per Diem Allowances](https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp) (https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp).

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 and Scoring section on pages 10-15](#).

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. The second level is a technical review to evaluate the merits of the Concept Proposals.

The CDFA SCBGP Technical Review Committee will perform the technical review. The Technical Review Committee 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

Proposals that are disqualified utilizing the criteria below will be notified within 21 days of the Concept Proposal due date. All other applicants will be notified regarding the status of their Concept Proposals in December 2024. Successful applicants will be invited to complete a Scope of Work and will receive instructions for submission. Applicants not invited to complete a Scope of Work will receive feedback on their Concept Proposal within 60 days after receiving notification.

To ensure all communications are received, points of contact listed in the application should add grants@cdfa.ca.gov to their email safe senders list, address book, or contact list.

Disqualifications

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

- Proposals from individuals; for-profit organizations; local, state, and federal government entities (excluding K-12 school districts and tribal governments); public or private colleges and universities; and organizations with the capacity to hire and/or contract with a grant writing organization or consultant.

- Proposals from organizations that have successfully submitted an application to the 2025 SCBGP within the FFAST system.
- Incomplete proposals: proposals with one or more unanswered questions or only minimal responses.
- 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 objectives.
- Proposals with indirect costs that exceed the limit set forth in this document.
- Proposals submitted that did not use the required Concept Proposal template.
- Proposals that benefit a single individual, individuals, or organization rather than the specialty crop industry as a whole.

APPEAL RIGHTS: Any discretionary action taken by the Office of Grants Administration (OGA) may be appealed to the CDFA's Office of Hearings and Appeals within ten (10) calendar days of receiving a notice of disqualification from CDFA. Email notification shall serve as the date of service. The appeal must be in writing and signed by the responsible party named on the grant application or their authorized agent. It must state the grounds for the appeal and include any supporting documents and a copy of the OGA decision being challenged. The submission must be sent to the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Office of Hearings and Appeals, 1220 N Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 or emailed to CDFA.LegalOffice@cdfa.ca.gov. If submissions are not received within the time frame provided above, the appeal will be disqualified from consideration.

Assistance and Questions

Concept Proposal Webinars

CDFA will conduct webinars on the 2025 SCBGP solicitation process and the Concept Proposal application between August 29, 2024 – September 13, 2024. Please visit the

[CDFA SCBGP website](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/SCBGP)

(https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/) for dates, times, and locations. All applicants are encouraged to participate in a webinar.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The Additional Assistance Program FAQ can be accessed on the CDFA SCBGP website [CDFA SCBGP website](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/SCBGP)

(https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/).

Questions and Answers (Q&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. Responses to all questions received during the webinars or by email will be posted to the CDFA SCBGP website according to the following schedule:

Schedule for Q&A

Questions Received by:	Responses Posted by:
August 19, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. PT	August 23, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. PT
August 26, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. PT	August 30, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. PT
September 3, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. PT	September 6, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. PT

September 3, 2024, at 8:00 a.m. PT is the final deadline to submit questions for the general SCBGP Concept Proposal phase. (Personalized assistance, as described below, continues to be available after this date.)

Personalized Assistance Available

CDFA is able to provide the assistance that best fits applicants' needs. For example, in addition to the Webinars and FAQ, one-on-one assistance is available at your request in your preferred format. Please email grants@cdfa.ca.gov to:

- Schedule a phone call;
- Schedule a virtual meeting;
- Submit individual questions;

- Request feedback on the proposed project, Concept Proposal, or any sections thereof; or
- Receive a more detailed walk-through of the Solicitation Process or Grant Management (should funds be awarded).

There is no deadline to receive personalized assistance prior to the Concept Proposal due date of September 27, 2024; however, please note that CDFA is available Monday to Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PT and assisting with multiple proposals. Applicants are encouraged to request assistance as soon as possible.

Appendix A: Project Examples

Access, Education, and Training Category A: Healthy Specialty Crops for All Californians

- Increase child nutritional knowledge through education in the classroom.
- Increase interest in specialty crops through experiential learning (such as school gardens).
- Develop training or demonstrations to educate families on increasing consumption of specialty crops in their diets.
- Improve knowledge of the health benefits of specialty crops among children, seniors, and caregivers.
- Strengthen the local food system in underserved communities by supporting production, distribution, access points, and consumption of specialty crops.
- Address “food deserts” with improved access to specialty crops at farmers’ markets, corner stores, grocery stores, food hubs, or other systems.
- Utilize regional, local, or native crops to address disparities in access.

Access, Education, and Training Category B: Equity, Opportunity, and Education for All California Specialty Crop Farmers

- Assist specialty crop farmers in adopting Good Agricultural Practices, Good Handling Practices, and Good Manufacturing Practices.
- Design and conduct culturally appropriate business skills training for underserved 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.

Appendix B: Budget Example

Budget

For each budget category described in column one below, enter the amount of SCBGP funds requested (rounded to the nearest whole dollar) in column two and a description of the costs or activities to be covered in column three. A description is required for each budget category in which funds are requested, except for category *H. Indirect Costs* and category *I. Total SCBGP Funds Requested*.

Budget Categories	Amount of Funds Requested	Description of Costs or Activities
<p>A. Salary and Wages Cost of salary and wages for time spent working on the project by employees of the applicant organization.</p>	\$121,500	<p><i>Maria Gonzalez, Program Manager (PM) - \$22,000, 10% FTE. The PM will oversee the Education Director and Educators in all major project tasks and will present project results at one educational conference in Year 2 and Year 3.</i></p> <p><i>Joe Jones, Education Director (ED) – \$82,500. 50% FTE. The ED will develop curriculum related to purchasing, preparing, and eating specialty crops. They will lead cooking demonstrations at local farmers’ markets and other events, train and direct part-time Educators, and assist in outreach at educational conferences in Year 2 and Year 3.</i></p> <p><i>TBD, four Educators - \$17,000; 4 part-time Educators will work 250 hours each in Year 2. They will assist in cooking demonstrations and provide virtual and in-person workshops on the benefits of consuming more produce.</i></p>
<p>B. Fringe Benefits Cost of fringe benefits for time spent working on the project in accordance with the applicant organization's established fringe benefits policy.</p>	\$48,725	<p><i>Maria Gonzalez, PM - \$9,900 45% rate in accordance with organization’s approved rates.</i></p> <p><i>Joe Jones, ED - \$37,125 45% rate in accordance with organization’s approved rates.</i></p> <p><i>TBD, four Educators - \$1,700 10% rate in accordance with organization’s approved rates.</i></p>
<p>C. Travel ¹ Cost of project related travel for all individuals except contractual personnel.</p>	\$6,000	<p><i>Conference – \$3,500 The PM and ED will travel to present project findings at XYZ conference. Travel costs include round trip flights, lodging, per diem, and a vehicle rental.</i></p> <p><i>In-Person Workshops – \$2,500 Mileage costs for ED and Educators to travel from San Francisco, CA, to various sites throughout the Bay Area to present in-person workshops and cooking demonstrations. Estimated 40 trips (20 cooking demonstrations and 20 workshops).</i></p>

<p>D. Special Purpose Equipment Cost to purchase special purpose equipment (for items greater than \$10,000 per unit) necessary to achieve project objectives.</p>	\$0	No costs requested.
<p>E. Supplies Cost to purchase supplies (for items less than \$10,000 per unit) necessary to achieve project objectives.</p>	\$4,800	<p>Samples - \$1,200; Supplies for produce sampling at educational workshops, estimated at \$2.00 per attendee (30 attendees at 20 workshops).</p> <p>Cooking supplies - \$3,000; Supplies for cooking demonstrations, estimated at \$150.00 per demonstration (20 demonstrations).</p> <p>Sampling cups, napkins, etc. - \$600; Sampling cups, napkins, nitrile gloves, hand sanitizer, etc. to allow for safe and sanitary sampling of produce and recipes. Estimated at \$0.50 per attendee (30 attendees at 20 workshops and 20 cooking demonstrations).</p>
<p>F. Contractual ² Cost of work by individuals/organizations other than the applicant (e.g., cooperators, consultants, contractors, partners, etc.).</p>	\$25,000	<p>Translation Services - \$5,000; Translation services will allow curricula, handouts, recipe cards, etc. to be offered in community languages.</p> <p>Interpretation Services - \$20,000; Live interpretation services will be used at most cooking demonstrations and workshops to assist attendees and make the material more accessible. (\$500 per session, 20 cooking demons and 20 workshops).</p>
<p>G. Other Cost of all other expenses (e.g., conference registration, speaker/trainer fees, stipends, publication fees, data collection, lab analysis, rentals, subscriptions, etc.).</p>	\$4,400	<p>Printing - \$2,400; Printing materials for handouts, activity sheets, recipe cards, pre- and post-surveys, etc. for educational workshops, estimated at \$2.00 per attendee (30 attendees each at 20 workshops and 20 cooking demonstrations).</p> <p>Conference registration fees - \$2,000; Registration fees for the PM and ED to attend one educational conference in Year 2 and Year 3 of the project to conduct outreach regarding project results. (\$500 x 2 years x 2 individuals).</p>
<p>H. Indirect Costs Facilities and administrative costs.</p>	\$13,618	Must not exceed 8.00% of total personnel costs (A. Salary and Wages + B. Fringe Benefits)
<p>I. Total SCBGP Funds Requested Sum of categories A through H.</p>	\$224,043	Must match "Funds Requested" in FFAST and be within the grant funding range as specified in the Request for Concept Proposals.
<p>J. Program Income Income (if any) that may be generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the award.</p>	\$0.00	Enter a description of any Program Income that may be generated as a result of the award.

Appendix C: Outcome Measures Example

Outcome Measures

Select the applicable outcome measure(s), indicators(s) and, if applicable, sub-indicator(s). All of the following must be addressed in the Outcome Measures section:

- Outcome: Using the check boxes provided, select one or more of the seven outcome measures.
- Indicator: Using the check boxes provided, identify one or more indicators for each selected outcome. Complete the fillable text fields for each indicator selected. If there are multiple sub-indicators under a selected indicator, enter a value for one or more.
- Description: Within the description section for each outcome selected, describe the data collection methods for the outcome(s) and indicator(s) selected. The description of data collection methods must apply specifically to the Outcome Measure selected and not to other aspects of the project.

Please note that all selected outcome measures and related indicators/sub-indicators must be achievable during the grant duration.

For additional information on the required outcomes and indicators, reference the [Outcome Measures Supplement](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/SCBGP_OutcomeMeasuresSupplement.pdf) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/docs/SCBGP_OutcomeMeasuresSupplement.pdf).

Outcome measures and the associated indicators were developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Office of Management and Budget and cannot be altered or amended in any way. Altering the language of the outcomes or indicators or providing responses in a format other than that described in the document will result in disqualification of a proposal.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Outcome 1: Increasing Consumption and Consumer Purchasing of Specialty Crops
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Indicator 1.1: Total number of consumers who gained knowledge about specialty crops 600. 1.1a Adults: 600. 1.1b Children: Enter number.
<input type="checkbox"/> Indicator 1.2: Total number of consumers who consumed more specialty crops Enter number. 1.2a Adults: Enter number. 1.2b Children: Enter number.
<input type="checkbox"/> Indicator 1.3: Number of additional specialty crop customers counted Enter number.
<input type="checkbox"/> Indicator 1.4: Number of additional business transactions executed Enter number.
<input type="checkbox"/> Indicator 1.5: Increased sales measured in: 1.5a Dollars \$ Enter dollar amount. 1.5b Percent change Enter number. 1.5c Combination of volume and average price as a result of enhanced marketing activities. Volume: Enter number. Average Price: Enter number.
Description of data collection methods: The project proposes to hold at least 20 cooking demonstrations at farmers' markets and community events and at least 20 in-person workshops on the benefits of consuming specialty crops, including sampling of local, in-season produce. It is anticipated that each event will host at least 30 attendees, for a total of 1,200 unique participants. The project team will issue simple paper surveys before and after each event that ask questions to measure participants' increases in knowledge on the availability of specialty crops, how to access them, and how they can be prepared in simple, culturally-relevant recipes. It is expected that at least 50 percent of participants will report an increase in knowledge.

Appendix D: Concept Proposal Tips

To help ensure that a proposal is accurately submitted and well-received by the Technical Review Committee, please consider the following advice when composing the Concept Proposal:

- Contact grants@cdfa.ca.gov with questions or to request technical assistance as soon as possible.
- Do not wait until the last minute to prepare or submit the Concept Proposal. Allow ample time for composition, research, review, and submittal.
- Compose answers to questions in a word processing document so they can be checked for grammar, spelling, syntax, and overall clarity before entering them into the application template.
- Keep answers clear and concise.
- Double-check the project budget against the [Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table](#) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/Specialty_Crop_Competitiveness_Grants/pdfs/Allowable-and-UnallowableCosts-and-Activities.pdf). Significant unallowable costs listed in the budget may result in disqualification.
- Double-check to ensure the most appropriate funding category has been selected for the proposal. Identifying the most appropriate category ensures proposals are evaluated by reviewers with the most relevant expertise. The selected funding category cannot be changed once the Concept Proposal is submitted.
- Check that the total award requested is between \$100,000 and \$250,000.