

## **CDFA BIPOC Advisory Subcommittee**

### **Recommendations framework for CDFA block-grant processes**

Updated: 07/10/2025

Audience: CDFA Block Grant Program Staff

#### **I. Recommendations for Block Grant Organizations Solicitation Process**

- Ensure more proportional geographic area coverage, based on program's priority area and resource need. If higher regional need based on intent of funding (i.e. drought, water conservation, disaster relief, urban etc.), ensure higher proportional block grant administrators in those areas, particularly for grants focused on resource need/resource scarcity/ disaster impacts.
- Ensure underserved and BIPOC-led organizations are aware of block grant solicitations through early and often outreach and engagement in different regions.
- Utilize local expertise, including researchers, ag industry professionals, farmer-led groups (including BIPOC-led groups), non-profit organizations, and California Native American Tribes to vet local needs and priorities for regions as an extra step to ensure accuracy prior to releasing RFP.
- Highlight the program priority in the application to serve underserved producers in prominently and in non-technical language.
- Include a description in the RFP related to farmer technology barriers: Ensure block grant organizations can appropriately address technology and language barriers.

#### **II. Mechanisms to Assess Performance of Block Grant Organizations**

- Incorporate a risk analysis into CDFA grant process, utilizing a combination of past performance and farmer grantee feedback via a CDFA survey (See suggested survey questions below).
- Verify that the block grant organization has the organizational and staff capacity to administer funds in a timely manner and to reach and serve underserved/ SDFR communities, including tribes.
  - Require letters of support from boards of directors in application
  - Require letters from elected tribal officials if the organization serves or represents tribal interests.
  - Require Curriculum Vitae or resumes from applicants that demonstrate history of working with underserved communities and language capacity of staff.
  - Require applicants to specify how they are serving Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFR) groups and CA Native American Tribal members, in addition to how they are expanding networks to serve all producers outside of regular network.
  - Utilize anonymous survey mentioned above to monitor feedback, in addition to regular grant reporting and verification methods.

### **III. Standardize Block Grant Organizations' Application Process and Requirements**

- Standardized application for farmers across all local block grant administrators, ensure farmer-friendly application platforms and language accessibility when possible.
- Standardize farmer grant review process to ensure non-biased and transparent review of farmer apps by block grant organizations.
- Standardized requirements- such as data collection, Personal Identifying Information to ensure block grant organizations are not asking for additional qualifications beyond scope of grant.
- Ensure advance payments are offered and if not, clear communication is given from block grantee to farmers.
- Standardize farmer application turnaround time to the extent possible.
- Provide feedback in writing to applicants who are not selected/ inform what was missing in their application to allow them to enhance it next time. Provide enough information to help farmers to be successful in next round.
- Standardize communication block grant orgs are required to share to all program applicants to ensure transparency in timelines.
  - Timeline for application review and disbursement.
- Application period- Allow for longer application window (2 months minimum).
  - Rolling application cycles, when possible, to allow farmers more time to apply.

### **IV. Data Reporting/ tracking**

- Report out how targets are being met and measuring success rate for SDFR producers, first time applicants and other priority populations based on statute requirements. (ex. 25% of funding for SDFRs).
- Data management and reporting: report and demonstrate how block grant models improve services/accessibility to BIPOC, underserved and small-scale producers.
- Analyze data from block grant orgs after each round to understand regional trends in applications, new applicants vs. repeat applicants, farm size and demographic data.

### **V. Other outreach /Materials Needed to increase accessibility by SDFR groups**

- Ensure RFP's and a program summary are offered in plain and non-technical language. Summarize grant opportunity succinctly and for a farmer audience. This could be a resource/ document shared with block grant orgs and TA providers to use as a tool.
- Develop non-technical general information on the grant to disperse to block grant orgs.

### **VI. Block Grant Organization Feedback Survey Recommendation**

Survey goal: To assess and provide feedback on performance, communication and customer service of block grant orgs. Information can be used for future rounds of funding, for identifying issues and identify solutions, assessing capacity of block grant orgs to serve underserved communities.

- Keep survey short as possible 4-5 questions.
- Survey goes directly back to CDFA (make it optional for applicants).
- Include optional demographic question and farm size.
- Use yes/no questions or Likert scale style questions.
- Clear communication that survey does not impact funding and will be anonymous (unless someone would like to provide their contact info).
- Target questions on customer service, communication from block grant organization, clear timeline on grant payment process, satisfaction with application process, language support, report satisfaction level, and identify any delays in payment or communication.
- Ensure survey is also available for applicants who were not awarded (on block grant orgs website).
  - Was the reason for not being awarded provided and/or feedback on how to improve future applications?
- Include a question on TA assistance with applications- did applicants receive TA or other assistance to complete or implement project and how helpful it was.
- Leave room for a qualitative section (for farmers to provide open comments).

**VII. Establish or make more visible a separate, anonymous and confidential complaint feedback process for producers**

- Establish or provide a method for farmers to contact and report potential conflict of interest situations or other more serious matters which may occur within block grant program models. This would be separate from CDFA staff who administer the program.

**Acronyms**

BIPOC- Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

RFP- Request for Proposal

SDFR- Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers