

Request for Proposal (RFP)

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill (SCBGP-FB)

Website: www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-16-0003

Fiscal Year 2016

CFDA Number 10.170

Introduction

The College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES) of the University of the District of Columbia is soliciting completed proposals for projects that specifically address the goals that the United States Department of Agriculture's Agriculture Marketing Service ("USDA/AMS") has established for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill (SCBGP-FB).

This Request for Proposal "(RFP)" was prepared in accordance with rules and regulations developed by the funding agency, the USDA/AMS.

Program Authority

On December 21, 2004, the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621) authorized the USDA to provide grants to state departments of agriculture solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) amended the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 and authorized the USDA to provide grants to states for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2012 to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. This RFP is an extension of that authority.

This program was developed to enhance the productivity of specialty crops in the United States and U.S. territories only. In order to have your proposal funded, you must follow all of the rules and regulations listed and explained in the RFP. Additionally, your proposed project must address a problem that would specifically enhance specialty crop production and consumption in the District of Columbia.

The USDA defines specialty crops as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture (including maple syrup and honey), and nursery crops (including floriculture). A complete list of eligible and ineligible specialty crops can be found on the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant website: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>.

Available Funding

The total available funding for the District of Columbia is approximately \$208,776.33 for FY 2016 through FY 2019. CAUSES expects to award multiple grants under this program. Solicitations for individual grant awards between \$10,000 and \$50,000 will be considered. CAUSES may advance up to 20 percent (maximum \$5,000) of the approved budget for the initiation of project activities, with the balance being attainable on a reimbursable schedule. Reimbursement will require timely completion and proper reporting of approved budget activities and the submission of invoices.

A selected UDC and External Advisory Committee will review all grant proposal submissions and make recommendations to CAUSES, which will make the final recommendations to Dr. Sabine O’Hara, Dean of CAUSES, and Dr. Rachel Petty, UDC Provost.

CAUSES retains the right to reject applicants with previous participation whose performance was assessed as incomplete or unsatisfactory. While it is not required, applicants who offer documented matching funds through their budget and narrative may be eligible for additional evaluation consideration. All funding for grants associated with this program are subject to final approval by USDA/AMS under the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

Project Duration

This specialty crop block grant will be awarded for projects for two years. However, the grant period may be extended upon petition to and negotiation with CAUSES. The start date is expected to be on or about Feb 1, 2017 and will end on February 28, 2019. The latest date a grant period can be extended to is September 30, 2019.

Additional Notifications

Failure to follow instructions completely may result in non-consideration of your proposal. The funding agency does not offer or assume any responsibility for costs associated with the preparation and submission of any proposal. Those expenses are solely the responsibility of the applicant. All documents and information provided in support of the RFP application are considered to be public record. Proposals must follow the Project Profile Template included at the end of this project. We request that you submit proposals in “.doc” format, as approved proposals will be incorporated into a single USDA proposal for DC.

Proposals received after the close of business on May 27, 2016, will not be considered. Additionally, errantly directed proposals that arrive at incorrect locations of the government will not be considered.

Proposal Submission Process

Full and complete application due via email by 5:00 p.m., **Friday, May 27, 2016**

Review of proposals, **June 6- June 17, 2016**

Award announcements **June 27, 2016**

DC State Plan due to USDA-AMS: **July 6, 2016**

USDA notifies UDC of approval of funding for grant projects included in the state plan: **September 2016**

All Applicants are notified of the status of their applications: **September – October, 2016**

UDC Grant Contracts are prepared for Grant recipients: **November 2016 -January 2017**

Anticipated start date for selected projects. Funded projects may begin upon execution of a grant agreement with UDC: **February 1, 2017**

End date for projects (can request a 6 month extension): **January 31, 2019**

Submission should be mailed to:

Matthew.richardson@udc.edu and whare@udc.edu

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Eligibility

To be eligible for a grant, the project must solely enhance the competitiveness of U.S. or U.S. territory grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. CAUSES will consider applications from non-profit organizations including Native-American Tribal Organizations, for-profit, and public sector organizations. **All eligible organizations must provide a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS number) at the time of the award.** The DUNS number is a 9-character identification provided without charge by Dun & Bradstreet. In addition, we are prohibited from funding any applicants or their contractors who appear on the government debarment list. Each applicant must provide proof that certifies it is not restricted from participating in Federal Assistance Programs due to suspension or debarment.

Who is eligible to submit a proposal?

State and/or local organizations, producer associations, academia, community-based organizations and non-profits, for profit organizations, and other specialty crops stakeholders are eligible to apply. The organizations must be legal entities recognized by the IRS and applicants must reside and/or conduct their business or organization in DC.

What projects are eligible?

To be considered for a grant, each agricultural organization or individual application shall be clear and include the following documentation satisfactory to CAUSES.

You are generally encouraged to develop a project solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops pertaining to the following issues that affect the specialty crop industry:

We will consider submitted proposals that increase the competitiveness of specialty crop farmers, including Native American, immigrant, and disadvantaged farmers. Increasing competitiveness may include developing local and regional food systems and improving food access in underserved communities. Additionally, projects that help to enhance marketing of fresh produce in underserved areas will be favorably considered.

Applications should demonstrate how the project will potentially produce measurable impacts for the specialty crop industry as a whole; and not-for-benefit to a specific product, single organization, institution, or individual.

A typical range of project ideas might include:

- 1) Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- 2) Improving efficiency and reducing costs of specialty crop distribution systems.
- 3) Assisting all entries in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing "Good Agricultural Practices," "Good Handling Practices," "Good Manufacturing Practices," and in cost-sharing arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors.
- 4) Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes
- 5) Enhancing food safety
- 6) Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops
- 7) Developing local and regional food systems
- 8) Pest and disease control
- 9) Development of organic and sustainable production practices
- 10) Improving food access in underserved communities

2016 Priority Focus

We are **particularly interested** in projects which:

- 1) Establish new specialty crop production within social service communities such as shelters, elderly or retirement homes, and halfway residences.
- 2) Establish new specialty crop production within areas lacking fresh vegetable access and distribution (food deserts).
- 3) Assess, through research, which specialty crops are accepted by local communities and are amenable for urban heat islands and urban soils.
- 4) Assess, through research, techniques for increased production of specialty crops, improved pest and disease management, best practice sustainable production, and the health and well-being benefits of specialty crop production in the District
- 5) Address and expand on goals of UDC centered food hubs, as they pertain to specialty crops.

These goals are outlined below:

- a. Specialty crop production through biointensive and efficient urban agriculture including hydroponics and aquaponics;
- b. Specialty crop processing and preparation through commercial kitchens that serve as a business incubator;

- c. Specialty crop distribution through networked farmers' markets, grocery stores, restaurants;
- d. Closing the loop through waste reduction and reuse at sites that produce specialty crops.

All applicants must conduct their projects within the District of Columbia or directly benefit D.C. residents in a sustainable manner.

Examples of Acceptable Projects:

- A specialty crop organization requests funds to conduct a “Buy Local Produce” advertising or promotional campaign that will benefit DC specialty crop producers.
- An organization requests funding to partner with a university to conduct research on the feasibility of planting, cultivating, and growing a specialty crop in a particular area, the results of which can be shared with many growers throughout the District.
- A single farmer erects high tunnels on his/her property to extend the growing season of tomatoes and lettuce and conducts a field day and farm tour to encourage other small family farmers to adopt their production methods.

Examples of Unacceptable Projects:

- A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop for the purpose of making a profit, or to expand production of a single business.
- A sole proprietor requests grant funds to redesign her/his logo in order to make her/his specialty crop value-added product stand out at the local farmers market.
- A company that develops specialty crop value-added products requests funds to train its employees how to make its value-added products.
- A specialty crop producer requests funds to promote their crop at a roadside stand.

Required Project Outcomes (New for 2016)

Each project submitted in the State Plan **must** include at least one of the eight outcomes listed in the [SCBGP Evaluation Plan](#) and at least one of the indicators listed in the selected outcome(s). Applicants are required to determine for themselves which indicator is most relevant to their project. These 8 outcomes are as follows:

Outcome 1: To enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales

Outcome 2: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption

Outcome 3: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access and awareness

Outcome 4: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through greater capacity of sustainable

practices of specialty crop production resulting in increased yield, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and/or conservation of resources.

Outcome 5: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems

Outcome 6: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety

Outcome 7: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources

Outcome 8: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through enhancing or improving the economy as a result of specialty crop development.

Restrictions and Limitations on Grant Funds

Awards will **NOT** be granted to entities whose projects benefit or assume profit for an individual organization, institution or person.

The acceptance of the approved project budget by CAUSES will constitute a binding-spending plan. Any changes to that budget must have the prior approval of the grant administrator.

Funds awarded through this grant may only be used for allowable costs as stipulated and consistent with the provisions of the federal grant. This also means that the award support received from CAUSES may not exceed the allowable costs incurred by the recipient for those activities. Indirect costs are **NOT** allowed.

Additionally:

- Grant funds shall supplement the expenditure of state funds in support of specialty crops grown in that state, rather than replace state funds.
- Grant funds may not be used to fund political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. 1501-1508 and 7321-7326).
- Development or participation in lobbying activities pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1352 including costs of membership in organizations substantially engaged in lobbying are unallowable.
- **Capital expenditures** for general-purpose equipment, buildings and land are unallowable as direct and indirect charges.
 - Capital expenditures means expenditures for the acquisition cost of capital assets (i.e. equipment, buildings, land), or expenditures to make improvements to capital assets that materially increase their value or useful life. Acquisition cost means the cost of the asset including the cost to put it in place. Acquisition cost for equipment, for example, means the net

invoice price of the equipment, including the cost of any modifications, attachments, accessories, or auxiliary apparatuses necessary to make it usable for the purpose for which it is acquired. Ancillary charges, such as taxes, duty, protective in transit insurance, freight, and installation may be included in, or excluded from the acquisition cost in accordance with the governmental unit's regular accounting practices.

- **General purpose equipment** refers to equipment, which is not limited to research, scientific or other technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.
- **Equipment** refers to an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5000
 - Capital expenditures for special purpose equipment are allowable as direct costs, provided that items with a unit cost of \$5000 or more have the prior approval of the UDC/AES.
 - Special purpose equipment means equipment used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities. The special purpose equipment must solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops and benefit the specialty crop industry.
- **Rental costs** of buildings and equipment are allowable as direct costs in accordance with the cost principles in Subpart T of 7 CFR 3015.

2016 Specialty Crops Block Grant Program – Farm Bill (2016 SCBGP-FB)

Review Criteria - Proposal will be evaluated within the following categories:

1. **Significance:** The proposal should identify and explain how it meets the Specialty Crop competitiveness mandate and the possible effects of the actions or research on concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services or preventive interventions. **20 points**
2. **Approach:** The proposal should provide a framework, design, method, and analysis, which is well integrated, reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project. It is expected that the applicant will acknowledge potential problem areas and identify contingency approaches as necessary. **20 points**
3. **Research or Innovation:** The project proposal should be original and innovative. The activity or research should challenge existing paradigms or research, address a critical barrier, extend or develop and employ novel concepts, methodologies, or tools. **20 points**
4. **Environment:** The project environment and logistics should reasonably contribute to the probability of success. The proposal should adequately describe collaborative arrangements and any unique features of the action environment. **10 points**
5. **Leadership and organizational plan:** The proposal should describe the governance and organizational structure as well as specify the roles and responsibilities of key personnel. In addition, it should identify the expected outputs of external contractors. **5 points**
6. **Support Documentation:** The proposal should include letters of support, financial capability, reports of previous successful experience, resumes', and proof of good standing (non-debarment or suspension) within the Federal system. **5 points**
7. **Clarity and conciseness:** The proposal should follow a logical model pathway that clearly defines the undertaking, the resources, the expected outputs, and the expected outcomes. **10 points**
8. **Budget and Narratives:** The budget narrative should explain in detail how the funds will be used for each category and segregated from other funding sources. If using matching funds, matching fund sources should be elucidated clearly and be segregated from requested funds. **10 points**

Total Evaluative Points: 100