



MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF **AGRICULTURE**

2022 SCBG Grant Proposal Manual

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Grant Proposal Manual

Federal Fiscal Year 2022 Funding Cycle

Grant Proposal Due Date:

March 28, 2022, 2:00 p.m. MST

Contact:

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STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The Montana Department of Agriculture seeks your comments about this Grant Proposal Manual. We will consider the comments when we develop the next Manual for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Submit written stakeholder comments via e-mail to: scbg@mt.gov. In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2022 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Grant Proposal Manual.

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Funding Opportunity Description

Mission Statement

The mission of the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) is to protect producers and consumers, and to enhance and develop agriculture and allied industries.

Legislative Authority

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG) is authorized under section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 ([7 U.S.C. 1621 note](#)) and amended under [section 10010 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 113-79](#) (the Farm Bill). SCBG is currently implemented under [7 CFR part 1291](#) (published March 27, 2009; 74 FR 13313). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) administers the SCBG, sub-awarding funds to State departments of agriculture in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Purpose

Montana's SCBG Program assists entities in enhancing the competitiveness of Montana specialty crops.

Available Funds

MDA anticipates funding available of approximately \$5,500,000. MDA plans to award multiple grants from these funds.

Critical Dates

Date	Time*	Event	Venue
January 6, 2022	5:00 PM	Post Notice of Funding	MDA Website
March 3, 2022	1:00 PM	Open Question and Answer	Conference Call**
March 22, 2022	10:00 AM	Open Question and Answer	Conference Call**
March 28, 2022	2:00 PM	Applications Due to MDA	Amplifund
TBD	8:00 AM	Reviewer Meeting	MT Dept. of Ag

*All times in Mountain Standard Time

**Call information will be posted on the [MDA website](#)

General Compliance

Awarded grant projects must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and the terms of the grant award. The Grantee shall comply with the [Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004 of Public Law 108-465](#) as amended (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note); federal cost principles at [2 CFR Part 200](#) and excluded and disqualified participant requirements at [2 CFR Part 180, subpart C](#). For-profit applicants must also comply with Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 31.2, Contracts with Commercial Organizations, codified at [48 CFR Subpart 31.2](#).

Eligibility

Eligible & Ineligible Specialty Crops

A comprehensive definition of specialty crops can be found on the [USDA website](#).

Eligible specialty crops must be intensively cultivated and used by people for food, medicinal purposes, and/or aesthetic gratification to be eligible.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants

State and/or local organizations, government entities, producer associations, academia, community-based organizations, and other specialty crop stakeholders are eligible to apply either as single entities or in combined efforts. Regional or multi-state projects may be considered.

Enhance Specialty Crops

To be eligible for a grant, the project(s) **must enhance the competitiveness** of specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets and benefit crops grown in Montana.

Multiple Beneficiaries

MDA will not award grant funds for projects that solely benefit a commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution or individual. In addition, recipients and subrecipients cannot use grant funds to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services.

Minimum & Maximum Amount

Funding amount requested must be a minimum of \$10,000; there is no maximum.

UEI Number

In order to receive an award all applying entities (as defined in [2 CFR Part 25, subpart C](#)) must provide a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. A UEI can be obtained for free through SAM.gov at <https://sam.gov/content/home>.

Debarment & Suspension

Organizations or individuals that are suspended, debarred, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from eligibility for covered transactions by any Federal department or agency cannot, during the period of suspension, debarment, or exclusion, receive MDA and/or USDA grants or be paid from MDA and/or USDA grant funds, whether under an award, subaward, or contract. Charges made to the SCBG for such individuals (e.g., salary) are unallowable. Regulations published in [2 CFR part 180](#), as adopted and supplemented by USDA at [2 CFR part 417](#); describe the government-wide debarment and suspension requirements.

You are required to disclose if any of the following conditions apply to Subrecipient or principals, including all key grant management personnel:

- Within the 3-year period preceding the application, the Applicant or its principals have been convicted of, or had a civil judgment rendered against them, for:
 - fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, State, or local) transaction or contract under a public transaction;
 - violation of a Federal or State antitrust statute;
 - embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification, or destruction of records; or
 - false statements or receipt of stolen property.
- The Applicant or its principals are presently indicted or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State, or local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated above.
- Within a 3-year period preceding the application, the Applicant or its principals had any public transaction (Federal, State, or local) terminated for cause or default.

A variety of “lower-tier” covered transactions are also subject to these requirements. Contracts (including individual consultants) under grants (where the contract requires the provision of goods or services that will equal or exceed \$25,000) and all subawards also are subject to these suspension and debarment rules. The requirements of [Subpart C of 2 CFR part 180](#) provide Subrecipient’s responsibilities when entering into a lower-tier transaction.

Delinquency on Federal Debt

Any organization or individual that is indebted to the United States and has a judgment lien filed against it for a debt to the United States, is ineligible to receive a Federal grant. Applicants are required to inform MDA if they are delinquent on any Federal debt. If an applicant discloses a delinquency, MDA may not award a grant until the debt is satisfied or satisfactory arrangements are made with the agency to which the debt is owed.

Anyone who has been judged to be in default on a Federal debt and who has had a judgment lien filed against him or her should not be a participant in an application for a SCBG grant until the judgment is paid in full or is otherwise satisfied. No funds may be re-budgeted following an award to pay such an individual. MDA will disallow costs charged to awards that provide funds to individuals in violation of this requirement.

Past Performance

An applicant may be removed from competition in the screening stage if they previously received funding from MDA and failed to adequately deliver on the conditions of that funding. Failure to perform may include, but is not limited to:

- Inability to responsibly manage funds
- Inability to adhere to reporting requirements
- Failure to provide agreed upon deliverables

Eligible Projects

USDA encourages entities to develop projects pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry:

- Enhancing food safety;
- Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (21 U.S.C. Chapter 27), for example, developing “Good Agricultural Practices,” “Good Handling Practices,” “Good Manufacturing Practices,” and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems (including USDA GroupGAP) for small farmers, packers and processors;
- Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
- Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
- Pest and disease control;
- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems; and
- Sustainability.

Projects that support the increased consumption of fruits and vegetables in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing incentives at the point of purchase and/or include technologies for benefit redemption systems should consider submitting those projects to the [Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program \(FINI\)](#).

Projects that support domestic farmers’ markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities, local and regional food business enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, or store locally or regionally produced food products should consider submitting those projects to the [Farmers Market Promotion Program](#) and [Local Food Promotion Program](#).

Projects that support biobased products and bioenergy and energy programs, including biofuels and other alternative uses for agricultural and forestry commodities (development of biobased products) should see the USDA energy website at <http://www.usda.gov/energy/matrix/home> for information on how to submit those projects for consideration to the energy programs supported by USDA.

Examples of Acceptable Projects

- A non-profit organization requests funds to conduct an advertising campaign that will benefit its specialty crop members.
- 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 the 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 to make a profit, or to expand production of a single business or organization.
- A single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase its membership.

Priorities

The following priorities have been adopted by MDA specific to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. These priorities are used to guide the MDA director in making decisions on funding recommendations.

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Providing Farmer Education on Specialty Crop

- Farm to institution practices
- Value-added production
- Disease and pest management
- Farm and food safety
- Organic production
- Use of beneficial organisms
- Business promotion and development

Supporting Research in the areas of Specialty Crop

- Disease and pest management
- Variety testing and selection
- Organic production
- Use of beneficial organisms
- Specialty crop product development
- Adaptability and Resiliency

Planning and supporting Infrastructures that create or support Specialty Crop

- Storage
- Processing
- Farm to institute
- Pest management assistance for farmers

Increasing Consumer Awareness of the Value of Specialty Crops through

- Education
- Market Development

Representing a Geographic Diversity of Projects across the State

Multiple Grant Proposals

An entity may submit more than one grant proposal only if the proposals are for distinctly different projects.

Multi-State Partnerships

A project is multi-state when an organization receives SCBG funding from more than one state to execute the same or multiple components of the same project. The project must be identified as a multi-state project in the Grant Proposal.

Applicants should specifically address how the funds requested benefit Montana.

How to apply

Applications for this grant should be completed on the provided forms in the appendices and submitted via the Amplifund website. Forms are also posted on the [Montana specialty crop webpage](#) in an open format.

Applications will only be accepted on the forms provided and submitted through Amplifund. Applications may not be submitted on paper or through email.

Important Dates

Final Grant Proposal Due Date

Completed grant proposal packets must be uploaded and submitted via Amplifund no later than **2:00 p.m. Monday, March 28, 2022. Late applications will not be accepted.**

Project Operating Dates

Proposed projects should start no earlier than September 30, 2022 and end no later than September 29, 2025.

Submission

Requirements for submitting the grant are as follows:

Grant Proposal Packet Requirements

Applicants **must** adhere to the instructions in this manual to be eligible for grant funds. Grant Proposals must be submitted in their entirety. Applications should not contain any materials not requested in this packet. **Any additional materials submitted, including letters of support, will not be provided to the Grant Review Workgroup.**

Method

Applications must be uploaded and submitted via Amplifund. If technical difficulties make submitting an application impossible, the applicant must contact the SCBG Program Manager **prior to the application due date.**

Instructions for the Proposal template

Applicant Self-Assessment

Appendix A

Grantees will be required to complete the Applicant Self-Assessment form provided in Appendix A. The intent of this form is to inform the screening team of the capacity of the applicant organization to effectively manage federal grants. This form will not be provided to the Grant Review Workgroup and does not affect grant scoring.

Application Narrative

Appendix B

The following instructions should be read prior to drafting your application.

Cover Sheet

Company/Organization Name

Provide the officially registered name of the Applicant company/organization, matching the name registered for the provided UEI number.

DBA

If applicable, fill in the officially registered “doing business as” name.

Business/Organization Type

Select only one of the provided options.

Tax ID

Provide your organization’s Federally-assigned tax ID.

DUNS or UEI #

In order to receive an award all applying entities (as defined in [2 CFR Part 25, subpart C](#)) must provide a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. A UEI can be obtained for free through SAM.gov at <https://sam.gov/content/home>.

Grant Project Contact

The Grant Project Contact is the individual responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the grant if awarded. If the Grant Project Contact is not an employee of the applicant, a formal written agreement with the Grant Project Contact, specifying an official relationship between the parties, must be established.

Grant Management Contact

The Grant Management Contact is representative of the applicant with authority to act on their organization’s behalf in matters related to the acceptance and administration of grants. This individual agrees that the organization will assume the obligations imposed by applicable Federal and State statutes and regulations and other terms and conditions of the award, including any assurances.

Project Title

Provide a title that accurately and succinctly describes the project, **limited to fifteen words**.

Project Start Date

The project start date should be no earlier than September 30, 2022. Projects do not have to be initiated on the grant effective date but should be initiated as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be achieved within the funded project period.

Project End Date

Project end date should be no later than September 29, 2025.

Crop(s) benefitting from project

Indicate the specific specialty crop the proposed project will focus on. For questions, start with the [list of crops commonly considered](#).

Other

Indicate whether this project have a substantial focus on benefiting:

- ***Beginning farmers*** - individuals or entities who have not operated a farm for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.
- ***Socially disadvantaged farmers*** - a farmer who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A “Socially Disadvantaged Group” is 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 a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program
- ***Multi-state*** - A multi-state partnership is a project that implements activities with measurable outcomes that benefit two or more U.S. States and/or Territories.
- ***Covid-19*** – Implementation of market adaptations related to COVID-19 for projects that benefit a variety of businesses.

Narrative

Abstract

Include a project summary of 250 words or less, suitable for dissemination to the public. It should include:

1. *The name of the applicant organization*
2. *A concise outline the project's desired outcome(s), and*
3. *A description of the general tasks to be completed during the project period to fulfill each outcome.*

Project Purpose:

1. **What is the specific issue, problem or need?**
 - What is the problem or need that you are trying to address?
 - Why is the project important and timely?
 - What is the importance to specialty crop stakeholders?
2. **What are the objectives of the project?** Provide a listing of the objectives that this project hopes to achieve.

Potential Impact

1. **Who are the beneficiaries of the project?** Be specific, describe the population affected and where they are located. Use statistics to describe the target population.

2. **How many beneficiaries will be impacted?** The answer to this must include a number.
3. **How will the beneficiaries be impacted by the project?** Be specific and refer to the target population. Discuss their current condition and how the activities performed will improve that condition.

Outreach

Describe how you will share the results of the project with specialty crop growers and other interested specialty crop stakeholders.

Project Support

Describe the individuals and organizations that will support the project and the nature of the support they are providing.

Eligibility

By marking the box provided, you confirm that this project enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops in accordance with and defined by [7 U.S.C. 1621](#). Further information regarding the definition of a specialty crop can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp.

Previous Efforts

If this project builds on a previously funded SCBG project?

1. Describe how the project differs from and builds on the previous project.
2. Provide a summary (3 to 5 sentences) of the outcomes of the previous project(s)
3. What was learned from implementing this project, including potential improvements?
4. How are the lessons-learned incorporated to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes?
5. Describe the likelihood of your efforts becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds.

Support from Other Federal or State Grant Programs

Did you submit this project to a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBG for funding and/or is a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBG funding the project currently? If YES:

1. Identify which Federal and/or State grant program
2. Describe how the SCBG project differs from or supplements the other grant program(s) efforts.

Project Funding

Provide the following information in this section:

Could the outcomes of this project be accomplished with a reduced budget?

Indicating areas for potential cuts does not guarantee any cuts to your budget or project.

If NO, you are indicating that the project could not be accomplished with a reduced budget (i.e. the funding decision must be “all or nothing”).

If YES, indicate which areas of the project could be cut and any resulting changes in project outcomes.

Research Methods (optional)

If your proposal is research focused use this section to describe research design and methods.

Citations (optional)

A list of citations may be added to the application but is strictly optional.

Budget Narrative

Appendix C

If Applicants have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing the Federal [cost principles](#), contact the [SCBG Program Manager](#).

A thorough and detailed budget must be submitted with the Grant Proposal packet. MDA reserves the right to reject Proposals in which the budget calculations or figures cannot easily be discerned.

Round totals to the nearest whole dollar.

The funding amount requested must be a minimum of \$10,000; there is no maximum.

Matching funds are not required.

Personnel

List the organization’s employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities.

List the organization’s employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities.

Personnel Justification

For each individual, describe the activities to be completed, including approximately when activities will occur.

Fringe Benefits

Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project’s employees listed in the Personnel section.

For each employee list:

- **Name/ Title:** Provide the name and title of each employee directly charging time to the grant.
- **Fringe Benefit Calculation:** Show how the funds requested are calculated.
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting.

Travel

Explain the purpose for each trip request by completing the following:

- **Trip Destination**
- **Type of Expense:** airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.
- **Unit of Measure:** days, miles, nights, etc.
- **Number of Units**
- **Cost per Unit:** \$/night, \$/mile etc.
- **# of Travelers Claiming Expense**
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting.

Travel Guidance

Allowable for domestic travel when costs are limited to those allowed by organizational policy and the purpose aligns with the purpose project.

Allowable foreign travel includes any travel outside Canada, Mexico, the United States, and any United States territories and possessions. Projects must provide justification for the travel. It is recommended that applicants search the Foreign Agricultural Service database of GAIN reports to ensure that proposals will not duplicate information that already exists.

For organizations that do not have formal travel policies and for-profit entities, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by General Services Administration (GSA), including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. If a recipient does not have a formal travel policy, those regulations will be used to determine the amount that may be charged for travel costs.

In the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares.

Travel Justification

For each trip, describe the purpose of the trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Include the approximate date of the trip.

Equipment

Describe any special purpose equipment to be purchased or rented under the grant. “Special purpose equipment” is tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 per unit and is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities

Rental of general-purpose equipment must also be described in this section. Purchase of general-purpose equipment is not allowable under this grant.

- **Item Description:** What is the equipment
- **Purchase or Rent:** Will the equipment be purchased or rented
- **Purchase Date:** Approximately when will the equipment be purchased

- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting.

Equipment guidance

Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land are unallowable as direct charges to the grant.

Capital Expenditures means expenditures for the acquisition cost of the capital assets (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 that the net invoice price of the equipment, including the cost of any modifications, attachments, accessories, or auxiliary apparatus necessary to make it usable for the purpose for which it is acquired. Ancillary charges, such as tax, 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 -unallowable- means 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 means an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000.

Capital expenditures for special purpose equipment are allowable as direct costs, provided that items with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more have the prior approval of MDA.

Special Purpose Equipment means equipment which is used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities. Examples of special purpose equipment include microscopes, spectrometers, and equipment which are used for a single purpose to solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops and benefit the specialty crop industry and not a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.

Equipment Justification

For each Equipment item describe how this equipment will be used to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project.

Supplies

List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal.

Complete the following:

- **Item Description:** What is going to be purchased
- **Per Unit Cost:** the cost of each individual item purchased
- **Number of Units/Pieces Purchased:** How many of the item will be purchased
- **Acquire When:** Approximately when will the purchase be made
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting.

Supplies Justification

Describe the purpose of each supply listed and how it is necessary for the completion of the project.

Contractual

Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be described separately.

Complete the following:

- **Contractor Name:** List the name of the selected contractor or indicate the contractor has not been selected.
- **Hourly Rate/Flat Rate:** List the contractor's fee.
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting.

Contractual Justification

For each contractor describe the activities and how they meet the objectives and outcomes of the project. Include timelines for each activity.

If contracted employee or consultant hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in your area, provide a justification for the expense. The consultant hourly rate does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses.

Other

Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section may include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, publication costs, and data collection.

If you budget meal costs for reasons other than meals associated with travel per diem, provide adequate justification to support that these costs are not entertainment costs.

To complete this section:

- **Item Description:** What will be purchased.
- **Per Unit Cost**
- **Number of units Provided**
- **Purchase Date:** When will the purchase be made.
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting.

Other Justification

Describe the purpose of each item and how it is necessary for the completion of the project.

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are not an allowable grant expense.

Program Income

Program income is gross income—earned by a recipient under a grant—directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned only because of the grant agreement, during the grant period of performance. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award; registration fees for conferences, etc.

To complete this section:

- **Source of Income:** Describe how program income will be generated by this project.
- **Description of how funds will be invested:** To enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops
- **Estimated Income:** How much income do you anticipate earning from the described source?

Program income may only be expended on allowable costs that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Next Steps

After submitting the Grant Proposal Packet the Amplifund system will notify you of receipt. MDA encourages all Applicants to submit proposals at least one week prior to the due date to ensure on-time receipt. If you do not receive a notification of receipt within 24 hours of the due date, contact SCBG Program Manager.

Confidential Information

After grant awards have been made, all Grant Proposal packets and the associated evaluations will be available to the public. PRIOR TO SUBMITTING a proposal to the Department you must send a written description of the information you believe is subject to confidentiality (including trade secrets, as defined by Mont. Code Ann. 30-14-402). Department legal staff will review the description to determine if the information is such that there is an individual privacy interest worthy of constitutional protection. If the privacy interest clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure, the Department will furnish the applicant with a confidentiality agreement to be signed and submitted with the constitutionally protected information. Information received pursuant to an approved confidentiality agreement will be available for review only by the SCGB Manager, the evaluation committee members, the Department of Agriculture Director and Department legal counsel. Applicants shall pay all legal costs associated with defending a claim for confidentiality should another person or entity submit a “right to know” (open records) request.

Screening

Screening Team

The first step in the Funding process is screening. MDA's Internal Screening Team reviews proposals according to the items in the Screening Criteria section below.

Screening Criteria

Criteria

- Are all required materials included in the application?
- Are all sections of the proposal complete?
- Is the applicant's organization eligible to apply?
- Are the applicant and listed contractors eligible to receive federal funds (not suspended or debarred)?
- Is the application in compliance with applicable federal and state regulations and in alignment with this notice?
- If a current SCBG grantee, are all invoicing and reporting current?
- If a previous grantee, has the organization successfully completed past projects?
- Does the proposed project enhance the competitiveness of the specialty crops?
- Does the Proposal clearly define a challenge that is facing today's specialty crop industry and indicate a project which will assist in finding a solution?
- Does the applicant have the background and ability to successfully manage and complete the proposed project?

If the screening team answers no to any of the above questions the application will be removed from competition.

Screening Results

Grant Proposals passing Screening will proceed to Evaluation. Grant Proposals that do not pass screening will not receive further consideration for an award. Neither the Screening Team, nor MDA is required to recommend funding a project that does not sufficiently satisfy the screening criteria.

SCBG Program Manager will notify all Applicants of the results of the screening process within 30 days of the due date. Applicants may protest the screening decision of a rejected proposal as described in the Request for reconsideration section of this manual.

The second step in the funding decision process is Evaluation.

Evaluation

Evaluation Workgroup

MDA will send applications that pass screening to the Evaluation Workgroup. MDA selects the Evaluation Workgroup based on expertise and geographic distribution. In order to ensure high quality and fair reviews, the evaluation workgroup will consist of technical experts from various fields.

Conflict of Interest

Individuals selected for the evaluation workgroup are responsible for notifying MDA staff of any potential conflict of interest, real or apparent, with any applicant requesting funding. MDA Legal staff will review all disclosed conflicts of interest to determine whether a conflict of interest exists. If a conflict exists, the workgroup member will be recused from participating in the decision process on the conflicted application. Workgroup members will disclose any conflict of interest and certify that they are otherwise free from any conflict of interest.

Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation workgroup will use the Evaluation Criteria below to rate the Grant Proposal packets and make recommendations for funding to MDA's Director.

Category	Points possible	Assessment areas
Project purpose	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the applicant define the need for and purpose of the project?Is the project important and timely?Are the project objectives clear and appropriate?
Potential Impact	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Does the applicant define a specific group of specialty crop industry beneficiaries?Does the applicant provide a reasonable estimate of the number of beneficiaries that will be impacted?Does the applicant describe how beneficiaries will be impacted by the project?Do they show that the project will improve upon the current conditions that are facing producers?Does the applicant demonstrate that the project will have a significant economic impact for the specialty crop industry?
Outreach	10	Does the applicant present a plan to share information from this project with specialty crop growers and stakeholders?
Project Support	10	Does the applicant demonstrate that they have engaged critical stakeholders that will help to ensure the success and impact of the project?
Budget	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Is the amount requested reasonable?Are line items reasonable and appropriate?Does the budget narrative adequately explain the line items?

Scoring Matrix

Members of the grant review workgroup will be given the table below as guidance for scoring applications.

Points Possible	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
40	<21	21-30	31-36	37-40
30	<16	16-23	24-27	28-30
10	<6	6-7	8-9	10

Applications will be ranked based on the consensus (not average) scores of the grant review workgroup. Rankings will be presented to the MDA Director who will make the final determination regarding which applications will be recommended to USDA-AMS for funding.

The third step in the funding decision process is review and recommendation by the MDA Director.

Director's Recommendation

The MDA Director (or their designee) will make all final decisions on which applications are submitted to USDA. In making their decision, the Director will utilize the Evaluation workgroup's ranking of applications, the funding priorities identified in this packet and any other materials the Director may deem pertinent.

SCBG Program Manager will notify all Applicants of the results of the Evaluation process and inclusion in the Director's decision within 90 days of the application due date.

USDA-AMS Approval

Applications selected by the Director for submission will be sent to USDA-AMS for final review. USDA-AMS will conduct a review to ensure proposals meet the statutory purpose of the program, are in accordance with regulations and costs are allowable. USDA-AMS may require additional information from Applicants at this time; failure to provide the requested information in a timely manner may result in loss of funding.

Once all administrative and programmatic issues have been resolved, USDA-AMS will notify MDA and the SCBG Program Manager will notify Applicants of the results. MDA anticipates that grant awards and notifications will be made in October 2022.

The last step in the funding process is a formal grant contract agreement.

Grant Agreement

Once official notification of award is received from USDA-AMS, MDA staff will supply each grantee with a contract formalizing the relationship under which the project will be conducted. Grantees must sign and return the contract to MDA before funds can be drawn on the project. In signing the contract, the grantee agrees to complete the project as described in the final proposal accepted by USDA-AMS, this will include any agreed upon revisions between the grantee, MDA and USDA-AMS.

Requests for Reconsideration

Applicants who wish to have the results of Screening or Evaluation reconsidered may make such request based on substantive issues of fact concerning bias, discrimination, conflicts of interest and/or non-compliance with procedures described in this Funding Notice.

The request for reconsideration must be submitted in writing to the Department of Agriculture SCGB Program Manager within 7 days following notification of the Screening or Evaluation results.

Requests for reconsideration must describe the substantive fact(s) concerning bias, discrimination, conflict of interest, or noncompliance that affected the screening or evaluation of their proposal.

MDA Legal Counsel and/or their designee will review the request for reconsideration to determine whether the claims made are substantiated and likely to have resulted in an inaccurate, inconsistent or unfair assessment of their proposal.

The applicant will be notified of the results of Legal Counsel's review within 7 days of the receipt of their request.

Should MDA Legal Counsel find that claims are substantiated, all application materials and the accompanying request for reconsideration will be provided to the MDA Director prior to the selection of applications for inclusion in the state plan.

Appendix A Applicant Self-Assessment

Applicant Self-Assessment of Internal Controls and Risks

Montana Department of Agriculture will use this form to assess the risk of awarding a grant for each applicant. Answers will determine eligibility to qualify for funding and the extent to which special conditions may be applied (such as reporting frequency, site visits, etc.) should a grant be awarded.

Company/Organization Name	
Grant Project Contact	
Project Title	
Date Prepared	

Staff Qualifications

3 or more	1-3	Less than 1	Internal Control
			How many years of experience managing projects of this type does the Grant Project Contact have?
			How many years of experience does the Grant Project Contact have in working with federal grants?
Comments:			

Control Environment

Answer "yes" if activity in question applies to your organization. Each "no" answer indicates a potential weakness of internal controls. All "no" answers require an explanation.

Organizational Structure

Yes	N/A	No	Internal Control
			Do organizational policies exist delegating grant/financial management responsibilities among staff?
			In addition to program staff, are financial and management personnel involved in the day-to-day implementation of grant funded projects?
Comments:			

Internal Controls

Yes	N/A	No	Internal Control
			Are written personnel policies maintained?
			Are processes in place to ensure that wages charged to the grant are reviewed and based on actual time and effort?
			Are policies in place that clearly delegate authority within the organization and identify staff responsibilities?

			Are procedures in place to ensure supervisors, financial staff and managers receive adequate training on federal grant management practices?
			Is a list of authorized check signers maintained?
			Are accounting policies in place to ensure that expenses are accompanied by source documentation?
			Does your organization have a written travel policy?
			Are written procurement policies maintained and followed by your organization?
			Do policies exist to separate accounting duties, such as the preparing and signing of checks?
			Are all records, checks, and supporting documents retained according to a written policy complying with state and federal regulations?
			Are periodic (monthly, quarterly) reports of budget to actual spending prepared and reviewed by both accounting and grant staff?
			Does your accounting system track the receipt and disbursement of funds by each grant or source of funding?
			Are there policies and procedures to provide for the appropriate use of program income?
Comments:			

Allowable Activities & Costs

Yes	N/A	No	Internal Control
			Are procedures in place to ensure that all expenditures are allowable prior to the outlay of funds?
			Have personnel responsible for coding expenditures been trained on federal grant management?
			Are all grant documents made available to grant staff to ensure their ability to adequately review for the allowability of expenditures?
			Are periodic (monthly, quarterly) reviews of the status of actual to planned program performance prepared and reviewed by staff?
Comments:			

Equipment Management

This section is required only if you requested funds for Special Purpose Equipment in your proposal.

Yes	N/A	No	Internal Control
			Are fixed asset records maintained that adequately classify and identify individual items, as well as detailing their location?
			Is someone assigned responsibility to ensure that all equipment is properly maintained?
			Is insurance coverage maintained for grant purchased equipment?
Comments:			

Matching Funds or Program Income in your proposal.

Matching Funds & Program Income

This section is required only if you indicated Matching Funds or Program Income in your proposal.

Yes	N/A	No	Internal Control
			Does your organization use as standard form to document “in-kind” contributions?
			Are cash match contributions entered into your organizations accounting system?
			Are cash/check receipt policies and procedures clearly documented and communicated to personnel?
			Are there policies and procedures to provide for the appropriate use of program income?
Comments:			

Audit

Yes	N/A	No	Internal Control
			Does your organization expend \$750,000 or more during the non-Federal entity's fiscal year in Federal awards?
			Does our organization engage in audits compliant with OMB Circular a-133?
			Was your previous audit free of significant findings?
			Have audits been conducted by a CPA or Licensed Public Accountant
			Are past audit reports kept on file?
Comments:			

Appendix B Application Narrative

View the Grant Proposal Manual for instructions and more information.

Cover Sheet

Organization Information									
Company/Organization Name									
DBA (if applicable)									
Business/Organization Type (select one)	Agricultural producer or processor				Local government agency				
	Non-profit				College or university				
	State government				Other:				
Tax ID #									
UEI #									
Grant Project Contact									
Mailing Address									
Physical Address									
Phone									
Email									
Grant Management Contact									
Phone					Email				
Project Information									
Project Title (limited to <u>fifteen</u> words)									
Project Start Date					Project End Date				
Crop(s) benefitting from project									
Will project benefit beginning farmers?*		Yes		No	Will project benefit socially disadvantaged farmers?***		Yes		No
Is this a multi-state project?		Yes		No	List partnering state(s)				
Does project include market adaptations for COVID-19?		Yes		No	If yes, explanation				

***Beginning farmers** - individuals or entities who have not operated a farm for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

****Socially disadvantaged farmers** - means a farmer who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A “Socially Disadvantaged Group” is 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 a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program

Narrative

Abstract

Include a project summary of 250 words or less, suitable for dissemination to the public. It should include:

1. *The name of the applicant organization*
2. *A concise outline the project's outcome(s), and*
3. *A description of the general tasks to be completed during the project period to fulfill reach outcomes.*

Project Purpose

1. What is the specific issue, problem or need?

- What is the problem or need that you are trying to address?
- Why is the project important and timely?
- What is the importance to specialty crop stakeholders?

2. What are the objectives of the project? Provide a Listing of the Objectives that this Project Hopes to Achieve

Objective Name	Objective Description
1)	
2)	
3)	

Potential Impact

1. **Who are the beneficiaries of the project?** Be as specific as possible, describe the population affected and where they are located. Use statistics to describe the target population.

2. **How many beneficiaries will be impacted?** The answer to this must include a number.

3. **How will the beneficiaries be impacted by the project?** Be specific and refer to the target population. Discuss their current condition and how the activities performed will improve that condition.

--

Outreach

Describe how you will share the results of the project with specialty crop growers and other interested specialty crop stakeholders.

--

External Project Support

Describe the individuals and organizations that support the nature of the support they are providing.

--

Eligibility

By marking the box below, I confirm that this project enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops in accordance with and defined by [7 U.S.C. 1621](#). Further information regarding the definition of a specialty crop can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp.

Yes	
-----	--

Previous Efforts

Does the project build on a previously funded SCBG project?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

If YES,

1. Describe how the project differs from and builds on the previous project.

--

2. Provide a summary (3 to 5 sentences) of the outcomes of the previous project(s).

--

3. What was learned from implementing this project, including potential improvements?

--

4. How are the lessons-learned being incorporated to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes?

--

5. Describe the likelihood of your efforts becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds.

--

Support from Other Federal or State Grant Programs

Did you submit this project to a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP for funding and/or is a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP funding the project currently?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

If YES,

1. Identify which Federal and/or State grant program

--

2. Describe how the SCBGP project differs from or supplements the other grant program(s) efforts.

--

Project Funding

Provide the following information in this section:

Could the outcomes of this project be accomplished with a reduced budget?

	No, this project would not be possible with a reduced budget.
--	---

	Yes, we would accept a reduced amount that, if granted, could still accomplish the outcomes of this project. OR
	Yes, we would accept a reduced amount, with corresponding reductions in outcomes.

Research Methods (optional)

If your proposal is research focused use this section to describe research design and methods.

Citations (Optional)

A list of citations may be added to the application but is strictly optional.

Appendix C Budget Narrative

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Budget Narrative / Federal Fiscal Year 2022 Funding Cycle

Please round totals to the next whole dollar.

Funding amount requested must be a minimum of \$10,000; there is no maximum.

Personnel

List the organization's employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities.

Name/Title:	Level of Effort (# of hours OR % FTE)	Funds Requested

Total Personnel Funds Requested

Personnel Justification

For each individual, describe the activities to be completed, including approximately when activities will occur. Add more personnel by copying and pasting the existing listing.

Personnel 1:	
Personnel 2:	

Fringe Benefits

Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project's salaried employees described in the Personnel section that will be paid with SCBGP funds.

Name/Title:	Fringe Benefit Rate Calculation:	Funds Requested

Total Fringe Funds Requested

Travel

Explain the purpose for each Trip Request. Please note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. For recipient organizations that have no formal travel policy and for-profit recipients, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <http://www.gsa.gov>.

Trip Destination:	Expense Type: (airfare, hotel, per diem, etc.)	Unit of Measure: (days, nights, miles)	# of Units:	Cost Per Unit:	# of Travelers Claiming expense	Funds Requested

Total Travel Funds Requested

Travel Justification

For each trip, describe the purpose of the trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Be sure to include the approximate date of the trip.

Trip 1:	<input type="text"/>	Date(s):	<input type="text"/>
Trip 2:	<input type="text"/>	Date(s):	<input type="text"/>

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that my organization's established travel policies will be adhered to when completing the above-mentioned trips in accordance with 2 CFR 200.474 or 48 CFR subpart 31.2 as applicable.

☐

Equipment

Describe any special purpose equipment to be purchased or rented under the grant. "Special purpose equipment" is tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 per unit and is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities.

Rental of "general purpose equipment" must also be described in this section. Purchase of general-purpose equipment is not allowable under this grant.

Item Description:	Purchase or Rent?	Purchase Date?	Funds Requested
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Total Equipment Funds Requested

Equipment Justification

For each Equipment item describe how this equipment will be used to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project.

Equipment 1:	<input type="text"/>
Equipment 2:	<input type="text"/>

Supplies

List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal and solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Item Description:	Per Unit Cost	# of Units	Purchase Date?	Funds Requested
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Total Supplies Funds Requested

Supplies Justification

Describe the purpose of each supply listed and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s).

Item 1:	<input type="text"/>
Item 2:	<input type="text"/>

Contractual

Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be described separately. (Repeat this section for each contract/consultant).

Contractor:	Hourly Rate/Flat Rate:	Funds Requested

Program Income

Program income is gross income—earned by a recipient under a grant—directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned only because of the grant agreement, during the grant period of performance. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award; registration fees for conferences, etc.

Source of Income	Description of how you will reinvest the program income into the project to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops	Estimated Income