

Request for Proposal (RFP)

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

Website: www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-SCBGP-2015

**Fiscal Year 2015
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: www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp.

Available Funding

The total available funding for the District of Columbia is approximately \$210,837.58 for FY 2015 through FY 2018. 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 provide 20 percent 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 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, 2016 and will end on February 28, 2018.

Additional Notifications

- Failure to follow instructions completely may result in non-consideration of 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 received after the close of business on June 5, 2015, 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, June 5, 2015**

Review of proposals, **June 8- June 26, 2015**

Award announcements **July 1, 2015**

DC State Plan due to USDA-AMS: **July 8, 2015**

USDA notifies UDC of approval of funding for grant projects included in the state plan: **September 2015**

All Applicants are notified of the status of their applications: **September – October, 2015**

UDC Grant Contracts are prepared for Grant recipients: **November 2015 -January 2016**

Anticipated start date for selected projects. Funded projects may begin upon execution of a grant agreement with UDC: **February 1, 2016**

Submission should be mailed to:

whare@udc.edu and Lorraine.clarke@udc.edu

Lorraine Weller Clarke
Project Specialist in Urban Agriculture
Building 44, Room 100-19
College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability, and Environmental Sciences
The University of the District of Columbia
4200 Connecticut Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
(202) 274-6494

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

2015 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 and survey analysis, attitudes, descriptions, and develop alternative approaches toward affecting behavioral change for specialty crop consumption.
- 4) Education focused projects that support entrepreneurs and farmers who wish to produce specialty crops on the newly available urban land through the DC Urban Farming and Food Security Act (<http://lims.dccouncil.us/Legislation/B20-0677>).
- 5) Research based projects assessing intercropping 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.

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.

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.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

Project proposal should detail the information necessary to fulfill its goals and objectives. The acceptable font size for the narrative is 11 or 12 pitch with all margins set at 1-inch. The following information must be included.

Project Title *(15 words or less)*

Abstract

Include a project summary of 250 words or less suitable for dissemination to the public. It should include the reason for the project or program, a brief description of the goals and outcomes, and your plan for evaluating and measuring the success.

Project Partner Organization

Include the name of the applicant organization that will establish an agreement or contractual relationship with the State Department of Agriculture to lead and execute the **project**.

Project Purpose

- What is the specific issue, problem, or need that the project will address?
- Why is the project important and timely?
- What are the objectives of the project?
- If any of the project activities or costs has the potential to enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops (ex: farmers market, buy local program, CSA etc.) describe the methods or processes you will implement to verify all grant funds are expended on activities and costs that only enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. If you propose a cost-share or match to cover non-specialty crop activities and costs, include the specific costs or contributions proposed to meet the cost-share or match, the source of funding or contributions, and describe how you determined the appropriate amount of cost-share or match.
- If the project is a continuation of a project that the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funded previously, describe how the project differs from and builds on the previous project's efforts. Specifically, provide a summary (between three and five sentences per project) of the accomplishments of the previous project that have led you to seek continued funding.
- Describe the likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds. How will this project be supported after grant funds run out?
- Have you submitted the project to another federal or state grant program other than the SCBGP for funding and/or is another federal or state grant program other than the SCBGP funding the project currently?

- If no, indicate that you have not.
- If yes, identify the Federal and/or State grant program by name and describe how the new project differs from and supplements efforts of the SCBGP and the other Federal or State grant program rather than duplicates funding efforts. The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects.

EXAMPLE

Many school children do not have access to healthy fruits and vegetables (ISSUE). The School Nutrition Association will subsidize installation of salad bars in forty schools to increase access to nutritious fruits, vegetables and nuts in school breakfasts and lunches (OBJECTIVE). Not only will this result in increased purchases from specialty crop growers, but the evaluation component also will provide a model for other schools in their efforts to market healthy meals to children (IMPORTANCE). This project has not been submitted to or funded by another Federal or State grant program.

Potential Impact

This section must show how the project benefits the specialty crop industry and/or the public or multiple states rather than only a particular commercial product, single organization, institution or individual.

- Who are the specialty crop beneficiaries of the project?
- How many specialty crop beneficiaries will the project benefit?
- How will the project benefit the specialty crop beneficiaries?
- What is the potential economic impact of the project if it can be estimated?
- If applicable, how will the project have a multi-state (benefitting two more or states) or national impact?

Expected Measurable Outcomes

Provide at least one distinct quantifiable and measurable project outcome that solely supports enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. If the outcome measures are long-term and occur after the project’s completion, then identify an intermediate outcome that occurs before the end of the grant period and that is expected to help lead to the fulfillment of long-term outcomes. For further information on expected measurable outcomes, please see the [Outcomes Model](#) or this [Educational Bulletin](#)

- Provide a GOAL - A goal is what you hope to achieve as a result of conducting the activities and producing the outputs (tangible results that can be seen, touched, handled or moved about) of the project. Examples of outcome-oriented goals could include a change in knowledge, change in behavior, change in conditions that make a difference for the beneficiaries of the project.

GOAL:

- Provide a PERFORMANCE MEASURE. Identify a performance measure for each goal that you will use to measure the actual project results compared to the expected results. These are usually expressed in quantifiable terms and should be objective and measurable (numeric values, percentages, scores and indices, although in certain circumstances qualitative measures are appropriate).

PERFORMANCE MEASURE:

- Provide a BENCHMARK - For each performance measure provided, include a benchmark, or the baseline data against which you will measure your success. Examples of a benchmark could include current or initial level of knowledge, current behavior, or current conditions.

BENCHMARK:

- Provide a TARGET - For each benchmark provided, indicate the TARGET. The TARGET is the level of change that you anticipate by the completion of the project. This is NOT the target audience or target population.

TARGET:

- Provide your PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN. How will you monitor your progress toward achieving each GOAL?
- What are your data sources for monitoring performance? For example, will you conduct surveys or use questionnaires?
- How will you collect the required data? Be sure to include the frequency of your data collection.
- Describe how you will share the results of the project with specialty crop growers and other interested specialty crop stakeholders.

Work Plan

Project Activity Describe the project activities that are necessary to accomplish the objectives. Please include your performance monitoring/data collection activities.	Who will do the work? Indicate the project participants who will do the work of each activity, including sub-recipients, and/or contractors. If you request grant funds for personnel and contractors, you must include them in the work plan to demonstrate the requested funding is warranted. If you request funds for travel, these activities must also be included.	When will the activity be accomplished? Include a timeline that indicates when each activity will occur (at least month and year) and beginning and end dates for the project. The work plan timeline must demonstrate that the project will be completed within the allowable grant period.

Project Commitment

Describe the specialty crop stakeholders other than the applicant, individuals and organizations involved in the project that support this project and why. This section may be supplemented with support letters, attached separately to the project narrative.

Budget Narrative

All expenses described in this Budget Narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP. If matching funds will be used, a description of that usage is required by the State Department of Agriculture. Expenses to be covered with matching funds must be described separately.

<i>Budget Summary</i>	
Expense Category	Funds Requested
Personnel	
Fringe Benefits	
Travel	
Equipment	
Supplies	
Contractual	
Other	
Direct Costs Subtotal	
Indirect Costs	
Total Budget	

- Personnel** - List the organization's employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

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

- 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	Funds Requested
Fringe Subtotal		

- **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 www.gsa.gov.

Trip Destination	Purpose of the Trip	Type of Expense (airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.)	Unit of Measure (days, nights, miles)	Number of Units	Cost per Unit	Number of Travelers Claiming Expense	Funds Requested
Travel Subtotal							

Additional justification of travel expenses, as needed:

- **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	Justification for Equipment	Rental or Purchase	Funds Requested
Equipment Subtotal			

- **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	Justification for Supplies	Per-Unit Cost	Number of Units/Pieces Purchased	Funds Requested
Supplies Subtotal				

- **Contractual/Consultant** - 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.)
 - If the contractor/consultant has already been selected, please verify that the state applicant followed the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-federal sources. For all non-state applicants, please verify that the applicant used its own procurement procedures which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the federal laws and standards identified in 7 CFR Part 3019.40 through 48 or 3016.36, as applicable.
 - If a contractor/consultant has not yet been selected, provide an acknowledgement that the procurement processes have not yet been conducted and an assurance that the state applicant will follow the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-federal sources. For all non-state applicants, provide an acknowledgement that the procurement processes have not yet been conducted, and an assurance that the applicant will use its own procurement procedures which reflect applicable state and local laws and regulations and conform to the federal law and standards identified in 7 CFR Part 3019.40 through 48 or 3016.36, as applicable.
 - Provide an itemized budget (personnel, fringe, travel, equipment, supplies, other, etc.) with appropriate justification. If indirect costs are/will were included in the contract, include the indirect cost rate used. Please note that any statutory limitations on indirect costs also apply to contractors and consultants.
 - If contractor employee and consultant hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-15, step 10, federal employee in your area and provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses. Visit <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages> for more information.

Contractual/Consultant Subtotal	
--	--

- **Other** - Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section 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 an adequate justification to support that these costs are not entertainment costs.

Item Description	Justification of the Expense	Per-Unit Cost	Number of Units	Funds Requested
Other Subtotal				

- **Program Income** - Program income or gross income is earned by a recipient or sub-recipient under a grant—directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned 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 (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); and registration fees for conferences, etc.

Source/Nature of Program Income	Description of how you will reinvest the program income into the project to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops	Estimated Income
Program Income Total		

2015 Specialty Crops Block Grant Program – Farm Bill (2015 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. You will be required to present signed agreements prior to receiving the award. **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 proposal should follow a format that identifies and explains how the funds will be used and segregated from other funding sources. **10 points**

Total Evaluative Points: 100