

# **Specialty Crop Block Grant**

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) 10.170

## **2021 Request for Proposals**

Revised to include COVID-19 relief funds (2/10/2021)

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this information is available in alternative forms of communication upon request by calling 651-201-6000. TTY users can call the Minnesota Relay Service at 711. The MDA is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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## Eligibility and Application Instructions

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### Eligible Applicants

Nonprofit organizations, producer organizations, government agencies, universities, and other organizations involved in Minnesota agriculture are eligible to apply. Projects proposed by individual producers, for-profit businesses, or commercial entities are eligible only if they demonstrate a significant benefit to the specialty crop industry (or a segment of the industry). Proposals may involve collaborations or partnerships between producers, industry, academia or agricultural organizations. Applicants may cooperate with any public or private organization. Organizations may submit more than one application but may be asked to prioritize those projects.

All applicants must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. This is a nine-digit number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. to uniquely identify business entities (it is not your Employer Identification Number). You can get or update a DUNS number by calling 866-705-5711 or on the [Dun and Bradstreet](#) website.

All applicants must also register with the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#) and provide annual updates as needed. Registering allows you to do business with the Federal government and ensures that Federal funds are paid to organizations that have not been suspended or disbarred.

### Eligible Projects

To be eligible for all sources of Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) funding, projects must address one of these means to accomplish the purpose of the SCBG Program, which is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by:

- Leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops;
- Assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops;
- Expanding availability and access to specialty crops; and
- Addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers.

The focus of Minnesota SCBG projects should be on benefiting the competitiveness of specialty crops that are or will be grown in Minnesota. Specialty crops are defined by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and include “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture.” The USDA provides a more comprehensive list of [eligible and ineligible specialty crops](#) on their website. Eligible project(s) may also exclusively increase the competitiveness of processed products with 50 percent or more specialty crop content by weight, exclusive of added water.

A project is a set of interrelated tasks with a cohesive overarching goal that the applicant wants to accomplish through a series of individual activities or tasks. It follows a planned, organized approach over a fixed time period and within specific limitations (cost, resources specific to project, performance, etc.). Each project is required to demonstrate external support from specialty crop stakeholders, including specialty crop growers, grower-level groups, processors, and distributors. Applications for grant funds should describe how the project potentially affects and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public, who will benefit from the project, and how project results and outcomes will be evaluated. Projects that address problems or opportunities that cross state boundaries are eligible.

Previously funded activities need to describe how the projects should become self-sustaining or justify funding an on-going project. Ongoing projects must also list the specialty crop stakeholders, other than those involved in the project, who support the continuation of the project.

Projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product, provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual, or result in unfair competition with private companies that provide equivalent products or services are not allowed.

The MDA expects to award approximately \$2.9 million in SCBG funding through this round of applications, including about \$1.65 million in one-time funding for [COVID-19 relief \(PDF\)](#).

## Funding Priorities

Minnesota seeks projects that pertain to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry by awarding up to eight points for proposals according to how well they address one of these priorities:

- Improve distribution systems and marketing of specialty crops, such as reducing costs, increasing promotion, or creating new methods to achieve and sustain profitable businesses.
- Increase child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops.
- Research on and development of techniques that focus on pest or disease control.
- Develop new or improved specialty crop seed or plant varieties.
- Research and develop techniques to improve sustainable production of specialty crops and environmental outcomes. Examples include extending growing season, adaption to drought and floods, strengthening seed and crop systems, and increasing soil health.
- Improve capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, developing “Good Agricultural Practices,” “Good Handling Practices,” “Good Manufacturing Practices,” and other support for farmers, packers and processors to enhance food safety.

**Projects that benefit beginning farmers receive up to two points.** A Beginning Farmer is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

**Projects that benefit Emerging Farmers receive up to five points.** The USDA tracks projects that benefit Socially Disadvantaged farmers as defined in the USDA [SCBG Request for Applications \(PDF\)](#). This definition includes Emerging Farmers, such as Native American producers, immigrant farmers, farmers of color, and women.

Priority for COVID relief SCBG funding will be for projects designed to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on specialty crop producers and specialty crop food supply chain. This priority will be given according to the requirements the USDA places on the COVID-19 relief funds.

## Eligible Project Expenses

Applicants may request a grant award of \$20,000 to \$150,000 per project. All project costs must be associated with and needed to conduct approved project activities and are allowable as described in the most recent USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) [General Terms and Conditions \(PDF\)](#). State, local, or Indian tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, colleges, and universities can find further guidance

on cost principles in [2 Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) 200 Subpart E](#). For-profit organizations can find further guidance in [48 CFR Subpart 31.2](#). You can also contact the Program Coordinator with questions about expense-related questions. For this application round that includes COVID-19 relief/stimulus funds, an eligible applicant (Organization or Principle Investigator) may be approved for more than one sub-award; applicants may be asked to prioritize their projects.

Eligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:

### **Personnel**

Includes personnel services in proportion to the amount of time or effort an employee devotes to the grant-supported project or program. Salaries, wages and fringe benefits incurred under formally established policies of the organization, must be consistently applied, reasonable for the services rendered, and supported with adequate documentation.

### **Consultant Services and Contractual Costs**

Includes professional and consultant services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant that is in a particular profession or with a special skill. Also included in this category are contractual expenses associated with purchasing goods. These expenses are procured through a contract.

- Compensation for contractor/consultant services should be reasonable and consistent with that paid for similar services in the marketplace. Contractor/consultant rates must not exceed \$68 per hour (not including fringe and other allowable expenses such as travel).
- Procurement standards for goods and services – grantees must use their own documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations, provided that the requirements conform to applicable Federal law and the standards found in [2 CFR 200.318-326](#).
- Any subcontract must be a written agreement between the grantee and the third party. The contract must, as appropriate, state the activities to be performed; the time schedule; the policies and requirements that apply to the contractor, including those required by [2 CFR 200.326](#) and other terms and conditions of the grant (these may be incorporated by reference); the maximum amount of money for which the grantee may become liable to the third party under the agreement; and the cost principles to be used in determining allowable costs in the case of cost-type contracts.

### **Materials and Supplies**

Includes materials, supplies, and fabricated parts necessary to carry out the grant project. Purchased materials and supplies must be charged at their actual prices, net of applicable credits. Computing devices, if the acquisition cost is less than \$5,000 and is essential and allocable to the performance of the grant project, are allowable.

### **Equipment**

Includes tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 per unit.

- Only lease or rental of general purpose equipment is allowable, and the agreement must terminate at the end of the grant cycle. General purpose equipment means equipment that is not limited to

technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, modular offices, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, air conditioning equipment, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.

- Special purpose equipment is equipment used only for research, scientific, or technical activities of the grant award project. Rental costs and acquisition costs of special purpose equipment are allowable provided certain criteria are met, such as being not otherwise reasonably available and accessible (consult with the MDA Program Coordinator for further restrictions.)
- Website development, mobile apps, etc., that are not considered to be information technology systems, but rather social media applications, are allowable.
- Equipment is subject to the full range of acquisition, use, management, and disposition requirement under [2 CFR 200.313](#).

## Travel Costs

Includes domestic airfare, lodging, meals, mileage, parking, etc. if these costs are necessary for grant activities. Grantees must follow their formal organizational policy to limit these costs. If a grantee does not have formal travel policies or is a for-profit entity, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the [Federal Travel Regulation \(FTR\)](#) issued by the [General Services Administration](#), including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. In the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares.

## Other

Includes, but is not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, publication costs, data collection, and participant support costs-including stipends/gift cards to participants that complete a project survey or take part in a focus group. These costs need to be reasonable and justifiable and some need prior approval (inclusion in the application). Meeting meals cannot be associated with entertainment and not included in a per diem Travel cost. Publication costs are the costs of printing and publication of informational leaflets, reports, manuals, and soft copy publications relating to the project.

## Ineligible Project Expenses

Ineligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Costs incurred prior to the start date on the executed grant agreement
- Costs associated with preparing the application
- Indirect costs in a sub-grant contract agreement or for any contractor or consultant services as defined at [2 CFR 200.56](#)
- Business startup or farm expansion costs
- Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land
- Construction and renovation of buildings and structures
- Costs for projects that will disparage the mission, goals, and/or actions of another organization
- Bad debt
- Lobbying, political, and other governmental activities
- Entertainment and alcohol (alcoholic beverage expenses are allowed only when the costs are associated with enhancing the competitiveness of wine grapes and when prior approval is given by the MDA)

- Amusement, diversion, or social activity costs (such as tickets to shows or sports events, or meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, or gratuities connected with attending entertainment events)
- Tuition for grantees
- Contributions to a contingency reserve or any similar provision
- Fines, penalties, damages, and other settlements resulting from violations (or alleged violations) of, or failure to comply with, Federal, State, local, or Indian tribal laws and regulations
- Organized fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions – regardless of the purpose for which the funds will be used
- Costs of goods or services for personal use of the employees – regardless of whether the cost is reported as taxable income to the employees
- Information technology systems that have a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost equal to or exceeding \$5,000 (consult with the MDA program coordinator for additional details)
- Costs of investment counsel and staff and other expenses incurred to enhance income from investments
- Political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act ([5 United States Code 1501-1508](#) and [7324-7326](#))
- Unallowable costs for the USDA SCBG are listed in Section 8.2 of the AMS [General Terms and Conditions \(PDF\)](#)

## Program Income

SCBG projects occasionally result in the grantee generating income by the grant-supported activity or earned only because of the grant agreement during the grant period of performance. This includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award (including items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); registration fees for conferences, etc. Program income earned during an active agreement must be re-invested into the project and used to further the objectives, and it does not have to “offset” any awarded/allocated SCBG funds.

## Application Review Process and Timeline

All eligible applications will be reviewed by the MDA staff and an external review committee based on the criteria in the evaluation profile. External reviewers may include growers, private industry members, university faculty or staff, public agency staff, and representatives from nonprofits who have interest and expertise in specialty crops, research, food marketing, and/or agricultural systems. The Commissioner of Agriculture reviews the committee recommendations and is responsible for finalizing the recommendations that will be forwarded to the USDA for final approval. The Commissioner may also use an applicant’s past performance on MDA grants as basis for funding decisions.

All applicants will be notified after the MDA review process whether their proposal was or was not selected for submission to USDA. Proposals that are recommended by reviewers and approved by the MDA will be included in the Minnesota State Plan which will be submitted to the USDA in May 2021 for approval. During the USDA review process, the MDA will notify you if adjustments to your scope of work and/or project budgets are requested.

Request for Proposals (RFP) posted on the MDA website.....	January 2021
Revised RFP including COVID stimulus funds released.....	February 2021
Deadline for Questions.....	March 5, 2021, 4:00 pm CST
Applications due to the MDA.....	March 16, 2021, 4:00 pm CST
Grant Review Process.....	six to eight weeks
MDA notifies conditionally approved applicants.....	by May 10, 2021
MDA submits state plan to the USDA.....	May 2021
USDA approval (anticipated).....	September 2021
MDA issues approval letters to successful applicants/initiates contracting...	October 2021
Earliest grant contract start date-Project work can start.....	November 1, 2021
Planned project end date.....	April 30, 2024
Furthest project end date upon approved request (expected).....	September 29, 2024

Once the USDA AMS approves Minnesota’s state plans for both sources of funding, we will notify successful applicants and request documentation needed for risk assessment and to draft a grant award contract agreement. We expect to be able to notify awardees in September of 2021 and to draft grant agreement documents in October, with the earliest projected project start date of November 1, 2021.

## Application Instructions

Grant applicants are required to submit proposals through our [online application system](#).

**All applications must be received by 4:00 p.m. CST, on March 16, 2021.** Late applications will not be considered. The MDA is not responsible for any technical or logistical problems causing an application to be received late. It is your responsibility to ensure that submission is received by the MDA before the deadline.

## Questions

Submit questions by email using [Ann.Kuzj@state.mn.us](mailto:Ann.Kuzj@state.mn.us) or [MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us). Questions must be submitted by 4:00 p.m. CST on **March 5, 2021**. Answers will be posted on the [Questions and Answers](#) portion of the Specialty Crop Block Grant webpage.

Technical assistance with the online application system can be provided until the submission deadline by contacting Ann Kuzj or calling the Grants Line at 651-201-6500 or emailing [MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us](mailto:MDA.AGRIGrants@state.mn.us) with “Specialty Crop Technical Assistance” in the subject line.

## Data Privacy and Trade Secret Notice

The information provided by an applicant will be used to assess the applicant’s eligibility to receive a Specialty Crop Block Grant. The decision to apply for this grant is voluntary, and applicants are not legally required to provide any of the requested information. Applicants may decline to complete this application without any legal consequence. However, only completed applications will be considered for a grant; incomplete applications will not be considered.



Data provided in this application is initially classified by the Minnesota Data Practices Act as private or nonpublic, although some or all of the data will generally become public at various points of the application process unless the data are otherwise classified by state or federal law. Access to private or nonpublic data is limited by law. Parties that may gain access to private or nonpublic data include MDA staff and contractors with a valid work assignment to access the data, parties authorized by the applicant or by a valid court order, Minnesota Management and Budget, Minnesota Department of Administration, the state auditor, the legislative auditor, or any other person or entity authorized to receive the data by state law, federal law, federal regulation, or federal subpoena. Federal entities that are legally authorized to receive not public data related to this grant application include the USDA, Inspectors General, and the Comptroller General of the United States. If necessary, the MDA may also share the data with law enforcement and the Minnesota Office of the Attorney General.

Per [Minnesota Statute 13.599](#):

- Names and addresses of grant applicants, and the grant amount requested, will be public data once all application responses are opened.
- All remaining data in application responses (except trade secret information, see below) becomes public data after the evaluation process is completed (for the purposes of this grant, when all grant agreements have been fully executed).
- All data created or maintained by the MDA as part of the evaluation process (except trade secret information, see below) will be public data after the evaluation process is completed.
- Trade secret information (as defined in Minnesota Statute 13.37) is classified as private or nonpublic. In order for an applicant to protect data submitted as part of this application as trade secret information, the applicant must identify the specific formula, pattern, compilation, program, device, method, technique or process that the applicant believes qualifies for trade secret protection, and provide a detailed and well-reasoned explanation on how each data element identified as a “trade secret” meets the definition found in Minnesota Statute 13.37, subdivision 1(b). Determining what constitutes trade secret information is ultimately the responsibility of the MDA, and the MDA cannot guarantee that data marked by an applicant as trade secret information or marked “confidential” will be classified as such. If the MDA determines that data do not meet the definition of trade secret information, that data will be available to the public unless the applicant secures a court order saying otherwise.

## Liability

The MDA will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any firm for work performed in the preparation and production of a proposal, nor for any work performed prior to the formal execution of the contract.

## Other Considerations

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP become the property of the MDA. The MDA reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, otherwise use, and to authorize others to use materials produced under this grant agreement.

The MDA also reserves the right to:

- Post funded proposals or final reports to the MDA website
- Reject any or all proposals received

- Waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and agreement of applicant
- Use any or all ideas submitted unless those ideas are covered by legal patent or proprietary rights
- Clarify the scope of this program, within the RFP requirements and with appropriate notice to potential applicants, to best serve the interests of the State of Minnesota
- Amend program specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to potential applicants
- Withhold any payments when contract conditions are not met.

# Requirements for Projects Receiving Grant Funds

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## General Compliance

All grant recipients must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and the most recent USDA AMS Grants Division [General Terms and Conditions \(PDF\)](#).

## Financial Management

Grantees must follow the general procurement standards in [2 CFR 200.318](#) and use their own documented procurement procedures which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations, provided that the requirements conform to applicable Federal law and the standards found in [2 CFR 200.302-326](#).

Grantees must have adequate internal controls to assure that Federal grant funds are kept separate from other grant funds and general organization expenses and income and has a process for approving expenditures as described in [2 CFR 200.303](#).

Grantees must maintain written standards of conduct covering conflicts of interest and governing the actions of its employees engaged in the selection, award, and administration of contracts.

Grantees must not make subawards or contract with vendors who are included in [Minnesota's Suspended/Debarred Vendor Report](#). Grantees must also verify that sub-awardees have registered with the [System for Award Management](#) and have maintained an active account.

## Pre-Award Financial Review

All Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) applying for grants from the State of Minnesota must undergo a financial review prior to a grant award of \$25,000 or more. All grantees that are NGOs will be required to submit one of the following documents upon notification of conditional award:

Applicant Organization's Total Annual Revenue	What to Submit
Less than \$50,000 (or if the organization has not been in existence long enough to have completed an IRS Form 990)	The organization's most recent board-approved financial statement
Between \$50,001 and \$750,000	Most recent IRS Form 990
More than \$750,000	Most recent certified financial audit

If a grantee expends more than \$750,000 per year in Federal funds, the organization's single audit will be reviewed from the [Federal Audit Clearinghouse](#) or provided by the grantee.

A recent balance sheet may be requested from for-profit individuals and organizations.

## Grant Award Agreement

Prior to beginning work on the proposed project or receiving funding, each successful applicant must sign a grant contract agreement with the MDA indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks, report

results, and authorizing the MDA to monitor the progress of the proposed project. The MDA cannot pay for any activity/ project expenses incurred before the agreement is executed.

Some changes may become necessary during your project. Please contact the Program Coordinator with any project changes. These include moving funds between cost items or activities, purchasing an item not listed in the approved budget, or changes in key personnel or personnel time devoted to the project. Changes that alter the scope, objectives, or outcomes of a project require prior approval by the MDA and USDA and require an amendment to the contract.

## Reporting Requirements and Payments

To receive a payment, the grantee must submit requests for reimbursement. Requests need to include an itemized invoice, along with financial reports from your financial accounting system (including payroll), supporting documentation, and a progress report.

There are three types of progress reports:

- **Invoicing reports** are brief progress reports attached to each payment request in between annual reports.
- **Annual performance reports** describe activities done to accomplish the project objectives and collect data on outcomes and are required for the reporting period that ends on September 29 of each year of the grant agreement.
- The **final performance report** describes the activities performed and accomplishments made to assist in fulfillment of the project’s objectives, outcomes, and/or indicators; the impact the accomplishments had on the project’s beneficiaries; and quantifiable results for each Outcome/Indicator. Any corrective actions or project changes conducted to overcome challenges or developments and lessons learned are also explained in this report. The final report will be posted to the USDA website in order to share project findings with Federal and State agencies and with the public. The MDA will post links to project publications and results on the SCBG website.

All reports must be submitted in a format specified by the MDA. Grantees who do not submit reports on time, and/or submit incomplete reports, may be required to return previously disbursed funds to the MDA, and may be removed from consideration for future funding. The MDA reserves the rights to modify reporting requirements during the project and to conduct additional follow-up surveys of funding projects in order to determine long-term impacts of the program.

Reports should be submitted according to the following schedule:

Due Date	Date Range	Type of Progress Report
April 30, 2022	Contract Effective Date – March 31, 2022	Invoicing
November 15, 2022	April 1, 2022 – September 30, 2022	Annual Performance
April 30, 2023	October 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023	Invoicing
November 15, 2023	April 1, 2023 – September 30, 2023	Annual Performance
April 30, 2024*	October 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024 or end date	Invoicing or Final Performance
November 15, 2024*	April 1, 2024 – September 29, 2024 or end date	Final Performance

\*Grantees must submit a final performance report within 45 days of their grant agreement end date.

If needed by the grantee or required by the MDA, an interim financial report with supporting documentation and invoicing progress report may be submitted for the report periods: April 1 to June 30 and October 1 to December 30 of each year within the grant contract term. Submission due dates are 30 days after the end of the interim report period. Recipients may request 10 percent of the grant award as an advance, if necessary, to get a project started, and then deduct the advance payment amount from total project expenditures claimed during the first reporting period of the grant.

The MDA may retain up to 25 percent of the total award pending receipt of an acceptable and timely final report, in a format specified by the MDA.

## Monitoring

The MDA monitors grantees to ensure that work is progressing within the required time frame, outcome data is being collected, and that fiscal procedures are followed accurately and appropriately. Monitoring can include review and discussion of financial and program information via phone and email (called “desk audits”), as well as site visits.

## Record Retention and Audits

Grantees must maintain a project file containing all records of correspondence with the MDA, receipts, invoices, records of payments, payroll records, and copies of all reports and documents associated with the project. Upon request by State or Federal agencies, the grantee shall produce a legible copy of any or all such records. Per [Minnesota Statute 16B.98 Subdivision 8](#), the grantee’s books, records, documents, and accounting procedures and practices of the grantee or other party that are relevant to the grant or transaction are subject to examination by the State granting agencies, and either the legislative auditor or the state auditor, as appropriate. This requirement will last for a minimum of six years from the grant agreement end date with receipt and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements in [2 CFR §200.333](#), whichever is later.

All grantees (other than Federal agencies and for-profit businesses) are responsible to comply with [2 CFR 200 Subpart F – Audit Requirements](#). The standards require any grantee that expends \$750,000 or more in Federal awards during their fiscal year to have a single or program-specific audit conducted for that year. All auditees are to submit their audit reports directly to the [Federal Audit Clearinghouse](#).

## Civil Rights

The Minnesota Department of Human Rights enforces the state human rights law that prohibits discrimination in public services because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or public assistance status. For more information or to file a complaint, contact:

Minnesota Department of Human Rights  
Freeman Building, 625 North Robert Street  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
651-539-1100 (voice)  
800-657-3704 (toll free)  
711 or 800-627-3529 (MN Relay)  
651-296-9042 (Fax)  
[Info.MDHR@state.mn.us](mailto:Info.MDHR@state.mn.us) (Email)  
<https://mn.gov/mdhr/> (Website)

## Affirmative Action and Non-Discrimination

The grantee agrees not to discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, status in regard to public assistance, membership or activity in a local commission, disability, sexual orientation, or age in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. [Minnesota Statute 363A.02](#). The grantee agrees to take affirmative steps to employ, advance in employment, upgrade, train, and recruit minority persons, women, and persons with disabilities.

The grantee must not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of physical or mental disability in regard to any position for which the employee or applicant for employment is qualified. The grantee agrees to take affirmative action to employ, advance in employment, and otherwise treat qualified disabled persons without discrimination based upon their physical or mental disability in all employment practices such as the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment, advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship. [Minnesota Rules, part 5000.3500](#).

The grantee agrees to comply with the rules and relevant orders of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights issued pursuant to the [Minnesota Human Rights Act](#).

## Voter Registration

The grantee will comply with [Minnesota Statute 201.162](#) by providing voter registration services for its employees and for the public served by the grantee.

## 2021 SCBG MDA Project Evaluation Profile

Evaluation Criteria	Score
<p><b>Potential Impact</b> Does the project have the potential to have a positive impact on the competitiveness of a specialty crop industry/segment in Minnesota? How well will the project address one of the means to accomplish the purpose of the SCBG program? Is the proposal well organized and does it clearly explain how the project will do these two things?</p>	1 – 15
<p><b>Project Purpose</b> How well does the applicant define the need for and purpose of the project? Are the objectives clear and appropriate? Is the project purpose important and timely?</p>	1 – 15
<p><b>MDA Funding Priorities</b> How well does the proposal address one of these funding priorities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve distribution systems and marketing of specialty crops, such as reducing costs, increasing promotion, or creating new methods to achieve and sustain profitable businesses</li> <li>• Increase child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops</li> <li>• Research on and development of techniques that focus on pest or disease control</li> <li>• Develop new or improved specialty crop seed or plant varieties</li> <li>• Research and develop techniques to improve sustainable production of specialty crops and environmental outcomes. Examples include extending growing season, adaption to drought and floods, strengthening seed and crop systems, and increasing soil health</li> <li>• Improve capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, developing “Good Agricultural Practices,” “Good Handling Practices,” “Good Manufacturing Practices,” and other support for farmers, packers and processors to enhance food safety</li> </ul>	0 – 8
<p><b>Project Beneficiaries and External Project Support</b> Will the project meaningfully impact a significant number of beneficiaries? Do stakeholders (growers, grower organizations, processors, and distributors) support the project? Is the project likely to succeed?</p>	1 – 15
<p><b>Benefit Emerging Farmers</b> The potential of this project to directly benefit Emerging Farmers</p>	0 – 5
<p><b>Benefit Beginning Farmers</b> The potential of this project to directly benefit beginning farmers</p>	0– 2
<p><b>Measurable Outcomes and Indicators</b> Does the project include at least one outcome and indicator that measures the project’s achievements? Is each indicator relevant and achievable within project period? Is there a good plan for collecting data to report on each outcome and indicator?</p>	1 – 15
<p><b>Budget and Narrative</b> Is the total grant amount requested reasonable and appropriate? Are line items reasonable and appropriate, including compensation/personnel rates? Does the budget narrative adequately explain and justify each budget line item?</p>	1 – 15
<p><b>Personnel and Contractual Responsibilities</b> Does the applicant adequately describe each activity needed to accomplish the goals and purposes of the project? Do they state when those activities are taking place and who is responsible for each? Does the plan make sense?</p>	1 – 10
<p><b>Additional Criteria for COVID-19 Relief Funds</b> Does this project address a timely need that will minimize or reverse the effects of the COVID pandemic on specialty crop producers, industry, or food supply chain?</p>	Yes/No
<p><b>Maximum Possible Points</b></p>	<b>100</b>

## Application Questions

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These questions are provided for your convenience; application information will be used by the MDA Program Coordinator to complete the USDA SCBG Application [Project Profile Template \(Word\)](#). You will answer these questions in the [Online Application System](#).

### Contact Information

(Part of registration in the Online Application System)

- Name of Contact Person
- Name of Organization
- Address
- City
- State
- Zip
- Email Address
- Phone

### Background

- Project Name
- Name and Title of Authorized Signer
- Email Address and Phone Number of Authorized Signer
- Project Coordinator/Principal Investigator (PI) Name
- PI Name/Phone Number/Email Address
- Industry Sector(s) or Specific Specialty Crop(s) Targeted (e.g. Tree Fruit: Apples)
- Counties Served by Proposal
- Amount Requested
- Project Start Date
- Project End Date
- DUNS Number

### Overview

Please confirm that the following statements apply to your organization. You must respond “Yes” to all the statements to be eligible to apply for this grant.

- The organization applying benefits Minnesota specialty crop producers or industry, has agricultural research capabilities, an adequate financial system, and a DUNS number.
- The organization applying is in good standing with the State of Minnesota and is eligible to receive federal funding by having an active account with the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#).

### Project Description

Provide a very brief (approximately one sentence) description of your project. This may be used for public notification. *(250 characters, including spaces)*



## Project Summary

Summarize the project, to include:

- The name of the applicant organization that, if awarded a grant, will establish an agreement or contractual relationship with the MDA to lead and execute the project;
- A concise outline of the project outcomes; and
- A description of the general tasks to be completed during the project period to fulfill this goal. *(2,600 characters, including spaces)*

## Project Purpose (Need for Project)

Provide the specific issue, problem, or need that the project will address. *(3,000 characters, including spaces)*

Explain how this project is timely and will enhance the competitiveness of this specialty crop or industry. *(1,200 characters, including spaces)*

List of each main objective (Objective 1, Objective 2, etc.) that this project aims to achieve that is both realistic to achieve during this grant. Under each objective, provide a brief description of what you will accomplish and general plan on what you will do to accomplish the objective within the time frame of the grant. *(3,700 characters, including spaces)*

Will this project enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by:

- Leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops? Yes/No
- Assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops? Yes/No
- Expanding availability and access to specialty crops? Yes/No
- Addressing local, or regional challenges confronting specialty crop producers? Yes/No

## Project Beneficiaries

Estimate the number of people/organizations who will benefit from the project, including a one to two-word descriptor (e.g. 500 children consumers, 20 specialty crop producers) and the total number (sum of all types) of beneficiaries (e.g. 520 beneficiaries.) *(300 characters, including spaces)*

Describe how your project will address barriers within the specialty crop production, distribution, and marketing systems that affect Emerging Farmers, such as Native American producers, immigrant farmers, farmers of color, and women. (See the [Emerging Farmers Report \(PDF\)](#) from the MDA for more information.) *(1,500 characters, including spaces)*

Describe how your project will benefit beginning farmers by increasing their profitable production of specialty crops. *(1000 characters, including spaces)*

## COVID Response Project Purpose

Describe how this project will minimize or mitigate the effects of the COVID pandemic on specialty crop producers, industry, or food supply chain. *(2,000 characters, including spaces)*

## Continuation and Other Federal and State Support

If this project is continuing the efforts of a previously funded SCBG project, address the following points.

- Describe how this project will differ from and build on previous efforts; and
- Provide a summary (3-5 sentences) of the outcomes of the previous efforts. *(3,000 characters including spaces)*
- Provide lessons learned on potential project improvements:
  - What was previously learned from implementing this project?
  - How are the lessons learned and improvements being incorporated into the project to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes? *(2,800 characters including spaces)*
- Describe the likelihood that this project will become self-sustaining and not indefinitely depend on grant funds. *(2,000 characters including spaces)*
- Has this project been submitted to another Federal or State grant program or is another Federal or State grant program currently funding the project? Yes/No
- If your project is receiving or will potentially receive funds from another Federal or State grant program:
  - Identify the Federal or State grant program(s).
  - Describe how the SCBG project differs from or supplements the other grant program(s) efforts. *(2,000 characters including spaces)*

## Project Support

List all project partners and collaborators and provide a brief summary of each of their contributions to this project and a short description of their relevant abilities and qualifications. *(3,500 characters including spaces)*

- A **partner/partnership** is a relationship involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities in the management of the project.
- A **collaborator** is a person or organization that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project but is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

Affirm that each partner and collaborator listed understands their role and has indicated they are willing to participate and commit adequate time to this project.

Describe the specialty crop stakeholders (e.g. growers, grower level groups, processors and distributors) who support this project and how each stakeholder supports this project. *(3,500 characters, including spaces)*

Provide letters of support from specialty crop stakeholders. Stakeholder letters of support are not required but are encouraged.

## Outcomes

- Refer to the list of Performance Measures in the [Appendix](#). Select the performance measure(s) that are applicable for this project from that list. Select at least one of the eight outcomes and list at least one of the indicators for each outcome from the indicator list under each outcome. If there

are multiple sub-indicators listed under the indicator, select at least one sub-indicator. You will have to report on each indicator chosen in annual and final reports. *(2,000 characters, including spaces)*

- **For example:** Outcome 2, Indicator 1. A: Of the 150 total number of children and youth reached, 132 will gain knowledge about eating more specialty crops.
- If the indicator(s) are not relevant to the project, a project-specific indicator(s) may be developed subject to approval by USDA.
- Explain how work/activities conducted to accomplish your project objectives will result in the chosen measurable Outcome Indicators before the end of this grant period. *(1,500 characters, including spaces)*.
- Explain how you will collect the required data to report on the results of assessing each outcome and indicator in the final report. *(3,000 characters, including spaces)*.

## Budget

### Budget Table

Complete the Budget Table with expenses that will be funded by the SCBG if awarded a grant and then upload to your application.

Expense Category	SCB Grant Funds Requested
Personnel – Salaries	
Personnel – Fringe Benefits	
Travel	
Equipment (over \$5000)	
Supplies	
Contractual	
Other	
<b>Total Direct Project Costs</b>	

### Budget Narrative

Provide a detailed explanation for each item in each expense category. For each section, see the definitions in the [Eligible Expenses](#) section.

#### Personnel

- List people employed by your organization whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to this project’s activities. For each person you list, include their name, title, level of effort (number of hours or percent of full-time equivalents (FTE), and total grant funds requested for each employee. *(1,500 characters including spaces)*
- For everyone listed above, describe the activities to be completed by name/title, including approximately when the activities will occur. *(3,600 characters including spaces)*

#### Fringe Benefits

Provide the rate of fringe benefits and funds requested for each of the project’s salaried employees described in the personnel section that will be paid with SCBG funds. *(1,000 characters including spaces)*

## Travel

Complete the Travel Table and upload to your application. Travel costs are limited to those allowed by your organization's formal policy.

Destination	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	Grant Funds Requested
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
<b>Total Travel Funds Requested</b>						

For each project-related trip, explain the purpose of the trip, how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project, and approximately when each trip will occur. *(3,600 characters including spaces)*

Do you confirm that your 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? Yes/No

If you do not agree to the statement above, explain the travel policy you will adhere to when making SCBG funded trips? *(1,000 characters, including spaces)*

## Equipment

Describe each piece of special purpose equipment to be purchased or rented using SCBG funds and any general purpose equipment rented using SCBG funds. Include whether the equipment item will be rented or purchased, when it will be acquired, the funds requested *(1,000 characters including spaces)*, and how it will be used to accomplish the project's objective(s) and outcomes(s) *(2,000 characters including spaces)*.

## Materials and Supplies

Describe each item (material, supply, and fabricated part that costs less than \$5,000 per unit) including the item's per-unit cost, number of units/pieces needed, when it will be acquired, amount of funds requested for each item *(2,500 characters including spaces)*, and how each item is necessary to complete this project's objective(s) and outcomes(s) *(3,000 characters including spaces)*.

## **Contractual/Consultant**

Provide a list of contractors/consultants, detailing out the name, hourly or flat rate, overall cost of the services performed by each contractor or consultant (*1,500 characters including spaces*), and describe the project activities each will accomplish to meet the project's objective(s) and outcome(s), as well as the timeline for their work. Also explain why each contractual service will be used instead of your organization's personnel (*3,500 characters including spaces*). Note that we do not allow indirect costs for contractors and consultants.

Do you confirm that your organization follows the same policies and procedures used for procurements from non-federal sources, which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the Federal laws and standards identified in [2 CFR Part 200.317 through .326](#), as applicable? If the contractor(s)/consultant(s) are not already selected, my organization will follow the same requirements. Yes/No

## **Other**

List each project expense not covered in any of the previous budget categories. For each item, give the per-unit cost, number of units you will purchase, when you will acquire the item, the amount of SCBG funds requested (*2,500 characters including spaces*), and describe the purpose of each item listed and how it is necessary for completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s). (*3,000 characters including spaces*)

## **Program Income**

Describe the nature or source of program income, how you will reinvest the program income back into this project to further the objectives of this project, and the total estimated amount from each source. (*2,000 characters including spaces*)

## Appendix: Performance Measures

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Each application must include at least one of the following eight outcomes, and at least one of the indicators listed underneath the selected outcome. If there are multiple sub-indicators listed under the indicator, select at least one. All marketing projects are required to use Outcome 1. If these Outcomes/Indicators are not relevant to the project, you can develop a project-specific Outcomes/Indicators that are subject to approval by USDA. You are required to report on the results of data collected on each indicator in annual and final reports.

For more information, read page 2 of the [USDA SCBG Performance Measures \(PDF\)](#).

### Outcome 1

**To enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales.**

#### Indicator

Sales increased from [\$ amount] to [\$ amount] and by [percent], as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities.

*Example: An expected increase in sales of specialty crops from \$20,000 to \$50,000 and growth in sales of 150 percent from year 1 to year 2 as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities.*

**This indicator is required for all marketing and promotion projects.** An established baseline of sales in dollars must already exist. If it does not, then one of the objectives of your project must be to determine a baseline.

Marketing and promotion projects focus efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, and generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue.

### Outcome 2

**Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption.**

#### Indicators

1. Of the [total number] of children and youth reached,
  - A. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops
  - B. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops
  - C. The number that reporting eating more specialty crops
2. Of the [total number] of adults reached,
  - A. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops
  - B. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops
  - C. The number that reported eating more specialty crops
3. Number of new and improved technologies and processes to enhance the nutritional value and consumer acceptance of specialty crops (excluding patents)
4. Number of new specialty crops and/or specialty crop products introduced to consumers

## Outcome 3

Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access and awareness.

### Indicators

1. Of the [total number] of consumers or wholesale buyers reached,
  - A. The number that gained knowledge about how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
  - B. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
  - C. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/preserved/obtained/prepared
2. Of the [total number] of individuals (culinary professionals, institutional kitchens, specialty crop entrepreneurs such as kitchen incubators/shared-use kitchens, etc.) reached,
  - A. The number that gained knowledge about how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
  - B. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
  - C. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/prepared/preserved/obtained
3. Number of existing delivery systems/access points of those reached that expanded and/or improved offerings of specialty crops:
  - A. farmers markets
  - B. produce at corner stores
  - C. school food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.)
  - D. grocery stores
  - E. wholesale markets
  - F. food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops
  - G. home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers
  - H. lawn and garden centers
  - I. other systems/access points, not noted
  - J. total (if not reported above)
4. Number of new delivery systems/access points offering specialty crops:
  - A. farmers markets
  - B. produce at corner stores
  - C. school food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.)
  - D. grocery stores
  - E. wholesale markets
  - F. food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops
  - G. home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers
  - H. lawn and garden centers
  - I. other systems/access points, not noted
  - J. total (if not reported above)

## 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.**

### Indicators

1. Numbers of plant/seed releases (i.e. cultivars, drought-tolerant plants, organic, enhanced nutritional composition, etc.)
2. Adoption of best practices and technologies resulting in increased yields, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and conservation of resources (select at least one below):
  - A. Number of growers/producers indicating adoption of recommended practices
  - B. Number of growers/producers reporting reduction in pesticides, fertilizer, water used/acre
  - C. Number of growers/producers reporting increased dollar returns per acre or reduced costs per acre
  - D. Number of acres in conservation tillage or acres in other best management practices
3. Number of habitat acres established and maintained for the mutual benefit of pollinators and specialty crops

## Outcome 5

**Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems.**

### Indicators

1. Number of new or improved innovation models (biological, economic, business, management, etc.), technologies, networks, products, processes, etc. developed for specialty crop entities including producers, processors, distributors, etc.
2. Number of innovations adopted
3. Number of specialty crop growers/producers (and other members of the specialty crop supply chain) that have increased revenue expressed in dollars
4. Number of new diagnostic systems analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases (diagnostic systems may be labs, networks, procedures, access points, etc.)
5. Number of new diagnostic technologies (not individual pieces of equipment or devices) available for detecting plant pests and diseases
6. Number of first responders trained in early detection and rapid response to combat plant pests and diseases
7. Number of viable technologies/processes developed or modified that will increase specialty crop distribution and/or production
8. Number of growers/producers that gained knowledge about science-based tools through outreach and education programs



## Outcome 6

**Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety.**

### Indicators

1. Number of viable technologies developed or modified for the detection and characterization of specialty crop supply contamination from foodborne threats
2. Number of viable prevention, control, and intervention strategies for all specialty crop production scales for foodborne threats along the production continuum
3. Number of individuals who learn about prevention, detection, control, and intervention food safety practices, and number of those individuals who increase their food safety skills and knowledge
4. Number of improved prevention, detection, control, and intervention technologies
5. Number of reported changes in prevention, detection, control, and intervention strategies

## Outcome 7

**Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of the ecology of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources.**

### Indicators

1. Increased understanding of fecal indicators or pathogens
2. Increased safety of all inputs into the specialty crop chain
3. Increased understanding of the roles of humans, plants, and animals as vectors
4. Increased understanding of pre-harvest and postharvest process impacts on microbial and chemical threats
5. Number of growers or producers who obtain on-farm food safety certifications (such as Good Agricultural Practices or Good Handling Practices)

## Outcome 8

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

### Indicators

1. Number of new rural careers (new businesses created or adopted can be an indication of new careers) created
2. Number of new urban careers created
3. Number of jobs (jobs are net gain of paid employment) maintained/created
4. Number of small businesses maintained/created
5. Increased revenue/increased savings/one-time capital purchases [in dollars]
6. Number of new beginning farmers who went into specialty crop production
7. Number of socially disadvantaged farmers who went into specialty crop production