

# 2018 Minnesota Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

CFDA#10.170

## Request for Proposals (RFP) and Grant Manual

### This packet includes:

- General grant information
- Application instructions and requirements
- Grant award process and reporting requirements
- Scoring criteria/Evaluator score sheet

Find more details and link to the application on the [MDA Specialty Crop Block Grant webpage](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/specialty) (www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/specialty).

### Application Due Date:

4:00 pm CST, Thursday, March 15, 2018. Late proposals will not be accepted. All applicants will receive confirmation when we receive their application.

[Apply online.](#)

### Questions/Contact:

Ann Kuzj, SCBG Program Administrator  
[ann.kuzj@state.mn.us](mailto:ann.kuzj@state.mn.us)  
651-201-6028

We will post responses to all questions on the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page.

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
AG MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION  
651-201-6012

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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# 2018 Minnesota Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

## General Information

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) is announcing a competitive solicitation process to award funds anticipated to be granted from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG), for projects that enhance the competitiveness of Minnesota's specialty crop industries. Applications that are selected for funding will be included with Minnesota's state plan which is submitted to USDA for final approval.

### A. Background

The USDA distributes block grant funds to state departments of agriculture, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

### B. Available Funds and Project Duration

The MDA will award grants for projects that enhance the competitiveness of Minnesota specialty crops in local, regional, national and export markets. The MDA distributes the bulk of our block grant, about \$1 million, through a competitive review process, which starts with this RFP. An outside panel of people who have knowledge and experience producing, researching and marketing specialty crops will review and rank applications for funding under this RFP. We will award grants of \$10,000 to \$100,000 for projects that can last up to two years and four months.

Organizations may submit more than one application but may be asked to prioritize those projects. Projects may be submitted by a single organization for collaborative specialty crop research and development efforts.

RFP released.....	January 2018
Applications due to the MDA.....	March 15, 2018, 4:00 pm CST
Grant Review Process.....	about five weeks
MDA notifies conditionally approved applicants.....	April 2018
MDA submits state plan to USDA.....	May 2018
USDA approval (anticipated).....	September 2018
MDA issues approval letters to successful applicants/initiates contracting.....	October 2018
Project work can start (anticipated).....	November 1, 2018
Latest project end date.....	March 31, 2021

## C. Eligible Projects – Funding Priorities

To be eligible, project(s) must solely enhance the competitiveness of a Minnesota specialty crop, as defined by the USDA (see section D). Eligible project(s) may also include processed products with 50% or more specialty crop content, by weight. These are not business startup or farm expansion grants, and there are significant restrictions on the use of SCBG funds for equipment purchase. Each project is required to demonstrate external support from specialty crop stakeholders. 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 ensure that the projects are likely to become self-sustaining and that specialty crop stakeholders, other than those involved in the project, support the continuation of the project.

### 1. MDA SCBG Funding Priorities:

**Ten points awarded for projects that fit at least one project description:**

- Improving operational efficiency, reducing costs or other barriers, or increasing access to distribution systems and new markets for specialty crops
- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops
- Pest and disease control, or developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops
- Specialty crop research, including research to focus on sustainability, conservation or environmental outcomes
- Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act

**Projects that benefit beginning farmers or socially disadvantaged farmers receive bonus 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.
- A Socially Disadvantaged farmer is 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, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, and/or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

## D. Eligible Specialty Crops

The Farm Bill defines specialty crops as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture.” You can find a more comprehensive list of [eligible and ineligible specialty crops](http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop) at [www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop](http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop).

## E. 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.

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. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities (it is not your EIN). You can [get or update a DUNS number](#) by calling 866-705-5711 or at <https://iupdate.dnb.com/iUpdate/>.

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

## F. Eligible Project Expenses

All costs must be associated with project activities that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. State, local or Indian tribal governments, nonprofit organizations, colleges and universities can find further guidance on cost principles in [2 CFR 200 Subpart E](#). For-profit organizations can find further guidance in [48 CFR Subpart 31.2](#). You can also contact the MDA SCBG Program Administrator with questions about expense-related questions.

**Eligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:**

### 1. Personnel

- Compensation for 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.

### 2. Consultant Services and Contractual Costs

- Costs of 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 \$600 per eight- hour day (not including 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.

### **3. Materials and supplies**

- Costs incurred for 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.

### **4. Equipment:**

Equipment is defined as 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 rental costs and acquisition costs are allowable with prior USDA approval and provided certain criteria are met (consult with the MDA Program Administrator). Special Purpose Equipment is equipment used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. Examples include grape harvesters, high tunnels, fruit or vegetable coolers, vegetable washing machines, fruit or vegetable processing equipment, etc.
- Website development, mobile apps, etc., that are not considered to be information technology systems, but rather social media applications, are allowable.

### **5. Travel Costs – Domestic**

- Expenses for airfare, lodging, meals, mileage, parking, etc. are allowable if necessary for grant activities. Travel costs must be accounted for in the budget. 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](#) issued by the [General Services Administration](#) ([www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov)), 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.

### **6. Other miscellaneous costs**

- Expenses in this section include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, publication costs, and data collection. Meeting meals need to be reasonable and justifiable, and not associated with entertainment. Publication costs are the costs of printing and publication of informational leaflets, reports, manuals, and soft copy publications relating to the project.

## G. 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 defined at [2 CFR 200.56](#)
- Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land
- Construction and renovation of buildings and structures
- Bad debt
- Lobbying, political and other governmental activities
- Entertainment and alcohol
- Alcoholic beverages expenses are allowed only when the costs are associated with enhancing the competitiveness of wine grapes and with prior approval is given from the MDA.
- No amusement, diversion, or social activity costs are allowed (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 equals or exceeds \$5,000
- 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 U.S.C. 1501-1508](#) and [7324-7326](#))

## H. General Compliance

All grant recipients must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and most recent Terms and Conditions of the grant award. You can more find information about specific federal administrative and audit requirements and cost principles at [2 CFR part 200](#).

## I. Record Requirements

Grantees must set up and maintain a project file that contains 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. This file and any other data or other records relating to the project must be retained for a period of six years after the MDA submits the final report to USDA. Upon request, the grantee shall produce a legible copy of any or all such records.

## J. Monitoring

MDA may monitor grantees to ensure that work is progressing within the required time frame and that fiscal procedures are followed accurately and appropriately. Monitoring can include review of financial and program information (called “desk audits”), as well as site visits.

## K. 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.

## L. Open Records

While the proposals are being received and reviewed, only people with a need to access your data in support of your 2018 Minnesota Specialty Crop Block Grant proposal will have the authority to access the data you provide here unless you give the MDA informed consent to release the data, a court orders the release of the data, or a legislative auditor requests to review the data.

After all the proposals have been reviewed and the grantees determined, all the information in the approved proposals will become public data unless otherwise protected by law.

## M. Reporting Executive Compensation

If you meet both of the criteria listed below, upon receipt of your grant contract, you will be required to report the names and total compensation of each of the five most highly compensated executives of your organization/ business for the preceding completed fiscal year.

In your preceding fiscal year, your entity received

- 80 percent or more of the organization's annual gross revenues come from Federal procurement contracts (and subcontracts) and [Federal financial assistance subject to the Transparency Act](#), as defined at [2 CFR 170.320](#); and
- \$25,000,000 or more in annual gross revenues from Federal procurement contracts (and subcontracts), and Federal financial assistance subject to the Transparency Act (and sub-awards).

The public does not have access to this information about the compensation of executives.

## N. 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 requirement 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



- Require a good faith effort on the part of the project sponsor to work with the MDA subsequent to project completion to develop or implement project results
- Withhold any payments when contract conditions are not met

## O. Amendments

We realize that some changes may become necessary during the course of your project. Please contact the MDA Grants Administrator with any project changes, including changes in key personnel or personnel time devoted to the project. Changes that alter the scope or objectives of a project require prior approval by the MDA and USDA.

## P. Contracting and Bidding Requirements

Grantee 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 200.302 through .401](#).

The grantee 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.

The grantee must not make subawards or contract with vendors who are suspended or debarred.

## Q. Audits

Per [Minn. Stat. §16B.98 Subd. 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 granting agency 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, receipt, and approval of all final reports, or the required period of time to satisfy all state and program retention requirements, whichever is later.

Per [2 CFR 200.501](#), grantees expending more than \$750,000 per year in Federal funds must undergo a single audit.

## R. Financial Review Process

All Nongovernmental 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. In order to comply with [State Policy on the Financial Review of Nongovernmental Organizations \(PDF\)](#), all grantees that are nongovernmental organizations 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

## Application Instructions and List of Questions

### A. Required Application Format

You must submit your application using the [MDA's online application portal](#), which can be found on the [MDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program website](#) ([www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/specialty](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/grants/grants/specialty)). If you cannot access the site or have trouble with the application, please contact the MDA SCBG Program Administrator at [ann.kuzj@state.mn.us](mailto:ann.kuzj@state.mn.us) or 651-201-6028.

### B. Application Requirements

#### Items found in the MDA's Online Grants Module:

#### 1. Project Title, Description, and Summary

- A Project Description provides a very brief, (one sentence preferably) description of your project. This will be used for public notifications and will be the first sentence of your Project Summary to the USDA.
- In addition, a Project Summary of 230 words or less is required and is also suitable for dissemination to the public. A project summary includes:
  - The applicant organization name that if awarded a grant will establish an agreement with the MDA to lead and execute the project.
  - A concise outline of the project's outcome(s).
  - A description of the general tasks to be completed during the project period to fulfill this goal.

#### 2. Project Purpose

- Clearly state the specific issue, problem, or need that your proposed project will address.
- Make a list of each objective (Objective 1, Objective 2 etc.) that this project aims to achieve with a short description of each objective.

#### 3. Project Beneficiaries

- Estimate the number of people/organizations who will benefit from the project (Include a one to two word descriptor, e.g., 500 children consumers, 20 specialty crop producers.)
- State the total number of project beneficiaries. To calculate, add the numbers of each type of beneficiary to arrive at the total.
- Answer the questions:
  - Does this project directly benefit socially disadvantaged farmers as defined in the RFP? [Yes or No]
  - Does this project directly benefit beginning farmers as defined in the RFP? [Yes or No]

#### 4. Statement of solely enhancing specialty crops

- Check the appropriate affirmation box: I confirm that this project **solely** enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops in accordance with and defined by [7 U.S.C. 1621](#). (USDA provides the [definition of a specialty crop \(PDF\)](#), as well as [lists of common specialty crops](#).) [I do confirm or I do not confirm]

## 5. Continuation Project Information

- If the project is a continuation of a previously funded SCBG project address each of the following points/answer each question:
  - Describe how this project will differ from and build on previous efforts.
  - Provide a summary (3-5 sentences) of the outcomes of the previous efforts.
  - Provide lessons learned on potential project improvements:
    - What was previously learned from implementing this project, including potential improvements?
    - 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?
    - Describe the likelihood that this project will become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds.

## 6. Other Support from Federal or State Grant Programs

- The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects. 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 or 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 SCBGP project differs from or supplements the other grant program(s) efforts.

## 7. External Project Support

- Project Commitment
  - Provide letters of commitment from all project partners and collaborators. 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. Only letters that are signed and dated and provided prior to the MDA's application deadline will be considered by grant reviewers.
  - Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support this project and why (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project)
- Letters of Support
  - Letters of support from specialty crop growers and other non-partner/collaborator stakeholders are also encouraged. These must be submitted with the application. Only letters that are signed and dated and provided prior to the MDA's application deadline will be considered by grant reviewers.

## 8. Expected Measurable Outcomes

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

- **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.** If the indicator(s) are not relevant to the project, you can develop a project-specific indicator(s) that is subject to approval by USDA. You will have to report on each indicator(s) in annual and final reports.
  - For example: for Outcome 2, Indicator 1. A.  
*Of the **150** total number of children and youth reached, **132** will gain knowledge about eating more specialty crops.*

- **Outcome 1:**

**Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales** (required for marketing projects).

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

1. 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.

- **Outcome 2:**

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

Possible Indicators (you must include at least one):

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.**

Possible Indicators (you must include at least one):

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.**

Possible Indicators (you must include at least one):

1. Numbers of plant/seed releases (i.e., drought-tolerant, 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):
3. Number of growers/producers indicating adoption of recommended practices
4. Number of growers/producers reporting reduction in pesticides, fertilizer, water used/acre
5. Number of growers/producers reporting increased dollar returns per acre or reduced costs per acre
6. Number of acres in conservation tillage or acres in other best management practices
7. 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.**

Possible Indicators (you must include at least one):

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.**

Possible Indicators (you must include at least one):

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.**

Possible Indicators (you must include at least one). Give the number of projects focused on:

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.**

Possible Indicators (you must include at least one):

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

## **9. Data Collection**

- Explain how you will collect the required data to report on each outcome and indicator.

## **10. Budget Table and Narrative**

- This section must include a budget summary table and a detailed explanation for each item in each expense category. All expenses described in this Budget Narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP.

- **Personnel**

- A. 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 her/his name, title, level of effort (number of hours or percent of full time equivalents (FTE), and total grant funds requested for each employee.
- B. Personnel Justification and Work Plan
  - For each individual listed above, describe the activities to be completed by name/title, including approximately when the activities will occur.

- **Fringe Benefits**

- A. 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 SCBGP funds. For each name/title, provide their fringe benefit rate and total funds requested for each employee.

- **Travel**

- A. Complete the table of each project related trip you are requesting to be funded by SCBGP and include: Trip's 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 the Expense, and Funds Requested.
- B. Travel Justification and Work Plan
  - For each project-related trip listed in the Trip Destination Table, explain the purpose of the trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project.
  - Include approximately when each trip will occur.

- C. Assurance of Conforming to your Travel Policy
    - Please note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by your organization’s formal policy (more information in Eligible Expenses section under General Information in the RFP).
  - D. Choose whether you agree or do not agree: 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.
    - If you do not agree to the statement above, explain what travel policy you will adhere to when making SCBGP funded trips.
- **Equipment**
    - A. List and describe each “special purpose equipment” to be purchased or rented using SCBGP funds and any “general purpose equipment” rental using SCBGP funds. State whether the equipment item will be rented or purchased, when it will be acquired, and the funds requested. (See definitions and descriptions of allowable and unallowable equipment costs in the Eligible Project Expenses and Ineligible Project Expenses under General Information of the RFP.)
    - B. Equipment Justification
      - For each Equipment item requested, describe how this equipment will be used to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project.
  - **Supplies**
    - A. List/describe each supply item (material, supply, and fabricated part that costs less than \$5,000 per unit) along with each item’s per-unit cost, number of units/pieces purchased, when it will be acquired, and the amount of funds requested for each item.
    - B. 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). (See descriptions of allowable supplies in the Eligible Project Expenses under General Information of the RFP.)
  - **Contractual/Consultant**
    - A. Provide a list of contractors/consultants, detailing out the name, hourly or flat rate, and overall cost of the services performed by each contractor or consultant. Please note that we do not allow indirect costs for contractors and consultants (see description under Eligible Project Expenses of the RFP.)
    - B. Contractual Justification and Work Plan
      - For each of your real or anticipated contractors listed above, provide a description of the project activities each will accomplish to meet the objectives and outcomes of the project. Include timelines for each activity.
      - Also include a justification for why each contractual/consultant service will be used to meet the anticipated outcomes and objectives.
    - C. Conforming with your procurement Standards
      - Choose “I Agree” or “I do not agree” to: I confirm that my organization followed 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.



- **Other**
  - A. List each project expense not covered in any of the previous budget categories (See definitions and descriptions of allowable and unallowable other miscellaneous costs in the Eligible Project Expenses and Ineligible Project Expenses under General Information of the RFP.) For each item, give the per-unit cost, number of units you will purchase, when you will acquire the item, and the amount of SCBGP funds requested.
  - B. Other Budget Category Justification
    - Describe the purpose of each item listed and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s).

## **11. Program Income**

- Program income is gross income—earned by a grantee—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 (this includes 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.
- List the nature or source of program income (e.g. registration fees), describe how you will reinvest the program income back into this project to further enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, and total estimated amount from each source.

## **Grant Awards Process and Reporting**

### **A. How We Evaluate Applications**

All eligible applications will be reviewed by the MDA staff and an external review committee. 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. Applications are evaluated on the merits of the proposals based on the scoring criteria listed on the last page of the RFP. Final funding decisions may include other factors such as funding priorities, total funds requested, and past performance with Specialty Crop Block Grants.

During the review process, we will notify applicants if adjustments to your scope of work and/or project budgets are requested. Proposals that are recommended by reviewers and approved by the MDA will be included in the Minnesota State Plan which will be submitted to USDA in May 2018 for approval. All applicants will be notified after the review process about whether or not their proposal was selected for submission to USDA.

### **B. Notification of Award**

Once USDA approves Minnesota's state plan, we will notify successful applicants and send them a grant award contract agreement. We expect to be able to notify successful applicants and start writing grant contracts in September of 2018, with earliest projected project start date of November 1, 2018.

## **C. Grant Award Agreement and Payment**

Prior to beginning work on the proposed project or receiving funding, each successful applicant must sign a grant award 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 all parties have signed (executed) the agreement.

Recipients may request 10 percent of the grant award up front if necessary to get a project started. You must then submit requests for reimbursement at least semi-annually (but no more often than quarterly) upon approval of an itemized invoice, progress report and receipts and other supporting documentation. 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.

## **D. Reporting Requirements and Compliance**

The MDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the course of the project. All progress and final reports must be submitted in a format specified by the MDA.

### **1. Progress Reports**

Annual reports are required for projects that last longer than one year.

Invoicing reports are brief progress reports attached to each payment request.

### **2. Final Reports**

You must submit a final performance report in a format designated by the MDA, within 60 days of the grant agreement end date. Report may be posted to the MDA and USDA websites in order to share project findings with Federal and State agencies and with the public.

In addition to the final project report, the MDA reserves the right to conduct a follow-up survey of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts.

### **3. Reporting Compliance**

Applicants who do not submit progress and annual 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.

## Minnesota 2018 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Application Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Possible Points
<p><b>Quality of Proposal</b> Is the project well organized and easy to understand? Has the applicant submitted all the required information?</p>	1 – 10
<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>Potential Impact &amp; Commitment</b> Does the project have the potential to have a positive impact on the competitiveness of a specialty crop industry/segment in Minnesota? Do stakeholders support the project? Does the project stand to impact a large number of beneficiaries? Is the Project likely to succeed?</p>	1 – 20
<p><b>Measurable Outcomes and Indicators</b> Does the project include at least one measurable outcome and indicator that directly support the project’s purpose? Are they important to intended beneficiaries? Do they meet USDA’s requirements? Is there a good plan for collecting data to report on each outcome and indicator?</p>	1 – 20
<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>Funding Priority(ies)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Score 10 points if the project addresses at least one of the MDA funding priorities:</li> <li>• Improving operational efficiency, reducing costs or other barriers, or increasing access to distribution systems and new markets for specialty crops</li> <li>• Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops</li> <li>• Pest and disease control, or developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops</li> <li>• Specialty crop research, including research to focus on sustainability, conservation or environmental outcomes</li> <li>• Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act</li> </ul>	0 or 10
<p><b>Bonus Points</b> Does this project directly benefit socially disadvantaged farmers as defined in the RFP?</p>	0 – 2
<p><b>Bonus Points</b> Does this project directly benefit beginning farmers as defined in the RFP?</p>	0 – 2
<b>Maximum Possible Points</b>	<b>104</b>