Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-23-0003

Publication Date: January 21, 2023

Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on May 1, 2023

PROGRAM SOLICITATION INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Title: Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-23-0003

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing Number (formerly CFDA): 10.170

Dates: Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 1, 2023, through Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) to award grants to eligible State departments of agriculture to carry out projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Not including AMS administrative costs, approximately $72.9 million in annual Farm Bill funding is available for applications under this solicitation.

This announcement identifies the eligibility criteria for SCBGP projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a SCBGP award.

AMS encourages applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, underserved producers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities. For grants intending to serve these entities, applicants should engage and involve those beneficiaries when developing projects and applications.

Stakeholder Input: AMS seeks comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program. Email written stakeholder comments within one year of the publication date of this RFA to: AMSGrants@usda.gov. This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not for requesting information or forms. In your comments, please state that you are responding to the **Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.**

2023 HIGHLIGHTS AND CHANGES

Below is a highlight of a major change to the program since last year.

- On April 4, 2022, the Federal government stopped using DUNS to uniquely identify entities and started using a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) created in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). For more information, please visit gsa.gov/entityid.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

AMS expects applicants to read the entire Request for Applications (RFA) prior to submitting their application to ensure that they understand the program's requirements. This application checklist provides the required and conditionally required documents for an application package.

This program requires that **all application packages** include the following:

- SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (Grants.gov)
- SF-424A – Budget Summary (Grants.gov)
- Project Abstract Summary (Grants.gov)
- Project Narrative Form (*Section 5.2.4*)
- Grant Administration Narrative (*Section 5.2.4*)

APPLICATION TIPS

- To do business with the Federal Government and to submit your application electronically using Grants.gov, you must —
    - Have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
    - Be registered in SAM.gov, the Government's primary registrant database;
    - Provide your UEI number and TIN on your application; and
    - Maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.
- Register in Grants.gov and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE**. AMS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks before the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all the instructions provided by AMS.
- Thoroughly review the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Apply to the correct grant program in Grants.gov using the correct Assistance Listing "**10.170**" and "**USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-23-0003.**"
- Ensure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with Grants.gov software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
- Limit Application File Size/ File Name Characters (50 or less).
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names ($, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- When uploading attachments, click the "Add Attachments" button (do NOT use the "paperclip" icon in Adobe Reader).
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are "accepted".
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
  http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html
  https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Legislative authority is provided under section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note), as amended by section 10107 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. No. 115—334) (Farm Bill).

1.2 PURPOSE

The SCBGP assists State departments of agriculture in the 50 States, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by—

> (1) leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops;

> (2) assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops;

> (3) expanding availability and access to specialty crops; and

> (4) addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers.

Specialty crops are fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). A State department of agriculture is the agency, commission, or department of a State government responsible for agriculture within the State. The term 'State' means the several States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

1.3 PROJECT TYPES

States are encouraged to develop projects pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry:

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

USDA promotes climate-resilient landscapes and rural economic systems, including tools to support agriculture, forests, grazing lands, and rural communities. AMS encourages applicants to consider including goals and activities related to reducing and stabilizing the levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere or adapting to the already occurring climate change in their project's design and implementation.

1.3.1 PROJECTS MORE RELEVANT FOR OTHER FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS

Entities that engage in projects that support the increased consumption of fruits and vegetables in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing incentives at the point of purchase and/or include technologies for benefit redemption systems should consider submitting those projects to the Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program.

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

Entities that engage in projects that support biobased products and bioenergy and energy programs, including biofuels and other alternative uses for agricultural and forestry commodities (development of biobased products), should see the USDA energy website at https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/energy-programs for information on how to submit those projects for consideration to the energy programs supported by USDA.

1.4 DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSALS

1.4.1 STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RESPONSIBILITIES

State departments of agriculture are responsible for developing proposals and overseeing funded projects. This includes ensuring that subrecipients maintain appropriate records and follow all applicable Federal statutes and regulations as well as the Grant Agreement and applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions.

State departments of agriculture must ensure that proposals are appropriate for the SCBGP by reviewing section *1.2 Purpose*. Contact a specialist listed in section *8.0 Agency Contacts* if there is any question about whether or not a project qualifies for SCBGP.

1.4.2 OUTREACH TO IDENTIFY FUNDING PRIORITIES

State departments of agriculture are encouraged to perform outreach to interested parties, including underserved farmers and ranchers, new and beginning farmers or ranchers, veteran producers, and underserved communities, prior to the development and release of the State's request for proposals or applications, through a transparent process of receiving and considering public comment to identify State SCBGP funding priorities. The State department of agriculture should conduct this outreach to ensure that the grant applications it submits to the SCBGP have been developed with proven and justified public support.

Beginning Farmer or Rancher is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

Underserved Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who is a member of an Underserved Group. An Underserved Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

Veteran Farmer or Rancher is a producer who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof, was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable, and has not operated a farm or ranch or has operated a farm or ranch for no more than 10 years or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.

1.4.3 COMPETITIVE GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

State departments of agriculture are encouraged to develop their State Plans through a competitive review process to ensure maximum public input and benefit. The competitive review process should follow State policies and procedures and include the use of an independent review panel of experts or qualified individuals, overseen by State officials. This review should include the factors and reasons for selecting an applicant and any changes in project proposal ranks/scores that may occur during the review process. All documentation affecting the decision to approve, disapprove, defer, or otherwise not fund an application should be maintained in an accessible, centralized program file.

State departments of agriculture must abide by 2 CFR § 400.2. Review panel members must be free from conflicts of interest and conduct fair and impartial reviews.

In addition, the SCBGP encourages State departments of agriculture to notify successful and unsuccessful sub-applicants about the outcome of the competitive process as it relates to their proposals.

Finally, the SCBGP encourages State departments of agriculture during their competitive review process to examine funding requests carefully for previously funded activities to ensure:

- The projects are likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds;

- Funding decisions are based on the sub-applicant's/subrecipient's past performance; and

- Specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the continuation of the project.

1.4.4 DEFINITION OF A PROJECT

A project is a set of interrelated tasks with a cohesive, distinct, specified, and defined goal. It follows a planned, organized approach over a fixed period of time and within specific limitations (cost, performance/quality, etc.). Additionally, it uses resources that are specifically allocated to the work of the project and usually involves a team of people.

Projects are different from other ongoing operations in an organization because, unlike operations, projects have a definitive beginning and end – they have a limited duration. A project has an overarching goal that the applicant wants to accomplish through a series of individual activities or tasks. Examples of projects include:

- Researching new cultivars
- Providing outreach opportunities on specialty crops to youth, families, seniors, and the overall community
- Marketing apples through a targeted promotional campaign

Activities or tasks that could be a part of such projects might include:

- Hiring personnel
- Purchasing special purpose equipment: defined in Section 8.2 of the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions as equipment used only for research, scientific, or technical activities.
- Holding an educational workshop
- Planting specialty crops
- Distributing product promotional materials

1.4.5 MULTI-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

A multi-state partnership is a project that implements activities with measurable outcomes that benefit two or more U.S. States and/or Territories. Multi-state partnerships are encouraged and should provide solutions to problems that cross state boundaries including, but not limited to, food safety, plant pests and disease, research, crop-specific projects addressing common issues, and marketing and promotion. State departments of agriculture with multi-state partnership projects can also consider submitting those projects to the Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP).

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS will use a Grant Agreement to provide support to successful applicants.

2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

New application. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the selection process and evaluation criteria described in *6.0 Application Review Information*.

2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING AND FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION

Funding Type	Available Funding	Award Period	Start Date	End Date
Farm Bill Funds (annual funding)	$72.9 million*	3 years	September 30, 2023	September 29, 2026

*Amounts do not include AMS administrative costs. Enactment of additional continuing resolutions or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.

The applicant must indicate the start and end dates on the SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance" in block 17. AMS encourages State departments of agriculture to allow ample time for completion of all projects.

2.4 BLOCK GRANT AMOUNTS AVAILABLE TO EACH APPLICANT

Subject to the amount of available funding as set forth above in section *2.3 Available Funding and Federal Award Period Duration*, each eligible State department of agriculture applicant that submits an application that the AMS reviews and accepts is eligible to receive the available grant allocation as indicated below. Each State department of agriculture is eligible to receive an estimated base grant of approximately $243,001.17 (Farm Bill) and an amount based on the average of the most recent available value of specialty crop cash receipts in the State (2021 calendar year estimates) and the acreage of specialty crop production in the State (2017 Census of Agriculture). The data source for specialty crop cash receipts and acreage is the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service and National Agricultural Statistics Service.

State Department of Agriculture	Available Grant Allocation
Alabama	$495,715.27
Alaska	$255,164.92
American Samoa	$268,684.06
Arizona	$1,307,641.14
Arkansas	$363,721.46

State Department of Agriculture	Available Grant Allocation
California	$23,828,176.85
Colorado	$797,194.18
Connecticut	$403,636.97
Delaware	$341,566.84
District of Columbia	$243,001.17
Florida	$3,817,366.22
Georgia	$1,422,114.92
Guam	$245,608.99
Hawaii	$533,251.53
Idaho	$2,095,642.50
Illinois	$544,223.76
Indiana	$484,966.71
Iowa	$355,599.70
Kansas	$327,969.82
Kentucky	$332,336.26
Louisiana	$355,421.20
Maine	$653,495.99
Maryland	$456,890.13
Massachusetts	$459,069.42
Michigan	$2,247,222.50
Minnesota	$1,352,800.33
Mississippi	$428,448.20
Missouri	$409,394.92
Montana	$3,066,409.14
Nebraska	$821,384.34
Nevada	$267,038.43
New Hampshire	$294,620.57
New Jersey	$815,369.75
New Mexico	$610,354.81
New York	$1,276,513.58
North Carolina	$1,257,957.86
North Dakota	$3,346,952.71
Northern Mariana Islands	$244,560.90
Ohio	$602,986.66
Oklahoma	$543,987.11
Oregon	$1,929,531.55
Pennsylvania	$1,025,493.07
Puerto Rico	$484,767.40
Rhode Island	$270,585.67
South Carolina	$600,301.51
South Dakota	$378,623.40
Tennessee	$496,697.76

State Department of Agriculture	Available Grant Allocation
Texas	$1,441,051.75
U.S. Virgin Islands	$244,639.86
Utah	$385,924.06
Vermont	$320,109.29
Virginia	$551,113.45
Washington	$4,826,262.92
West Virginia	$299,607.43
Wisconsin	$1,332,908.96
Wyoming	$338,270.12

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants are State departments of agriculture in the 50 States, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the United States Virgin Islands. A State department of agriculture is the agency, commission, or department of a State government responsible for agriculture within the State.

AMS expects that State departments of agriculture will consult with specialty crop growers, processors, and/or distributors before developing SCBGP project applications to ensure maximum public input and benefit. These stakeholders should play an important role in development of project goals and objectives, in implementing the project plan, and in evaluating and disseminating project results and outcomes.

3.2 ENHANCE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF SPECIALTY CROPS

Projects must enhance the competitiveness of U.S. or U.S. territory-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. See the SCBGP website for a definition of specialty crops and processed products, including a list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities.

3.3 BENEFIT MORE THAN ONE PRODUCT OR ORGANIZATION

Applications for grant funds should describe how the project potentially affects and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual.

AMS will not award grant funds for projects whose products or services promote or provide profit that solely benefits a single organization, institution, or individual. In addition, recipients and subrecipients cannot use grant funds to compete unfairly with companies that provide equivalent products or services. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

Examples of Acceptable Projects:

- A non-profit organization requests funds to demonstrate the viability of organic small fruit production and partners with Cooperative Extension to publicize the working model of diversification to other regional growers.

- A single farmer implements food safety practices or models on his/her property to meet food safety requirements and conducts a field day and training services to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the methods.

Examples of Unacceptable Projects:

- A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop to make a profit or to expand production of a single business or organization.

- A single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase its membership.

3.4 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

AMS is required to report on the outcomes of the SCBGP on a national scale to demonstrate the performance of this program. In 2021 AMS, in conjunction with the State departments of agriculture, completed a year-long evaluation to assess its current performance measures. Additional information regarding the update to the performance measures can be found on the AMS Grant Performance Measures website. By collecting, aggregating, and reporting performance data across all States and Territories, AMS can share the impact of the SCBGP with all stakeholders, including OMB, U.S. Congress, the agricultural community, and the public.

Each project submitted in the State Plan **must** include at least one of the seven outcomes listed in the SCBGP Performance Measures and at least one of the indicators listed in the selected outcome(s). The progress of the one or more outcomes and indicators selected will need to be reported in the Annual Performance Report, and the results will be reported in the Final Performance Report. Please refer to the SCBGP Performance Measures for more information.   The project narrative templates covered in section *5.2.4 State Plan Narrative* have been updated to reflect the new performance measures.

4.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 COST-SHARING AND MATCHING

This funding opportunity does not have a Federal cost-sharing or matching requirement. Applicants should not include this topic in the submitted application nor subsequent performance or financial reports.

4.2 INDIRECT COSTS

4.2.1 LIMIT ON ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Administrative costs are defined as indirect costs and are limited to 8 percent of the total Federal funds provided under the award per section 101(k)(2) of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note), as amended by section 10107 of the Farm Bill. The State department of agriculture must notify sub-applicants of the limit on indirect costs in its request for proposals/applications so that indirect costs requested by sub-applicants plus indirect administrative costs requested by the State department of agriculture do not exceed 8 percent of the State's grant request. If the State department of agriculture does not take the full 8 percent of indirect costs, individual sub-applicants may claim the remaining portion of these costs at the discretion of the State. State-approved indirect costs in sub-applicant projects may not exceed 8 percent of that project's budget. See the information below on presenting direct and indirect costs consistently.

Presenting Direct and Indirect Costs Consistently

Applicants are responsible for presenting direct and indirect costs appropriately and consistently and must not include costs associated with their organization's indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, a cost may not be allocated as an indirect cost if it also incurred as a direct cost for the same purpose and vice versa.

Direct costs are costs that can be identified specifically with a particular award, project or program, service, or other organizational activity or that can be directly assigned to such an activity relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy. Typically, direct costs include, but are not limited to, compensation of employees who work directly on the award to include salaries and fringe benefits, travel, equipment, and supplies directly benefiting the grant-supported project or program.

Indirect costs (also known as "facilities and administrative costs") defined at 2 CFR § 200.1 are costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. Refer to 2 CFR §§ 200.413 and 414 for additional information on determining if costs charged to the award are direct or indirect.

The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should typically be treated as indirect costs. However, charging these costs as direct costs may be appropriate where all the following conditions are met:

(1) administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity;

(2) individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;

(3) such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency; and

(4) the costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

Typical Indirect Costs by Organization Type

Type of Organization	Typical Indirect Costs
Non-Profits	General administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment, and the costs of operating and maintaining facilities.
Colleges and Universities	Equipment and capital improvements, operation and maintenance expenses, library expenses, general administration and general expenses, departmental administration, sponsored projects administration, student administration and services, depreciation and use allowances, and interest on debt associated with certain buildings.
State and Local Governments	State/local-wide central service costs, general administration of the applicant department or agency, accounting and personnel services performed within the applicant department or agency, depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment, and the costs of operating and maintaining facilities.

Benefit of Using Indirect Costs for Grant Administration

AMS encourages all grant applicants to include the grant administrative funds, up to 8 percent of their total Federal award, in their budget narrative, which can be used for costs such as monitoring subrecipients, ensuring grant recipient and subrecipient compliance with regulations and requirements, and grant management training. Grant recipients are encouraged to conduct periodic site visits to review project accomplishments and monitor progress, to review financial and performance records, organizational procedures, and financial control systems, and to provide technical assistance to subrecipients as required. These recommended site visits are meant to support accountability, compliance with regulations and requirements, and achievements of subrecipients.

It is imperative that States and territories consider the capacity of support staff to manage these grant funds to not only ensure that subrecipients are paid in a timely way, but also that Federal funds are managed appropriately.

4.2.2 SUPPLANTING

Funds must supplement the expenditure of State funds in support of specialty crops grown in that State, rather than replace State funds. Additionally, Federal funding may not replace State funding that is required under section 101(d)(3) of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note). In instances where a question of supplanting arises, the applicant or recipient will be required to substantiate that the reduction in non-Federal resources occurred for reasons other than the receipt or expected receipt of Federal funds.

General Supplanting Definition. A State organization reduces State funds for an activity specifically because Federal funds are available (or expected to be available) to fund that same activity.

Example: State funds are appropriated for a stated purpose and Federal funds are awarded for that same purpose. (If a State has $50.00 budgeted for a specialty crop program and the Federal government awards a $100.00 grant for the same specialty crop program, the total project must expend $150.00 – the State cannot remove the original $50.00 and use it for something else).

4.3 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions.

4.4 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

Recipients are expected to attend AMS sponsored grant management meetings during the project's period of performance. It is also possible that meetings may be conducted virtually. The State department of agriculture's Grant Administration Budget Narrative should include travel funds for the Coordinator and any additional key personnel as reasonably determined by the recipient and AMS. This is not necessary if the eligible applicant has already committed funds for this purpose under another AMS grant agreement.

4.5 FUNDS NOT APPLIED FOR

Eligible State department of agriculture applicants who do not apply for or do not request all available funding during the specified grant application period will forfeit that portion of available funding not requested. AMS will allocate funds not applied for, by a date determined by AMS, pro rata to the remaining State departments of agriculture and territories that submitted applications.

5.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

5.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. AMS strongly encourages applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process, see Grants.gov's Apply for Grants webpage. This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in section *5.3.1 How to Register to Apply Through Grants.gov*.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number "10.170" or the SCBGP Funding Opportunity Number "USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-23-0003."

5.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

5.2.1 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Required: Form SF-424 is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Applicants may use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on the SF-424.

Block	Instruction
#1 Type of Submission	Select Application type
#2 Type of Application	Select New
#4 through #7	Not required
#8.c Organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	Enter applicant UEI# for the organization submitting the application. Note: On April 4, 2022, the federal government stopped using DUNS and start using a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) created in SAM.gov. For more information, please visit gsa.gov/entityid.
#8.d Address	Enter the organization street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes will not be accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code.
#10 Name of Federal Agency	AMS, USDA
#11 Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (Assistance Listing Number)	Enter "10.170"
#12 Funding Opportunity Number	Enter "USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-23-0003"
#13 Competition Identification Number	Not applicable.
#14 Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, States affected by project.
#15 Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project	Provide a short description of the project.
#16a Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where the applicant is located.
#16b Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be implemented. Write "All" if the projects will be implemented in more than one location.
#17 Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Enter Start Date: September 30, 2023. End date: September 29, 2026. The project period cannot be more than 36 months (3 years) in length.
#18.a Estimated Funding – Federal	Enter the total Federal amount requested
#18.b – 18.f Estimated Funding – Applicant	Enter the total match amount from the applicant organization and/or other partners, or 'N/A' if not applicable.
#19 Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See section *5.6 Intergovernmental Review*.

5.2.2 SF-424A BUDGET INFORMATION FOR NON-CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMS

Required: SF-424A is available via the application package in Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the form instructions. The following are supplemental instructions associated with specific boxes on form.

Please complete only sections A and B. (Do not complete sections C - F.)

SECTION A - BUDGET SUMMARY	Instruction
Grant Program Function or Activity (a)	Insert each of the applicable expense types in the boxes for this section: 1) Project totals. This will be the total for all proposed projects from the State Plan Budget Summary. 2) Grant Administration. This will be the Grant Administration total (from the State Plan Budget Summary
Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (b)	Enter the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (10.170).
Estimated Unobligated Funds (c) & (d):	Leave blank.
New or Revised Budget (e):	Insert the totals for each of the applicable expenses in these sections. Enter the Federal totals under column (e).
Totals (column (g) and row 5):	Calculate the totals of columns (e) and (f) for each expense type. Please note the Grants.gov form will auto calculate this total.

SECTION B - BUDGET CATEGORIES	Instruction
Object Class Categories	Enter the same expense types in the column headings for Section 6. Please note the Grants.gov form will auto fill these headers. For 1) Project totals, enter the total for all proposed projects under "contractual". For 2) Grant Administration, enter the total expenses for each class category (e.g., Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, etc.) and sum the amounts in column 5 and row K. Note that totals will also auto fill when using the Grants.gov form.

Please note that the State department of agriculture will fill out this form at the state level, to describe the budget for its overall request. All projects, which are considered subawards, should be combined under the Contractual cost category for the State department of agriculture's request.

5.2.3 PROJECT ABSTRACT

Required. The Project Abstract will be used as the award description for the overarching Federal award. This is separate from the individual subaward summaries in the Project Profile Template. An example state level project abstract is as follows:

The [Insert State Name] Department of Agriculture will enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through 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 through a variety of activities/projects with their grant recipients. Beneficiaries include the residents of the State or territory. Performance evidence in the form of measurable outcomes is required.

5.2.4 STATE PLAN NARRATIVE

Required. The applicant must submit a State Plan that includes the content required in the Grant Administration Template and Project Profile Template. The Grant Administration Template and Project Abstract will be provided once at the

beginning of the State Plan; the applicant will use the Project Profile Template for each project submitted through the State Plan.

For both Project Narrative types, page size must be 8.5 inches by 11 inches. The acceptable font size is 11 or 12 pitch with all margins at 1 inch. Each State Plan should include a series of project profiles that detail the information necessary to fulfill the goals and objectives of the project. For examples of acceptable formats, please see Grant Administration Template, Project Profile Template, and the Sample State Plan. To view the Sample State Plan, please download the document and open it from your computer, rather than the browser.

5.3 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

5.3.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

The applicant organization registration process can take **up to four weeks** to complete. Therefore, complete your registration allowing sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

If individual applicants eligible to apply for this grant funding opportunity, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

1) Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number: All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Unique Entity Identifier from SAM.gov. Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational UEI" on the SF-424 form.

2) Register with the System for Award Management (SAM): In addition to having a UEI number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with SAM. Current SAM.gov registrants have already been assigned their UEI and can view it within SAM.gov. All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.**

3) Create a Grants.gov Account: The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's UEI number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need the Authorized Organization Role (AOR).

4) Authorize Grants.gov Roles: After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, including the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.

5) Track Role Status: After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you to track your status.

6) Electronic Signature: When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR who submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC must authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization to act as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

5.3.2 HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO AMS VIA GRANTS.GOV

Applicants can apply using Grants.gov Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different web forms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement (FOA), an applicant creates individual instances of a workspace.

1) *Create a Workspace*: This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.

2) *Complete a Workspace*: Add participants to the Workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.

   a. *Adobe Reader*: If you decide not to apply by filling out the webforms, you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or AMS forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, and then accessed through Adobe Reader. NOTE: You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software. There is no cost for Adobe Reader Software.

   b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms:* Fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color are mandatory fields you must complete to successfully submit your application.

   c. *Complete SF-424 Fields First*: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant's name, address, and UEI number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

3) *Submit a Workspace*: Submit your application through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

   SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for AMS required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in section *5.2 Content and Form of Application Submission* are included.

4) *Track a Workspace*: After successfully submitting a Workspace package, Grants.gov automatically assigns a Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) to the package, which will be listed on the Confirmation page generated after submission.

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides additional training resources, including video tutorials.

Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email support@grants.gov. Grants.gov will issue a ticket number to which you and Grants.gov can refer if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact individuals mentioned in section *8.0 Agency Contacts*.

5.4 APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

AMS will not consider any applications received after the deadline, any applications submitted by fax, email, or postal mail and any applications not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (eligibility, incomplete application, missing required attachments documents, etc.). See AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy.

Ensure that all components are complete before submission. Allow enough time for the application process, as it may take more than one attempt before your application is successfully submitted. AMS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks before the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov using an electronic date/time stamp generated when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

Special Note for Applicants with Slow Internet Connections: Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, may experience significantly longer transmission times when submitting their application to Grants.gov, especially if there are large attachments contained in the upload. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error message or a successfully received transmission notification via email to the applicant AOR.

5.5 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on May 1, 2023. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. (See AMS' Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy)

5.6 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This program is not subject to Executive Order 12372 (Intergovernmental Review (SPOC List)), which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials.

6.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

AMS will review grant applications to ensure each State Plan meets the statutory purpose of the program, all application criteria are fulfilled in accordance with section *5.0 Application and Submission Information*, and that all costs are allowable. AMS will also assess an organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these monies using the guidance provided by 2 CFR § 200.206.

AMS will notify the individual listed on the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance" in block 8f. if additional information is required after the initial review of the application. An applicant should ensure that all sub-applicants are aware that additional information may be required from them because of the review of their grant proposal. Failure to provide requested information in a timely manner may result in a project not receiving funding.

7.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

7.1 AWARD NOTICES

Upon announcement of the Federal awards, AMS will prepare and send a Notice of Award (NOA) to each recipient for signature by the appropriate official. The NOA will be signed by AMS and the AOR.

The NOA will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in 2 CFR § 200.211 and a reference to the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions.

7.2 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

As part of the NOA, all AMS grant recipients must abide by the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions, which reference applicable *Administrative and National Policy Requirements*.

7.3 REPORTING

Reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions. If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

7.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

Proper acknowledgement of your USDA-AMS SCBGP funding in published solicitations (e.g., for state competitions), presentations, press releases, and other communications is critical for the success of our agency's programs. Grant recipients must meet the acknowledgement requirements outlined in the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions.

8.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the SCBGP staff by e-mail with questions about the grant program at SCBlockGrants@usda.gov.

For additional information, please visit the SCBGP Website: https://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp

8.1 ADDRESS

> Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill 2023
> USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
> 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
> Room 1510-S
> Washington, DC 20250-0269

8.2 GRANTS.GOV CONTACT INFORMATION

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to Grants.gov's Applicant Support.

8.3 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on the SCBGP website (https://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp) that may be helpful to applicants, including webinar information, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), descriptions of funded projects, and required application forms. AMS staff is available to provide timely technical assistance.

9.0 OTHER INFORMATION

9.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

9.2 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) of 1966 (5 U.S.C. § 552) and the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. § 552a), as implemented by USDA's regulations (7 CFR § 1, Subpart A), govern the release or withholding of information to the public in connection with this Federal award. The release of information under these laws and regulations applies only to records held by AMS and imposes no requirement on the recipient or any subrecipient to permit or deny public access to their records.

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 2055-S, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0201, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov.

9.3 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. § 3501 *et seq.*), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0240. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.