



# Specialty Crop Multi-State Program

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***Fiscal Year 2015 Request for Applications***

***Funding Opportunity Number:*** USDA-AMS-SCMP-2015

**Application Due Date:** 11:59 PM Eastern Time on January 14, 2016

## Program Solicitation Information

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**Funding Opportunity Title:** Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP)

**Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-AMS-SCMP-2015

**Announcement Type:** Initial

**Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 10.170

**Dates:** Applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern time on January 14, 2016, through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

State departments of agriculture must notify USDA by September 30, 2015, if they would like to be designated as a Participating State department of agriculture. See [section 1.4.2](#) for more details.

**Stakeholder Input:** A *Notice of Guidance Regarding the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Multi-State Project Competition* was published in the Federal Register on October 23, 2014 (**79 FR 63377**). Interested persons were invited to submit written comments until November 24, 2014. Comments were received from a specialty crop organization, a sustainable agriculture organization, a State department of agriculture, an association of State agriculture departments, and one individual. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) considered these comments during the preparation of the fiscal year (FY) 2015 Request for Applications (RFA). The comments are summarized and discussed at SCMP [Summary of Comments Received](#).

**Executive Summary:** AMS requests applications for the FY 2015 SCMP to competitively award funds to State departments of agriculture to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by funding collaborative, multi-state projects that address the following regional or national level specialty crop issues: food safety; plant pests and disease; research; crop-specific projects addressing common issues; and marketing and promotion.

Approximately \$3 million may be available to fund applications under this solicitation. The funding amount available consists of \$1 million not awarded in FY 2014 and \$2 million allocated for FY 2015. Funds not awarded will be rolled over into the next fiscal year.

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

**STAKEHOLDER INPUT:** The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) seeks your comments about this RFA. We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program. Submit written stakeholder comments by January 14, 2016, to: Janise Zygmunt, Specialty Crop Multi-State Program, Grants Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, STOP 0267; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-0267; or via e-mail to: [janise.zygmunt@ams.usda.gov](mailto:janise.zygmunt@ams.usda.gov). In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Specialty Crop Multi-State Program RFA.

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## 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 under [section 10010 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 113-79](#).

### 1.2 PURPOSE

The purpose of the SCMP is to competitively award funds to State departments of agriculture to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by funding collaborative, multi-state projects that address the following regional or national level specialty crop issues:

- Food safety
- Plant pests and disease
- Research
- Crop-specific projects addressing common issues
- Marketing and promotion

### 1.3 PROJECT TYPES

States are encouraged to develop projects that bring together multi-state teams to research and develop solutions to practical problems that cross State boundaries and address the needs of specialty crop growers in the areas of food safety, plant pests and disease, research, crop-specific projects addressing common issues, and marketing and promotion. Eligible project types include the following:

#### 1.3.1 FOOD SAFETY PROJECTS THAT ADDRESS THE HANDLING, PREPARATION, AND STORAGE OF SPECIALTY CROPS IN WAYS THAT REDUCE FOODBORNE THREATS

Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Improve detection, monitoring, control, and response to potential food safety hazards in the production, processing, and handling of specialty crops;
- Develop procedures and mechanisms and provide assistance/education in implementing Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), or Good Handling Practices (GHP) on a national or regional level. If providing education/training opportunities, utilize the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) or other FDA-recognized curriculum and materials;

- Conduct research focused on issues (such as die-off rates/survival rates of pathogens) related to (1) water quality; or (2) use of biological soil amendments of animal origin, on similar agro-ecological regions or localities.

The following Framework Document is suggested as a reference for developing projects involving agricultural water:

- Harris, L.J., J. Bender, E.A. Bihn, T. Blessinton, M.D. Danyluk, P. Delaquis, L. Goodridge, M. Ibekwe, S. Ilic, K. Kniel, J.T. Lejeune, D.W. Schaffner, D. Stoeckel, and T.V. Suslow. December 2012. A framework for developing research protocols for evaluation of microbial hazards and controls during production that pertain to the quality of agricultural water contacting fresh produce that may be consumed raw. See [Journal of Food Protection. 75\(12\):2251-2273](#).

The following Framework Document is suggested as a reference for developing projects involving biological soil amendments of animal origin:

- Harris, L.J., E. Berry, T. Blessington, M. Erickson, M. Jay-Russell, X. Jiang, K. Killinger, F.C. Michel, P. Millner, K. Schneider, M. Sharma, T.V. Suslow, L. Wang, R.W. Worobo. 2012. A framework for developing research protocols for evaluation of microbial hazards and controls during production that pertain to the use of untreated biological soil amendments of animal origin for produce that may be consumed raw. See [Journal of Food Protection. 76\(6\):1062-1084](#).

- Apply new or improved food processing technologies to prevent and reduce foodborne pathogen loads in specialty crops;
- Strengthen national and regional traceback systems; promote an outbreak response system that shortens the time between outbreak detection, resolution, and recovery; and improve methods for communicating with consumers about traceback and foodborne illness outbreaks; and/or
- Improve national support and coordination of food safety programs by conducting national and regional conferences, building collaborative networks, and exchanging information about integrated food safety.

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### 1.3.2 PROJECTS THAT ADDRESS THREATS FROM PESTS AND DISEASES

May include, but are not limited to:

- Develop safe, effective, and economical pest and disease management solutions for growers of specialty crops;

- Develop monitoring systems to enhance capabilities to predict pest and disease incidence, estimate damage, and identify valid action thresholds;
- Develop treatments for quarantine pests and diseases to maintain or open healthy markets with U.S. trading partners;
- Develop diagnostic tools, particularly new ones, for plant pests and diseases and for detection of pesticide resistance in pest populations, including weeds; and/or
- Develop delivery methods, particularly new methods, designed to expand the options for integrated pest management (IPM) implementation.

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#### 1.3.3 RESEARCH PROJECTS

May include, but are not limited to:

- Conduct research in plant breeding, genetics, and genomics to improve crop characteristics;
- Develop new innovations and technologies, including mechanization;
- Improve production, processing, storage, and distribution efficiencies for conventionally or organically grown specialty crops;
- Reduce environmental impacts;
- Conduct research to determine consumer preferences, including studies of willingness to pay, sensory evaluations, focus groups and other evaluative research methods that will then be disseminated to specialty crop growers in multiple States.

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#### 1.3.4 CROP-SPECIFIC PROJECTS

Crop-specific projects involve collaborative efforts to address issues that affect a specific specialty crop. An example of an acceptable project would involve a specific specialty crop that is grown commercially in several distinct and widely dispersed geographic areas or regions of the country.

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#### 1.3.5 MARKETING AND PROMOTION PROJECTS

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

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#### 1.3.6 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT ELIGIBLE PROJECT TYPES

##### Priority Points in the Review Process

AMS will give priority to proposals where the main project activities fall under the following project types: food safety; plant pests and disease; and research as described in sections [1.3.1](#), [1.3.2](#) and [1.3.3](#).

#### Highly-Technical Proposals

AMS recognizes that it is often necessary to test out and prove new technologies or approaches on a small scale in the laboratory before taking them into the field. Any technically-oriented proposal submitted to SCMP must outline how, if proven successful in the laboratory, the technology or approach will be tested in real-world conditions, and specifically how specialty crop producers and processors may benefit.

#### Proposals Involving Food Safety Training or Education for Producers, Processors and/or Handlers

State departments of agriculture and their partners or any other entity participating in the project must utilize PSA or other FDA-recognized training and resources for producer and/or processor training or education.

Training need not be restricted to the classroom. Training “in the field” can be beneficial and effective. AMS will allow training conducted under a SCMP project to take place in alternate venues provided that it follows PSA or other FDA-recognized curriculum, materials and resources.

There may be situations where some additional unique training materials or information specific to a particular region and/or to a particular specialty crop may be needed. Such specific materials or information may be developed and used in a SCMP project provided that it is presented in addition to, and not instead of, PSA or other FDA-recognized training, materials and resources which must serve as the foundation.

#### Proposals Involving Consumer Food Safety Education

Consumers may benefit from educational materials and campaigns that convey messages regarding safe handling, preparation and storage of specialty crops in the home. Educational materials and campaigns targeted to consumers are acceptable under the SCMP provided that the content is aligned with the PSA or other FDA-recognized source and that the focus is on providing useful and practical information to help consumers avoid food contamination by using practices that are under their control once they purchase a specialty crop.

#### Proposals Involving Other Types of Training and Education



Training and education programs may be developed for producers, processors, handlers and consumers relating to plant pests and diseases, research and crop-specific projects addressing common issues.

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### 1.3.7 TYPES OF PROJECTS ENCOURAGED BY USDA

USDA encourages proposals that will:

- Improve producer and facility capacity to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act.
- Develop adaptation and mitigation strategies for farmers in drought-stricken regions of the country.
- Increase opportunities for new and beginning farmers.
- Develop strong local and regional food systems.
- Protect pollinator habitats and improving pollinator health.
- Support the growth of organic specialty crops.
- Benefit underserved communities and veterans
- Involve contributions to the project by partners of cash and/or in-kind resources as appropriate.

Note that, with the exception of proposals to improve producer and facility capacity to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, submission of proposals that address the topics listed in this section does not convey any advantage, including priority points, in terms of evaluation and scoring during the review process.

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### 1.3.8 UNALLOWED PROJECT TYPES

The following types of projects are not allowed:

- **DUPLICATION OF MATERIALS** – Projects that duplicate the content of food safety training curricula or any resources or materials already developed by the Produce Safety Alliance.
- **DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO PRODUCERS** - Projects that provide direct financial assistance to producers or processors to offset the cost of GAP, GHP or GMP or to cost-share for funding audits of such systems.
- **DISPARAGE THE WORK OF ANOTHER ORGANIZATION** - Projects in which one organization specifically attempts to disparage the mission, goals, and/or actions of another organization.

- **BENEFIT ONLY ONE ORGANIZATION, INSTITUTION OR INDIVIDUAL-** Projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. In addition, SCMP funds cannot be used to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services.
- **SUPPLANTING** - SCMP funds awarded must supplement rather than replace the expenditure of State funds that support specialty crops grown in that State.

**General Supplanting Definition.** A State reduces State funds for an activity specifically because Federal funds are available (or expected to be available) to fund that same activity. Federal funds must be used to supplement existing State funds for program activities and may not replace State funds that have been appropriated or allocated for the same purpose. Additionally, Federal funding may not replace State funding that is required by law. In those 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.

- 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 initiative and is awarded \$100.00 for the same initiative, the total project must expend \$150.00 – the original \$50.00 cannot be removed and used for something else).

Any discovery of supplanting will result in the immediate return of Federal funds related to the expenditure and project. Supplanting puts all Federal funds at risk.

**Documentation and Record Retention.** If a question of supplanting arises, the State department of agriculture awarded SCMP funds should retain whatever documentation is produced during the ordinary course of government business that will help substantiate that supplanting has not occurred. Depending on the circumstances, relevant documents might include annual appropriations acts or executive orders directing broad reductions of operating budgets.

## 1.4 DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSALS

### 1.4.1 DEFINITION OF A MULTI-STATE PROJECT

SCMP applications must bring together a multi-state organizational team to develop solutions for practical problems that cross State boundaries and address the needs of specialty crop growers.

Projects should also lead to measurable benefits for specialty crop growers, encourage partnerships among specialty crop organizations, and reduce duplication of effort among participating organizations. A SCMP project:

- (1) Addresses one or more national or regional (multiple-State) issues described in [section 1.3 Project Types](#);
- (2) Defines the geographic target area of impact of the project such as the specific States, or foreign markets;
- (3) Defines the specific specialty crops that are the focus of the project;
- (4) Involves at least two partners located in different States. A Participating State department of agriculture which will provide only administrative support for the project does not count as a partner for the purposes of this section.

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#### 1.4.2 PARTICIPATING STATE DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE

AMS recognizes that not all State departments of agriculture have the resources to administer SCMP projects. State departments of agriculture must notify AMS no later than September 30, 2015, if they would like to be designated as a Participating State department of agriculture.

A Participating State department of agriculture:

- (1) Is the only entity that may submit SCMP proposals to AMS;
- (2) Provides AMS a point of contact who will handle inquiries from the public about the SCMP;
- (3) Establishes a deadline for accepting SCMP applications and develops internal procedures to screen any application from any source submitted to them to ensure it meets both the definition of a multi-state project and the requirements outlined by the RFA;
- (4) Takes responsibility for submitting all applications they receive that meet both the definition of a multi-state project and the requirements of the RFA;
- (5) Upon request by AMS before the application deadline, submits an SF-424B - Assurances – Non-Construction Program Form.
- (6) Accepts administrative responsibility for any application they submitted to AMS that is ultimately selected for funding under the SCMP; and
- (7) If awarded, uses subagreements or subcontracts as needed to carry out the project in order to maintain control of the project objectives, set policies, and ensure that the

project is carried out in accordance with all applicable Federal statutes and regulations as well as with the SCMP award terms and conditions.

It is not the responsibility of Participating State departments of agriculture to assist interested partners in developing proposals or to give feedback to improve their proposals. Participating State departments of agriculture are not responsible for finding partners for proposals they do not develop themselves.

All SCMP proposals must have at least two partners with substantive involvement in the project, and the partners must be located in different States. Participating and non-participating State departments of agriculture may develop their own proposals if they intend to have a substantive role in the project. In such cases, the State department of agriculture must recruit at least one partner who is located in another State, and who will have a substantive role in the project.

Following are examples of acceptable partnerships:

- A national level organization and a State department of agriculture
- State level organizations from two different States
- Two State departments of agriculture
- Other combinations of partners listed in section [1.4.3](#)

A Participating State department of agriculture that develops its own proposal will submit it directly to AMS along with other proposals it has received that have been determined to meet the RFA requirements. Non-participating State departments of agriculture must submit their proposals to a Participating State department of agriculture which will submit the proposal to AMS if it meets the RFA requirements.

An entity other than a State department of agriculture may develop a SCMP proposal, but only a Participating State department of agriculture may submit the proposal to AMS. For proposals developed by an entity other than a State department of agriculture, at least one partner must be located in another State.

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### 1.4.3 PARTNERSHIPS

Project partners bring specialized knowledge and expertise, research capability, and/or other resources needed to conduct a successful project. Examples of project partners include but are not limited to, the following:

- Non-participating State departments of agriculture
- Participating State departments of agriculture, but only if they have more than an administrative role in the project
- State agencies such as a State department of public health, a State department of natural resources, etc.

- Tribes
- Land grant or State universities or colleges
- Specialty crop producer organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Community-based organizations

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#### 1.4.4 CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING IF AN APPLICATION IS APPROPRIATE FOR SCMP

When evaluating a proposal to determine if it is appropriate for SCMP, Participating State departments of agriculture must ensure that:

- (1) The proposal fits into at least one of the project category types outlined in [section 1.3 Project Types](#);
- (2) The proposal meets the definition of a multi-state project as outlined in this section;
- (3) The proposal differs from and/or supplements and does not duplicate projects currently or previously funded by the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), or another Federal award program;
- (4) Any partner named in a SCMP project that is a current or past recipient of SCBGP funds does not, or did not have, any performance and compliance issues relating to the SCBGP-funded project. When developing proposals, designated State SCMP contacts should communicate with each other to ensure there have been no past performance or compliance issues with partners named in a proposal; and
- (5) The proposal adheres to the requirements of [section 1.3.6](#), if the proposal is highly-technical, or involves food safety training or education for producers, processors and/or handlers; consumer food safety education; or other types of training and education.

Participating State departments of agriculture that have questions about whether or not a proposal fits within the scope of the SCMP should contact the SCMP Program Manager. Potential partners that have questions about the SCMP should contact the individual or office designated by one of the Participating State department of agriculture to handle SCMP applications. AMS will post a list of Participating State departments of agriculture SCMP contacts on the SCMP website after September 30, 2015.

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#### 1.4.5 OUTREACH

As the only entities eligible to apply directly for SCMP, Participating State departments of agriculture have a unique role in disseminating information about the opportunity to potential partners in their States and regions. However, all State departments of agriculture are encouraged to publicize the SCMP opportunity to stakeholders and potential partners via their

department website, the State's SCBGP website, a press release, newsletters and other mechanisms routinely used for disseminating information about grant opportunities.

## 2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

### 2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

SCMP will use a Grant Agreement to provide support to successful SCMP applications.

### 2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

**New application.** All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the evaluation criteria and selection process described in section [5.0 Application Review Information](#).

### 2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING

Approximately \$3 million will be available to fund applications covered in the fiscal year (FY) 2015 RFA. AMS will award funds only for projects that meet the requirements of this RFA. Any funds not awarded under the FY 2015 SCMP RFA will be applied to the next project award cycle.

### 2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION

SCMP projects must be completed within 3 years. It is acceptable to complete a project before the scheduled ending date. The start date selected for a proposal should be no earlier than a date in calendar year 2016. The ending date will be three years from that date.

### 2.5 AWARD SIZE

Minimum award is \$250,000 and a maximum award is \$1,000,000.

## 3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

### 3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

State departments of agriculture in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands are eligible to apply for funds. State department of agriculture is defined as the agency, commission, or department of a State government responsible for agriculture within the State. AMS will not accept an application submitted by an entity other than a Participating State department of agriculture.

### 3.2 ELIGIBLE SPECIALTY CROPS

Specialty crops and processed products are defined at the [SCBGP website](#). The list identifies eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities. Only specialty crops and processed products

grown or produced in a State, territory or other entity listed under section [3.1 Eligible Applicants](#) are considered to be eligible specialty crops.

### 3.3 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

Although SCMP does not require cost share or match, AMS encourages partners to contribute cash and/or in-kind resources to the project as appropriate. However, cost sharing and matching contributions do not convey any advantage to the application in terms of evaluation and scoring during the review process.

### 3.4 NUMBER OF SCMP APPLICATIONS THAT MAY BE SUBMITTED TO AMS

There is no limit on the number of applications a Participating State department of agriculture may submit to the SCMP. However, submission of the same proposal by more than one Participating State department of agriculture is prohibited. Any State department of agriculture may serve as a partner and participant on an unlimited number of unique SCMP applications.

## 4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### 4.1 OBTAINING AN APPLICATION PACKAGE

Participating State departments of agriculture can apply for the SCMP at [Grants.gov](#), and may search for the SCMP funding opportunity using the SCBGP CFDA number “10.170,” or the SCMP Funding Opportunity Number “USDA-AMS-SCMP-2015.”

### 4.2 APPLICATION CHECKLIST

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#### SF-424 – APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE (REQUIRED)

Each project must be submitted by a Participating State department of agriculture as a separate application with its own SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance. DO NOT combine applications under one SF-424 form. Applications must be submitted via [Grants.gov](#) separately. The SF-424 form is available to applicants when accessing the SCMP opportunity at [www.Grants.gov](#).

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#### APPLICATION PACKAGE (REQUIRED)

The following documents must be prepared and consolidated outside of [Grants.gov](#), then uploaded under SF-424 item #15. Click on “Add Attachments” and follow the instructions on the form. ***Combine and submit the following items in one file in the order they appear below.***

Narrative and Budget which consist of:

- a) Cover Page
- b) Table of Contents

- c) Abstract
  - d) Narrative (not to exceed 15 pages)
  - e) References, if applicable
  - f) Budget Spreadsheet and Budget Narrative
- Other Required Elements:
- a) Personnel Qualifications
  - b) A Letter of Commitment from Each Partner
  - c) 3 Letters of Support from Stakeholders or Beneficiaries
  - d) Areas Affected by Project (attachment from Block 14 of the SF-424)

### 4.3 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

#### 4.3.1 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE (REQUIRED)

Form SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance is available via the SCMP opportunity at Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the instructions. However, for SCMP applications, you must use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on form SF-424.

Block	Instruction
#1 Type of Submission	Application
#2 Type of Application	New
#4 through #7	Not required
# 8c Organizational DUNS	Applicant DUNS# for the Organization submitting the application See <a href="#">D&amp;B Request a DUNS Number</a> .
#8d 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	10.170
#12 Funding Opportunity Number	USDA-AMS-SCMP-2015.
#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 only project title, not to exceed 10 words.
#16a Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located.
#16b Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be implemented. Write "All" if the project will be implemented in more than one location.
#17 Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	All agreements will be established for 3 years. The start date selected should be no earlier than a date in calendar year 2016. The ending date will be three years from that date.
#18 Estimated Funding	Total SCMP funds requested
#19 Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	This initiative is subject to <a href="#">intergovernmental review</a> .



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#### 4.3.2 APPLICATION PACKAGE (REQUIRED)

##### *FORMAT*

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To ensure a fair and equitable competition, the required format is a single-spaced, 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Number the pages in the right-hand bottom corner. The Narrative may be in Word (.doc, .docx) or Adobe Acrobat (.pdf). Handwritten applications will not be accepted. Ensure that before submitting your application to [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov), your document is in final form (e.g. if you used the “track changes” function, accept all changes before submitting so that the mark-up is not visible on the version of the document submitted to [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov)).

##### *COVER PAGE*

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The Cover Page must be included at the beginning of the application package, and include:

- Proposal Title of no more than 10 words
- Name and contact information of the applicant
- Names and contact information of the project leader and other principal partners

##### *TABLE OF CONTENTS*

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All pages must be numbered. The Table of Contents indicates the page number for all required sections of the application as well as for any attachments.

##### *ABSTRACT*

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The Abstract must be a concise, stand-alone description of and justification for the project. The maximum length is 250 words.

##### *NARRATIVE*

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The Narrative must include the following sections in the order they appear below. The Narrative may not exceed 15 pages. All sections of the Narrative must be in a paragraph format. Do not present or combine sections into a spreadsheet or table. If you reference the literature, see [References](#) for instructions.

#### **(1) Project Purpose**

This section must address the following:

- What project type(s) is/are being addressed (see [1.3 Project Types](#))?
- What is the specific geographic target area of impact of the project?
- What specific specialty crop(s) is/are the focus of the project?

- What is the specific issue, problem or need that the project will address, or what is the research question that will be answered? Include data and/or estimates that describe the extent of the problem. Provide a literature review sufficient to demonstrate the current state of knowledge about the topic and how the proposed work builds on it or addresses any gaps.
- Why is the project important and timely?
- How will the completion of this project have a national or regional impact on the competitiveness of specialty crops?
- If the proposal is highly technical, indicate how, if it is proven successful in the laboratory, will the technology or approach be tested in real-world conditions, and how may specialty crop producers and processors benefit?
- If some aspect of the proposal was previously funded by the SCBGP, how does the proposal differ from and build upon the previous project's efforts?

## **(2) Other Federal Award Programs**

Indicate if the proposal has been or will be submitted to another Federal award program. If so, identify the Federal award program. If the proposal is selected for funding by another Federal award program after the proposal is submitted to SCMP, the applicant must inform SCMP immediately and withdraw the SCMP proposal. If a partner currently has a SCBGP award, indicate the name of the project, the fiscal year awarded, and the State agriculture department which awarded the grant.

## **(3) Work Plan**

The Work Plan describes the major project activities, who will do the work, and when.

**Project activity.** Describe the project activities that are necessary to accomplish the objectives. Make sure to include a performance monitoring/data collection plan, if applicable.

**Who will do the work?** Indicate the project participants who will do the work of each activity, including subrecipients, and/or contractors. If funds are requested for personnel and contractors, details must be included in the work plan to demonstrate the requested funding is warranted. If you request funds for travel, these activities must also be included.

**When will each activity be accomplished?** Include a timeline that indicates when each activity will occur (month and year).

#### (4) Potential Impact

This section must show how the project potentially benefits the specialty crop industry and/or the public in multiple States. The following questions should be answered:

- Who are the specialty crop beneficiaries of the project?
- How many specialty crop beneficiaries will the project benefit?
- How will the project benefit the specialty crop beneficiaries?
- What States and/or regions will benefit from this project?
- What is the targeted/intended economic impact of the project?

#### (5) Expected Measureable Outcomes

Provide at least one distinct, quantifiable, measurable project outcome. If the outcome measures are long-term and occur after the project's completion, identify an intermediate outcome that occurs before, and is expected to help lead to the fulfillment of long-term outcomes.

#### FOOD SAFETY PROJECTS

The following are some suggested outcome measures for food safety projects, however if these are not relevant to your project, you are required to develop at least one project-specific outcome measure and one indicator which will be subject to approval by AMS if the project is selected for funding.

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

Possible Indicators:

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

- Number of improved prevention, detection, control, and intervention technologies.
- Number of reported changes in prevention, detection, control, and intervention strategies.

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

Possible Indicators:

- Number of projects focused on:
  - Increased understanding of fecal indicators and pathogens.
  - Increased safety of all inputs into the specialty crop chain.
  - Increased understanding of the roles of humans, plants and animals as vectors.
  - Increased understanding of preharvest and postharvest process impacts on microbial and chemical threats.
- Number of growers or producers obtaining on-farm food safety certifications (such as Good Agricultural Practices or Good Handling Practices).

#### *PLANT PESTS AND DISEASE PROJECTS*

The following are some suggested outcome measures for plant pests and disease projects, however if these are not relevant to your project, you are required to develop at least one project-specific outcome measure and one indicator which will be subject to approval by AMS if the project is selected for funding.

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

Possible Indicators:

- Number of new or improved innovations models ((biological, economic, business, management, etc.), technologies, networks, products, processes, etc.) developed for specialty crop entities along the food supply chain: producers, processors, distributors, etc.
- Number of innovations adopted.
- Number of specialty crop growers/producers (and other members of the specialty crop supply chain) that have increased revenue (expressed in dollars).
- Number of new diagnostic systems analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases. [Diagnostic systems refer to, among other things: labs, networks, procedures, access points.]
- Number of new diagnostic technologies available for plant pests and diseases. [The intent here is not to count individual pieces of equipment or devices, but to enumerate technologies that add to the diagnostic capacity.]

- Number of first responders trained in early detection and rapid response to combat plant pests and diseases.
- Number of viable technologies/processes developed or modified that will increase specialty crop distribution and/or production.
- Number of growers/producers that gained knowledge about science-based tools through outreach and education programs.

### RESEARCH PROJECTS

The following are some suggested outcome measures for research projects, however if these are not relevant to your project, you are required to develop at least one project-specific outcome measure and one indicator which will be subject to approval by AMS if the project is selected for funding.

**Outcome:** *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:

- Numbers of plant/seed releases (i.e. cultivars, drought-tolerant plants, organic, enhanced nutritional composition, etc.)
- Adoption of best practices and technologies resulting in increased yields, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and conservation of resources.
  - Number of growers/producers indicating adoption of recommended practices.
  - Number of growers/producers reporting reduction in pesticides, fertilizer, water used/acre.
  - Number of producers reporting increased dollar returns per acre or reduced costs per acre.
  - Number acres in conservation tillage or other best management practice.
- Number of acres of pollinator habitat established and maintained for the primary benefit of specialty crops.

### CROP SPECIFIC PROJECTS ADDRESSING COMMON ISSUES

Applicants must develop at least one appropriate outcome measure and one indicator which will be subject to approval by AMS if the project is selected for funding.

### MARKETING AND PROMOTION PROJECTS

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

The following is a suggested outcome measure for marketing and promotion projects. However if it is not relevant to your project, you must develop at least one appropriate outcome measure and one indicator which will be subject to approval by AMS if the project is selected for funding.

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

The specific measure must be expressed as a dollar value and percentage change in sales of one or more specialty crops in one or more States or foreign markets as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities. For example, an expected outcome of growth in sales from 5% to 10% is not acceptable by itself, but in combination with an increase in sales of \$1 million to \$2 million, it is acceptable. This requirement means that an established baseline of sales in dollars must already exist at the time of application. For projects that do not already have a baseline of sales in dollars, one of the objectives of the project must be to determine such a baseline in order to meet the requirement to document the value of sales increases by the end of the project.

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

AMS understands that sales can be impacted by a host of unrelated issues including trade disputes, phytosanitary issues, export conditions, weather, and other factors affecting the farmer, supply chain, retailers, wholesalers and/or consumers. The above factors demonstrate that even a perfectly executed marketing campaign can result in sales remaining constant or even declining. These factors and events that either positively or negatively impacted the sales of a project can be explained in the performance report.

## **(6) Project Deliverables**

List any expected deliverables that will result from the project in addition to the required final report. Examples of project deliverables include professional journal or farm press articles, Extension bulletins, and manuals.

## **(7) Outreach Plan**

Describe how the project results will be shared with and disseminated to the target audience(s), stakeholders and other interested parties (i.e., beyond those directly involved in the project). Examples of such activities include presentations at professional conferences or producer meetings, publication of articles in professional journals or the agricultural press, educational brochures, slides, survey instruments, and websites. Web pages devoted to the project must also include this information in a prominent location. All materials must be made available electronically and disseminated via appropriate websites.

## REFERENCES

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Do not use footnotes. If applicable, cite the literature referenced in the text and attach a separate page called “References” with the detailed literature citations. Reference pages do not count toward the 15-page Narrative maximum.

## BUDGET SPREADSHEET AND BUDGET NARRATIVE

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The Budget Spreadsheet and Budget Narrative do not count toward the 15-page Narrative maximum.

Please see the [Budget Spreadsheet Example](#) on page 64. The Budget Spreadsheet must show a separate budget for each year as well as a cumulative budget.

The Budget Narrative must explain how the dollar amounts for each expense category shown on the Budget Spreadsheet were derived and what expenses they cover. Applicants should review [section 4.7.2](#) for a full listing of allowable and unallowable costs when developing the budget narrative.

**Personnel** - List all employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities. See section 4.7.2 for [Salaries and Wages for Allowable Costs](#) and [Activities and Presenting Direct and Indirect Costs Consistently](#) for further guidance. For each employee paid with SCMP grant funds, provide the following:

- Name and title
- Level of effort (number of hours and hourly rate or % FTE)
- Total funds requested for each employee
- A subtotal for all SCMP-funded Personnel costs.

If a third party will be hired after SCMP funds are awarded, but has not yet been identified, indicate the type of wages to be paid (e.g. hourly, salaried, or graduate assistantship). Rates must be reasonable and consistent with locality pay for similar jobs. See [2 CFR part 200.430](#) and [2 CFR part 200.431](#).

**Fringe Benefits** - Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project’s salaried employees described in the Personnel section that will be paid with SCMP funds. This section must include the following:

- Name and title
- Fringe benefit rate
- Corresponding funds requested for each person

- A subtotal for all SCMP-funded Fringe benefit costs.

**Travel** - Explain the purpose for each trip request. Note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. For recipient organizations that have no formal travel policy and for-profit recipients, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <http://www.gsa.gov>. See [Travel](#) and [Foreign Travel](#) for further guidance and See [2 CFR part 200.474](#). Provide the following information for each trip:

- Trip destination
- Purpose of trip
- Type of expense (airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.)
- Number of days traveling
- Estimated number of miles and mileage rate
- Estimated ground transportation costs
- Estimated lodging and meal costs
- Number of travelers claiming expense
- Total funds requested for each expense
- Additional justification of travel expenses, as needed
- Subtotal for all SCMP-funded travel costs.

**Special Purpose Equipment** - Describe any special purpose equipment to be purchased or rented under the grant. “Special purpose equipment” is tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than 1 year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 per unit and is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. “Acquisition cost” means the cost of the asset, whether funded wholly or in part by SCMP, including the cost to put it in place. See [Equipment](#) for allowable costs and activities.

Rental of “general purpose equipment” must also be described in this section. Purchase of general purpose equipment is not allowable under this grant. See [Equipment](#) for definitions. This section must include the following:

- Description of equipment item



- Justification for each item
- Indication if each item is rented or purchased
- Total funds requested for each item.
- Subtotal for all SCMP-funded equipment costs.

**Supplies** - List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal and solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. See [Supplies and Materials, Including Costs of Computing Devices](#) for further information. This section must include the following:

- Description of each supply item
- Justification for each item
- Per-unit cost of each supply
- Number of units/pieces purchased
- Total funds requested for each supply
- Subtotal for all SCMP-funded supply costs.

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

- If the contractor/consultant has already been selected, the applicant must follow the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-Federal sources.
- If a contractor/consultant has not yet been selected, the applicant must provide an acknowledgement that the procurement processes have not yet been conducted and assurance that the same policies and procedures it uses for procurements from its non-Federal sources will be followed.
- Provide an itemized budget (personnel, fringe, travel, equipment, supplies, other, etc.) with appropriate justification. If indirect costs are/will be included in the contract, include the indirect cost rate used. Please note that any statutory limitations on indirect costs also apply to contractors and consultants.
- Include a subtotal for all SCMP-funded contractual/consultant costs.

**Other** - Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, publication costs, and data collection. If you budget meal costs for reasons other than meals associated with travel per diem, provide an adequate justification to support that these costs are not entertainment costs. See [Meals](#) for further guidance. For data collection expenses, provide the estimated cost of collecting performance data necessary to measure the project outcomes and impact. This section must include the following:

- A description of the item
- Justification for the expense
- Per-unit cost of each item
- Number of units
- Total funds requested for each item
- Subtotal for all SCMP-funded other costs

**Indirect Costs** - The indirect cost rate must not exceed the rate established by the State department of agriculture and cannot exceed the limit of eight [8] percent of the project's budget ([see section 4.7.1](#)). Indirect costs are any costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives that therefore cannot be readily identified with an individual project, program, or organizational activity. They generally include facilities operation and maintenance costs, depreciation, and administrative expenses. The indirect costs section must include the indirect cost rate and the total indirect costs requested.

**Program Income** - Program income is gross income—earned by a recipient or subrecipient under an award—directly generated by the award-supported activity, or earned only because of the grant agreement during the 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 award funds); registration fees for conferences, etc.

This section must include the source/nature of program income; a description of how you will reinvest the program income back into the project or program to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops; and the estimated amount of program income.

## OTHER REQUIRED ELEMENTS

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### **(1) Personnel Qualifications**

Provide a one- to two-page resume of relevant experience and/or qualifications of the principal investigator(s) and for each of the other major project participants.

### **(2) A Letter of Commitment from Each Partner**

Each partner must provide a letter of commitment outlining their role in the project. The letter must include the name and title of the letter writer, organization name, address, telephone number and email address. Include a description of who will work on the project and what they will be responsible for. The letter should be addressed to the State department of agriculture that will apply for the SCMP grant.

### **(3) Letter(s) of Support from Stakeholders or Beneficiaries**

Three (3) signed letters from specialty crop producer organizations and/or other stakeholders are required. The letters should describe why they endorse the project. Letters should be addressed to the State department of agriculture that will apply for the SCMP grant. Form letters are discouraged. Congressional letters of support do not meet this requirement.

### **(4) Areas Affected by Project (Cities, counties, States, etc.)**

Complete Block 14 on the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance and submit as a separate attachment.

## 4.4 DISQUALIFICATION OF A SUBMITTED APPLICATION

Your application will be disqualified if:

- You are not an eligible entity.
- The application is received after the deadline.
- The application is submitted via any method other than through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov).
- The topic and/or approach of the application are outside the SCMP program scope.

## 4.5 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

The deadline for submitting FY 2015 applications is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 14, 2016. Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. If you will submit more than one application, each application must be submitted separately via Grants.gov.

Ensure that all components of the application are complete before submitting them to Grants.gov. It may take more than one try before your application is successfully submitted so

plan ahead to leave enough time for the application process. The application will meet the deadline if it is validated by Grants.gov no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on January 14, 2016.

## 4.6 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

SCMP is subject to [intergovernmental review](#) which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials.

## 4.7 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

### 4.7.1 LIMIT ON ADMINISTRATION COSTS

Administration costs are defined as indirect costs and are limited to eight [8] percent of the total Federal funds provided under the award per [Section 10010 \(k\) of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 110-246](#). The State department of agriculture must notify their project partner(s) of the limit on indirect costs so that indirect costs requested by subrecipients, plus indirect administration costs requested by the State department of agriculture, do not exceed eight [8] percent of the total direct cost of the project. See the information below on presenting direct and indirect costs consistently.

#### *PRESENTING DIRECT AND INDIRECT COSTS CONSISTENTLY*

Applicants and subapplicants are responsible for presenting costs direct costs 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 is 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 part 200.56](#) 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 parts 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. Direct charging of these costs may be appropriate where all of 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
<b>Non-Profits</b>	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.
<b>Colleges and Universities</b>	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.
<b>State and Local Governments</b>	State/local-wide central service costs, general administration of the recipient department or agency, accounting and personnel services performed within the recipient department or agency, depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment, and the costs of operating and maintaining facilities.

#### 4.7.2 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

Item	Description
<b>Alcoholic Beverages</b>	<i>Unallowable</i> except when the costs are associated with enhancing the competitiveness of a processed product. A processed product is defined as a product that constitutes greater than 50% of the specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water.

Item	Description
<b>Aquaponics</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> as a topic of study provided the crops grown are eligible specialty crops, and the focus of the project is on the specialty crops and not the fish.</p> <p>For more information on constructing or purchasing an aquaponics system, see <a href="#">Equipment</a>.</p>
<b>Advisory Councils</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs incurred by advisory councils or committees.</p>
<b>Buildings and Land - Construction</b>	<p>A <i>building</i> is any permanent structure designed or intended for support, enclosure, shelter or protection of people, animals or property having a permanent roof supported by columns or walls.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for the acquisition of buildings, facilities, or land or to make additions, improvements, modifications, replacements, rearrangements, reinstallations, renovations or alterations of an existing building or facility (including site grading and improvement, and architecture fees). This also includes construction and construction-related materials, which may include, but are not limited to the purchase of building materials such as wood, nails, concrete, asphalt, roofing, gravel, sand, paint, insulation, drywall, or plumbing.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for rental costs of land with prior approval.</p>
<b>Conferences</b>	<p>A conference is defined as a meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, workshop or event whose primary purpose is the dissemination of technical information beyond the non-Federal entity and is necessary and reasonable for successful performance under the Federal award.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> if the project solely consists of conference or workshop.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> if a conference or workshop is part of a larger project. The applicant must clearly indicate the purpose and target audience for the conference or workshop, and explain how the activity will be paid for. Also indicate if registration fees will be collected and if applicable, show the fees as program income on the Budget spreadsheet and provide an explanation in the Budget Narrative. If funds are requested to pay for food or refreshments, provide an estimate.</p>

Item	Description
	<p><i>Allowable</i> to rent a building or room for training, however, where appropriate, SCMP encourages the use of technologies such as webinars, teleconferencing, or videoconferencing as an alternative to renting a building or a room. If renting a building or a room is necessary, the most cost-effective facilities such as State government conference rooms should be utilized.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for meal costs (breakfast, lunch and dinner) unless the applicant justifies that to do so would otherwise impose arduous conditions on the continuity of a meeting and its participants. Breakfasts for conference attendees are usually considered unallowable as it is expected that individuals will have sufficient time to dine on their own before the conference begins.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for meals consumed while in official travel status. They are considered per diem expenses and should be reimbursed in accordance with the organization's established written travel policies.</p>
<b>Contributions and Donations</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for contributions or donations, including cash, property, and services, from the recipient or subrecipient to other entities (also referred to as "regranting of funds").</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> to use SCMP funds to conduct a competitive subgrant program.</p>
<b>Entertainment Costs</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for entertainment costs including amusement, diversion, and social activities and any costs directly associated with such costs such as, tickets to shows or sports events, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, and gratuities regardless of their apparent relationship to project objectives.</p>
<b>Equipment</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for acquisition costs of general purpose equipment.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for rental costs of general purpose equipment. For equipment leases or rentals with an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000, rates should be in light of such factors as: rental costs of comparable equipment, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the equipment leased.</p>

Item	Description
	<p><i>Allowable</i> for acquisition costs and rental costs of special purpose equipment provided the following criteria are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Necessary for the research, scientific, or other technical activities of the grant award;</li> <li>2) Not otherwise reasonably available and accessible;</li> <li>3) The type of equipment is normally charged as a direct cost by the organization;</li> <li>4) Acquired in accordance with organizational practices;</li> <li>5) Must only be used to solely meet the legislative purpose of the grant program and objectives of the grant award;</li> <li>6) More than one single commercial organization, commercial product, or individual must benefit from the use of the equipment;</li> <li>7) Must not use special purpose equipment acquired with grant funds to provide services for a fee to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent services; and</li> <li>8) Equipment is subject to the full range of acquisition, use, management, and disposition requirements under <a href="#">2 CFR part 200.313</a> as applicable.</li> </ol> <p><b><u>Equipment Definitions</u></b></p> <p><b>Equipment</b> is defined as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes, or \$5,000. Recipients and subrecipients purchasing equipment are encouraged to use funds to purchase only American-made equipment or products.</p> <p><b>Acquisition cost</b> means the cost of the asset including the cost to ready the asset for its intended use. Acquisition cost for equipment, for example, means the net invoice price of the equipment, including the cost of any modifications, attachments, accessories, or auxiliary apparatus necessary to make it usable for the purpose for which it is acquired.</p> <p><b>General Purpose Equipment</b> 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.</p>



Item	Description
	<b>Special Purpose Equipment</b> is equipment used only for research or technical activities. Examples include grape harvesters, vegetable washing machines, fruit or vegetable processing equipment, etc.
<b>Fines, Penalties, Damages and Other Settlements</b>	<i>Unallowable</i> for costs resulting from violations of, alleged violations of, or failure to comply with, Federal, State, tribal, local or foreign laws and regulations.
<b>Fixed Amount Subawards</b>	<i>Allowable</i> with prior written approval from AMS, a pass-through entity may provide subawards based on fixed amounts up to the Simplified Acquisition Threshold, provided that the subawards meet the requirements for fixed amount awards in <a href="#">2 CFR part 200.201</a> .
<b>Foreign Travel</b>	For purposes of this provision, “foreign travel” includes any travel outside Canada, Mexico, the United States, and any United States territories and possessions. However, the term “foreign travel” for a governmental unit located in a foreign country means travel outside that country. See <a href="#">Travel</a> in this table for more information on travel costs.
<b>Fundraising</b>	<i>Unallowable</i> for 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. This includes salaries of personnel involved in activities to raise capital.
<b>General Costs of Government</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Salaries and expenses of the Office of the Governor of a State or the chief executive of a local government or the chief executive of an Indian tribe;</li> <li>2) Salaries and other expenses of a State legislature, tribal council, or similar local governmental body, such as a county supervisor, city council, school board, etc., whether incurred for purposes of legislation or executive direction;</li> <li>3) Costs of the judicial branch of a government;</li> </ol>

Item	Description
	<p>4) Costs of prosecutorial activities unless treated as a direct cost to a specific program if authorized by statute or regulation (however, this does not preclude the allowability of other legal activities of the Attorney General as described in <a href="#">§200.435 Defense and prosecution of criminal and civil proceedings, claims, appeals and patent infringements</a>); and</p> <p>5) Costs of other general types of government services normally provided to the general public, such as fire and police, unless provided for as a direct cost under a program statute or regulation.</p>
<b>Goods or Services for Personal Use</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs of goods or services for personal use of the recipient's or subrecipient's employees regardless of whether the cost is reported as taxable income to the employees.</p>
<b>Health and Nutrition Messaging</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> when health and nutrition information complies with regulations and policies of the:</p> <p><i>Federal Trade Commission</i>  <a href="http://www.ftc.gov/about-ftc/bureaus-offices/bureau-consumer-protection">http://www.ftc.gov/about-ftc/bureaus-offices/bureau-consumer-protection</a></p> <p>AND</p> <p><i>U.S. Food and Drug Administration</i>  <a href="http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/LabelingNutrition/default.htm">http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/LabelingNutrition/default.htm</a>.</p> <p>Nutrition and health claims must be truthful, not misleading or deceptive, and include adequate disclaimers if appropriate.</p>
<b>Information Technology Systems</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for information technology systems having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established in accordance by generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) by the non-Federal recipient or subrecipient for financial statement purposes or \$5,000. Acquisition cost means the cost of the asset including the cost to ready the asset for its intended use. Acquisition costs for software includes those development costs capitalized in accordance with GAAP.</p>

Item	Description
	<p>Information technology systems include computing devices, ancillary equipment, software, firmware, and similar procedures, services (including support services), and related resources. Computing devices means machines used to acquire, store, analyze, process, and publish data and other information electronically, including accessories (or “peripherals”) for printing, transmitting and receiving, or storing electronic information. Examples of unallowable information technology systems include service contracts, operating systems, printers, and computers that have an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for website development, mobile apps, etc.</p>
<b>Insurance and Indemnification</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> as indirect costs for insurance and indemnification.</p>
<b>Lobbying</b>	<p>The recipient should obtain an advance understanding with the SCMP if it intends to engage in certain activities intended to influence Federal, State or local government entities.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Attempts to influence the outcomes of any Federal, State, or local election, referendum, initiative, or similar procedure, through in-kind or cash contributions, endorsements, publicity, or similar activity;</li> <li>(2) Establishing, administering, contributing to, or paying the expenses of a political party, campaign, political action committee, or other organization established for the purpose of influencing the outcomes of elections in the United States;</li> <li>(3) Any attempt to influence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) The introduction of Federal or State legislation;</li> <li>b) The enactment or modification of any pending Federal or State legislation through communication with any member or employee of the Congress or State legislature (including efforts to influence State or local officials to engage in similar lobbying activity);</li> <li>c) The enactment or modification of any pending Federal or State legislation by preparing, distributing, or using publicity or propaganda, or by urging members of the general public, or any</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Item	Description
	<p>segment thereof, to contribute to or participate in any mass demonstration, march, rally, fund raising drive, lobbying campaign or letter writing or telephone campaign; or</p> <p>d) Any government official or employee in connection with a decision to sign or veto enrolled legislation;</p> <p>(5) Legislative liaison activities, including attendance at legislative sessions or committee hearings, gathering information regarding legislation, and analyzing the effect of legislation, when such activities are carried on in support of or in knowing preparation for an effort to engage in unallowable lobbying.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> activities directly related to the performance of a grant include:</p> <p>(1) Technical and factual presentations on topics directly related to the performance of a grant, contract, or other agreement (through hearing testimony, statements, or letters to the Congress or a State legislature, or subdivision, member, or cognizant staff member thereof), in response to a documented request (including a Congressional Record notice requesting testimony or statements for the record at a regularly scheduled hearing) made by the non-Federal entity's member of congress, legislative body or a subdivision, or a cognizant staff member thereof, provided such information is readily obtainable and can be readily put in deliverable form, and further provided that costs under this section for travel, lodging or meals are unallowable unless incurred to offer testimony at a regularly scheduled Congressional hearing pursuant to a written request for such presentation made by the Chairman or Ranking Minority Member of the Committee or Subcommittee conducting such hearings;</p> <p>(2) Any lobbying made unallowable by paragraph (c)(1)(iii) of <a href="#">2 CFR part 200.450</a> to influence State legislation in order to directly reduce the cost, or to avoid material impairment of the non-Federal entity's authority to perform the grant, contract, or other agreement; or</p> <p>(3) Any activity specifically authorized by statute to be undertaken with funds from the Federal award.</p> <p>(4) Any activity excepted from the definitions of "lobbying" or "influencing legislation" by the Internal Revenue Code provisions that require nonprofit organizations to limit their participation in direct and "grass roots"</p>

Item	Description
	<p>lobbying activities in order to retain their charitable deduction status and avoid punitive excise taxes, I.R.C. §§501(c)(3), 501(h), 4911(a), including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Nonpartisan analysis, study, or research reports;</li> <li>b) Examinations and discussions of broad social, economic, and similar problems; and</li> <li>c) Information provided upon request by a legislator for technical advice and assistance, as defined by I.R.C. §4911(d)(2) and 26 CFR 56.4911-2(c)(1)-(c)(3).</li> </ul>
<b>Meals</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for business meals when individuals decide to go to lunch or dinner together when no need exists for continuity of a meeting. Such activity is considered an entertainment cost.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for breakfasts for conference attendees because it is expected these individuals will have sufficient time to obtain this meal on their own before the conference begins in the morning.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for meal costs that are duplicated in meeting participant's per diem or subsistence allowances.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for lunch or dinner meals if the costs are reasonable and a justification is provided that such activity maintains the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the meeting participants.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for meals consumed while in official travel status. They are considered per diem expenses and should be reimbursed in accordance with the organization's established written travel policies.</p>
<b>Memberships, Subscriptions, and Professional Activity Costs</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs of membership in any civic or community organization.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for costs of membership in business, technical, and professional organizations.</p>
<b>Organization Costs</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> with prior approval for organization costs per 2 CFR part 200.455.</p>

Item	Description
	<i>Unallowable</i> for costs of investment counsel and staff and similar expenses incurred to enhance income from investments.
<b>Participant Support Costs</b>	<i>Allowable</i> with prior approval for such items as stipends or subsistence allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with approved conferences, training projects, and focus groups.
<b>Pre-Award (Pre-Agreement Costs)</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i>, if such costs are necessary to conduct the project or program, and would be allowable under the grant, if awarded.</p> <p>A recipient may incur pre-award costs 90 calendar days before SCMP makes the award without prior approval from SCMP. Expenses more than 90 calendar days pre-award require SCMP prior approval. All costs incurred before SCMP makes the award are at the recipient's risk. The incurrence of pre-award costs in anticipation of an award imposes no obligation on SCMP to award funds for such costs.</p>
<b>Printing and Publications</b>	<i>Allowable</i> to pay the cost of preparing informational leaflets, reports, manuals, and publications relating to the project, however the printing of hard copies is discouraged.
<b>Rearrangement and Reconversion Costs</b>	<i>Allowable</i> as indirect costs incurred for ordinary and normal rearrangement and alteration of facilities.
<b>Salaries and Wages</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> as part of employee compensation for personnel services in proportion to the amount of time or effort an employee devotes to the grant-supported project or program during the period of performance under the Federal award, including salaries, wages, and fringe benefits. Such costs must be incurred under formally established policies of the organization, be consistently applied, be reasonable for the services rendered, and be supported with adequate documentation.</p> <p>Salary and wage amounts charged to grant-supported projects or programs for personnel services must be based on an adequate payroll distribution system that documents such distribution in accordance with generally accepted practices of like organizations. Standards for payroll distribution systems are contained in the applicable cost principles (other than those for for-profit organizations).</p>

Item	Description
<b>Selling and Marketing Costs</b>	<i>Allowable</i> if the primary purpose is to promote the sale of an eligible specialty crop by either stimulating interest in a particular specialty crop or disseminating technical information or messages for the purpose of increasing market share for the specialty crops.
<b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Promotion of an Organization’s Image, Logo, or Brand Name</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs designed solely to promote the image of an organization, general logo, or general brand rather than eligible specialty crops.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A promotional campaign to increase sales of “XYZ Grown” Watermelon is acceptable while increasing brand awareness of “XYZ Grown” generically is not.</li> <li>• Promoting tomatoes while including an organization’s logo in the promotion is acceptable, while generally promoting an organization’s logo is not.</li> <li>• Promotional items could say “Buy XYZ Grown Apples” but not “XYZ Grown”, which promotes XYZ generically.</li> </ul> <p>A promotional campaign to increase producer sales of “XYZ Grown fruits and vegetables” is acceptable while increasing membership in “XYZ Grown” generically is not.</p>
<b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Promotion of Non-Specialty Crop Activities</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs for promotion at non-specialty crop specific venues, tradeshows, events, meetings, programs, conventions, symposia, seminars, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertisements could say “Buy Sweet Corn! It is the Best!” but not “Buy Local!”</li> </ul> <p>Advertising educational sessions at a conference that solely benefits specialty crop growers are acceptable, while advertising a non-specialty crop specific local food conference is not.</p>
<b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Promotional Items, Gifts, Prizes, etc.</b>	<i>Unallowable</i> for promotional items, swag, gifts, prizes, memorabilia, and souvenirs.

Item	Description
<b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Sponsorships</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs associated with sponsorships. A sponsorship is a form of advertising in which an organization uses grant funds to have its name and/or logo associated with certain events and where the organization does not necessarily know how the funds associated with sponsorship costs will be used. These costs are considered a contribution or donation and only benefit the organization offering funding. This limits the beneficiaries to the sponsor organization, which conflicts with the restriction that projects affect and produce measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual.</p>
<b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Coupons, Incentives or Other Price Discounts</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs of coupon/incentive redemptions or price discounts. Costs associated with printing, distribution, or promotion of coupons/tokens or price discounts (i.e., a print advertisement that contains a clip-out coupon) are allowable only if they solely promote the specialty crop rather than promote or benefit a program or single organization.</p> <p>See also <a href="#">Participant Support Costs</a>.</p>
<b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Use of Meeting Rooms, Space, Exhibits for Non-Specialty Crop Activities</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs associated with the use of trade shows, meeting rooms, displays, demonstrations, exhibits, and the rental of space for activities that do not solely promote specialty crops.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting the participation of raspberry and blueberry producers at a non-specialty crop specific international trade show to promote berries to an international audience is allowable, while renting a booth space for berry producers as well as wheat producers at an international trade show is not allowable.</li> <li>• Supporting the participation of farmers’ market managers at a national conference that is not specific to specialty crops is not allowable.</li> <li>• Supporting a portion of a national conference that is not specific to specialty crops is not allowable, while supporting a session on specialty crops at a national conference that is not specific to specialty crops is allowable.</li> </ul>



Item	Description
	<p>Funding an “XYZ State Grown” booth at a specialty crop-specific venue where all exhibitors in the booth are specialty crop producers is allowable, but funding an “XYZ Grown” booth at a non-specialty crop specific venue is not allowable.</p>
<p><b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Cookbooks, Cooking Demonstrations, Recipe Cards, Food Pairings</b></p>	<p><i>Allowable</i> for costs promoting the specialty crops in processed products (products prepared or created for the purposes of promoting a specialty crop but that require other ingredients are considered a processed product). A processed product is defined as a product that constitutes greater than 50% of the specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs of separate complementary non-specialty crop products. A separate complementary non-specialty crop product means a product closely associated with a specialty crop product, the purchase of one encouraging consumers to buy the other (i.e., cheese and wine).</p>
<p><b>Supplies and Materials, Including Costs of Computing Devices</b></p>	<p><i>Allowable</i> for costs incurred for materials, supplies, and fabricated parts necessary to carry out a Federal award. Purchased materials and supplies must be charged at their actual prices, net of applicable credits. Withdrawals from general stores or stockrooms should be charged at their actual net cost under any recognized method of pricing inventory withdrawals, consistently applied. Incoming transportation charges are a proper part of materials and supplies costs. Only materials and supplies actually used for the performance of a Federal award may be charged as direct costs.</p> <p>A computing device is a supply if the acquisition cost is less than the lesser of the capitalization level established by the recipient or subrecipient for financial statement purposes or \$5,000, regardless of the length of its useful life. In the specific case of computing devices, charging as direct cost is allowable for devices that are essential and allocable, but not solely dedicated, to the performance of a Federal award. Where Federally-donated or furnished materials are used in performing the Federal award, such materials will be used without charge.</p>
<p><b>Training</b></p>	<p><i>Allowable</i> for the State department of agriculture recipient when training is directly related to Federal grants management in proportion to the amount of time and effort expended by the trainee on the grant program.</p>

Item	Description
	<i>Allowable</i> when the training is required to meet the objectives of the project or program.
<b>Travel Costs</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> when travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, the lowest reasonable commercial airfares must be used.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for travel costs of government officials per <a href="#">2 CFR part 200.444</a>.</p> <p>Recipients and subrecipients that do not have formal travel policies and for-profit subrecipients' allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <a href="http://www.gsa.gov">http://www.gsa.gov</a>. If a recipient or subrecipient organization has no formal travel policy, those regulations will be used to determine the amount that may be charged for travel costs.</p> <p>Recipients and subrecipients are strongly encouraged to take advantage of discount fares for airline travel through advance purchase of tickets if travel schedules can be planned in advance.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to the use of alternative technologies such as teleconferencing or videoconferencing if they are available, appropriate for the project, and less costly.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for domestic and international travel of individuals for activities directly related to the project objectives. Examples of personnel whose travel may be covered: State agency personnel working directly on the project, technical experts, producer representatives who have unique knowledge about one or more specialty crops, and individuals whose presence on an international trip will make a direct contribution to the goals of the project.</p>

#### 4.8 OTHER SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

SCMP requires State departments of agriculture to submit applications electronically through the central Federal grants website, [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov).

- (A) **Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number Requirement:** Applicants must have a DUNS number at the time of application submission. A DUNS number may be acquired at no cost online at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>. To acquire a DUNS number by phone, contact the D&B Government Customer Response Center:

URL: <http://www.dnb.com/get-a-duns-number.html>

Hours: Monday – Friday 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., CST

US Calls and U.S. Virgin Islands: 866-705-5711

Alaska and Puerto Rico: 800-234-3867 (Select option 2, then option 1)

- (B) **Registration Requirement** [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov): Applicants must be registered with <http://www.SAM.gov> prior to submitting a completed application package. Should your organization be selected for a Federal award, your funding will be disbursed via Electronic Funds Transfer to the bank account registered in this system. **The registration processes can take at least 5 weeks.**

For SAM Customer Service, contact the Federal Service Desk:

URL: [www.fsd.gov](http://www.fsd.gov)

Hours: 8am - 8pm (Eastern Time)

US Calls: 866-606-8220

- (C) **Registration and Submission** [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov). For information on how to apply electronically via Grants.gov, consult the Grants.gov [Get Registered](#) webpage. Applicants experiencing problems in electronic preparation or submission of documentation should contact, the Grants.gov Contact Center at:

URL: [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov)

Email: [support@Grants.gov](mailto:support@Grants.gov)

Hours: Monday-Friday, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., Eastern Time; closed on Federal Holidays.

US Calls: 800-518-4726

If you are experiencing submission issues, keep a record of any correspondence with Grants.gov, including any ID or case number provided.

**How Do I Know If My Grant Has Been Submitted?** Grants.gov will send the following communications to applicants upon final submission. If you do not receive these confirmations, [contact Grants.gov](#) to check the status of your application.

1. Submission Receipt Email (with "Track My Application" link): Within two business days after the application package has been received by Grants.gov, applicants will receive a

submission receipt email which indicates that the submission has entered the Grants.gov system and is ready for validation. This email contains a tracking number for use while tracking the status of the submission as well as a "Track My Application" link, to use to see the progress of the submission.

2. Submission Validation (or Rejection with Errors): Grants.gov checks for technical errors within the submitted application package, but it does not review application content for award determination. After applicants receive the submission receipt email, the next email will be a message either validating the submitted application package or rejecting the submitted application package with errors. If an applicant does not receive both a receipt confirmation AND either a validation confirmation or a rejection email message within two business days, Grants.gov should be contacted as soon as possible.
3. AMS Retrieval Email: Once the application package has passed validation, it is delivered to SCMP. After SCMP confirms receipt of the application, a third email will be sent from Grants.gov.

## 5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

### 5.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application will be reviewed competitively using the following criteria and scoring:

(1) **PURPOSE** (20 points) – The proposal is well-justified, addresses at least one of the SCMP project types described in [section 1.3](#), and contains a problem/issue statement which concisely outlines the issue to be studied or the activities to be completed. The project aligns well with SCMP legislative and program goals. If the proposal involves technical research, the proposal includes a literature review which supports the need for the research, and outlines how--if proven successful in the laboratory or under test conditions--the technical research will be tested in real-world conditions.

(2) **APPROACH** (25 points) – The goals, objectives, and work plan are logical and clearly explained. The individuals who will work directly on the project have the appropriate qualifications, knowledge and experience necessary to conduct a successful project. Partnerships are appropriate and documented with letters of support. The roles and responsibilities of each partner, including the State department of agriculture submitting the proposal, are described. The proposal includes a timeline. In addition:

- If the proposal involves technical research, the research methodology is described and it is appropriate to answer the research questions.

- If the proposal involves food safety training or education for producers, processors and/or consumers, the proposal identifies the FDA-recognized resources that will be used. If additional unique food safety training materials or information specific to a particular region and/or to a particular specialty crop will be developed, the proposal describes them and includes a justification. For all training and education proposals, the proposal describes where the training sessions will be held—in the classroom, at a production or processing facility and/or at another site.

(3) IMPACT (20 points) – The proposal describes the potential impact it will have on specialty crop producers, the specialty crop industry, and the potential for the proposal to provide new knowledge, and lessons learned that could be applied in other States, regions of the country or nationally. If applicable, the proposal describes the estimated economic impact and supports the estimates with relevant data. For long-term projects, the proposal includes a feasibility plan for the project to become self-sustaining in the post-grant period and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds. The proposal includes at least one quantitative metric to demonstrate impact.

(4) BUDGET (20 points) - All budget items are allowable, reasonable, fully described, and adequately support the project objective(s). Elements of this criterion include:

- The necessity and reasonableness of costs to carry out project activities and achieve project objectives;
- The appropriateness of budget allocations between the applicant and partner(s); and
- The adequacy of funds assigned to effectively evaluate the outcome measures and disseminate the results of the project.

(5) OUTREACH (15 points) – The proposal outlines a plan to disseminate project results electronically and in-person to the target audience, stakeholders, and interested parties beyond those directly served by the project. A means of collecting feedback on the results is included. Outreach can be expected to continue beyond the term of the project.

#### (6) PRIORITY POINTS

AMS will award 5 priority points to proposals where the main project activities fall under the following project types: food safety; plant pests and disease; and research as described in sections [1.3.1](#), [1.3.2](#) and [1.3.3](#).

## 5.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

### *Step 1: Initial Screening*

Each application will be screened by SCMP to determine if all required components of the application have been submitted and that the project is within the SCMP scope. Applications that pass Step 1 will proceed to Step 2: Technical Review. Incomplete applications and applications that are not responsive to the eligibility criteria will not advance through the review process (see [section 4.4](#)). Applicants will be notified if their application did not meet submission requirements.

### *Step 2: Technical Review*

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by subject matter specialists from USDA, other Federal agencies, if appropriate, and from academia. State department of agriculture personnel may also participate in the review unless their State department of agriculture:

- Has submitted a FY 2015 SCMP proposal; and/or
- Is named as a partner on a SCMP proposal submitted by another State department of agriculture.

Proposals will be evaluated using instructions prepared by SCMP in consultation with AMS officials. Individual reviewers will evaluate and score their assigned proposals and then confer with other team members to derive a consensus score which will serve as the basis for awarding and allocating SCMP funds. The consensus review will focus on strengths, weaknesses and suggestions, which will be shared with unsuccessful applicants after the awards have been announced.

Proposals will be evaluated using the criteria listed in [section 5.1](#). The text under each heading is provided to help applicants understand generally what aspects of their proposals will be evaluated, but it is not meant to be a checklist or to indicate how scores within the individual evaluation categories will be weighted.

### *Step 3: Administrative Review*

Top applications that qualify for Step 3 of the review process will be evaluated to ensure the application is consistent with the appropriate *Federal Assistance Regulations*.

AMS selections are made based on the review panel's top rankings and recommendations, Agency clearances and priorities, review of potential award project and budget (below), and available funding.

In consideration for an award, potential awarded projects and budgets may be revised by SCMP based on allowable, allocable, and reasonable costs; fulfillment of Agency's funding, authorization and mission priorities; and quantitative evaluation of project outputs, outcomes,

and performance metrics. Depending upon the timelines of award determination, the applicant may be contacted to negotiate these revisions, or the SCMP award may be rejected upon receipt. AMS will also assess your organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these monies. This assessment will consider your organization's:

- (1) Financial stability;
- (2) Quality of management systems and ability to meet the management standards prescribed in 2 CFR part 200;
- (3) History of performance. Your record in managing Federal awards if you have previously received them including timeliness of compliance with applicable reporting requirements, conformance to the terms and conditions of previous Federal awards, and if applicable, the extent to which any previously awarded amounts will be expended prior to future awards;
- (4) Reports and findings from audits performed under [Subpart F—Audit Requirements of 2 CFR part 200](#) or the reports and findings of any other available audits; and
- (5) Ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on your organization.

AMS will award funds only for projects that meet the requirements of this RFA. Any funds not awarded under the FY 2015 SCMP RFA will be applied to the next project award cycle.

## 6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### 6.1 AWARD NOTICES

Upon announcement of the Federal awards, SCMP will prepare and send a Grant Agreement to each recipient for signature by the appropriate official. Grant Agreements consist of a 1-page Agreement Face Sheet (AMS-33) that will be signed by AMS and the appropriate recipient official.

The Grant Agreement sets forth pertinent information about the award, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Federal Agreement Identification Number (FAIN) or “agreement number;”
- Statutory authority for the award and any applicable program regulations;
- Name of Recipient organization;
- Name of Recipient Project Coordinator;
- Approved period of performance start and end dates;
- Amount of Federal funds authorized for obligation by the recipient;

- Name of the Federal Agency Project Manager; and
- General Terms and Conditions of Award, by either reference or inclusion.

## 6.2 UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS

Unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by SCMP via email as soon as possible after the SCMP awards are announced to inform them of the results. SCMP will email unsuccessful applicants the anonymous review panel consensus comments about their proposals to provide feedback.

## 6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

Several Federal statutes and regulations apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program. These include, but are not limited to the ones listed below.

[2 CFR part 25](#) – *System for Award Management and Universal Identifier Requirements*

[2 CFR part 170](#) – *Reporting Subaward and Executive Compensation Information*

[2 CFR part 175](#) – *Award Term for Trafficking in Persons*, which is the implementation of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, as amended ([22 U.S.C. 7104\(g\)](#))

[2 CFR part 180](#) and [part 417](#) – *OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-Wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement)* and *USDA Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension*

[2 CFR part 200](#) – *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards*

[2 CFR part 400](#) – *USDA implementation of 2 CFR part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards*

[2 CFR part 415](#) – *USDA General Program Administrative Regulations*

[2 CFR part 416](#) – *USDA General Program Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments*

[2 CFR part 418](#) – *USDA implementation of Restrictions on Lobbying*

Imposes prohibitions and requirements for disclosure and certification related to lobbying on recipients of Federal contracts, grants, cooperative agreements, and loans.

[2 CFR part 421](#) – *USDA Implementation of Government-wide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)*

[7 CFR part 1, subpart A](#) – *USDA implementation of the Freedom of Information Act*

[7 CFR part 1b](#) – *USDA procedures to implement the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended*



[7 CFR part 3](#) – USDA implementation of *OMB Circular No. A-129* regarding debt collection

[7 CFR part 15, subpart A](#) – USDA implementation of Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, as amended

[7 CFR part 331](#) and [9 CFR part 121](#)—USDA implementation of the *Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002*

[37 CFR part 401](#) – *Rights to Inventions made by Nonprofit Organizations and Small Business Firms under Government Grants, Contracts, and Cooperative Agreements*

The implementation of the *Bayh Dole Act* ([35 U.S.C. 200 et seq.](#)) controlling allocation of rights to inventions made by employees of small business firms and domestic nonprofit organizations, including universities, in Federally-assisted programs (implementing regulations are contained in).

[41 CFR part 301-10.131 to 301-10.143](#) – *Use of United States Flag Air Carriers*, which implements the *Fly America Act* ([49 U.S.C. 40118](#))

[48 CFR part 25](#) – *Foreign Acquisition*, which implements the *Buy American Act* ([41 U.S.C. Ch. 83](#))

[48 CFR subpart 31.2](#) – *Contracts with Commercial Organizations*

[44 U.S.C. 3541 et seq. \(Pub. L. 107-347\)](#) – *Federal Information System Security Management Act of 2002* (FISMA)

An Act designed to improve computer and network security within the Federal Government. Applies to awardees if it will collect, store, process, transmit, or use information on behalf of AMS.

Motor Vehicle Safety – *Highway Safety Act of 1966*, as amended ([23 U.S.C. 402 & 403](#)); *Government Organization and Employees Act*, as amended ([5 U.S.C. 7902 \(c\)](#)); *Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970*, as amended ([29 U.S.C. 668](#)); *Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949*, as amended ([40 U.S.C. 101, et seq.](#)); *Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States* ([EO 13043](#)); *Federal Leadership on Reducing Text Messaging While Driving* ([EO 13513](#))

Federal statutes and regulations found on the SF-424B “Assurances –Non-Construction Programs” (this form is submitted to AMS before the application deadline)

[2 CFR part 422](#) – *Research Institutions Conducting USDA-Funded Extramural Research; Research*

## 6.4 REPORTING

State department of agriculture recipients are required to submit annual performance reports and Federal Financial Reports (SF-425) within 90 calendar days after the award’s anniversary date (i.e. one year following the month and day on which the grant agreement period of performance begins and each year thereafter up until a Final Performance Report is required).

The following reports are due within 90 days following the grant ending date:

- 1) Final Performance Report
- 2) Final Payment Request (SF-270), if applicable
- 3) Final SF-425, "Federal Financial Report" and if applicable, payment of unobligated balance
- 4) Tangible Personal Property Report, if applicable

The recipient should submit the reports to the SCMP electronically via email as required in the SCMP General Award Terms and Conditions.

## 7.0 AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact SCMP [janise.zygmont@ams.usda.gov](mailto:janise.zygmont@ams.usda.gov) or by phone 202-720-5024.

### SCMP Program Manager

Janise Zygmont

### Mailing Address

SCMP  
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Room 4549-South Building  
Stop 0267  
Washington, D.C. 20250-0267

## 8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

### 8.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The USDA prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll-free at (866) 632-9992 (English) or (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (English Federal-relay) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## 8.2 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 part 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 3521-S, Mail Stop 0202

1400 Independence Ave., SW

Washington, DC 20250-0202

Telephone: (202) 720-2498

Fax: (202) 690-3767

E-mail: [AMS.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:AMS.FOIA@usda.gov)

## 8.3 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) published *A Notice of Guidance Regarding the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Multi-State Project Competition* (Guidance) in the Federal Register on October 23, 2014 ([79 FR 63377](#)), inviting interested persons to submit written comments until November 24, 2014. AMS received comments from a specialty crop organization, a sustainable agriculture organization, a State department of agriculture, an association of State agriculture departments, and one individual. We considered these comments during the preparation of the 2015 Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP) Request for Applications (RFA). Comments received on specific sections of the Guidance are summarized and discussed below.

### **Section 2.0 Background**

**COMMENT:** The Background included a sentence that said: "The Farm Bill also proposes a new multi-State project set-aside for projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops involving food safety, plant pests and disease, research, crop-specific projects addressing common issues, and any other area as determined by the Secretary." One commenter requested clarification of the term "common issues," asking whether it referred to the specialty crop, the region, or the United States.

**RESPONSE:** The term "common issues" was included in the section of the enabling legislation describing the purpose of the SCMP. The concept is expanded upon in the priority areas listed in the RFA.

### **Section 3.2 Priority Areas**

#### ***3.2.1 Bullet #1—Improve detection monitoring, control and response to potential food safety hazards in the production, processing, and handling of specialty crops;***

**COMMENT:** One commenter stated that "these are current practices that are already being extensively explored. Sampling is the biggest obstacle to improving detection."

**RESPONSE:** Although current studies may address the issues listed in 3.2.1 Bullet #1, we believe the call for additional studies is valid and necessary to ensure, and continually improve, the safety of specialty crops throughout the supply chain. Sampling is a challenge. In the context of the priorities listed in the RFA, sampling issues are not outside the scope of the SCMP as a topic of study. We retained Bullet #1 as originally stated in the Guidance.

**3.2.1 Bullet #2--Develop procedures and mechanisms and provide assistance/education in implementing Good Agricultural Practices, Good Manufacturing Practices, Good Handling Practices on a national or regional level. If providing education/training opportunities, ensure the curriculum and materials align with and not duplicate that being developed by the Produce Safety Alliance (PSA);**

COMMENT: One commenter recommended that the phrase “and/or cooperating states” be added at the end of Bullet #2 after “Produce Safety Alliance (PSA).” One commenter recommended that “Although we agree that materials should not duplicate those being developed by PSA, neither should materials be restricted solely to those that follow and align with PSA. Such a restriction would prevent curriculum alternatives to PSA’s materials from being developed that could best serve the unique needs of different farming communities.” The commenter also stated that “PSA’s curriculum approaches training through a classroom model,” and recommended that funding be made available for a variety of training programs emphasizing “those with the greatest on-the-ground impact.”

RESPONSE: We accepted these suggestions. State departments of agriculture and their partners or any other entity participating in the project must utilize PSA or other FDA-recognized training and resources for producer and/or processor training or education.

Training need not be restricted to the classroom. Training “in the field” can be beneficial and effective. AMS will allow training conducted under a SCMP project to take place in alternate venues provided that it follows PSA or other FDA-recognized curriculum, materials and resources.

**3.2.1 Bullet #3--Conduct research focused on issues (such as die-off rates/survival rates of pathogens) related to (1) water quality; or (2) use of biological soil amendments of animal origin, on similar agro-ecological regions or localities utilizing the specific.**

COMMENT: One commenter stated that they support the language of Bullet #3, “as long as it’s done under real-world conditions, not simulated in a laboratory or under extreme contamination conditions.”

RESPONSE: The phrase “utilizing the specific” was inadvertently included in Bullet #3 in the Guidance. Bullet #3 is expanded in the RFA. It references separate, specific Framework Documents which were developed under FDA- commissioned studies and resulted in protocols when conducting research on agricultural water and for biological soil amendments of animal origin. As described in the RFA, we suggest applicants use these Framework protocols as references when developing technical research proposals in these areas.

We agree that SCMP proposals must have practical impact. However, it is often necessary to test out and prove new technologies or approaches on a small scale in the laboratory before taking them into the field. Any technically-oriented proposal submitted to SCMP must outline how, if proven successful in the laboratory, the technology or approach will be tested in real-world conditions, and specifically how specialty crop producers and processors may benefit.

***3.2.1 Bullet #4--Apply new or improved food processing technologies to prevent and reduce foodborne pathogen loads in specialty crops.***

COMMENT: One commenter said that “There appears to be limited success on this type of process.”

RESPONSE: New and existing food processing technologies are continuously being developed and refined. It is not possible to anticipate what new technologies may be developed in the future, or to what degree they will prove successful. We retained Bullet #4 as originally stated in the Guidance.

***3.2.1 Bullet #5--Strengthen national traceback systems; promoting an outbreak response system that shortens the time between outbreak detection, resolution, and recovery; and improving methods for communicating with consumers about traceback and foodborne illness outbreaks; and/or***

COMMENT: One commenter stated that “Traceback of product eaten to its source is not the problem, and shortening that time will not help. Detection by public health agencies that an illness from food has occurred, and traceback from an ill person to what made them ill are the primary delays.”

RESPONSE: Traceback remains a major limitation in many food contamination investigations, especially for those involving fresh produce. If the food item does not have an individual label or if it is highly perishable, the consumer either does not have information about the source of the food item, or the packaging containing the information has been discarded by the time the consumer is recognized to be part of an outbreak. In addition, many locations that serve consumers such as grocery stores or restaurants do not have the ability to trace a product to the final point of sale. Thus, delays at each step--from detecting illness, to tracing the food, to removing the contaminated food from the marketplace--can result in more consumers becoming ill. It is vital to reduce risk at each step in the farm-to-table continuum. Better traceback systems and protocols are needed. The term “systems” includes, but is not limited to, IT or electronic systems.

COMMENT: One commenter recommended that Bullet #5 be revised to read as follows by adding the phrase “and regional: “

*Strengthen national **and regional** traceback systems; promoting an outbreak response system that shortens the time between outbreak detection, resolution, and recovery; and improving methods for communicating with consumers about traceback and foodborne illness outbreaks; and/or*

RESPONSE: We accepted the recommendation. SCMP authorizes projects addressing both regional (multi-State) and national issues, including traceback systems.

**3.2.1 Bullet #6--Improve national support and coordination of food safety programs by conducting national and regional conferences, building collaborative networks, and exchanging information about integrated food safety.**

COMMENT: One commenter stated that “These are currently going on throughout the country. Support state, local public health agencies in outbreak detection and investigation would be more effective.”

RESPONSE: We acknowledge that there are efforts already underway to improve national support and coordination of food safety programs and also that there are many conferences, networks, and ways to exchange information. However, many of these efforts are broad, covering multiple industry food sectors instead of focusing specifically on produce. It is important to avoid duplication of the existing efforts, but there are opportunities to complement these efforts and/or fill in gaps. Small and medium sized firms and producers may be difficult to reach and they may be unaware of technical information and materials available to them. It would be helpful to find ways to better reach this community since they are often not linked up with the larger trade associations.

Although support of State and local public health and regulatory agencies is critical to an effective food safety system in the United States, State and local agencies focus on State and local issues, not on cross-jurisdictional issues such as investigations of multi-State outbreaks. It is important to improve coordination between the States, especially because so much of the food supply has wide distribution and involves multiple States when a food contamination event occurs.

COMMENT: One commenter requested that AMS define “food safety programs.”

RESPONSE: We believe the term “food safety programs” does not require a specific definition in that many different programs may fall under this heading. We retained Bullet #6 as originally stated in the Guidance. Section 1.3.1 of the RFA covers food safety proposal types.

COMMENTS: One commenter recommended that food safety projects should reach all populations: growers, retailers, food service workers, and consumers, most importantly, and that Good Agricultural Practices could be introduced to all groups simultaneously with a customized media education and outreach campaign. One commenter recommended the following bullet be added to the Priority Areas:

- *“Reduce foodborne threats by executing an outreach and education campaign that combines the force of innovative media and on site engagement to encourage food safety practices that influence consumers, growers, retailers and food service workers on a regional or national level. Projects that address Good Agricultural Practices and extend the messaging developed by the Produce Safety Alliance to **new and different audiences** are recommended.”*

RESPONSE: We acknowledge that consumers would benefit from educational materials and campaigns that convey messages regarding safe handling, preparation and storage of specialty crops in the home. Projects that reach all audiences listed in the comment are acceptable under the SCMP.

COMMENT: One commenter observed that there was nothing in the Guidance about marketing projects being allowed, and recommended that such projects be added as acceptable for SCMP.

RESPONSE: We accepted this recommendation. Marketing and promotion projects are allowed under the SCMP. The RFA defines marketing and promotion projects as focused efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, and generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue.

We suggest that marketing and promotion projects include the following outcome measurement and indicator:

Outcome: To enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales.

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



If this outcome and indicator does not apply to the project, the applicant must use another outcome and indicator, subject to approval by AMS if the project is selected for funding.

COMMENT: One commenter suggested that projects which provide assistance to specialty crop producers to comply with FSMA implementation should be included.

RESPONSE: Providing financial assistance to producers is outside the scope of SCMP and would duplicate the types of projects currently covered under the Specialty Crop Block Grant program (SCBGP). SCBGP specifically authorizes projects to assist “all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing “Good Agricultural Practices,” “Good Handling Practices,” “Good Manufacturing Practices,” and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers; packers and processors; ”

COMMENT: One commenter recommended that Bullet #6 be revised to read as below (in bold) by including the phrase “developing educational materials for producers and consumers.”

*Improve national support and coordination of food safety programs by conducting national and regional conferences, **developing educational materials for producers and consumers,** building collaborative networks, and exchanging information about integrated food safety.”*

RESPONSE: We did not add the suggested phrase to this bullet, but developing educational materials and campaigns targeted to consumers is acceptable under the SCMP provided that the content conforms to PSA or other FDA-recognized guidelines and the focus is on providing useful and practical information that will help consumers avoid food contamination using practices that are under their control once they purchase a specialty crop. We cover this topic in more detail in the RFA.

COMMENT: One commenter recommended that AMS include additional examples of projects that would meet priority areas.

RESPONSE: The existing examples provided in the Guidance and carried over to the RFA reflect the overall intent of the legislation. We believe they are general enough to encompass a wide variety of topics relevant to the SCMP.

#### **Section 3.3.4 Crop-Specific Projects**

COMMENT: One commenter suggested the following Bullet be added as an example under this section.

- *“Connect specialty crop farmers to consumers by enhancing market opportunities that highlight production practices, growing locations, and advance specialty crops.”*

RESPONSE: We did not accept the addition of this new bullet as recommended, but we have added marketing and promotion to the list of allowable topics. These activities are acceptable, but to include the specific language of the suggested bullet would imply that marketing and promotion is limited to these activities.

### **Section 3.4 Indicators of Successful Applications**

COMMENT: One commenter recommended that the SCMP RFA require applicants to describe the national or regional impact of the project; to disclose if an applicant is currently participating in a State-level AMS SCBGP project; and if so, to identify the State department of agriculture.

RESPONSE: We have accepted these recommendations. The RFA describes the requirements of the application package. The Narrative subsection includes a number of questions applicants are required to address including identification of the specific geographic target area of impact of the project, and a description of the specific issue, problem, or need that the project will address, or the research question that will be answered. Applicants are also asked to indicate if a partner currently has a SCBGP award, and if so, to indicate the name of the project, the fiscal year awarded, and the State agriculture department which awarded the grant.

COMMENT: One commenter recommended the following clarification (in bold italics) to the first statement in this section:

“SCMP applications must bring together a multi-state organizational team and seek to develop solutions for practical problems that cross state boundaries and address the needs of specialty crop growers ***within the projects participating states.***”

RESPONSE: We did not accept the recommendation. SCMP projects can have implications not only for the States involved in the project, but also for those in the region or even nationally. It is understood that a multi-State proposal will address the needs of specialty growers in the targeted States.

### **Section 3.5 Development of Proposals**

COMMENT: One commenter recommended that:

1. Applicants submit proposals directly to AMS rather than go through State departments of agriculture;

2. AMS, rather than State departments of agriculture, have direct responsibility for the administration of SCMP projects; and
3. If State departments of agriculture must take the lead in SCMP projects, AMS should issue requirements to assist States in deciding whether or not to be the State lead.

A second commenter recommended that AMS poll State departments of agriculture before issuing the RFA to determine which of them would be willing to accept SCMP applications, and to make the list of State departments of agriculture willing to accept applications publically available.

RESPONSE: Recommendations 1 and 2 were not accepted. Section 101 (a) of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note), reads “Using the funds made available under subsection (I), the Secretary of Agriculture shall make grants to States for each of the fiscal years 2005 through 2018 to be used by State departments of agriculture solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.” This enabling legislation establishes that State departments of agriculture are the eligible entities to apply for SCMP funding, and as such have the direct responsibility to administer SCMP projects.

Recommendation 3 and the recommendation from the second commenter were accepted. AMS recognizes that every State department of agriculture may not have the resources to administer SCMP projects. AMS has determined that each State department of agriculture must decide if they would like to be designated as a Participating State department of agriculture and to notify AMS no later than September 30, 2015, of their decision. A Participating State department of agriculture will be the only entity that may submit SCMP proposals to AMS. Additional requirements are included in the RFA.

Participating State departments of agriculture that have questions about whether or not a proposal fits within the scope of the SCMP should contact the SCMP Program Manager. Inquiries from potential partners will be referred to the points of contact identified by the Participating State departments of agriculture.

COMMENT: One commenter recommended that AMS stress the importance of partnerships and suggested the following language be included in the RFA:

“State departments of agriculture must also reach out to potential project partners to engage them in developing proposals that meet multi-state project priorities. These stakeholders should play an important role in the development of project goals and objectives, in implementing the project plan, and in evaluating and disseminating project results and outcomes.”

“Applications are required to include nongovernmental organizations or community-based organizations with expertise in specialty crop agricultural producer training and outreach as partners or collaborators that contribute in a significant way to the project.”

**RESPONSE:** Project partners bring specialized knowledge and expertise, research capability, and/or other resources needed to conduct a successful project. The RFA provides examples of project partners that may include but are not limited to, the following:

- Non-participating State departments of agriculture
- Participating State departments of agriculture, but only if they have more than an administrative role in the project
- State agencies such as a State department of public health, a State department of natural resources, etc.
- Tribes
- Land grant or State universities or colleges
- Specialty crop producer organizations
- Non-profit organizations
- Community-based organizations

### **Section 5.1 Eligible Applicants**

**COMMENT:** One commenter recommended that State departments of agriculture be ineligible for SCMP funding if they are responsible for administering and approving SCMP awards. This recommendation was made to address a concern about conflict of interest in the event a State department of agriculture might submit their own proposal(s) in place of another proposal.

**RESPONSE:** We eliminated the cap on the number of applications that a Participating State department of agriculture can submit. Participating State departments of agriculture will establish a deadline for accepting SCMP applications, and develop internal procedures to screen any application from any source submitted to them to ensure it meets the definition of a multi-state project and the requirements outlined by the RFA. Participating State departments of agriculture must submit all applications they receive that meet the RFA criteria.

### **Section 5.4 Grower-Level Projects**

**COMMENT:** One commenter indicated the language of this section was unclear, specifically that -- “shouldn’t all projects do this in some capacity since individuals, business or commercial products cannot benefit from SCBGP?” (Below is the language of this section from the Guidance.)

*The AMS SCBG-MSPC encourages State departments of agriculture to prioritize and further expand funding to projects that address the needs of and support U.S. specialty crop growers.*

**RESPONSE:** This language was originally included to establish the focus of SCMP projects, and provide States with guidance on prioritizing potential projects. Since the cap on the number of applications a State department of agriculture can submit has been removed, Participating State departments of agriculture will be required to use the RFA as a guide for deciding whether or not to submit a proposal to the SCMP. Acceptable applications cover a wide range of topics including issues of importance to producing, handling, preparing, storing and marketing specialty crops.

#### **Section 5.7 Limited Number of Applications**

**COMMENT:** The Guidance stated that State departments of agriculture could submit no more than three applications. Two commenters recommended that AMS not restrict the number of applications a State department of agriculture may submit.

**RESPONSE:** We accepted this recommendation and removed the cap on the number of SCMP applications a Participating State department of agriculture may submit.

#### **Section 6.0 Application Review Information**

**COMMENT:** One commenter requested further information about the panel members who will review and score SCMP applications including the types of people who will be on the panel, if they will represent all of the U.S. regions, and if the panel will review all applications. One commenter recommended that State departments of agriculture be involved in the review process and that selected projects reflect “as regionally equitable distribution of funds as possible.”

**RESPONSE:** We will seek subject matter specialists from USDA, other Federal agencies, as appropriate, and from academia to review proposals. We accepted the recommendation to include State departments of agriculture as participants in the review of proposals. However, Participating State departments of agriculture may not review proposals, and any State department named as a partner on a SCMP proposal, will not be able to participate in the review.

Depending on the number and topic areas of proposals received, AMS will determine if review panel members will see all proposals or if they will be assigned a subset of proposals to review. To the degree possible, we will seek regional representation on the review panel(s).

We did not accept the recommendation about selecting proposals to achieve a regionally equitable distribution of funds. Proposals will be selected on their merits.

**COMMENT:** One commenter recommended that projects targeting small and mid-sized farms and/or that assist beginning, socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers receive preference points in the scoring process. The commenter also recommended that half of the available funding should be dedicated to projects that focus on farmer food safety outreach education and training.

**RESPONSE:** USDA encourages proposals that increase opportunities for new and beginning farmers and that target small and mid-sized farms and/or that assist beginning, socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers and ranchers are welcome. However, SCMP will not dedicate a portion of the grant funds to a specific type of project, or award priority points when scoring these proposals.

#### **Other – Timing of Release of the RFA**

**COMMENT:** One commenter recommended that the SCMP RFA be published before the SCBGP RFA deadline. One commenter recommended that the SCMP RFA run concurrently with the annual AMS SCBGP RFA.

**RESPONSE:** The SCBGP is an annual program and funds must be obligated before the end of the fiscal year, whereas the SCMP is not tied to an annual schedule. We will consider these comments when we determine announcement dates and application deadlines for both programs.

#### **Other – Indirect Cost**

**COMMENT:** One commenter recommended that State administrative costs (indirect cost) be allowed at the maximum allowed by law.

**RESPONSE:** We do not have discretion to authorize any deviation from the maximum set by law. The maximum indirect cost allowed under SCMP is 8 percent per Section 101 (k) (2) of the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004.

#### **Other – Translation and Interpretation Services**

**COMMENT:** One commenter recommended the RFA encourage projects, where applicable, to provide translation or interpretation services for farmers with limited English proficiency.

RESPONSE: These services would be appropriate and allowed under SCMP if necessary to project goals. If a project requires such services, they should be discussed in the narrative and reflected in the budget.

## 8.4 BUDGET SPREADSHEET EXAMPLE

### Budget Spreadsheet Example

All expenses described in the Budget Narrative must be reflected in the Budget Spreadsheet. Prepare a separate Budget Spreadsheet for each year of the project as well as a cumulative budget. Label each Budget Spreadsheet as Year 1, 2 or 3, as appropriate, and for the three-year period, label the Budget Spreadsheet as Cumulative.

<b>SCMP BUDGET SPREADSHEET- Year X (or Cumulative)</b>	
Expense Category	Funds Requested
Personnel – <i>one line for each person</i>	
Total Personnel	
Fringe Benefits - <i>one line for each person</i>	
Total Fringe Benefits	
Total Personnel and Fringe Benefits	
Travel	
Total Travel	
Equipment	
Total Equipment	
Supplies	
Total Supplies	
Contractual	
Total Contractual	
Other	
Total Other	
Total Direct Costs	
Indirect Costs	
<b>TOTAL PROJECT BUDGET</b>	