



Specialty Crop Multi-State Program

Fiscal Year 2021 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-21-0005

Publication Date: August 6, 2021

Application Due Date (Multi-State Partners to Participating States): 5:00 PM Eastern time on, November 4, 2021

Application Due Date (Participating States to AMS): 11:59 PM Eastern Time on December 6, 2021

PROGRAM SOLICITATION INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Title: Specialty Crop Multi-State Program – Farm Bill

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-21-0005

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing (CFDA) Number: [10.175](#)

Dates: Applications from multi-state partners must be submitted to Participating States by 5:00 PM Eastern time November 4, 2021. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Applications from Participating States must be received by AMS no later than 11:59 PM Eastern time December 6, 2021 through [Grants.gov](#). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP). AMS will competitively award funds to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through 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 \$10 million is available to fund applications under this solicitation. In the FY 2020 application cycle, AMS received 53 applications and was able to fund 11 (21%) of the applications. To be competitive, applications must meet all program requirements and be of high quality.

This announcement provides information about the eligibility criteria for applicants and projects, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an award.

Stakeholder Input: 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 the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice via e-mail to: AMSgrants@usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not for requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are commenting on the **Specialty Crop Multi-State Program RFA**.

2021 HIGHLIGHTS AND CHANGES

- The RFA and [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) were updated to reflect changes in the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR part 200).

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

AMS expects applicants to read the entire RFA prior to submitting their application to ensure they understand the program’s requirements. The application checklist below lists the required and conditionally required documents for an application package.

SCMP requires that **all application packages** include the following:

- Form SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (in Grants.gov)
- Project Narrative (PDF Attachment)
- Signed Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator Organizations (PDF or MS Word Attachment)

When applicable, application packages are required to include the following documents:

- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (PDF Attachment)

TIMING TO OBTAIN AND SUBMIT GRANTS.GOV REQUIRED ELEMENTS

Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials	December 6, 2021 – 11:59 p.m. [Eastern Time]
Obtaining Your Organization’s DUNS Number (if you do not already have one)	1-2 business days
Establishing an <i>Active</i> SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days
Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one)	Up to 2 weeks
Creating your Grants.gov profile and registering your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) authorization	Up to 2 weeks

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.0	Funding Opportunity Description.....	5
1.1	Legislative Authority	5
1.2	Purpose	5
1.3	Project Types	5
2.0	Award Information	7
2.1	Type of Federal Assistance	7
2.2	Type of Applications	7
2.3	Available Funding	7
2.4	Federal Award Period Duration	8
2.5	Grant Amount Available per Individual Project	8
3.0	Eligibility Information	8
3.1	Eligible Applicants	8
3.2	Partners and Collaborators	8
3.3	Benefit more than one product or organization	9
3.4	Cost Sharing and Matching.....	9
4.0	Application and Submission Information	9
4.1	Electronic Application Package	9
4.2	Content and Form of Application Submission.....	10
4.3	Submission Date and Time	14
4.4	Intergovernmental review.....	15
4.5	Funding Restrictions.....	15
4.6	Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements .	17
5.0	Application Review Information	20
5.1	Project Evaluation Criteria	20
5.2	Review and Selection Process.....	21
6.0	Award Administration Information.....	22
6.1	Award Notices.....	22
6.2	Unsuccessful Proposals.....	22
6.3	Administrative and National Policy Requirements	22
6.4	Reporting	22
7.0	Agency Contact.....	23
7.1	Team Lead	23
7.2	Address	23
7.3	Grants.gov Questions	23
8.0	Other Information	23
8.1	Equal Opportunity Statement	23
8.2	Freedom of Information Act Requests	23
8.3	Paperwork Reduction	24

1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Legislative authority is provided in section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 ([7 U.S.C. 1621 note](#)) as amended by section 10107 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Public L. No. 115—343 (the Farm Bill).

1.2 PURPOSE

SCMP competitively awards funds to multi-state partnerships to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. A multi-state partnership is a project that implements activities with measurable outcomes that benefit two or more U.S. States and/or Territories. Projects address one or more of the following regional or national level specialty crop issues:

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

Projects must enhance the competitiveness of U.S. or U.S. territory-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets.

1.2.1 DEFINITION OF SPECIALTY CROPS

Specialty crops are fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, tree nuts, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). See the [SCBGP website](#) for a definition of specialty crops and processed products, including a list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities.

1.3 PROJECT TYPES

Multi-state partners must develop projects that bring together teams for 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.

Projects should 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 regional or national (multiple-State) issues described below;
- (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; and
- (4) Involves at least two partners located in different States.

1.3.1 FOOD SAFETY

Projects that address the handling, preparation, and storage of specialty crops in ways that reduce foodborne threats may include, but are not limited to:

- Improving detection, monitoring, control, and response to potential food safety hazards in the production, processing, and handling of specialty crops;
- Conducting research focused on issues related to (1) water quality; or (2) use of biological soil amendments of animal origin, on similar agro-ecological regions or localities; and/or
- Strengthening regional and 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 of foodborne illness outbreaks.

1.3.2 PLANT PESTS AND DISEASE

Projects that address threats from pests and diseases may include, but are not limited to:

- Developing safe, effective, and economical pest and disease management solutions for growers of specialty crops;
- Developing monitoring systems to enhance capabilities to predict pest and disease incidence, estimate damage, and identify valid action thresholds;
- Developing treatments for quarantine pests and diseases to maintain or open healthy markets with U.S. trading partners; and/or
- Developing diagnostic tools, particularly new ones, for plant pests and diseases and for detection of pesticide resistance in pest populations, including weeds.

1.3.3 RESEARCH

Research projects are systematic studies directed toward fuller scientific knowledge or understanding of the subject studied ([2 CFR § 200.1](#)). Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting research in plant breeding, genetics, and genomics to improve crop characteristics;
- Improving production, processing, storage, and distribution efficiencies for conventionally or organically grown specialty crops;
- Reducing environmental impacts; and/or
- Improving supply chain logistics.

1.3.4 CROP-SPECIFIC PROJECTS ADDRESSING COMMON ISSUES

Crop-specific projects involve collaborative efforts to address issues that affect a specific specialty crop. 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.

Conducting research to determine consumer preferences, including studies of agricultural product price decision, value-added, sensory evaluations, focus groups, and other evaluative research methods that will enhance the impacts of agricultural marketing and promotion efforts.

1.3.5 MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Marketing and promotion projects focus on multiple-state efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, generate publicity, attract new customers, enhance food transportation, and/or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue.

1.3.6 PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Projects are not eligible for funding if the proposed activities:

- Duplicate the content of food safety training curricula or any resources or materials already developed;
- Provide direct financial assistance to producers; or processors to offset the cost of, or to cost share for, funding audits of production, handling, or management systems;
- Benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. Funds cannot be used to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services; or
- Generate no direct, assessable benefits for the U.S. specialty crop producers or agricultural community.

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS will use a Grant Agreement to provide a Federal award to successful applicants.

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 \$10 million from FY 2020 and FY 2021 will be available to fund applications under this RFA. Any funds not awarded under this RFA will be applied to the RFA for the next competitive award cycle.

Enactment of a continuing resolution or an appropriations act may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any application or to make a specific number of awards.

2.4 FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION

Projects must be completed within 3 years. The applicant must indicate the start and end dates on the SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance" in block 17. AMS encourages Multi-State partners to allow ample time for completion of all projects.

2.5 GRANT AMOUNT AVAILABLE PER INDIVIDUAL PROJECT

Minimum award amount is \$250,000.

Maximum award amount is \$1,000,000.

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

All applicants must be domestic entities owned, operated, and located within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Eligible applicants include:

Entity Type	Description
Participating States	State departments of agriculture that elect to submit proposals to AMS on behalf of interested entities as well as oversee the administration of awarded agreements.
Nonparticipating States	State departments of agriculture that do not elect to submit proposals to the AMS on behalf of interested entities as well as oversee the administration of awarded agreements.
Entities in Nonparticipating States	Local governments, Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, or nonprofit organizations residing in Nonparticipating States.

Non-State Entities (i.e., local governments, Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, or nonprofit organizations) residing in Participating States are ineligible to apply directly to AMS. These entities must work with their local Participating State to apply on their behalf.

3.2 PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

The applicant may subcontract or subaward with partners and collaborators. Project partners and collaborators do not need to meet the eligibility requirements mentioned in section [3.1](#).

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

The applicants must disclose in writing any potential conflict of interest to the USDA/AMS or pass-through entity (See [2 CFR § 200.112](#)). Partners and collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit, or nonprofit entities.

3.3 BENEFIT MORE THAN ONE PRODUCT OR ORGANIZATION

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

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

The following are some examples of acceptable and unacceptable projects:

Examples of Acceptable Projects

- A non-profit organization requests funds to demonstrate the viability of organic small fruit production and partners with Cooperative Extension to publicize the working model of diversification to other regional growers.
- A single farmer implements food safety practices or models on his/her property to meet food safety requirements and conducts a field day and training services to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the methods.

Examples of Unacceptable Projects

- A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop to make a profit or to expand production of a single business or organization.
- A single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase its membership.

3.4 COST SHARING AND MATCHING

This funding opportunity does not have a Federal cost-sharing or matching requirement and must not be included in the submitted application nor subsequent performance or financial reports.

4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

4.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via [Grants.gov](#) in response to this RFA. AMS strongly encourages applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process, see Grants.gov's [Apply for Grants](#) webpage. This RFA contains the information

needed to obtain and complete required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in section [4.6 Grants.gov Application Submission and Receipt Procedures and Requirements](#).

Applicants can find the opportunity under either Assistance Listing number “10.170,” or the SCMP Funding Opportunity Number “USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-21-0005.”

4.1.1 PARTICIPATING STATES AND ENTITIES WITHIN THEM

Entities in Participating States must submit their applications to their respective Participating State using that State’s instructions.

Participating states will submit each application received from entities that meets the requirements outlined in this RFA as separate application packages through Grants.gov, including each applicable component listed in section [4.2](#).

4.1.2 NONPARTICIPATING STATES AND ENTITIES WITHIN THEM

Nonparticipating states and entities within them will submit their applications through Grants.gov, including each applicable component listed in section [4.2](#).

4.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

4.2.1 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

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

Block	Instruction
#1 Type of Submission	Check Application.
#2 Type of Application	Check New.
#4 and #5	Not applicable.
# 8c Organizational Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)	Applicant DUNS# for the Organization submitting the application. See D&B Request a DUNS Number .
#8d Address	Enter the State department of agriculture 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	Enter 10.170 – Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill.
#12 Funding Opportunity Number	Enter USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-21-0005.
#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	A detailed description of each project is not necessary.

Block	Instruction
#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 performed. Write "All" if the projects will be performed in more than one location.
#17 Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Start Date: October 31, 2022 End date: Enter the appropriate End Date for your project type
#18 Estimated Funding	Total SCMP funds requested.
#19 Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See section 4.4 .

4.2.2 PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required. The Project Narrative must be submitted as a PDF, attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under form SF-424 item #15. Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted. The Project Narrative must be typed, single-spaced, in an 11-point font, not to exceed fifteen (15) 8.5 x 11 pages.

Prior to submitting an application to Grants.gov, make sure that it 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 upon final submission). **The supporting documents in the subsequent sections do not count against the 15-page limit for the Project Narrative.**

(1) Executive Summary

Include a summary of 250 words or less, suitable for dissemination to the public. This summary should include a concise outline of the project's purpose; activities to be performed, including subawards (when applicable); deliverables and expected outcomes; intended beneficiaries; and any other pertinent information.

(2) Alignment and Intent

(i) Clearly state the purpose of the project and Project Type identified in section [1.3 Project Types](#). Describe the specific issue, problem, or need that the project will address in relation to the statutory language of the program ([7 U.S.C. § 1621 note](#)). Include data and/or estimates that describe the extent of the issue, problem, or need.

(ii) List the objectives of the project. The objectives must be related to addressing the issue(s), problem(s), or need(s) in relation to the statutory language of the program, as described in section (2)(i).

(iii) Provide a description of the benefits you intend to achieve as a result of the project, including the number of affected producers or processors.

(3) Technical Merit

(i) Provide a Work Plan that describes the activities and timeline associated with each project objective. Include the following information for each objective listed pursuant to the Alignment and Intent section above: a timeline for each activity and major output, including the anticipated date of completion; how and where the activities will take place; required resources; milestone(s) for assessing progress and success; the person(s) responsible for completing the activity, including collaborative arrangements or subcontractors; if conducting training and technical assistance, how participants will be recruited; and how you will help guide program development and delivery.

(ii) If the proposed project has been or will be submitted to another federal program for funding, provide the grant program name.

(iii) If the proposed project builds on work previously funded by a federal program, including [AMS grant programs](#), provide the year and grant program name and describe how the proposed project, if funded, would not duplicate work previously funded by the federal government.

(4) Achievability

(i) Provide at least one distinct, assessable project outcome and associated indicator. If the outcome measures are long-term and occur after the project's completion, identify an intermediate outcome that occurs during the term of the grant, and is expected to help lead to the fulfillment of long-term outcomes. Please refer to the [SCBGP Evaluation Plan](#) for more information.

(ii) For each completed, qualitative and/or quantitative outcome indicator, describe how you derived the numbers, how you intend to measure and achieve each relevant outcome and indicator, and any potential challenges to achieving the estimated targets and action steps for addressing them.

(iii) For each completed, qualitative outcome, describe the methodology, rationales, how you intend to assess and achieve each relevant outcome and indicator, and any potential challenges to achieving the estimated targets and action steps for addressing them.

(iv) Provide a clear description of the plan to disseminate the project results (positive and negative) to similar organizations, stakeholders, and others that may be interested in the project results or in implementing a similar project.

(5) Expertise and Partners

(i) List key staff, including personnel and external project partners and collaborators that comprise the Project Team, their roles, and their relevant experience and past successes in developing and operating projects similar to this project. Ensure that you have included Letters of Commitment from Multi-State partner and collaborator organizations to support the information. Disclose of any potential concerns of conflicts of interest. For example, if you recruit your spouse, relatives, and/or business partner, provide solid evidence and clear explanation of your decisions, including a detailed monitoring and risk management plan.

(ii) Describe your management plan for coordinating, communicating, and sharing data and reports among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, both internally to personnel and externally to partners and collaborators.

(iii) Describe how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project's period of performance (without grant funds).

4.2.3 FISCAL PLAN AND RESOURCES

Required: The Fiscal Plan and Resources includes the Budget Spreadsheet and Budget Narrative. The Budget Spreadsheet must show the relevant expenditure categories in the far-left column. Relevant cost categories include:

- Personnel
- Fringe Benefits
- Travel
- Special Purpose Equipment
- Supplies
- Contracts/Consultants
- Indirect Costs
- Program Income
- Other

Proceeding across the page, there must be a column showing the dollar amount of funds requested. Provide separate Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and cumulative budgets.

The Budget Narrative must break-down and explain how the dollar amounts for each category shown on the Budget Spreadsheet were derived and what they cover. All costs must be costs considered allowable for the purpose of the project. See section 8 of the *AMS General Terms and Conditions* for a full listing of allowable and unallowable costs.

The Fiscal Plan and Resources do not count toward the 15-page Project Narrative maximum.

4.2.4 PERSONNEL QUALIFICATIONS

Required: Provide a one- to two-page resume or summary of relevant experience and/or qualifications of the principal investigator(s) and for each of the other major project participants. *Longer resumes will be disregarded.*

4.2.5 LETTERS OF COMMITMENT FROM PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Required: Applicants must provide letters of commitment (in MS Word or PDF) from all project partners and collaborators. More information on partners and collaborators can be found in section **3.0 Partners and Collaborators**. The letter must state the partner or collaborator agrees to the project management plan presented in the Project Narrative. Emails will not be accepted. The Letter of Commitment must include the following:

- Project applicant

- Project title
- A short introduction describing the partnering organization’s mission and its interest in SCMP development
- What the organization commits to participating in and supporting
- The time period of the partnership
- Roles of the participating individuals, as applicable, and any individual time commitment
- A statement that these individuals and the organization agree to abide by the management plan contained in the application

Submit *Letters of Commitment* on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are **LETTERS OF COMMITMENT**. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Unsigned letters will not be accepted.

PLEASE NOTE: SCMP does not require Congressional letters of support and such letters do not carry additional weight during the evaluation process.

4.2.6 NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

SCMP has a statutory indirect cost cap of 8 percent. Negotiated indirect cost rates that exceed 8 percent will not be accepted. Refer to section [4.5.1 Limit on Administration Costs](#) for more information.

If the applicant prefers any indirect cost rate lower than 8 percent based on a previous negotiated indirect rate, USDA AMS requires the submission of the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). The NICRA must be in PDF format **and** attached to the Grants.gov application package using the “Add Attachments” button under SF-424 item #15.

4.3 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applications must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. Ensure that all components of the application are complete before submission. Allow enough time for the application process, as it may take more than one attempt before your application is successfully submitted. AMS encourages you to submit your application at least **two (2) weeks** prior to the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

4.3.1 APPLICATIONS TO PARTICIPATION STATES

The deadline for entities residing in Participating States to submit applications to Participating States is 5:00 pm Eastern Time November 4, 2021.

4.3.2 APPLICATIONS TO AMS

Only applications submitted and validated by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on December 6, 2021. See [AMS’ Policy on Late Applications](#).

4.4 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This program is not subject to [Executive Order 12372](#), which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials.

4.5 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

4.5.1 LIMIT ON ADMINISTRATION COSTS

Administration costs are defined as indirect costs and are limited to **8 percent** of the total Federal funds provided under an award. If the applicant does not use the full **8 percent** of indirect costs, its partners may claim the remaining portion of these costs.

Presenting Direct and Indirect Costs Consistently

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

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

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

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

- (1) administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity;
- (2) individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;
- (3) such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency; and
- (4) the costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

Typical Indirect Costs by Organization Type

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

4.5.2 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

4.5.3 SUPPLANTING

Funds must supplement and not replace the expenditure of State funds in support of specialty crops grown in that State, rather than replace State funds. In instances where a question of supplanting arises, the applicant or recipient will be required to substantiate that the reduction in non-Federal resources occurred for reasons other than the receipt or expected receipt of Federal funds.

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

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

4.5.4 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

Recipients are expected to attend an AMS sponsored grants management meeting during the project's period of performance. The proposed budget should include travel funds for the Project Coordinator and any additional key personnel as reasonably determined by the recipient and AMS.

4.6 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

4.6.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

The applicant organization registration process can take **up to four weeks** to complete. Therefore, when completing your registration, allow sufficient time to ensure that you are able to meet required application submission deadlines.

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

- 1) *Obtain a DUNS Number:* All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a [Data Universal Numbering System \(DUNS\) number](#) from Dun & Bradstreet. Applicants must enter the DUNS number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form.
- 2) *Register with SAM:* In addition to having a DUNS number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#). All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.**
- 3) *Register with Grants.gov:* The next step in the registration process is to [create an account with Grants.gov](#). Applicants must know their organization's DUNS number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need to request the (AOR) role.
- 4) *Authorize Grants.gov Roles:* After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of the registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and [authorize the appropriate roles](#), including the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.
- 5) *Track Role Status:* After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you [to track your status](#).

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

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

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

- 1) *Create a Workspace*: This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- 2) *Complete a Workspace*: This allows you to add participants to the workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.
 - a. *Adobe Reader*: If you decide not to apply by filling out the webforms, you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or AMS forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local storage device storage, network drive(s), or external drives, and then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: You may need to visit the [Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov](#) to download the appropriate version of the software. There is no cost for Adobe Reader Software.

- b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms*: Fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color are mandatory fields you must complete to successfully submit your application.
 - c. *Complete SF-424 Form Fields First*: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and DUNS number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.
- 3) *Submit a Workspace*: Submit your application through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for AMS required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in section [4.2 Content and Form of Application Submission](#) are included.

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

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides additional [training resources, including video tutorials](#). Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726 or email support@grants.gov. [Grants.gov](#) will issue a ticket number to which you and Grants.gov can refer if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the person identified in section [7.0 Agency Contact](#).

4.6.3 TIMELY RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS AND PROOF OF TIMELY SUBMISSION

All applications must be received by the due date established in section [4.3 Submission Date and Time](#). Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov using an electronic date/time stamp generated when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When AMS successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will electronically acknowledge receipt of the application to the applicant AOR's email address. Again, proof of timely submission shall be the official date and time that Grants.gov receives your application.

AMS will not accept applications packages by fax, email, or postal mail. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by AMS. See [AMS' Policy on Late Applications](#).

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

4.6.4 TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- Register and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE.**
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all the instructions provided by AMS.
- Apply to the correct grant program.
 - Assistance Listing number “**10.170**” and Funding Opportunity Number “**USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-21-0005.**”
- Review terms and conditions to ensure you understand the allowable and unallowable costs.
- Make sure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with [Grants.gov](#) software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
- Limit Application File Size/ File Name Characters (50 or less).
- When uploading attachments, click the “Add Attachments” button (do NOT use the “paperclip” icon in Adobe Reader)
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are “accepted”.
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names (\$, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).

- Input the correct DUNS number on the SF-424 cover page.
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
 - [Frequently asked questions by applicants](#)
 - [Registering on Grants.gov to submit an application](#)

5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

5.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be reviewed competitively using the following criteria and scoring:

Alignment and Intent **25 Points**

- 1) The extent to which the application provides a clear and concise description of the specific issue, problem, or need and objectives for the project.
- 2) The extent to which the project enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops through 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.
- 3) The extent to which the applicant identifies the intended beneficiaries and how they will benefit, including the number of beneficiaries.

Technical Merit **25 Points**

- 1) The extent to which the application presents a clear, well-conceived, and suitable overall methodology for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the proposed project.
- 2) The extent to which the application presents a realistic schedule for implementing the proposed project during the period of performance.
- 3) If the project and/or entity was previously funded, the extent to which the previous lessons learned are incorporated into the proposed project.

Achievability **15 Points**

- 1) The extent to which the Outcomes and Indicator(s) are feasible for the scale and scope of the project including:
 - a. How indicator numbers were derived, with a clear means to collect feedback to evaluate and achieve each relevant Outcome indicator; and
 - b. The anticipated key factors that are predicted to contribute to and restrict progress toward the applicable indicators, including action steps for addressing identified restricting factors.
 - c. The accessibility of any proposed outcomes and indicators.
- 2) The extent to which the proposed project can be adaptable to other regions, communities, and/or agricultural systems.

- 3) The extent to which the applicant provides a comprehensive plan to disseminate the project’s results (both positive and negative) electronically and in person to target audiences, stakeholders, and interested parties.
- 4) Provide a detailed and clear risk management plan.

Expertise and Partners **25 Points**

- 1) The extent to which the proposed project represents a substantial, effective, and diverse array of relevant partnerships and collaborations to accomplish the project’s goals and objectives and meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries, including:
 - a. Commitment from the key staff, demonstrated through Letters of Commitment from partner and collaborator organizations;
 - b. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and the names and titles of the individuals who comprise the Project Team; and
 - c. The expertise and experience of the Project Team necessary to successfully manage and implement the proposed project.
- 2) The extent to which the application describes plans for coordination, communication, data sharing, potential conflicts of interest, and managerial plan, and reporting among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, both internal applicant personnel and external partners and collaborators.
- 3) The extent to which the application describes how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project’s period of performance (without grant funds).

Fiscal Plan and Resources **10 Points**

- 1) The extent to which the application budget narrative/justification provides a clear, detailed, narrative description for each budget line item including:
 - a. Budget is consistent with the size and scope of the project; and
 - b. Budget relates logically to the narrative describing the project.
 - c. Details plan to manage and report the expenses, including risk management.

5.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Step 1: Initial Qualification Screening

To meet the basic eligibility requirements, applications must be responsive to the RFA. Please see [AMS’ Non-Responsive Application Policy](#) for more information.

Step 2: Technical Review

Each application that passes initial screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of independent peer reviewers. AMS makes every attempt to match reviewers with applications in their areas of expertise. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned proposals. The peer review panels evaluate their assigned proposals using instructions prepared by AMS

officials. Individual reviewers confer with other team members to derive a consensus score. The consensus review serves as the basis for awarding and allocating grant funds and focuses on strengths and weaknesses of each proposal.

Step 3: Administrative Review

AMS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of each review panel's top rankings and recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, AMS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic diversity, and USDA priorities. AMS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions if necessary and possible. AMS will also assess an organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these monies using the guidance provided by [2 CFR § 200.206](#).

6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

6.1 AWARD NOTICES

Upon announcement of the Federal awards, AMS will prepare and send a Notice of Award and 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 AOR.

The Notice of Award and Grant Agreement (AMS-33) will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in [2 CFR § 200.211](#) and a reference to the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

6.2 UNSUCCESSFUL PROPOSALS

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

6.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

As part of the Notice of Award and Grant Agreement, all AMS recipients must abide by the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#), which reference applicable *Administrative and National Policy Requirements*.

6.4 REPORTING

Reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, those will be identified in the award.

7.0 AGENCY CONTACT

Applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact:

7.1 TEAM LEAD

Mr. Martin “RO” Rosier

Phone: (202) 260-8449

E-Mail: Martin.Rosier@usda.gov

7.2 ADDRESS

Specialty Crop Multi-State Program

USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service

1400 Independence Avenue, SW

Room 2055 South Building

Stop 0201

Washington, DC 20250-0269

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scmp>

7.3 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to Grants.gov’s [Applicant Support](#).

8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

8.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

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

8.2 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

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

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 1671-S, Mail Stop 0202, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov.

By submission of its proposal or application, the applicant represents that it does not require any of its employees, contractors, or subrecipients seeking to report fraud, waste, or abuse to sign or comply with internal confidentiality agreements or statements prohibiting or otherwise restricting those employees, contractors, or subrecipients from lawfully reporting that waste, fraud, or abuse to a designated

investigative or law enforcement representative of a Federal department or agency authorized to receive such information. Note that: (1) the basis for this representation is a prohibition in sections 743 and 744 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, Pub. L. 114-113, (Division E, Title VII, General Provisions Government-wide) and any successor provisions of law on making funds available through grants and cooperative agreements to entities with certain internal confidentiality agreements or statements; and (2) section 744 states that it does not contravene requirements applicable to Standard Form 312, Form 4414, or any other form issued by a Federal department or agency governing the nondisclosure of classified information.

8.3 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

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