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Mike Beam, Secretary

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Kansas Department of Agriculture 2023 Specialty Crop Block Grant

Request for Applications

Applications due March 15, 2023, by 5:00 p.m.

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Introduction

The Kansas Department of Agriculture (KDA) is currently accepting applications for the 2023 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Funds for the program are awarded to state departments of agriculture by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The funds are in turn granted to projects and organizations that promote the competitiveness of specialty crops.

The purpose of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is to enhance the competitiveness of the specialty crop industry by:

- (1) leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops;
- (2) assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops;
- (3) expanding availability and access to specialty crops; and
- (4) addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers.

Specialty crops are defined by the USDA as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops including floriculture.

Each state department of agriculture who applies to this federal program is to receive an estimated base amount of \$243,001.17 plus an amount based on the average of the most recent available value of specialty crop cash receipts in the state and the acreage of specialty crop production in the state. Kansas' available grant allocation is \$327,969.82. Applicants may apply for up to \$75,000 for their projects. Matching funds are not required.

Applications must address all information requested on the following pages to be considered. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed. A review team will rate proposals on their ability to successfully promote specialty crops in Kansas and make a positive impact on the Kansas economy. Those recommendations will be made to the Kansas Secretary of Agriculture, who will make the final awards.

Applications for grant funds should describe how the project potentially impacts and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public, rather than a single organization, institution or individual. Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners. Other organizations that are encouraged to apply for these grants are schools, colleges and universities, extension programs, and research institutions.

The USDA encourages projects that benefit smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, underserved producers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities.

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

- Underserved Farmer or Rancher is a farmer or rancher who is a member of an Underserved Group. An Underserved Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.
- Veteran Farmer or Rancher is a producer who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof, was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable, and has not operated a farm or ranch or has operated a farm or ranch for no more than 10 years or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.

The Kansas Department of Agriculture seeks to fund projects that pertain to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry in the following areas.

Economic Development

- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems, including projects that seek to understand gaps in systems and supply/demand issues related to specialty crops
- Investing in specialty crop research, including research on the feasibility of growing novel specialty crops that aren't currently produced (or are produced in very small quantities) in Kansas
- Controlling pests and disease, as well as addressing issues such as pesticide drift that affect specialty crops
- Regional efforts to start incubator or community kitchen projects to encourage the development of value-added products from specialty crops

Education

- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops
- Developing materials to better educate specialty crop producers and buyers on food safety practices, including Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs), Good Handling Practices, and Good Manufacturing Practices
- Projects that create awareness of Kansas specialty crops for consumers

Sustainability

- Focus on conservation or environmental outcomes related to specialty crops
- Projects focused on sustainability of specialty crops

Preference will be given to projects that are one year in duration. Any proposed project longer than one year must give justification for the longer timeline in the application and work plan. The grant period must begin no later than September 30, 2023, end no later than September 29, 2026.

Grant Project Guidelines

Definition of a Project

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

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

Examples of projects include:

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

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

- Hiring personnel
- Purchasing special purpose equipment
- Holding an educational workshop
- Planting specialty crops
- Distributing product promotional materials

Enhance the Competitiveness of Specialty Crops Requirement

Projects must enhance the competitiveness of U.S. or U.S. territory-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. A list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities can be found at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>.

Benefit More Than One Product or Organization Requirement

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

Examples of Acceptable Projects

- A non-profit organization requests funds to demonstrate the viability of organic small fruit production and partners with Cooperative Extension to publicize the working model of diversification to other regional growers.
- A single farmer implements food safety practices or models on his/her property to meet food safety requirements and conducts a field day and training services to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the methods.
- A State requests funding to contract with a university to conduct research on the feasibility of planting, cultivating, and growing a specialty crop in a particular area, the results of which can be shared with many growers throughout the State.
- A single company requests funds to provide a viable pollination alternative to specialty crop stakeholders in the region, which currently does not have one.
- A single specialty crop organization requests funds to conduct an advertising campaign that will benefit their specialty crop members.
- A single farmer erects high tunnels on their property to extend the growing season of tomatoes and lettuce and conducts a field day and farm tour to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the production 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 for the purpose of making a profit, or to expand production of a single business.
- A State requests grant funds to make grants to individual specialty crop businesses or roadside stands to promote their individual business.
- A sole proprietor requests grant funds to redesign her/his logo to make her/his specialty crop value-added product stand out at the local farmers' market.
- A company that develops specialty crop value-added products requests funds to train its employees how to make its value-added products.
- A single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase its membership.
- A specialty crop producer requests funds to promote their asparagus at a roadside stand.

Allowable Costs

All awards and sub-awards are subject to those cost principles applicable to the organization concerned. For example, if KDA sub-awards to a university, the cost principles applicable to a university will apply. Please refer to the applicable cost principles when developing your project activities and budget. You may reference the USDA AMS General Terms and Conditions document to locate the principles applied in establishing the allowability or unallowability of specific items of cost. This document can be found at https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/FY2021_GD_TermsandConditions.pdf. All costs must be associated with project activities that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Restrictions and Limitations on Grant Funds

- Grant funds may not be used to fund political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. 1501-1508 and 7321-7326).
- Development or participation in lobbying activities pursuant to 31 U.S.C. 1352 including costs of membership in organizations substantially engaged in lobbying are unallowable.
- Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings and land are unallowable as direct and indirect charges.
 - *Capital expenditures* means expenditures for the acquisition cost of capital assets (equipment, buildings, land), or expenditures to make improvements to capital assets that materially increase their value or useful life. Acquisition cost means the cost of the asset including the cost to put it in place. 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. Ancillary charges, such as taxes, duty, protective in-transit insurance, freight, and installation may be included in, or excluded from the acquisition cost in accordance with the governmental unit's regular accounting practices.
 - *General purpose equipment* means equipment, which is not limited to research, scientific or other technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.
 - *Equipment* means an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000.
- Capital expenditures for special purpose equipment are allowable as direct costs, provided that items with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more have the prior approval of AMS and KDA. (Note: Prior approval from AMS means that the special purpose equipment must be included in the State Plan submitted by KDA, and the State Plan must receive approval from AMS. If special purpose equipment was not originally included in the approved State plan, then the grantee must request approval from AMS to purchase the equipment before utilizing grant funds.)
 - *Special purpose equipment* means equipment which is used only for research, scientific or other technical activities. The special purpose equipment must solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops and benefit the specialty crop industry.
- Rental costs of buildings and equipment are allowable as direct costs in accordance with the cost principles in Subpart T of 7 CFR 3015.
- Hourly contractual costs exceeding the cap of a CS-14 step 10 Federal employee in your area have been added as an unallowable cost unless an acceptable justification is provided.

Indirect Costs

For the Kansas Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, indirect costs shall not exceed eight percent of an individual project's total direct costs.

Multi-State Projects

Multi-state projects are encouraged to provide a growing need for solutions to problems that cross state boundaries such as, but not limited to: addressing good agricultural practices, research on crop productivity or quality, enhancing access to federal nutrition programs, pest and disease management or commodity-specific projects addressing common issues in multi-state regions.

A project is multi-state when an organization receives funding from more than one state to execute the same or multiple components of the same project. The project must be identified as a multi-state project through the inclusion of a multi-state section in the project profile. In addition, all states reviewing the proposal need to be aware that the project is multi-state so that they can collectively decide to fund it.

A high-quality, multi-state project proposal will have clearly focused objectives, direct involvement of each participant in the accomplishment of the stated objectives, and evidence that the project proposal has been peer-reviewed.

As of 2023, Kansas is not a participating multi-state partner for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. If interested in working with a particular state or states, please contact the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program office in that state. Contact information for those offices may be viewed at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/state-contacts>.

Grant Project Expectations

If a project receives a Specialty Crop Block Grant award through the Kansas Department of Agriculture, the grantee will be expected to carry out the project, maintain clear and consistent communication with KDA, keep detailed records and report project progress in a timely manner. The following activities with deadlines are contractual requirements as part of the grant process.

Quarterly Reports for Projects

These reports capture activities, delays/developments, outcome achievement, expenditures, successes, and future events for every three months of project progress. They are due 15 days after the end of each quarter.

Quarter 1

Reporting Period: September 30 to December 31

Report Due: January 15

Quarter 2

Reporting Period: January 1 to March 31

Report Due: April 15

Quarter 3

Reporting Period: April 1 to June 31

Report Due: July 15

Quarter 4

Reporting Period: August 1 to September 29

Report Due: October 15

Final Report for Projects

Upon completion of the grant period, grantees are expected to turn in a final performance report covering the entire project. The report will encompass the performance narrative, accomplishments and challenges, objective and outcome measures, expenditures and income and supplemental information. This report is due on November 30 of the final project year.

Annual Reports for Multi-Year Projects

In rare cases, projects longer than one year will turn in an annual report in place of a final report if the project is still active. These reports are similar to the final report but look more closely at project progress and completion. They are due on November 30 at the end of each project year. Once a multi-year project is complete, a final report will be submitted on the following November 30 in lieu of an annual report.

Application Process

The 2023 Specialty Crop Block Grant application process consists of three components: the project profile, letters of support, and the online application.

Project Profile

Applicants are required to fill out the Kansas Project Profile template to explain their proposed project plan. The template includes sections for applicants to define their project's purpose, project partners, objectives, expected measurable outcomes, budget, and proposed work plan. Their completed project profile document should be uploaded as a Word document on the online application form.

The "Expected Measurable Outcomes" section requires applicants to select at least one of the seven outcomes provided by the USDA. Each outcome must also have a corresponding indicator. The outcomes and indicators can be found at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/SCBGPPerformanceMeasures.pdf>.

Letters of Support (Optional)

Applicants are welcome to upload letters of support in the online application form to show industry support for the project, confirm project partners, and/or outline matching or in-kind donations pledged for the project. However, this is not required. Letters of support must be uploaded as a single document.

Online Application

The online application can be accessed at <https://fs22.formsite.com/KansasDeptAg/2023SCBG/>. It consists of five pages and asks for contact information and basic information about the applicant's project. The last page of the application contains a place to upload the applicant's project profile document and optional letters of support. If you have filled out a Specialty Crop Block Grant application in the past, the online application replaces the previous cover sheet.

All applicants must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to receive federal funds. If you do not have a UEI number or previously had a DUNS Number, visit <https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/technology-transformation-services/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-systems-information-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update>.

Applicants can save and return to their online application at any time. If they do not complete the application in one sitting, they are asked to set up an account to access previous work. The account is free and is only associated with this specific application.

Application Evaluation Rubric

All applications will be reviewed by an internal review panel and an external review panel. The Kansas Secretary of Agriculture will make the final decision based on recommendations from the panels.

FOR EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL REVIEW PANELS			
Project Area	Criteria	Maximum Points Awarded	Points Received
Project Need	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How effective is the project at enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops in Kansas? 2. Does the project have long-term benefits to help increase specialty crop production in Kansas? 3. Does the project help increase the sale or awareness of specialty crops; provide research on a specialty crop dealing with increasing production, distribution, or process; or help specialty crop producers improve distribution or production practices, or lower production cost/risk? 	35	
Measurable Outcomes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there at least one quantifiable, measurable outcome? 2. Are the outcomes definable and measurable? 3. Are the outcomes of the project worth the total investment? 4. Is there outreach to share information learned with the public? 	25	
Budget	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the budget realistic for the project, and are expenses reasonable for the project? 2. Is there a detailed budget for personnel, operating, consultants and other costs? 	15	
Feasibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the project have a quality work plan? 2. Is the project timeline appropriate? 3. Has the project identified other areas of funding that could sustain it in the future? 	15	
Industry Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there evidence of industry-wide support for the program? 2. Does the project partner with other organizations/institutions? 	10	
Review Total		100	
FOR INTERNAL REVIEW PANEL ONLY			
Previous Performance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If the applicant was a previous award grantee, subtract points for any failures to meet the agency's expectations and/or deadlines. 	- 20	
Total		100	