1320 Research Park Drive
Manhattan, KS 66502
785-564-6700
www. agriculture.ks.gov

Kansas
Department of Agriculture

900 SW Jackson, Room 456
Topeka, KS 66612
785-296-3556

Mike Beam, Secretary

Laura Kelly, Governor

Kansas Department of Agriculture
2023 Specialty Crop Block Grant

Frequently Asked Questions

I am a farmer, rancher, or agribusiness. How can I apply for this grant to help with my specialty crop production?

- The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is not designed to assist individuals or organizations with projects/costs for their own businesses or start-ups. The purpose of the grant is to enhance the specialty crop industry as a whole, not just a single individual or business. KDA has a resource guide listing available grants and subsidized loan options which can be found at https://agriculture.ks.gov/docs/default-source/ag-marketing/agriculture-grants-and-loans-available-jan-2021.pdf?sfvrsn=c6da8bc1_4.

- There are some opportunities for individuals or businesses to participate in the program. Individuals or businesses are encouraged to become project partners with other organizations, offering support, services, expertise, field day opportunities, and other relevant aspects to enhance projects. There are many organizations across the state seeking these types of collaborations. Rarely, some individual businesses propose an allowable project meant to enhance the industry, such as hosting an on-farm field day or educational program for other farmers. The applicant must ensure they justify how the project and associated costs support the industry as a whole and not just benefit themselves. The funds should be used to expand efforts to address challenges in the industry, not supplant existing efforts or production costs.

How do I fill out the application template to meet USDA requirements and improve my chances of having my project selected?

- The application template is standard across all Specialty Crop Block Grant Programs. This is where you explain the problem in the specialty crop industry, your proposed project for addressing it, the objectives (goals) and expected outcomes of your project, how you will measure success, the costs and their justifications for the project and the proposed work plan and timeline.

- Under each section, small italic text gives instructions for filling out sections, including links to important relevant documents. Filling out each section completely and ensuring detailed, well-justified responses to each question can help make your project stand out.

  o Under "Project Partner and Summary", the summary or abstract provides the broad overview for the project in paragraph format. The template outlines the three elements that must be included in less than 250 words. A bulleted list is

unacceptable. The full description of the project explaining in detail the activities and expected impacts should be included within the response for "Provide the Specific Issue, Problem Or Need That The Project Will Address" under "Project Purpose" in addition to describing the need or problem.

- Objectives are the goals the project seeks to achieve. These are the specific goals covering all aspects of project activities you will be reporting on for each report. Every activity should connect to a goal in some way. They can align closely with the Outcomes and Indicators in later sections, but usually these objectives are designed to be specific to your project.

- "Project Beneficiaries" has gray filler text where the total number of beneficiaries should be entered. Please click into the text and type in your number. The gray text will automatically disappear and format the final number correctly.

- Under "Expected Measurable Outcomes"

  - At least one of the outcomes must be selected, along with a corresponding indicator.

  - Under "Outcome Indicator(s)", the direct language of the selected indicator should be transferred from the Specialty Crop Block Grant Performance Measures document and filled out with the quantifiable result.

- Under "Data Collection", data collection and reporting plans for each selected indicator must be addressed. It is recommended to list each indicator and the specific plan for capturing the data separately in this section. A broad statement on general data collection and reporting practices does not sufficiently explain in enough detail on how these measures are captured individually.

- Under "Budget Narrative", each expense category requested must have the corresponding detailed justification filled out for each line item. Please review the Grant Project Guidelines above for instruction and resources on allowable and unallowable costs.

  - Under "Travel", each trip should be numbered individually, with its relevant expenses grouped together (mileage, per diem, hotel, etc.) on separate lines. For example, the mileage and per diem for a trip to Manhattan would each be numbered "1" in the first column and listed separately on two rows of the table. The trip's justification should be included under "Trip 1".

  - Under "Indirect Costs", indirect costs shall not exceed eight percent of an individual project's total direct costs.

- Please ensure each section is filled out and numbers are calculated correctly. Commonly missed sections are the required "Self-Sustaining" question, "Data Collection" section, justifications under each budget aspect and various check boxes (Travel Policy, Procurement Standards, etc.) throughout the budget section. If the section is not applicable (ex: project is not a continuation or no expected project income), please fill in "N/A". Do not delete sections of the application template.

I have matching funds or in-kind donations for my project. Where do I include these numbers?

- A separate letter of support describing any matching funds with the exact values is allowable and preferred.

- Do not include any matching funds in the application template. Comments about the match/donation within the application are acceptable if there is no dollar amount associated. For example, if an organization covers the expense for an individual's personnel/fringe while working on the project, a line item in the "Personnel" section of the budget can explain the individual's involvement in the project with no funds requested.

I'm new to grant writing. What resources are available to help me develop an application?

- Kansas State Research and Extension (KSRE): https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/community/civic-engagement/grantwriting.html

- Kansas Small Business Development Centers: https://www.kansassbdc.net/

- The Grantsmanship Center: https://www.tgci.com/funding-sources/kansas

- Local economic development offices may have resources available for stakeholders in their counties.

- Please note, the Kansas Department of Agriculture cannot assist with writing a grant application for this program. The grant administrator is available to answer specific questions while developing the grant but cannot review drafts or provide broad feedback due to time constraints and potential conflicts of interest. Please send any questions to KDA.SCBG@ks.gov after reviewing the RFA.

Any tips?

- Get started early, and do not wait until the last day to submit or ask questions.

- Read the RFA and the linked materials carefully to ensure your project's eligibility for funding.

- The project profile template is the most important aspect of your application. Plan to spend most of your time perfecting this document.

- Letters of support are not a requirement but are helpful in showing industry-wide support. They should reveal support for the proposed project and why it is important to the industry. Quality is more important than quantity in this case.

- Proofread all documents for completeness, calculations, spelling, and grammar before submission. Miscalculated funds and poor writing can detract from or negatively impact your application. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed.