

FY 24 West Virginia Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Grant Application Instruction Manual



**West Virginia Department of Agriculture
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WV SCBGP

Grant Application Instructions

Section I

Overview: The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

The purpose of this program is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in West Virginia. For purposes of the program, specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). A list of eligible and ineligible crops can be found at [Specialty Crop Block Grant : West Virginia Department of Agriculture \(wv.gov\)](http://SpecialtyCropBlockGrant.WestVirginia.gov)

The SCBGP assists applicants to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by:

- (1) Leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops;
- (2) Assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops;
- (3) Expanding availability and access to specialty crops; and
- (4) Addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers.

Priorities that are specific to West Virginia projects include:

- (1) Providing farmer education of Specialty Crops;
- (2) Supporting research in the areas of Specialty Crops;
- (3) Planning and supporting infrastructures that create, supports and/or expand Specialty Crops;
- (4) Increasing consumer awareness of the value of specialty crops through education and farmer consumer connections (includes projects that provide market research, consumer preferences and business planning) through a variety of delivery systems;
- (5) Assisting in the expansion or development of broadband technology specific to specialty crop education and marketing efforts;
- (6) Specialty crop projects that include an agritourism or farm-based education component with clustering characteristics or potentials to benefit two or more growers; and
- (7) Projects that can demonstrate quantifiable impact in terms of increased beginning farmers, increased farm or commodity income, and/or increased farm sector employment.

General Compliance: Awarded grant projects must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and the terms of the grant award. The Grantee shall comply with the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004 of Public Law 108-465 as amended (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note); specialty crop block grant program regulations at 7 CFR Parts 1290 and 1291; federal cost principles at 2 CFR Part 200 and excluded and

disqualified participant requirements at 2 CFR Part 180, subpart C. For profit applicants must also comply with Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 31.2, Contracts with Commercial Organizations, codified at 48 CFR Subpart 31.2.

Section II

Available Funding: The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) anticipates receiving approximately \$270,000 in FY 24 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds. The WVDA expects to award multiple grants from this funding. Grants/award amounts are as follows:

- Tier 1-\$1,000-\$15,000-micro grants (no match required)
- Tier 2-\$15,001-\$50,000-intermediate grants (10% match required)
- Tier 3-\$50,001-\$75,000-large grants (25% match required)

Match: Funds from other federal sources *MAY NOT* be used to meet the match requirement. Match for Tier 2 & Tier 3 are required.

The match requirement must be satisfied with either:

- CASH – for example, *funds contributed* from private sources or state and local governments such as a portion of someone's salary, or
- IN-KIND SERVICES – for example, services and goods *donated* by the applicant organization or other entities such as a volunteer, or donated food.

Funds or in-kind resources used as match must be directly related to the project goals and objectives.

Subrecipients must maintain records which clearly show the source, the amount, and the timing of all matching contributions.

Sources of match are restricted to the same requirements as funds allocated under the federal program and must be documented in the same manner as the federal program funds, including financial and programmatic reports.

Amount of match required is calculated as a percentage (10% or 25%) of the total project cost (the sum of grant funds and match funds), NOT just the amount of grant funds requested.

Example of 10%

\$40,000 divided by .90=\$44,444-Total Project

\$44,444 minus \$40,000=\$4,444-10% match required for \$40,000 grant request

Example of 25%

\$75,000 divided by .75=\$100,000-Total Project

\$100,000 minus \$75,000=\$25,000-25% match required for \$75,000 grant request

Section III

Application Deadline: Applications must be **received** or **postmarked** no later than **4:00 PM** on **Wednesday, January 31, 2024**. Late applications will **NOT** be accepted.

Completed applications may be submitted to:
WV Department of Agriculture
Agriculture Business Development Division
ATTENTION: Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
217 Gus Douglass Lane, Building 2, Suite 204
Charleston, WV 25305

Or

E-mail: grants@wvda.us

If you have any questions or need assistance in the preparation of this grant application, please contact:

Telephone: (304) 558-2210

E-mail: grants@wvda.us

Critical Dates

Date	Time*	Event	Venue
December 23, 2023	N/A	Funding Notice Posted	<u>Specialty Crop Block Grant : West Virginia Department of Agriculture (wv.gov)</u>
January 31, 2024	4 P.M.	Applications due to WVDA	Electronic Submission: <u>grants@wvda.us</u> Postmark Deadline.
August/September 2024	N/A	USDA authorizes State Plan with Project Approvals	All projects will be notified of status.

Section IV

Eligible Applying Agencies: State or local organizations, government entities, producer associations, academia, community-based organizations, and other specialty crop stakeholders are eligible to apply either as single entities or in combined efforts. Regional or multi-state applications may be considered by the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA). While single entities are eligible, the program requires that projects must benefit more than one commercial product, organization, or individual.

Section V

Definition of a Project & Project Types: 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. One way to think about this is that a project has an overarching goal that the applicant wants to accomplish through a series of individual activities or tasks.

Examples of projects include:

- (1) Researching new cultivars;
- (2) Providing outreach opportunities on specialty crops to youth, families, seniors, and the overall community;
- (3) Marketing apples through a targeted promotional campaign.

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

- (1) Hiring personnel;
- (2) Purchasing special purpose equipment;
- (3) Holding an educational workshop;
- (4) Planting specialty crops;
- (5) Distributing product promotional materials.

Section VI

Duration: Proposed projects should start no earlier than **September 30, 2024**, and end no later than **September 29, 2026**.

Section VII

How to Apply: Applications for this grant should be completed on the fillable word document forms posted on the WVDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Page.

Shortcut: [Specialty Crop Block Grant : West Virginia Department of Agriculture \(wv.gov\)](https://www.wvda.us/specialty-crop-block-grant)

Proposals and required attachments should be completed using 12 point Cambria font and submitted electronically (Word) to grants@wvda.us or via mail.

Applications will be accepted on the fillable word document forms only accessible at [Specialty Crop Block Grant : West Virginia Department of Agriculture \(wv.gov\)](http://Specialty Crop Block Grant : West Virginia Department of Agriculture (wv.gov))

Section VIII

Completing the Application: The following are components of a completed application:

1. Grantee Self-Assessment:

Grantees will be required to complete the Grantee Self-Assessment form provided as Attachment A or at:

[Specialty Crop Block Grant : West Virginia Department of Agriculture \(wv.gov\)](http://Specialty Crop Block Grant : West Virginia Department of Agriculture (wv.gov))

The intent of this form is to advise the Evaluation Committee of the organization's capacity to effectively manage federal grants. Completion of this form is mandatory.

2. Budget:

A thorough and detailed budget must be submitted with the grant application packet. The budget must be completed on the provided form as Attachment B or at:

[Specialty Crop Block Grant : West Virginia Department of Agriculture \(wv.gov\)](http://Specialty Crop Block Grant : West Virginia Department of Agriculture (wv.gov))

WVDA reserves the right to reject applications if budget calculations or figures cannot easily be discerned. All totals must be rounded to the next whole dollar.

NOTE: Grants/award amounts are as follows:

- Tier 1-\$1,000-\$15,000-micro grants (no match required)
- Tier 2-\$15,001-\$50,000-intermediate grants (10% match required)
- Tier 3-\$50,001-\$75,000-large grants (25% match required)

Note: Match for Tier 2 & Tier 3 are required. Match must be from a non-Federal source and is figured as 10% and 25% of the total project. See Page 4 of this document for all match requirements.

Example of 10%

\$40,000 divided by .90=\$44,444-Total Project

\$44,444 minus \$40,000=\$4,444-10% match required for \$40,000 grant request

Example of 25%

\$75,000 divided by .75=\$100,000-Total Project

\$100,000 minus \$75,000=\$25,000-25% match required for \$75,000 grant request

2.a. Personnel

Persons employed by the grantee organization with SCBGP funds should be

listed. Those employed elsewhere are listed as subcontractors or consultants in the “[Contractual](#)” category. For secretarial and clerical salaries to be allowable, they must be listed as direct expenses in the budget narrative.

Costs for general administrative, accounting or indirect costs are not allowable. The duties must be directly related to the project.

If the employee has not yet been named, please list the title and note in the narrative section that the organizational hiring procedures will either be followed or default to the State of West Virginia personnel guidelines. Level of effort and funds requested must be included. For each employee who will be working on the SCBGP project, please complete the following:

- **Name and Title:** Provide the name and title of employee who will charge time to the award.
- **Level of Effort:** Provide the amount of FTE or percent of time the employee will dedicate to this project.
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds being requested to support this budget item.

Personnel Justification

For each individual listed in the application, describe the activities to be completed by name and title, and how they will achieve objectives and outcomes of project.

Costs associated with student staffers in a university setting should be listed in the “other” section.

2.b. Fringe Benefits

Fringe benefits are compensation in addition to direct wages or salaries, such as medical insurance. Fringe benefits are allowable provided they are for personnel listed in the personnel section. Fringe benefit expenses are not required even if personnel expenses will be charged to the grant. Please complete the following:

- **Name/ Title:** Provide the name and title of employee who will charge time to the award.
- **Fringe Benefit Calculation:** Show how the funds requested are calculated based on the fringe benefit rate.
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds being requested to support this budget item.

2.c. Travel

Travel expenses charged to the grant must be directly related to the project. Please complete the following:

- **Trip Destination**
- **Type of Expense:** airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.
- **Number of Units:** e.g. 3 days, 700 miles, 2 nights.
- **Cost per Unit**
- **Number of Travelers Claiming Expense**
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds being requested to support this budget item.

Travel Guidance

Travel costs may be charged on an actual cost basis, on a per diem or mileage basis in lieu of actual costs incurred, or on a combination of the two, provided the method used is applied to an entire trip and not to selected days of the trip.

Costs incurred for travel, lodging and other subsistence, or incidental expenses must be considered reasonable and otherwise allowable only to the extent such costs do not exceed charges normally allowed by the applicant's written travel policy. The applicant must justify that participation of the individual is necessary to the federal award and the costs are reasonable and consistent with established travel policy.

In the absence of an acceptable, written policy regarding travel costs, the rates and amounts established under 5 U.S.C. 5701-11 ("Travel and Subsistence Expenses; Mileage Allowances"), or by the Administrator of General Services, or by the President (or his or her designee) pursuant to any provisions of such subchapter must apply to travel under federal awards (48 CFR 31.205- 46(a)).

Commercial air travel. Airfare costs in excess of the basic, least expensive unrestricted accommodations class offered by commercial airlines are unallowable except when such accommodations would:

- (1) Require circuitous routing;
- (2) Require travel during unreasonable hours;
- (3) Excessively prolong travel;
- (4) Result in additional costs that would offset the transportation savings; or
- (5) Offer accommodations not reasonably adequate for the traveler's medical needs.

The non-federal entity must justify and document these conditions on a case-by-case basis for the use of first-class or business-class airfare to be allowable.

Alternative air travel. Costs of travel by non-federal entity-owned, -leased, or -chartered aircraft include the cost of lease, charter, operation (including

personnel costs), maintenance, depreciation, insurance, and other related costs. The portion of such costs that exceeds the cost of airfare (as provided for in paragraph (d) of this section), is unallowable.

Travel Justification

For each trip listed in the application, describe the purpose of this trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Be sure to include the approximate time of the trip.

2.d. Equipment

This category includes tangible, nonexpendable property having a useful life of more than one year, and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 per unit. All tangible property that does not qualify as "Equipment" must be included under Supplies. For the purpose of this grant, the only allowable equipment that can be purchased with grant funds is "special purpose equipment" (see below) which requires a research component. Rental equipment can be included in the budget. Please complete the following:

- **Item Description:** Describe item to be purchased.
- **Is it a purchase or rental?**
- **When will the acquisition take place?**
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds being requested to support this budget item.
- **Inventory Retention:** Describe how the organization maintains inventory and disposition reports. Acknowledge that the organization is willing to report on the equipment purchased during and after the grant cycle.

Equipment Justification

For each equipment item listed in the application, describe how it will be used to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project.

NOTE: Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land are unallowable as direct charges to the grant.

However, 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 WVDA.

Special Purpose Equipment (allowable) is defined as equipment used for research, scientific, or technical activities only. Examples include microscopes, spectrometers, and single-purpose equipment to enhance competition of eligible specialty crops and its industry. The equipment should

not be used to benefit a particular commercial product, or to provide a profit for an organization, institution, or individual.

2.e. **Supplies**

This category should include all tangible property that does not qualify as equipment. This may include office supplies, educational materials, or lab supplies. Items such as long-distance charges, postage, fax, and express mail should be listed under the Other category. Please complete the following:

- **Item Description:** Describe what will be purchased.
- **Per Unit Cost**
- **Number of Units/Pieces Purchased**
- **When will the acquisition take place?**
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds being requested to support this budget item.

Supplies Justification

For each supply listed in the application, describe the purpose of each item and how it is necessary to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project.

2.f. **Contractual**

Contractual or consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods or procuring services in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be listed separately.

If the contractor's hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-14 step 10 federal employee in your area, a justification for the expenses must be provided. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, or other expenses. Please complete the following:

- **Contractor Name:** Indicate the name of the selected contractor, or if the contractor is not selected yet, indicate "not yet selected."
- **Hourly Rate/Flat Rate**
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting to support this budget line.

Contractual Justification

For each contractual expense listed in the application, describe the project activities that each contractor or consultant will accomplish and how it is necessary to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Include timelines for each activity. If contractor employee and consultant hourly rates

of pay exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 federal employee in your area provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses.

2.g. **Other**

List all other direct costs not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- **Conference/Meeting** – Conference or meeting costs are included in this category. Details of costs for each conference or meeting should be broken out and provided in the budget.
- **Communications** – Mailings, postage, express mail, faxes, and telephone long distance charges. Provide the estimated cost for this category.
- **Speaker/Trainer Fees** – List the amount of speakers' fees and a description of the services being provided.
- **Publication Costs** – Provide the estimated cost of printing the brochures and other program materials for scientific or technical journals as well as an estimate of the number of pieces to be printed or published.
- **Data Collection** – Provide the estimated cost of collecting performance data to measure the project outcome measures.
- Costs associated with employing student workers in a university setting.

Complete the following:

- **Item Description:** Describe what will be purchased
- **Per Unit Cost**
- **Number of Units Provided**
- **Time of Acquisition**
- **Funds Requested:** Provide the amount of federal funds being requested to support this budget item.

Other Justification

For each item listed in the application, describe the purpose of each item and how it is necessary to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project.

2.h. **Program Income**

Program income is gross income, earned by a recipient under a grant, directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned only due to the grant agreement, during the grant 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; and registration fees for conferences. Please complete the following:

- **Source of Income:** Describe how program income will be generated by this project.
- **Estimated Income:** Estimate how much income is anticipated to be earned from the revenue source?

Program income may only be expended on [allowable costs](#) that enhance the competitiveness of [specialty crops](#). Please note that the income must be reinvested back into the grant project and as allowable expenditures of the grant. Fundraising or profit taking is not an allowable SCBGP activity.

3. Project Narrative

Provide additional details and justification for this project. Describe the activities and work that the organization will undertake to meet the measurable outcomes and provide valuable resources, information, or research to West Virginia agriculture. Include how this work will impact more than one farmer or individual. Elaborate on how this work sets the foundation for future work and goals through expanded production, outreach, or sales.

4. Project Work Plan

List the significant planning and implementation elements of the grant application.

- When and who will meet to plan training and other project activities?
- When will expenditures take place?
- Who is responsible for each of these components?

This section should be treated like a scope of work. What are the major points that indicate that the project is moving toward completing the work, when will evaluation occur and how will it be shared. At a minimum, one entry per quarter of the grant period (September 30, 2024, to September 29, 2026) must be listed and include submission of a Program Income Report. Be sure to note two Annual Reports (due on November 1st of each year) and the project Final Report due November 1, 2025. Grantees will be required to complete the Work Plan form provided as Attachment C or at the link below: [Specialty Crop Block Grant : West Virginia Department of Agriculture \(wv.gov\)](#)

The application must contain the following:

- Organizational information including the UEI number
- The specific specialty crop(s) (e.g. “iceberg lettuce” instead of “vegetables” or “lettuce”) that will be the subject of your proposal?
- The following documents in one email or paper application on the templates provided:
 - ✓ Grantee Self-Assessment (Attachment A)
 - ✓ Specialty Crop Block Grant application including budget (Attachment B)

- ✓ Up to 2 pages of additional project information detailing outcomes, impact and beneficiaries
- ✓ Project Work Plan (Attachment C)
- ✓ Application Cover Sheet (Attachment D)

UNIQUE ENTITY IDENTIFIER

To receive an award and enter into a Grant Award Agreement with the WVDA, all applicants that are entities (as defined in 2 CFR Part 25, subpart C) must provide a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to the WVDA. The Unique Entity Identifier is the new 12-digit alphanumeric identifier that will be provided by [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) registration to all entities who register to do business with the federal government (including the existing entities). This is the identifier which is replacing the use of the DUNS.

Entity, as it is used in this section, means all of the following, as defined at 2 CFR Part 25, subpart C:

- A governmental organization, which is a state or local government, or an Indian tribe;
- A foreign public entity;
- A domestic or foreign nonprofit organization;
- A domestic or foreign for-profit organization; or
- A federal agency receiving an award under WVDA.

To obtain a UEI number:

- call (877) 252-2700; or
- via the web, [US Federal Contractor Registration \(USFCR\) | SAM.gov Registrations](https://sam.gov)

Section IX

Ineligibility

Debarment & Suspension

Organizations or individuals that are suspended, debarred, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from eligibility for covered transactions by any federal department or agency cannot, during the period of suspension, debarment, or exclusion, receive WVDA and/or USDA grants or be paid from WVDA and/or USDA grant funds, whether under an award, sub-award, or contract. Charges made to the SCBGP for such Individuals (e.g., salary) are unallowable. Regulations published in 2 CFR part 180, as adopted and supplemented by USDA at 2 CFR part 417; describe the government-wide debarment and suspension requirements.

You are required to disclose any of the following conditions that apply to subrecipient or principals, including all key grant management personnel:

- Within the 3-year period preceding the application, whether the applicant or its principals have been convicted of, or had a civil judgment rendered against them, for:
 - fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (federal, state, or local) transaction or contract under a public transaction;
 - violation of a federal or state antitrust statute;
 - embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification, or destruction of records; or
 - false statements or receipt of stolen property.
- The applicant or its principals are presently indicted or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (federal, state, or local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated above.
- Within a 3-year period preceding the application, whether the applicant or its principals had any public transaction (federal, state, or local) terminated for cause or default.

A variety of “lower-tier” covered transactions are also subject to these requirements. Contracts (including individual consultants) under grants (wherein the contract requires the provision of goods or services that will equal or exceed \$25,000), and all sub-awards are subject to these suspension and debarment rules. The Subrecipient is required to comply with the requirements of Subpart C of 2 CFR part 180 that provides the Subrecipient’s responsibilities when entering into a lower-tier transaction as described above.

Delinquency on Federal Debt

Any organization or individual that is indebted to the United States and has a judgement lien filed against it for a debt to the United States, is ineligible to receive a federal grant. Applicants are required to inform the WVDA if they are delinquent on any federal debt. If applicant discloses a delinquency, the WVDA may not award the grant until the debt is satisfied or satisfactory arrangements are made with the agency to which the debt is owed.

Anyone who has been judged to be in default on a federal debt and who has had a judgment lien filed against him or her should not be listed as a participant in an application for a SCBGP grant until the judgement is paid in full or is otherwise satisfied. No funds may be re-budgeted following an award to pay such an individual. WVDA will disallow costs charged to awards that provide funds to individuals in violation of this requirement.

Past Performance

An applicant may be removed from competition in the screening stage if they previously received funding from WVDA and, in the judgement of WVDA staff, failed to adequately deliver on the conditions of that funding. Failure to perform may include, but is not

limited to:

- Demonstrated inability to responsibly manage funds
- Demonstrated inability to adhere to reporting requirements
- Failure to provide agreed upon deliverables.

Section X

Next Steps after Submission: After the grant proposal packet is submitted, the SCBGP will provide a notification of receipt. WVDA encourages all applicants to officially submit proposals at least one week prior to the **due date** to ensure on-time receipt. If you do not receive a notification of receipt within 24 hours of intended delivery, contact the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program at grants@wvda.us. After the submission deadline, WVDA and/or USDA may ask an applicant for more information on any of the grant proposal packet requirements throughout the review process. Information requests do not imply status on the acceptance or approval of your application. Do not expect any correspondence regarding the status of your submission and its approval prior to October 2023.

Confidential Information

After grants have been awarded, evaluations and reviewer comments will be made available to the public. Prior to submitting to the Department any confidential information (including trade secrets per [Chapter 47. Regulation of Trade. Article 22. Uniform Trade Secrets Act of the WV Code](#)), you must send a written description of the information you believe is subject to confidentiality. Department legal staff will review the description to determine whether there is an individual privacy interest worthy of constitutional protection. If the privacy interest clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure, the department will furnish the applicant with a confidentiality agreement to be signed and submitted with the constitutionally protected information. Information received pursuant to an approved confidentiality agreement will be available for review only by the SCBGP contacts, the selection committee members, and department legal counsel. Applicants shall pay all legal costs associated with defending a claim for confidentiality, should another person or entity submit a “right to know” (open records) request.

Screening

The first step in the funding process is screening. WVDA’s internal screening team reviews proposals according to the items in the **Screening Criteria** section below.

- Are all required materials included in the application?
- Are all sections of the proposal complete?
- Is the applicant’s organization eligible to apply?
- Is the applicant suspended or debarred from receiving funds?
- Is the application in compliance with applicable federal and state regulations

and in alignment with this notice?

- If a current SCBGP grantee, are all invoicing and reporting current?
- If a previous grantee, has the organization successfully completed past projects?
- Does the proposed project enhance the competitiveness of the specialty crops?
- Does the proposal clearly define a challenge that is facing today's specialty crop industry and indicate a project which will assist in finding a solution?
- Does the applicant have the background and ability to successfully manage and complete the proposed project?

If the screening team answers no to any of the above questions, the application will be removed from competition.

Grant proposals that do not pass the screening process will **not** receive further consideration for an award. Neither the screening team, nor WVDA is required to recommend funding a project that does not sufficiently satisfy the above criteria, even if there are enough remaining grant funds to do so.

Applicants who do not pass the screening phase will be contacted by the SCBGP within 30 days of the due date. Applicants may protest the screening decision of a rejected proposal (as described in the request for reconsideration section of this manual) for resubmission in the 2023 application cycle with required modifications.

Evaluation

WVDA will send applications that pass screening to the Selection Committee. WVDA selects this committee based on geographic area, project emphasis, and reviewer qualifications to ensure high quality and fair reviews. If you are interested in serving on the 2024 Selection Committee, please email a cover letter and resume to grants@wvda.us. Selection Committee Members are expected to sign a letter of confidentiality and non-conflict of interest, read 5-8 grant applications, score the applications, and provide written feedback on proposal strengths and weaknesses. The Selection Committee provides a compiled summary of each project prepared by the WVDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program staff. Results are presented as an aggregate (and confidential) document; no individual reviews are shared. These results are utilized for the selection of applications for funding.

Conflict of Interest

Individuals selected for the Selection Committee are responsible for notifying WVDA staff of any potential conflict of interest, real or apparent, with any applicant for funding. WVDA legal and executive staff will review all disclosed conflicts of interest to determine whether a conflict of interest exists under state law. If a conflict exists, the committee member will be recused from participating in the decision process on the conflicting application. All committee members will certify that they are free from any conflict of interest on the

applications they are assigned to consider.

Evaluation Criteria

The Selection Committee will use the evaluation criteria below to rate the grant proposal packets and make recommendations for funding to the Commissioner of Agriculture.

Category	Points Possible	Assessment Areas
Project Purpose	15	How well does the applicant define the need for and purpose of the project? Are the project objectives clear and appropriate? Is the project important and timely? Does the project specify the specialty crops impacted in West Virginia? Is the SCBGP the appropriate funding vehicle for the project?
Potential Impact	15	Does the applicant identify a specific group of specialty crop industry beneficiaries? Does the applicant demonstrate that the project will be effective at creating positive impact for the beneficiaries? Does the applicant demonstrate that the project will have a significant economic impact for the specialty crop industry? Has the project defined, in numbers, the potential impact of the project on West Virginia agriculture? Has the applicant considered potential partners and collaborators and included them to expand the potential reach and return on investment of the grant funds requested?
Outcome(s)	10	Does the chosen outcomes meet one of the USDA evaluation outcome definitions and relevant to the project proposed? If the project is market driven, has an evaluation of sales been included in the Outcome selection? Is the outcome stated relevant to the project purpose, impact, and budget?
Indicator(s)	10	Do all outcomes selected have at least one (but no more than 2) indicators? Are indicators listed quantitatively or highlighted as baseline data with subsequent percent increases? If possible, are baseline numbers provided? Are the indicator targets reasonable and obtainable?
Evaluation and Outreach	10	Are evaluation methods or tools (survey) indicated? Has the applicant clearly described how the project outcomes will be shared with stakeholders?
Sustainability and Project Continuation	15	If the project has a definitive end result (survey or report), has the applicant provided additional next steps (funding) to implement results or take the project to the next level? If the project is providing personnel funding, has continuation funding been explored?
Project Support	10	Does the project have appropriate stakeholder and industry partners or collaborations, if indicated? Is the role of partners or collaborators in the project

		implementation clearly defined? Is the project scope appropriate (regional project that could benefit from a statewide effort)?
Budget	15	Is the amount requested reasonable? Are line items reasonable and appropriate? Does the budget narrative adequately explain the line items? Are all expenditures requested eligible? Does the application justify personnel expenditures in the budget or project narrative section as a percentage of the overall funding and how these expenses are necessary to the success of the project?
Total Possible Points	100	

Scoring Matrix

Members of the Grant Selection Committee will be given the table below as guidance for scoring applications.

Points Possible	Unacceptable	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
15	<5	5-7	8-10	11-15
10	<6	6-7	8-9	10

The consensus scores of the Selection Committee will be used to rank applications. Rankings will then be presented to the Commissioner of the WVDA, who will make the final determination regarding which applications will be recommended to USDA-AMS for funding.

Commissioner's Recommendation

West Virginia Commissioner of Agriculture will use the Selection Committee's rankings of applications, in addition to the priorities identified in this packet to determine which projects will be recommended to USDA-AMS for funding. All projects in the state recommendation must comply with eligibility requirements and, in total, not exceed West Virginia's SCBGP allocation. WVDA reserves the right to fund projects in part, add and delete tasks, and ask for clarification on the timeline, and budget. No agreement will be entered until WVDA is satisfied with all the specifications of the project.

After the Commissioner's decision, the SCBG program contacts will submit the West Virginia State Plan containing recommended proposals to USDA-AMS for their final approval. The decision of the Commissioner does not guarantee funding, as it is dependent on the availability of federal funds and the final approval from the USDA.

The SCBGP contacts will notify all applicants of the results of the selection process, and the commissioner's state recommendation by the USDA-AMS agreement issue date before September 30, 2024.

USDA-AMS Approval

Upon receipt, USDA-AMS will review the state recommendation in order to ensure it meets the statutory purpose of the program, that all application criteria are fulfilled in accordance with regulations, and that costs are allowable. USDA-AMS may require additional information from applicants; failure to provide requested information in a timely manner may result in loss of funding allocation.

Once all administrative and programmatic issues have been resolved, USDA-AMS will formally notify WVDA, and the SCBG program contacts will soon thereafter notify applicants of the results. WVDA anticipates that grant awards and notifications will be made in late August or early September 2024.

Grant Agreement

Subrecipient must decide whether to accept the award, including modifications to the application's activities, outcomes, and budget:

- (1) **If subrecipient cannot accept the award**, including the legal obligation to perform in accordance with award terms and conditions, the recipient should notify a SCBGP contact immediately upon receipt of the grant agreement.
- (2) **If subrecipient chooses to accept the award**, signing the grant agreement constitutes acceptance of an award, including any modifications to the proposal's activities, outcomes, budget, etc., and the agreement's associated terms and conditions, as listed in the grant agreement and grant management manual located on the West Virginia Specialty Crop Webpage.

Requests for Reconsideration

If a grant application is denied, the applicant may request reconsideration based on substantive issues of fact concerning bias, discrimination, conflicts of interest, or non-compliance with procedures described in the funding notice document.

The applicant must request reconsideration in writing to the Department of Agriculture, SCGBP, within 14 days of notification of the denial.

The request must:

- (1) Describe the substantive facts concerning bias, discrimination, conflict of interest, or noncompliance that caused the applicant to conclude the proposal should have been approved.

- (2) Outline the specific areas in the proposal the applicant believes significantly addresses the notice requirements.
- (3) Identify specific information in the proposal the applicant believes were misinterpreted by the WVDA.

WVDA legal counsel or other designated staff will review the request for reconsideration within seven (7) days of its receipt to ensure compliance with this policy and merits further review by WVDA.

If WVDA legal counsel or other designee determines that the request for reconsideration substantiates material issues concerning bias, discrimination, conflict of interest, or non-compliance with procedures set forth in the notice, the Agriculture Business Development Director will review the proposal to determine if the claims outlined in the appeal letter are of substantial consequence to warrant reconsideration of funding decisions.

The department will notify the applicant of the result of the reconsideration within 14 days of its receipt of the request for reconsideration.