FY 23 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Request for Applications (RFA)

Application Due Date:

January 20, 2023, 4:00 P.M.

Overview

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is pleased to announce the FY 2023 competitive Request for Applications (RFA) for the West Virginia 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, dried fruits, tree nuts, vegetables, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). A list of eligible and ineligible crops can be found at https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop.

Contact

West Virginia Department of Agriculture
Agriculture Business Development Division
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

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Legislative Authority

Legislative authority is provided under section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note) and amended under section 10107 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Public Law 115-343 (the Farm Bill). SCBGP is currently implemented under 7 CFR § 1291 (published March 27, 2009; 74 FR 13313).

Purpose

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (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.

The West Virginia SCBGP provides an opportunity for organizations to develop and enhance programs and activities targeted at increasing the production, promotion, research and sales of specialty crops throughout the state. To acquire additional information on the West Virginia SCBGP, or to obtain an application, please visit https://agriculture.wv.gov/divisions/marketinganddevelopment/Pages/Grant-and-Training-Opportunities.aspx.

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 they 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:

- 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 part of such projects might include:

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

Outreach to Identify Funding Priorities

West Virginia funding priorities were derived from "A Shared Agenda for Growing West Virginia's Agricultural Economy," The Strategic Plan for West Virginia Agriculture. This plan features recommendations from a lengthy community engagement process to include surveys and community meetings. From this strategic plan, staff with the WVDA Agriculture Business Development Division used information specific to specialty crops to create the program funding priorities.

West Virginia Funding Priorities

Priorities that are specific to West Virginia projects include:

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

Competitive Grant Application Review Process

Per USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) the competitive application review process should follow state policies and procedures and include the use of an independent review panel of experts or qualified individuals, overseen by state officials. This review should include the factors and reasons for selecting an applicant, and any changes in project proposal ranks or scores that may occur during the review process. All documentation affecting the decision to approve, disapprove, defer, or otherwise not fund an application should be maintained in an accessible, centralized program file.

State departments of agriculture must abide by 2 CFR § 400.2. Review panel members must be free from conflicts of interest and conduct fair and impartial reviews.

Additionally, the SCBGP encourages State departments of agriculture to notify successful and unsuccessful grant applicants about the outcome of the competitive process as it relates to the applicants' proposals.

Further, the SCBGP encourages state departments of agriculture during their competitive review process to review funding requests carefully for activities funded previously to ensure that:

- The projects are likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds;
- Funding decisions are based on the applicant's or subrecipient's past performance; and
- Specialty crop stakeholders other than the applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project support the continuation of the project.

Available Funding

The WVDA anticipates that it will receive approximately $270,000 in SCBGP funds in FY 2022, from which multiple grants will be awarded. Grant/award amounts are as follows:

- $1,000 - $15,000 – Micro Grants (No match required)
- $15,001 - $50,000 – Intermediate Grants (10% match requirement)
- $50,001 - $75,000 – Large Grants (25% match requirement)

Duration

Proposed projects require prior WVDA approval.

The grant period will begin September 30, 2023 and will end no later than September 29, 2025.

How to Apply

For an application and all attachments please visit:

Specialty Crop Block Grant: West Virginia Department of Agriculture (wv.gov)

Specific questions? Email: grants@wvda.us.