



**Oklahoma Department
of
Agriculture, Food, & Forestry**

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Grant Application Manual

Fiscal Year 2016 Funding Cycle

(10/1/2016 - 9/30/2019)

Grant Proposal Application Due Date: April 20, 2016

Copies of this publication may be obtained at the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry website at: <http://www.ag.ok.gov/mktdev/scg.htm>

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List of Terms and Acronyms

Administrative Costs – All executive, organizational, and clerical costs associated with the general management of an organization and not costs for the direct execution of the grant project

AMS – Agricultural Marketing Service (a division of USDA)

Authorized Agent, Authorized Signer – Individual authorized to receive funds on behalf of grantee and the person who becomes responsible for the execution of grant project responsibilities

Authorized Signature – Signature of authorized signer

Beginning Farmer – An individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation

Collaboration – Any cooperative effort of eligible applicants, universities, or industry trade associations to execute the completion of the proposed grant project

DBA – Doing business as

FY2016 – Federal fiscal year 2016; October 1, 2016 to September 30, 2017

Grant Award Agreement – ODAFF's contract with the authorized signer indicating the grantee's intention to complete the proposed tasks and authorizing ODAFF to monitor the progress of the proposed project

Matching Funds – A cash contribution toward the completion of the project or new, verifiable in-kind expenditures that the applicant or collaborators will incur contingent upon receiving a grant award

ODAFF – Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry

Project – Activities proposed to be funded by the SCBG

SCBG – Specialty Crop Block Grant

Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher – is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A Socially Disadvantaged 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

Specialty Crop – Fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and nursery crops (including floriculture) see link on page 6

State Plan – The document submitted by the NCDA&CS to the USDA, which includes the project profile for all projects recommended for USDA.

USDA – United States Department of Agriculture

Background

The Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) authorized the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide grants to state departments of agriculture solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) amended the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 and authorized the USDA to provide grants to states for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2012 to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. The American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 ([H.R. 8](#)) authorized funding of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program for 2013.

The “Farm Bill,” more specifically referred to as the Agricultural Act of 2014 was signed into law February 7, 2014 and will provide funding for fiscal years 2014 through 2018.

Funding Source and Available Funds

USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is charged with distributing block grant funds to State Departments of Agriculture, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in fiscal year 2016. Oklahoma SCBG funds will be distributed to the specialty crop industry through a competitive review process. Successful project application funding is contingent upon the available funding from the USDA, AMS. The USDA is the funding entity and has the final approval for projects submitted to the USDA for the Specialty Crop Block Grant. Although ODAFF and a review panel of industry representatives will make the initial review and award recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture, who will approve the state plan for submittal to USDA, the USDA will make the final decision concerning grant awards. ODAFF reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.

SCBG funds may be awarded for projects up to 2 years in duration for projects with funding request ranging from a minimum of \$10,000.00 to a maximum of \$100,000.00. Matching funds, either in cash and/or in-kind contribution of 20% of the total project budget will be required by applicants. Travel expenses associated with the project shall follow the ODAFF travel policy. 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 7324-7326).

Important Dates

March, 2016	Announce grant opportunity and publish request for proposals
April 20, 2016	Submission deadline for proposals
May 2016	Proposals evaluated and selected for inclusion in Oklahoma’s State Plan to USDA

July 1, 2016 Submit Oklahoma's State Plan to USDA
October 2016 Award announcement from USDA

Eligible Grant Projects

To be eligible, project(s) must solely enhance the competitiveness of an Oklahoma specialty crop, and they must benefit a specialty crop segment as a whole. 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. Projects must include a plan to disseminate results to the targeted segment or industry.

ODAFF and USDA encourages projects that benefit beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers and projects that address problems or opportunities that cross state boundaries.

Funding Priorities

Applicants are to develop projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Major areas of Focus: (Not limited to these issues affecting the specialty cop industry)

- Enhancing food safety
- Good Agricultural Practices
- Good Handling Practices
- Good Manufacturing Practices
- Increasing Specialty Crop nutrition education and consumption
- Specialty Crop research, pest and disease control
- Developing or improving marketing channels for specialty crops
- Developing new and improved seed varieties
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of production and distribution systems

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 in order 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 specialty crop producer requests funds to promote their asparagus at a roadside stand.

Examples of Acceptable Projects

- 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 grower 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 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.

Eligible Applicants

State, local or, tribal governments, individual producers, producer associations, colleges and universities, community based organizations, processors and other specialty crop stakeholders are eligible to apply either as single entities or in combined efforts.

Proposals that involve collaboration or partnerships between producers, industry groups, academics, or other organizations are encouraged and will be given priority.

Under USDA rules, grants cannot be awarded for projects that only benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single company or individual.

Eligible Specialty Crops

Commonly recognized specialty crops are fruits and tree nuts, vegetables, culinary herbs and spices, medicinal plants, as well as nursery, floriculture, and horticulture crops. Please see <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgrp/specialty-crop> for a comprehensive listing.

Eligible Expenditures

Generally, expenses that are necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient performance and administration of the project are eligible. Grant funds may not be used to supplant normal business costs but instead must be used to cover the cost incurred for the approved proposed activities. Examples of eligible expenditures include:

- Personnel costs – including salary and fringe benefits
- Direct operating expenses (other) – any expenses that do not fall into the other categories directly related to the proposed activities
- Supplies that cost less than \$5,000, such as office supplies, printing services and materials need to accomplish the proposed project

- Consultant Services or Subcontractors – Costs of professional and consultant services rendered by persons who are member of a particular profession or possess a special skill
- Travel, including mileage reimbursement, transportation and lodging

Ineligible Expenditures

Expenses may be prohibited by state or federal law or determined to be ineligible by program guidelines. Examples of these include, but are not limited to:

- Alcoholic beverages/ Entertainment
- Substituting existing efforts or research already funded
- Paying off existing debt
- Brick and mortar (construction) projects
- Contributions, charitable or political
- Expenses falling outside of the contract period
- Expenditures not listed in the project budget or an approved amendment
- Expenses that are not adequately documented
- Indirect Cost (may be shown as matching)
- Fines, penalties, damages and other settlements resulting from violations (or alleged violations) of, or failure of the governmental unit to comply with Federal, State, local or tribal laws and regulations
- Meal reimbursements related to travel, meetings conferences or other events
- Advertising cost designed solely to promote the image of an organization, general logo or general brand rather than eligible specialty crops are unallowable

General Compliance

All awarded grant projects must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and the terms of the grant award.

DUNS

All recipients of SCBG funds must have a DUNS number. Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) Provides a DUNS Number, a unique nine digit identification number, for each physical location of your business. DUNS Number assignment is FREE for all businesses required to register with the US Federal Government for contracts or grants. DUNS numbers may be obtained by visiting <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires that all entities receiving federal funds register in the Federal System for Award Management

(SAM) database and submit required information as determined in the FFATA regulation. SAM is a Federal Government owned and operated free website that consolidates the capabilities in CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS. As such, all selected applicants shall register in the SAM database, <https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/>, and submit any additional forms and/or documentation requested to fulfill the FFATA reporting requirements as outlined by the NCDA&CS. SAM registration must be maintained and the SAM account must remain active during the entire life of the Grant Award Contract.

Records Requirements

The grantee will be responsible for setting up and maintaining a project file that contains all records of correspondence with ODAFF, receipts, invoices and copies of all reports and documents associated with the project. All records shall be subject to inspection and audit by state personnel at reasonable times. Upon request, the grantee shall produce a legible copy of any or all such records. All applicants must submit a final report for their project specifying how the goals and results were met.

Grant Award Agreement and Payment

Prior to beginning work on the proposed project or receiving funding, each approved applicant will be required to sign a Grant Award Agreement with ODAFF indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks, report results, and authorizing ODAFF to monitor the progress of the proposed project.

Eligible expenses must not occur until approval is received and all parties have signed the agreement and a purchase order number has been assigned to the project. Funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis and upon the approval of properly submitted paperwork. Up to 10% of the total grant funds may be retained until receipt and approval of a final report.

Non-Availability of Funds

Every payment obligation of the State under a Grant Award Agreement will be conditioned upon the availability of funds appropriated or allocated for the payment of such obligation. If funds are not allocated and available for the continuance of the Agreement, it may be terminated by the State at the end of the period for which funds are available. No liability shall accrue to the State in the event this provision is exercised, and the State shall not be obligated or liable for any future payments or for any damages as a result of termination under this paragraph.

Reporting Requirements

An invoicing progress report is required with each invoice. These reports shall summarize project activities and progress made since the last report submitted and a summary of cost and reimbursements requested.

Annual reports are required for projects that span more than one year. A final performance report will be required within 60 days of the end date of the grant

agreement. Templates for these reports can be viewed at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/guidance>

Organizations failing to provide grant reporting (annual, expenditure, and final) and response to ODAFF and/or USDA requests may be required to return previously disbursed funds to ODAFF and will be ineligible to apply for future SCBG funding.

Monitoring

ODAFF reserves the right to perform site monitoring visits to any and all grantees to ensure that work is progressing within the required time frame and that fiscal procedures are followed accurately and appropriately. Monitoring includes both financial and program information as well as site visits.

Budget and Grant Period Adjustments

If a project budget adjustment is needed during the project period, a written request must be made to ODAFF describing the reallocation, redefining of project dates or other significant changes to the project submitted and approved. However, the total budget amount, as dictated by the approved grant, cannot be adjusted. Grantees may not spend funds from line items not approved in the Contract Award. Changes and adjustments are subject to ODAFF and/or USDA approval. A change/extension form will be signed by an ODAFF representative once USDA approval has been granted.

Unexpended Funds

Grantees shall inform ODAFF of the potential for unexpended awarded grant funds prior to the end of the grant period.

Application Packet Details

1. Proposals must be typed, single spaced in 12 pt. font.
2. Application packets should not exceed 15 pages in length. *This does NOT include the Grant Application Cover sheet.*
3. An electronic version of the completed Specialty Crop Grant Program Application (available on the ODAFF website <http://www.oda.state.ok.us/mktdev/scg.htm>), in Word format must be emailed to Jason Harvey at jason.harvey@ag.ok.gov.
4. Submit **FIVE** complete original application packets signed by the person authorized to receive funds to the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry at the address on page 12.
5. Each page must be numbered.
6. Do not bind application packets. The application packet should be stapled in the upper left-hand corner.

An application packet must be submitted in entirety. An incomplete application packet will not be given further consideration.

Indirect costs: Indirect costs are only allowable as in-kind matching funds under Oklahoma's grant program. Indirect costs should not exceed 8% of any proposed budget. A cost may not be allocated as an indirect cost if it is incurred for the same purpose under SCBG as a direct cost and vice versa.

Project Evaluation Criteria

The grant projects that meet all the requirements listed in this publication will be evaluated by a review panel selected by ODAFF. No incomplete applications will be accepted. The panel will score applications that meet all the requirements by using the evaluation criteria on the next page. The panel will then provide their comments on the applications to the Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture. The Secretary will then make the final decision on what projects receive funding.

Applicants may be requested to modify or adjust their application and provide additional data to reports and results. These are time sensitive and failure to provide requested information may mean applicants being withdrawn from consideration.

Evaluation Sheet

Project Information		
Title:		Total Funds Requested:
Proposal Grading Criteria		
Please rate the following areas using the scale: Low:1-2 pts Average: 3-4 pts High 5pts	Maximum Points Available	Points Received
1. Project Purpose		
How well does the applicant define the need for and the purpose of the project?	5	_____
Rate the achievability of the project.	5	_____
Rate the level of the projects timeliness and importance.	5	_____
2. Potential Impact		
How effective will the project be at enhancing the competitiveness of the industry?	5	_____
Rate the positive impact this project will have on Oklahoma Specialty Crops.	5	_____
Does the applicant clearly demonstrate how the project will have an impact on more than one grower?	5	_____
Rate the ability of the project to have an impact within the next five years.	5	_____
3. Expected Measurable Outcomes		
How well does the measurable outcome support the projects purpose?	5	_____
Are the outcomes definable and measurable?	5	_____
Is there outreach to share information learned with the public?	5	_____
4. Work Plan		
How well do the activities relate to the objectives and goals?	5	_____
How well do the activities match the needs or problems that are being addressed?	5	_____
Rate the timeline associated with each activity.	5	_____
5. Budget		
Is the requested budget reasonable?	5	_____
Are the budget items clearly outlined and justified?	5	_____
Are the expected benefits proportionate to the total investment?	5	_____
Does the applicant utilize the appropriate amount of matching funds?	5	_____
6. Additional Information		
Rate the level of long-term benefits after the end of this project.	5	_____
Rate the level of support this project demonstrates; are stakeholders actively involved or have they pledged their support of the projects goals?	5	_____
Rate the degree of proposed innovation including use of novel methods of approaches.	5	_____
Total		100 _____

Application Checklist

What to include in the Specialty Crop Block Grant Application.

<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Expected Measurable Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Budget
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Summary	<input type="checkbox"/> Budget Narrative & Justifications
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Signature
<input type="checkbox"/> External Project Support	

Submission of Application

1. An electronic grant application must be emailed to Jason Harvey at jason.harvey@ag.ok.gov no later than **5 pm on Wednesday April 20, 2016**. ***Applications must be received by the grant deadline.*** Applications that do not adhere to this deadline will not be accepted.
2. **Five** printed copies of the application signed by the person authorized to receive funds must be received by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry at the address below no later than **5 pm on Wednesday April 20, 2016**.

Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry
Attn: Jason Harvey
P.O. Box 528804
Oklahoma City, OK 73152

Contact Information

Jason Harvey
Program Coordinator
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