

# **SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM – FARM BILL**

**Request for Proposals**

**Fiscal Year 2026 Funding Cycle**

**Extended Application Deadline:**

**April 1, 2026**

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MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF  
**AGRICULTURE  
& COMMERCE**

*Commissioner Andy Gipson  
Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce  
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# Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill

## Request for Proposals

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***DISCLAIMER: USDA has not yet announced funding availability for this year’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (“SCBGP”). In an effort to allow applicants time to submit proposals, MDAC is releasing this Request for Proposals (“RFP”) in anticipation of funding availability; however, MDAC is not aware if or when such funds might become available. As more information is received from USDA, additional details will be released, which may include modifications to the SCBG Program requirements. Applicants will be required to submit any additional information as needed to comply with the grant program. If the funds anticipated for this program are, at any time, unavailable or insufficient, MDAC is under no obligation to fund project applications. Furthermore, MDAC has no obligation to fund any project for which an application has been received.***

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## IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UPDATES

Reminder: The SCBGP program performance measures (outcomes and indicators) were updated in 2023. There is also no mandatory performance measure for marketing and promotion projects.

**Projects cannot be awarded to an individual or farm to begin their own specialty crop (fruit, vegetable, etc.) farm or operation or expand on existing operation or farm. This is not an eligible use of program funds.**

## FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### Legislative authority

Legislative authority is provided under section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 ([Z U.S.C. 1621 note](#)), as amended (Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act). The program is implemented in accordance with 2 CFR 200—Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards and 2 CFR Chapter IV relating to the Department of Agriculture.

### Purpose

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) assists State departments of agriculture in the 50 States, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to enhance the competitiveness of U.S. grown 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.
5. for such other purposes determined to be appropriate by the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with specialty crop stakeholders and relevant State departments of agriculture.

Specialty crops are fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). Additional information on specialty crops, including a table of examples of the most common commodities, is available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>.

A state department of agriculture is the agency, commission, or department of a State government responsible for agriculture within the State.

### Project types

SCBGP encourages States to develop projects solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry:

- enhancing food safety;
- improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, by developing “Good Agricultural Practices,” “Good Handling Practices,” “Good Manufacturing Practices,” and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors;
- investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental

outcomes;

- developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
- pest and disease control;
- increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems; and
- sustainability.

#### Projects more relevant for other federal grant programs

Projects that support the increase of fruits and vegetables in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing incentives at the point of purchase and/or include technologies for benefit redemption systems should consider submitting those projects to the [Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program](#).

Projects that support domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, other direct producer-to consumer market opportunities, local and regional food business enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, or store locally or regionally produced food products should consider submitting those projects to the [Farmers' Market Promotion Program](#), [Local Food Promotion Program](#) and [Regional Food System Partnerships \(RFSP\) Program](#).

Projects that support biobased products and bioenergy and energy programs, including biofuels and other alternative uses for agricultural and forestry commodities (development of biobased products) should see the USDA energy website at <https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/energy-programs> for information on how to submit those projects for consideration to the energy programs supported by USDA.

#### 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.

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Each state submitting an application that is approved by USDA will receive an estimated base plus an additional amount based on the most recent available value of specialty crop cash receipts in the state. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) is awaiting the estimated funding allocation for FY2026.

It is the intent of MDAC to develop a state plan requesting funds to implement projects that will significantly and positively impact the specialty crop industry in Mississippi. This invitation for proposals has been developed to provide all interested parties an opportunity to apply for these funds.

## ELIGIBLE GRANT APPLICANTS

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is the authorized agency to assume the lead role in the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). **According to USDA guidelines, grant funds cannot be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual because these projects do not enhance the specialty crop industry's competitiveness. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.**

Proposals are encouraged from state and local organizations, academia, producer associations, industry or community-based groups, and other specialty crop organizations. Applicants may submit more than one proposal. If more than one proposal is submitted, please prioritize the submissions.

## ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

To be eligible for a grant, projects must enhance the competitiveness of Mississippi grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Specialty crops are defined in law as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.” Specialty crops are plants that are intensively cultivated. There are many plants that are specialty crops when cultivated but are also collected from wild populations. Wild plants are not considered specialty crops even though they may be used for the same purpose as cultivated plants. For a list of common specialty crops, see *Attachment I* or the [SCBGP website](#).

Each project must identify at least one expected measurable outcome that specifically demonstrates the project's impact in solely enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops (*See Attachment II*).

**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.** Grant funds cannot be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual because these projects do not enhance the specialty crop industry's competitiveness. In addition, recipients and subrecipients cannot use grant funds to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

The following are some examples of acceptable and unacceptable projects:

### 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 will be shared with many growers throughout the State during the project.
- 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 a region that currently does not have one.
- A non-profit organization requests funds to conduct an advertising campaign that will benefit their

specialty crop members.

- A single farmer erects high tunnels on his/her 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 to make a profit, or to expand production of a single business or organization.
- A State requests grant funds to make grants to individual specialty crop businesses or roadside stands to promote their individual business.
- A non-profit organization uses grant funds to purchase produce and then sells that produce to other entities at cost or a higher price than the purchase price while competing with other private companies who sell produce in the area.
- 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 single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase its membership.

#### Project proposals and goals must focus on the following priority areas:

- Specialty Crop Research
- Nutrient management
- Technology to improve production efficiency
- Increasing knowledge and consumption of specialty crops
- Promotion & Marketing
- Grower educational programs for new farmers and seasoned farmers
- Increasing market opportunities for specialty crops
- Development of new varieties and exploration of potential new fruit crops
- Enhancing food safety
- Pest and disease control
- Value-added specialty crop opportunities
- Consumer Education
- Labor

#### Multi-State Partnerships

Multi-state partnerships are encouraged and should provide solutions to problems that cross state boundaries such as, but not limited to, addressing good agricultural practices, food safety, research on crop productivity or quality, pest and disease management, or commodity-specific projects addressing common issues in multi-state regions. Applicants can also consider submitting those projects to the [Specialty Crop Multi-State Program](#).

A multi-state partnership is a project that implements activities with measurable outcomes that benefit two or more U.S. states and/or territories.

## **Performance Measures**

USDA-AMS is required to report on the outcomes of the SCBGP on a national scale to demonstrate the performance of this program. In 2021, AMS, in conjunction with State Departments of Agriculture, completed a year-long evaluation to assess its current performance measures. As a result of this assessment, the performance measures have been updated to focus on:

- Providing short- and long-term impact indicators
- More accurately reflecting grant recipients' accomplishments
- Reducing burden on grant applicants and recipients
- Improving AMS' ability to report on the impact of its grant programs
- Standardizing measures across programs where appropriate

Additional information regarding the update to the performance measures can be found on the [AMS Grant Performance Measures website](#). By collecting, aggregating, and reporting performance data across all States and Territories, AMS can share the impact of the SCBGP with all stakeholders, including OMB, U.S. Congress, the agricultural community, and the public.

Each project submitted in the State Plan **must** include at least one of the outcomes listed in the [SCBGP Performance Measures](#) and at least one of the indicators listed in the selected outcome(s). The progress of the one or more outcomes and indicators selected will need to be reported in the Annual Performance Report, and the results will be reported in the Final Performance Report. Please refer to the [SCBGP Performance Measures](#) for more information. The project narrative templates have been updated to reflect the new performance measures. Please refer to the *Attachment II* for more information.

## **Project Duration**

Specialty crop block grant funds will be made available around **September 30, 2026**. Funded projects must be completed by **September 29, 2028**.

## **Projects Attempting to Disparage the Work of Another Organization**

Projects where one organization specifically attempt to disparage the mission, goals, and/or actions of another organization are unallowable.

## **Supplanting**

Grant funds shall supplement the expenditure of funds in support of specialty crops grown in Mississippi, rather than replace funds. SCBGP funds must supplement the expenditure of applicant's funds in support of specialty crops grown in that State, rather than replace applicant's funds. Additionally, Federal funding may not replace funding that is required under [7 U.S.C. 1621\(d\)\(3\)](#). In instances where a question of supplanting arises, the applicant will be required to substantiate that the reduction in non-Federal resources occurred for reasons other than the receipt or expected receipt of Federal funds.

**General Supplanting Definition.** An organization reduces their funds for an activity specifically because Federal funds are available (or expected to be available) to fund that same activity.

- Example: State funds are appropriated for a stated purpose and Federal funds are awarded for that same purpose. (If a state has \$50.00 budgeted for a specialty crop program and the Federal Government awards a \$100.00 grant for the same specialty crop program, the total project must expend \$150.00 – the State cannot remove the original \$50.00 and use it for something else).

### **Cost-Sharing and Matching**

The SCBGP does not have a Federal cost-sharing or matching requirement. However, in some cases, an applicant proposes cost-sharing or matching contributions as a mechanism to ensure all grant funds will enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. In this situation, the recipient of Federal funds must keep adequate records to identify and document the specific costs or contributions proposed to meet the match or cost-share, the source of funding or contributions, and document how the valuation was determined.

## **ALLOWABLE COSTS**

All SCBGP awards are subject to the most recent award terms and conditions, *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* ([2 CFR part 200](#)), and other laws and regulations affecting Federal assistance.

All costs must be allowable in accordance with the Federal cost principles outlined in [2 CFR part 200 Subpart E](#). Recipients are required to meet the standards and requirements for financial management systems set forth or referenced in [2 CFR § 200.302](#). The recipient must use Federal funds in a responsible manner and apply adequate internal controls and cash management practices consistent with the requirements outlined in [2 CFR § 200.303](#).

Recipients must expend and account for funds under an award in accordance with their own State laws and procedures. Financial management systems and related records, of the grant recipient, and of any other entity involved in the grant, must be sufficiently detailed to prepare reports, trace funds, and demonstrate that fund management complies with Federal statutes, regulations, and these general and other program-specific terms and conditions.

The following list describes specific funding restrictions under the Mississippi SCBGP. This section is not intended to be all-inclusive. The applicant should consult the Federal cost principles for the applicable organization for the complete explanation of the allowability of costs they address. Applicants that have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing the associated Federal cost principles should contact the state department of agriculture.

All costs must be associated with project activities that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. In situations where project benefits include non-eligible specialty crops (i.e. produce market selling crafts and meats), project budgets must be pro-rated to only include specialty crops.

For more detailed information, *see Attachment III*.

### **Restrictions and limitations on grant funds**

Specialty Crop Block Grant Funds shall not be used to cover the following expenses:

- Administrative costs (overhead expenses and indirect costs)
- Paying off existing debt

- Substituting existing efforts or research already funded
- Purchase of general purpose equipment, land, or buildings
- Business entertainment including meals or business gifts
- Lobbying or political efforts including costs of membership in organizations substantially engaged in lobbying
- Donations and contributions
- Starting a specialty crop farm, grove, garden, or business for the purposes of profiting one individual

Personnel & Fringe is limited to 30% of budget.

Travel expenses will be limited to cover the expenses of a maximum of two travelers per trip. Travel to conferences/meetings that are not solely related to specialty crops, must provide justification that the project will benefit from these activities (i.e. presentation on project results).

Although General Purpose Equipment is not an allowed expenditure, Special Purpose Equipment is allowable with prior approval from USDA. Special Purpose Equipment means equipment used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities.

## APPLICATION GUIDELINES

# SCBGP PROJECT PROFILE TEMPLATE

Completed applications must include a signed Acknowledgement form and a narrative explaining how grant funds will be utilized to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Topics that are to be addressed in each section of the narrative are listed. Please address all topics listed. Incomplete narratives will not be accepted. The following format is to be followed:

## APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name of Applicant (or lead agency in the case of multi-agency projects) administering the project

Name of Project Coordinator

Mailing Address

Telephone

Fax

Email Address

Organizational Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS or Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number This is required before funds can be awarded to any organization.

Note: On April 4, 2022, the Federal government stopped using DUNS and started using a Unique Entity Identifier created in SAM.gov. For more information, please visit [gsa.gov/entityid](https://gsa.gov/entityid).

## PROJECT TITLE

*Provide a descriptive project title in 15 words or less in the space below.*

## DURATION OF PROJECT

**Start Date:**            Start Date

**End Date:**            End Date

## PROJECT PARTNER AND SUMMARY

*Include a project summary of 250 words or less suitable for dissemination to the public. A Project Summary provides a very brief (one sentence, if possible) description of your project. A Project Summary includes:*

- 1. The name of the applicant organization that if awarded a grant will establish an agreement or contractual relationship with the State department of agriculture to lead and execute the project,*
- 2. A concise outline the project's purpose, deliverables, and expected outcome(s),*
- 3. A description of the general tasks to be completed during the project period to fulfill this goal.*

**FOR EXAMPLE:**

The ABC University will mitigate the spread of citrus greening (Huanglongbing) by developing scientifically-based practical measures to implement in a quarantine area and disseminating results to stakeholders through grower meetings and field days.

**PRIORITY AREA**

Identify which priority area is the main focus of this proposed project.

**PROJECT PURPOSE**

PROVIDE THE SPECIFIC ISSUE, PROBLEM OR NEED THAT THE PROJECT WILL ADDRESS

Clearly state the purpose of each project. The purpose should include the specific issue, problem, interest, or need to be addressed and why the project is important and timely (5,000 character limit).

PROVIDE A LISTING OF THE OBJECTIVES THAT THIS PROJECT HOPES TO ACHIEVE

*Add more objectives by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete objectives that aren't necessary. **Please note that you will report on the status of completion of these objectives on the Annual and Final Reports.***

**Objective 1**

**Objective 2**

**Objective 3**

**Objective 4**

**Add other objectives as necessary**

## PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Estimate the number of project beneficiaries:..... Enter the Number of Beneficiaries

Who are the specialty crop beneficiaries of the project?

How will the project benefit the specialty crop beneficiaries?

Please detail how you will disseminate results of the project to the beneficiaries. If a research project, please detail how findings and information will be distributed to growers.

What is the potential economic impact of the project if it can be estimated?

## STATEMENT OF SOLELY ENHANCING SPECIALTY CROPS

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that this project **solely** enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops in accordance with and defined by [7 U.S.C. 1621](#). Further information regarding the definition of a specialty crop can be found at [www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp).

## CONTINUATION PROJECT INFORMATION

Does this project continue the efforts of a previously funded SCBGP project? Yes  No

*If "yes," please address the following:*

PROVIDE THE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND PROJECT TITLES PREVIOUSLY FUNDED

DESCRIBE HOW THIS PROJECT WILL DIFFER FROM AND BUILD ON THE PREVIOUS EFFORTS

PROVIDE A SUMMARY (3 TO 5 SENTENCES) OF THE OUTCOMES OF THE PREVIOUS EFFORTS

PROVIDE LESSONS LEARNED ON POTENTIAL PROJECT IMPROVEMENTS

**What was previously learned from implementing this project, including potential improvements?**

**How are the lessons learned and improvements being incorporated into the project to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes?**

DESCRIBE THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE PROJECT BECOMING SELF-SUSTAINING AND NOT INDEFINITELY DEPENDENT ON GRANT FUNDS

### OTHER SUPPORT FROM FEDERAL OR STATE GRANT PROGRAMS

The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects. Did you submit this project to a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP for funding and/or is a Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP funding the project currently?

Yes  No

IF YOUR PROJECT IS RECEIVING OR WILL POTENTIALLY RECEIVE FUNDS FROM ANOTHER FEDERAL OR STATE GRANT PROGRAM

**Identify the Federal or State grant program(s).**

- 

**Describe how the SCBGP project differs from or supplements the other grant program(s) efforts.**

### WORK PLAN

This section will address the activities that are necessary to accomplish the project objectives, who will do the work, and when the activities will be accomplished. The following shall be addressed in this section:

- **Project Activity:** Describe the project activities that are necessary to accomplish the objectives. Make sure you include your performance monitoring/data collection activities. If outcomes will be measured outside of the grant period, indicate how the monitoring will occur after the grant period ends.
- Include a timeline that indicates when each activity will occur (at least month and year) and beginning and end dates for the project. Make sure the work plan timeline shows that the project will be completed within the allowable grant period.
- Indicate the project participants who will do the work of each activity. If collaborative agreements or subcontracts are used, make sure to specify their role and responsibilities in performing project

activities. If you request funds for travel, these activities must also be included.

## EXTERNAL PROJECT SUPPORT

Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support this project and why (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project). **Must include at least one letter of support to demonstrate that projects are grower/industry driven.**

## EXPECTED MEASURABLE OUTCOMES

SELECT THE APPROPRIATE OUTCOME(S) AND INDICATOR(S)/SUB-INDICATOR(S)

You must choose at least one of the seven outcomes listed in the [SCBGP Performance Measures](#), which were approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to evaluate the performance of the SCBGP on a national level (see Attachment II).

### OUTCOME MEASURE(S)

Select the outcome measure(s) that are applicable for this project from the listing below.

- Outcome 1:** Increasing Consumption and Consumer Purchasing of Specialty Crops
- Outcome 2:** Increasing Access to Specialty Crops and Expanding Specialty Crop Production and Distribution
- Outcome 3:** Increase Food Safety Knowledge and Processes
- Outcome 4:** Improve Pest and Disease Control Processes
- Outcome 5:** Develop New Seed Varieties and Specialty Crops
- Outcome 6:** Expand Specialty Crop Research and Development
- Outcome 7:** Improve Environmental Sustainability of Specialty Crops

### OUTCOME INDICATOR(S)

Provide at least one indicator listed in the [SCBGP Performance Measures](#) and the related quantifiable result. If you have multiple outcomes and/or indicators, repeat this for each outcome/indicator.

#### FOR EXAMPLE:

##### **Outcome 1, Indicator 1.1a**

Total number of consumers who gained knowledge about specialty crops, Adults 132.

## MISCELLANEOUS OUTCOME MEASURE

*In the unlikely event that the outcomes and indicators above the selected outcomes are not relevant to your project, you must develop a project-specific outcome(s) and indicator(s) which will be subject to approval by AMS.*

## DATA COLLECTION TO REPORT ON OUTCOMES AND INDICATORS

*Explain how you will collect the required data to report on each outcome and indicator you chose above.*

## BUDGET NARRATIVE

*All expenses described in this Budget Narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP (see Attachment III).*

Budget Summary	
Expense Category	Funds Requested
Personnel	
Travel	
Equipment	
Supplies	
Contractual	
Other	
<b>Direct Costs Subtotal</b>	

<b>Total Budget</b>	
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## PERSONNEL

*Applicants may request funds for personnel, intermittent labor, etc. whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.*

- o Allowable as part of employee compensation for personnel services in proportion to the amount of time or effort an employee devotes to the grant-supported project or program during the period of performance under the Federal award, including salaries, wages, and fringe benefits. Such costs must*

be incurred under formally established policies of the organization, be consistently applied, be reasonable for the services rendered, and be supported with adequate documentation. Salary and wage amounts charged to grant-supported projects or programs for personal services must be based on an adequate payroll distribution system that documents such distribution in accordance with generally accepted practices of like organizations. Standards for payroll distribution systems are contained in the applicable cost principles (other than those for for-profit organizations).

- Unallowable for salaries, wages, and fringe benefits for project staff who devote time and effort to activities that do not meet the legislated purpose of the grant program.

*Intermittent Labor:*(meaning labor for irregular intervals, not full-time, continuous, or steady), for hourly positions. Labor hired are meant to assist the PI to aid in planting, maintaining, and harvesting, etc. in projects that heavily rely on research through extensive field plots and trials. Workers can only be paid for work that directly relates to the specialty crop block grant project so only specialty crops are benefiting.

University Applicants may request funds for a Graduate Student Assistantship to assist the PI in specialty crop research and extension. Funds for Graduate Assistantship must solely be for specialty crop work, or applicant must show funds from another source if the grant is to only partially fund the graduate student.

All requests are subject to approval and must include the following:

- Description of type of personnel requested and the tasks the person(s) will do, estimate of number to hire, estimate of number of hours for each task, the hourly wage proposed and the fringe rate (if required to comply by your institution’s regulations, if so please detail).
- All requests will be required to provide documentation, if awarded, to include but not limited to: hours worked in pay period, and details of work provide
- **Requests for personnel/fringe cannot exceed 30% of the total budget.**

#	Name	Description of work/tasks	Level of Effort (#of hours of % FTE)	Hourly wage rate, if applicable	Funds Requested
1					
2					
3					
4					

<b>Personnel Subtotal</b>	
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**PERSONNEL JUSTIFICATION**

For each individual listed in the above table, describe the activities to be completed by name/title including approximately when activities will occur. Add more by copying and pasting the existing listing or deleting those that aren’t necessary.

**Personnel 1:**

**Add other Personnel as necessary**

**FRINGE BENEFITS**

*Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of personnel described in the above section, if required, that will be paid with SCBGP funds.*

#	Name/Title	Fringe Benefit Rate	Funds Requested
1			
2			
3			
4			

<b>Fringe Subtotal</b>	
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**TRAVEL**

*Explain the purpose for each Trip Request. Please note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. For recipient organizations that have no formal travel policy and for-profit recipients, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel-resources>. See Attachment III, Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, Travel, and Foreign Travel for further guidance.*

*Travel expenses will be limited to cover the expenses of a maximum of two travelers per trip.*

*Travel to conferences/meetings that are not solely related to specialty crops, must provide justification that the project will benefit from these activities (i.e. presentation on project results).*

#	Trip Destination	Type of Expense (airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.)	Unit of Measure (days, nights, miles)	# of Units	Cost per Unit	# of Travelers Claiming the Expense	Funds Requested
1							
2							

3							
4							
5							
6							
7							

<b>Travel Subtotal</b>	
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**TRAVEL JUSTIFICATION**

*For each trip listed in the above table describe the purpose of this trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Be sure to include approximately when the trip will occur. Add more trips by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete trips that aren't necessary.*

**Trip 1 (Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):**

**Trip 2 (Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):**

**Trip 3 (Approximate Date of Travel MM/YYYY):**

**Add other Trips as necessary**

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**CONFORMING WITH YOUR TRAVEL POLICY**

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that my organization's established travel policies will be adhered to when completing the above-mentioned trips in accordance with [2 CFR 200.474](#) or [48 CFR subpart 31.2](#) as applicable.

**EQUIPMENT**

*Describe any special purpose equipment to be purchased or rented under the grant. "Special purpose equipment" is tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 per unit and is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities. See Attachment III, Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, Equipment - Special Purpose for further guidance.*

*Rental of "general purpose equipment" must also be described in this section. Purchase of general purpose equipment is not allowable under this grant. See Attachment III, Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, Equipment - General Purpose for definition, and Rental or Lease Costs of Buildings, Vehicles, Land and Equipment.*

#	Item Description	Rental or Purchase	Acquire When?	Funds Requested
1				
2				
3				
4				

<b>Equipment Subtotal</b>	
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### EQUIPMENT JUSTIFICATION

For each Equipment item listed in the above table describe how this equipment will be used to achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Add more equipment by copying and pasting the existing listing or delete equipment that isn't necessary.

**Equipment 1:**

**Equipment 2:**

**Equipment 3:**

**Add other Equipment as necessary**

### SUPPLIES

List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal and solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. See Attachment III, Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, Supplies and Materials.

Item Description	Per-Unit Cost	# of Units/Pieces Purchased	Acquire When?	Funds Requested

<b>Supplies Subtotal</b>	
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### SUPPLIES JUSTIFICATION

Describe the purpose of **each** supply listed in the table above purchased and how it is necessary for the completion of the project's objective(s) and outcome(s).

## CONTRACTUAL/CONSULTANT

*Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be described separately. (Repeat this section for each contract/consultant.)*

### ITEMIZED CONTRACTOR(S)/CONSULTANT(S)

*Provide a list of contractors/consultants, detailing out the name, hourly/flat rate, and overall cost of the services performed. Please note that any statutory limitations on indirect costs also apply to contractors and consultants.*

#	Name/Organization	Hourly Rate/Flat Rate	Funds Requested
1			
2			
3			
4			

<b>Contractual/Consultant Subtotal</b>	
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### CONTRACTUAL JUSTIFICATION

*Provide for each of your real or anticipated contractors listed above a description of the project activities each will accomplish to meet the objectives and outcomes of the project. Each section should also include a justification for why contractual/consultant services are to be used to meet the anticipated outcomes and objectives. 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 (for more information please go to <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>), provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses. See Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, (Attachment III) Contractual and Consultant Costs for acceptable justifications.*

**Contractor/Consultant 1:**

**Contractor/Consultant 2:**

**Contractor/Consultant 3:**

**Add other Contractors/Consultants as necessary**

**CONFORMING WITH YOUR PROCUREMENT STANDARDS**

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that my organization followed the same policies and procedures used for procurements from non-federal sources, which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the Federal laws and standards identified in [2 CFR Part 200.317 through.326](#), as applicable. If the contractor(s)/consultant(s) are not already selected, my organization will follow the same requirements.

**OTHER**

*Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, publication costs, and data collection.*

*If you budget meal costs for reasons other than meals associated with travel per diem, provide an adequate justification to support that these costs are not entertainment costs. See Attachment III, Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities, Meals for further guidance.*

Item Description	Per-Unit Cost	Number of Units	Acquire When?	Funds Requested

<b>Other Subtotal</b>	
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**OTHER JUSTIFICATION**

*Describe the purpose of each item listed in the table above purchased and how it is necessary for the completion of the project’s objective(s) and outcome(s).*

**PROGRAM INCOME**

*Program income is gross income—earned by a recipient or subrecipient under a grant—directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned only because of 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 (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); registration fees for conferences, etc.*

Source/Nature of Program Income	Description of how you will reinvest the program income into the project to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops	Estimated Income

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<b>Program Income Total</b>	
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*The Acknowledgement must be signed by the authorized representative(s) of the proposing organization.*

I/we the undersigned applicants, \_\_\_\_\_ of

*(Name/names)*

\_\_\_\_\_, Mississippi, hereby apply for Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

*(City/cities)*

Funds under the terms and conditions of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and

the United States Department of Agriculture, in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

*(Amount requested)*

The undersigned hereby warrants to the State of Mississippi that to the best of my/our knowledge, all information presented in this grant application is factual and true; that I/we understand that if this proposal is funded, I/we will be required to sign a grant agreement and other necessary documentation containing terms and conditions upon which funds will be released; and that I/we understand that I/we will be required to submit progress reports (quarterly and annually) and a final report at the completion of the project as a condition to participating in this grant program. All grant funding is subject to the availability and receipt of federal funds by MDAC.

The undersigned understands that the selection will be determined by MDAC based on criteria designed to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in Mississippi. The undersigned understands, due to the availability of a limited supply of funds, that every qualifying project may not be approved or receive funding and that approved projects may be funded in whole or part.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed application packets must be **received by 5:00 p.m. on April 1, 2026. No late applications will be accepted.** An electronic version of the application, in Microsoft Word format, is required. If you do not have access to internet and need to submit a hard copy, please have it mailed in time to meet the April 1, 2026, deadline and let me know in advance.

**E-Mail completed applications to:**

Susan Lawrence, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program  
Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce  
Email: [susan@mdac.ms.gov](mailto:susan@mdac.ms.gov)  
Phone: (601) 213-7542



## APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Grant applications will be reviewed by an Advisory Committee. Applications will be evaluated based on the merit of the submitted proposal narrative and the criteria listed below. See Application Guidelines in the previous section for requirements. Recommendations may be made to suggest adjustments to the monetary grant requests, proposed scope of work, and/or project budgets.

Criteria	Maximum Points	Points Received
<b>Project Purpose</b>		
How well does the applicant define the issue, problem, or need the project will address?	5	
Does this project address a significant problem or important need for Mississippi's specialty crop industry?	5	
Is this project relevant and timely to Mississippi's specialty crop industry?	5	
<b>Potential Impact</b>		
Does the project provide a direct and positive benefit to Mississippi's specialty crop producers?	5	
Does the applicant clearly demonstrate how the project will have an impact the specialty crop industry (and on more than one grower)?	5	
To what extent will the project enhance the competitiveness of Mississippi's specialty crop industry?	5	
<b>Expected Measurable Outcomes</b>		
Does the project have at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that directly supports the project purpose?	5	
Does the applicant describe how the outcomes will be monitored and data collected?	5	
Are the goals realistic and obtainable?	5	
<b>Work Plan</b>		
Do the tasks and activities relate to the project objectives?	5	
Is the timeline reasonable to successful complete the goals and objectives?	5	
How well do the activities match the needs or problems that are being addressed?	5	

<b>Budget</b>		
Do requested budget items correlate to the purpose/goals of the project?	5	
Is the budget narrative clearly outlined and itemized with justification of expenses?	5	
Are the expected benefits proportionate to the total investment?	5	
<b>Overall Application</b>		
Does the project have adequate oversight to endure proper administration?	5	
Does the overall application present a clear, focused, and viable plan to increase the competitiveness of Mississippi specialty crops?	5	
Is this project supported by the specialty crop industry/growers by letters of support?	5	
The extent to which the project, if successfully completed, will make an important contribution to the enhancement of the competitiveness of Mississippi specialty crops.	5	
Is the application complete, answering all questions and providing sufficient detail?	5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	

## ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

### USDA AMINISITRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Awards issued under this announcement are subject to the *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards* of [2 CFR part 200](#) as implemented by the USDA under [2 CFR part 400](#) and the most recent [SCBGP General Award Terms and Conditions](#). An application funded with the release of Federal funds through a grant award does not constitute, or imply, compliance with Federal regulations. Grant recipients and are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable Federal regulations.

### Unique Entity Identifies (UEI)

Applicants, must have an Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number, at the time of application. This is required before funds can be awarded to any organization.

Note: On April 4, 2022, the Federal government stopped using DUNS and started using a Unique Entity Identifier created in SAM.gov. For more information, please visit [gsa.gov/entityid](https://gsa.gov/entityid).

## SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT

To receive an award under the SCBGP, applicants are required to register with System for Award Management (SAM) and, in doing so, to designate an e-Business Point of Contact (e-Business POC). An applicant's SAM registration must be updated annually and be active and maintained with current information at all times during which the State department of agriculture has an active award or an application under consideration.

The e-Business POC authorizes individuals to submit grant and cooperative agreement applications on behalf of the organization and creates a special password called a Marketing Partner ID Number (M-PIN) to verify individuals authorized to submit grant applications for the organization.

Organizations that need to register in SAM for the first time or need to update their SAM registration will visit <https://sam.gov/content/home>. Questions about SAM may be directed to [askSAM@gsa.gov](mailto:askSAM@gsa.gov).

SAM is a centrally maintained government-wide database that includes the names of organizations and individuals that have been debarred, suspended, declared ineligible, or been voluntarily excluded; the reasons for that status; and the duration of that status. Exclusion records on SAM can be searched at <https://sam.gov/content/home> to identify those parties excluded from receiving federal funds. The State department of agriculture must document the results of the search and must disclose unfavorable information to the SCBGP before awarding funds. The SCBGP will consider the information as part of the determination of whether the State department of agriculture may award funds to a particular sub-applicant. See section [\*Debarment and Suspension\*](#) for further information on this.

## DEBARMENT AND SUSPENSION

Regulations published in [2 CFR part 180](#) and [2 CFR part 417](#) describe the government-wide debarment and suspension requirements for non-procurement programs and activities. "Non-procurement" transactions include, among other things, grant agreements. SCBGP implements these regulations as a term and condition of award. State department of agriculture recipients must [search SAM](#) prior to entering into a "lower-tier" transaction. "Lower tier" transactions include contracts (including individual consultants) under grants (where the contract requires the provision of goods or services that will equal or exceed \$25,000) and all subawards. See section [\*System for Award Management\*](#) for further information on SAM.

## DELINQUENCY ON FEDERAL DEBT

Any organization or individual that is indebted to the United States, and has a judgment lien filed against it for a debt to the United States, is ineligible to receive a Federal grant. Applicants are required to indicate in their applications if they are delinquent on any Federal debt. If the applicant discloses a delinquency, the SCBGP 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 judgment is paid in

full or is otherwise satisfied. No funds may be rebudgeted following an award to pay such an individual. The Federal Agency will disallow costs charged to awards that provide funds to individuals in violation of this requirement.

## OTHER APPLICABLE NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the above mentioned Federal statutes and regulations that apply to grant applications considered for review and to project grants awarded under this program there are additional national policy requirements including, but are not limited to the ones listed below.

You agree to comply with the following Federal statutes and regulations as applicable to your award. These include but are not limited to the ones listed below. The full text of Code Federal Regulations references can be found at: [eCFR-Code of Federal Regulations](#).

Federal statutes and regulations found on the SF-424B “Assurances –Non-Construction Programs”

- [2 CFR § 25](#) – *System for Award Management and Universal Identifier Requirements*
- [2 CFR § 170](#) – *Reporting Subaward and Executive Compensation Information*
- [2 CFR § 175](#) – *Award Term for Trafficking in Persons*
- [2 CFR §§ 180](#) and [417](#) – *OMB Guidelines to Agencies on Government-Wide Debarment and Suspension (Nonprocurement) and*
- *USDA Nonprocurement Debarment and Suspension*
- [2 CFR § 182](#) – *Governmentwide Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)*
- [2 CFR § 183](#) – *Never Contract with the Enemy*
- [2 CFR § 200](#) – *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards*
- [2 CFR § 400](#) – *Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards*
- [2 CFR § 415](#) – *General Program Administrative Regulations*
- [2 CFR § 416](#) – *General Program Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments*
- [2 CFR § 418](#) – *New Restrictions on Lobbying*
- [2 CFR § 421](#) – *Requirements for Drug-Free Workplace (Financial Assistance)*
- [2 CFR § 422](#) – *Research Institutions Conducting USDA-Funded Extramural Research; Research Misconduct*
- [7 CFR § 1, subpart A](#) – *Official Records (Freedom of Information Act)*
- [7 CFR § 1\(b\)](#) – *National Environmental Policy Act*
- [7 CFR § 3](#) – *Debt Management (OMB Circular No. A-129)*
- [7 CFR § 15, subpart A](#) – *Nondiscrimination in Federally-Assisted Programs of the Department of Agriculture—Effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*
- [7 CFR § 331](#) and [9 CFR § 121](#) – *USDA implementation of the Agricultural Bioterrorism Protection Act of 2002*
- [37 CFR § 401](#) – *Rights to Inventions made by Nonprofit Organizations and Small Business Firms under Government Grants, Contracts, and Cooperative Agreements*
- [41 CFR §§ 301-10.131 to 301-10.143](#) – *Use of United States Flag Air Carriers, which implements the Fly America Act (49 U.S.C.40118). For more information see <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/103191>.*

- [48 CFR subpart 31.2](#) – *Contracts with Commercial Organizations*
- [8 U.S.C. § 1324a](#) – *Unlawful employment of aliens*
- [29 U.S.C. § 794](#) – *Nondiscrimination under Federal grants and programs*
- [41 U.S.C. § 22](#) – *Interest of Member of Congress*
- [41 U.S.C. § 4712](#) – *Pilot program for enhancement of contractor protection from reprisal for disclosure of certain information*
- 44 U.S.C. § 3551 et seq. ([P.L. 107-347](#)) – *Federal Information System Security Management Act of 2002 (FISMA)*
- [EO 13166](#), *Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency*, take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP persons have meaningful access to programs in accordance with [LEP Implementation Strategy for AMS' Federally-Assisted Programs](#).
- [EO 13798](#), *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty*. As a recipient you must not discriminate against sub recipients on the basis of their religious character.
- [EO 13858](#), *Strengthening Buy- American Preferences for Infrastructure Project (Except for Section 5, revoked by EO 14005)*[EO 13864](#), *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities*
- [EO 13933](#), *Protecting American Monuments, Memorials, and Statues and Combating Recent Criminal Violence*[EO 13988](#), *Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation*
- [EO 13991](#), *Protecting the Federal Workforce and Requiring Mask-Wearing*[EO 13999](#), *Protecting Worker Health and Safety*
- [EO 14005](#), *Ensuring the Future Is Made in All of America by All of America's Workers*
- Motor Vehicle Safety – *Highway Safety Act of 1966*, as amended ([23 U.S.C. §§ 402 & 403](#)); *Government Organization and Employees Act*, as amended ([5 U.S.C. § 7902 \(c\)](#)); *Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970*, as amended ([29 U.S.C. § 668](#)); *Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949*, as amended ([40 U.S.C. § 101, et seq.](#)); *Increasing Seat Belt Use in the United States* ([EO 13043](#)); *Federal Leadership on Reducing Text Messaging While Driving* ([EO 13513](#))
- Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2012, [P.L. No. 112-55](#),
- Division A, Sections 738 and 739 regarding corporate felony convictions and corporate Federal tax delinquencies.

## OTHER INFORMATION

### RELEASE OF APPLICATION INFORMATION

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) of 1966 ([5 U.S.C. 552](#)) and the Privacy Act of 1974 ([5 U.S.C. 552a](#)), as implemented by USDA's regulations ([7 CFR part 1, Subpart A](#)) govern the release or withholding of information to the public in connection with this Federal award. The release of information under these laws and regulations applies only to records held by AMS and imposes no requirement on the recipient or any subrecipient to permit or deny public access to their records.

FOIA requests for records relating to this federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 3943-S, Mail Stop 0202, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 720-2498; or email: [AMS.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:AMS.FOIA@usda.gov).

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs).

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

## PROHIBITION ON USING FUNDS UNDER GRANTS AND COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS WITH ENTITIES THAT REQUIRE CERTAIN INTERNAL CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS

By submission of its proposal or application, the applicant represents that it does not require any of its employees, contractors, or subrecipients seeking to report fraud, waste, or abuse to sign or comply with internal confidentiality agreements or statements prohibiting or otherwise restricting those employees, contractors, or subrecipients from lawfully reporting that waste, fraud, or abuse to a designated investigative or law enforcement representative of a Federal department or agency authorized to receive such information. Note that: (1) the basis for this representation is a prohibition in sections 743, 744 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016, Pub. L. 114-113, (Division E, Title VII, General Provisions Government-wide) and any successor provisions of law on making funds available through grants and cooperative agreements to entities with certain internal confidentiality agreements or statements; and (2) section 744 states that it does not contravene requirements applicable to Standard Form 312, Form 4414, or any other form issued by a Federal department or agency governing the nondisclosure of classified information.

## PAPERWORK REDUCTION

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0240. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grant recipients will be responsible for submitting progress reports to MDAC as required.

**Quarterly Reports:** Quarterly reports detailing progress being made towards the project along with a breakdown of expenses shall be submitted quarterly to MDAC.

**Annual Performance Reports:** Grantees shall submit an annual performance report to MDAC. Annual performance reports shall follow the template given to awarded projects.

**Final Performance Reports:** Grantees shall submit a final performance report to MDAC at the conclusion of the completed project. Final performance reports shall follow the template given to awarded projects.

## REQUESTS FOR PAYMENT

Payment of funds to the grantee will be made on a monthly or quarterly reimbursement basis or as requested by the applicant. To receive reimbursement, grantees must provide assurance that the work has been completed (receipts, invoices, etc.), a budget report, and a budget narrative explaining expenses.

Requests for fund advances will be considered on a case by case basis. If a funding advance is requested, the need for the advance must be clearly stated in the project proposal. When funding advances are made, any unobligated (unencumbered) balance of cash at the end of the grant period must immediately be refunded back to MDAC.

The obligation of funds may be terminated without further cause unless the grantee commences the timely drawdown of funds. The initial drawdown of funds must be made within the first year of the grant period.

## PROGRAM CONTACT

Susan Head Lawrence  
Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce  
(601) 213-7543  
[susan@mdac.ms.gov](mailto:susan@mdac.ms.gov)

For more information about the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, please view the program outline at [www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp](http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp)

*The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce reserves the right to deny any or all proposals received; request additional information on project proposals; recommend partial funding for proposals that may be less than the amount requested in the grant application; and link the release of project funds to completion of necessary, timely progress reports. All grant funding is subject to the availability and receipt of federal funds.*

*The Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce maintains a policy which prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, creed, sex, age, national origin, physical handicap, disability or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws.*

## Attachment I

### ELIGIBLE SPECIALTY CROPS

Commonly recognized fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops (including floriculture)

Blueberries	Hops
Chickpeas	Lavender
Christmas trees	Lentils
Cocoa	Maple syrup
Coffee	Mushrooms
Cut flowers	Organic fruits and vegetables
Dry edible beans	Peppermint
Dry peas	Potatoes
Foliage	Seaweed
Fruit grapes for wine	Spearmint
Garlic	Sweet Corn
Ginger root	Sweet Potatoes
Ginseng	Turfgrass
Herbs	Vanilla
Honey	Vegetable seed

### Ineligible Commodities

Cotton and cottonseed  
Feed crops such as barley, corn, hay, oats, sorghum grain, millet, alfalfa  
Flaxseed  
Food grains such as rice, rye, wheat  
Hay  
Hemp  
Livestock and dairy products, including eggs  
Marine or fresh water aquaculture  
Oil crops such as peanut, soybean, sunflower, safflower, rapeseed, canola, mustard seed, evening primrose, borage  
Peanuts  
Range grasses  
Rice  
Sugar beets  
Sugarcane  
Tobacco  
Tofu

**Please visit the USDA-AMS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program-Farm Bill website (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>) for a more comprehensive listing of eligible and ineligible commodities.**

## Attachment II

### PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The grant program outcomes and performance measures outlined below reflect direct stakeholder feedback and provide a framework that allows grant recipients to evaluate project activities more accurately in relation to each program's statutory purpose.

For recipients, the measures are:

- More feasible to accomplish and measure within a grant's period of performance;
- Better aligned with grant program purpose and recipient activities; and
- More reflective of work performed during the project.

These performance measures went into effect with the FY2022 grant application cycle.

#### OUTCOME 1: INCREASING CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMER PURCHASING OF SPECIALTY CROPS

- 1.1** Total number of consumers who gained knowledge about specialty crops\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 1.1a** Adults\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 1.1b** Children\_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.2** Total number of consumers who consumed more specialty crops\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 1.2a** Adults\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 1.2b** Children\_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.3** Number of additional specialty crop customers counted\_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.4** Number of additional business transactions executed\_\_\_\_\_.
- 1.5** Increased sales measured in:
  - 1.5a** Dollars\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 1.5b** Percent change\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 1.5c** Combination of volume and average price as a result of enhanced marketing activities\_\_\_\_\_.

#### OUTCOME 2: INCREASING ACCESS TO SPECIALTY CROPS AND EXPANDING SPECIALTY CROP PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

- 2.1** Number of stakeholders that gained technical knowledge about producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing specialty crops\_\_\_\_\_.
- 2.2** Number of stakeholders that reported producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing more specialty crops\_\_\_\_\_.
- 2.3** Total number of market access points for specialty crops developed or expanded\_\_\_\_\_. Of those:
  - 2.3a** Number of new online portals created to sell specialty crops\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.3b** Number with expanded seasonal availability\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.3c** Number of existing market access points that expanded specialty crop offerings\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.3d** Number of new market access points that established specialty crop offerings\_\_\_\_\_.

- 2.4** Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about more efficient and effective distribution systems\_\_\_\_\_.
- 2.5** Number of stakeholders that adopted best practices or new technologies to improve distribution systems\_\_\_\_\_.
- 2.6** Total number of partnerships established between producers, distributors, and/or other relevant intermediaries related to distribution systems\_\_\_\_\_. Of those established:
  - 2.6a** Number formalized with written agreements (i.e. MOU's, signed contracts, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.6b** Number of partnerships with underserved organizations\_\_\_\_\_.
- 2.7** Total number of new/improved distribution systems developed\_\_\_\_\_. Of those, the number that:
  - 2.7a** Stemmed from new partnerships\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.7b** Increased efficiency\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.7c** Reduced costs\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.7d** Increased specialty crop grower participation\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.7e** Expanded customer reach\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.7f** Increased online presence\_\_\_\_\_.
- 2.8** Number of specialty crop-related jobs:
  - 2.8a** Created\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.8b** Maintained\_\_\_\_\_.
- 2.9** Total number of new individuals who went into specialty crop production as a result of marketing\_\_\_\_\_. Of those, the number who are:
  - 2.9a** Beginning farmers or ranchers\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.9b** Socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers\_\_\_\_\_.
- 2.10** Number of market access points that reported increased:
  - 2.10a** Revenue\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.10b** Sales\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 2.10c** Cost-savings\_\_\_\_\_.

### OUTCOME 3: INCREASE FOOD SAFETY KNOWLEDGE AND PROCESSES

- 3.1** Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about prevention, detection, control, and/or intervention food safety practices, including relevant regulations (to improve their ability to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and/or meet the standards for aligned third party food safety audits such as Harmonized GAP/GHP) \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3.2** Number of stakeholders that:
  - 3.2a** Established a food safety plan\_\_\_\_\_.
  - 3.2b** Revised or updated their food safety plan\_\_\_\_\_.
- 3.3** Number of specialty crop stakeholders who implemented new/improved prevention, detection, control, and intervention practices, tools, or technologies to mitigate food safety risks (to improve their ability to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and/or meet the

standards for aligned third party food safety audits such as Harmonized GAP/GHP) .

**3.4** Number of prevention, detection, control, or intervention practices developed or enhanced to mitigate food safety risks\_\_\_\_\_.

**3.5** Number of stakeholders that used grant funds to:

**3.5a** Purchase\_\_\_\_\_.

**3.5b** Upgrade food safety equipment\_\_\_\_\_.

#### OUTCOME 4: IMPROVE PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL PROCESSES

**4.1** Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about science-based tools to combat pests and diseases\_\_\_\_\_.

**4.2** Number of stakeholders that adopted pest and disease control best practices, technologies, or innovations\_\_\_\_\_.

**4.3** Number of stakeholders trained in early detection and rapid response practices to combat pests and diseases\_\_\_\_\_. Of those:

**4.3a** The number of additional acres managed using integrated pest management\_\_\_\_\_.

**4.4** Number of stakeholders that implemented new diagnostic systems, methods, or technologies for analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases\_\_\_\_\_ .

**4.5** Total number of producers/processors that enhanced or maintained pest and disease control practices\_\_\_\_\_. Of those, the number that reported:

**4.5a** Reduction in product lost to pest and diseases\_\_\_\_\_.

**4.5b** Improved crop quality\_\_\_\_\_.

**4.5c** Reduction in labor costs\_\_\_\_\_.

**4.5d** Reduction in pesticide use\_\_\_\_\_ .

**4.6** Number of producers/processors improving the efficiency of pest and disease control diagnostics and response testing, as reported by:

**4.6a** Improving speed\_\_\_\_\_.

**4.6b** Improving reliability\_\_\_\_\_.

**4.6c** Expanding capability\_\_\_\_\_.

**4.6d** Increasing testing (i.e. survey work for pests) \_\_\_\_\_.

#### OUTCOME 5: DEVELOP NEW SEED VARIETIES AND SPECIALTY CROPS

**5.1** Number of cultivar and/or variety trials conducted\_\_\_\_\_. Of those:

**5.1a** The number that advanced to further stages of development\_\_\_\_\_.

**5.2** Number of cultivars and/or seed varieties developed\_\_\_\_\_.

**5.3** Number of cultivars and/or seed varieties released\_\_\_\_\_.

5.4 Number of growers adopting new cultivars and/or varieties\_\_\_\_\_.

5.5 Number of acres planted with new cultivars and/or varieties\_\_\_\_\_.

#### OUTCOME 6: EXPAND SPECIALTY CROP RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

6.1 Number of research goals accomplished\_\_\_\_\_.

6.2 For research conclusions, the number that:

6.2a Yielded findings that supported continued research \_\_\_\_\_.

6.2b Yielded findings that led to completion of study\_\_\_\_\_.

6.2c Yielded findings that allow for implementation of new practice, process or technology\_\_\_\_\_.

6.3 Number of industry representatives and other stakeholders who engaged with research results\_\_\_\_\_.

6.4 Total number of research outputs published to industry publications and/or academic journals\_\_\_\_\_.  
For each published research output, the:

6.4a Number of views/reads of published research/data\_\_\_\_\_.

6.4b Number of citations counted\_\_\_\_\_.

#### OUTCOME 7: IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SPECIALTY CROPS

7.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies\_\_\_\_\_.

7.2 Number of stakeholders reported with an intent to adopt environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies\_\_\_\_\_.

7.3 Number of producers that adopted environmental best practices or tools\_\_\_\_\_.

7.4 Number of new tools/technologies developed or enhanced to improve sustainability/ conservation or other environmental outcomes\_\_\_\_\_.

7.5 Number of additional acres managed with sustainable practices, tools, or technologies that focused on:

7.5a Water quality/ conservation\_\_\_\_\_.

7.5b Soil health\_\_\_\_\_.

7.5c Biodiversity\_\_\_\_\_.

7.5d Reduction in energy use\_\_\_\_\_.

7.5e Other positive environmental outcomes (optional) \_\_\_\_\_.

7.6 Number of additional acres established and maintained for the mutual benefit of pollinators/specialty crops\_\_\_\_\_.

## Attachment III

### ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

The following list describes specific funding restrictions under the AMS SCBGP. This section is not intended to be all-inclusive. The recipient should consult the Federal Cost Principles ([Subpart E-Cost Principles of 2 CFR § 200](#)) for the complete explanation of the allowability of costs or the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce.

Item	Description
<b>Alcoholic Beverages</b>	<p>Unallowable for alcoholic beverages except when the costs are associated with enhancing the competitiveness of an eligible processed product (products prepared or created for the purposes of promoting a specialty crop but that require other ingredients are considered a processed product). A processed product is defined as a product that constitutes greater than 50% of the specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water.</p>
<b>Aquaponics</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> as long as the crops that are being grown are eligible specialty crops and the focus of the project is on the specialty crops and not the fish.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A project to determine whether carp, catfish, or tilapia are best for growing lettuce is acceptable.</li> <li>• A project to market broccoli grown through aquaponics is acceptable.</li> <li>• A project to compare the quality of lettuce grown in water to lettuce grown in a greenhouse is acceptable.</li> <li>• A project to study whether lettuce or tomato produced the highest yield of tilapia is not acceptable.</li> <li>• A project to farm fish using an aquaponics system and then sell the fish is not acceptable.</li> <li>• A project to grow specialty crops where both the specialty crops and the fish are sold is not acceptable.</li> </ul> <p>For more information on constructing or purchasing an aquaponics system, see <a href="#">Equipment-General Purpose</a> and <a href="#">Equipment – Special Purpose</a>.</p>
<b>Conferences</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> for costs of conferences as defined in <a href="#">2 CFR 200.432</a>. Allowable conference costs paid by the non-Federal recipient or subrecipient as a sponsor or host of the conference may include rental of facilities, speakers’ fees, costs of meals (see <a href="#">Meals</a> for restrictions), and refreshments, local transportation, and other items incidental to such conferences with the exception of entertainment costs that are unallowable. If registration fees are collected, the recipient or subrecipient must report fees as program income (See <a href="#">Program Income</a>).</p> <p>The SCBGP encourages the use of technologies such as webinars, teleconferencing, or videoconferencing as an alternative to renting a building or a room.</p>

<p><b>Construction and Renovation and Land or Building Acquisition</b></p>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for the acquisition of buildings, facilities, or land or to make additions, improvements, modifications, replacements, rearrangements, reinstallations, renovations or alterations of an existing building or facility (including site grading and improvement, and architecture fees). This also includes construction and construction-related materials, which may include, but are not limited to, the purchase of building materials such as wood, nails, concrete, asphalt, roofing, gravel, sand, paint, insulation, drywall, or plumbing.</p> <p>Allowable for rental costs of land and building space. However, lease to own agreements (i.e., lease-to-own or rent-to-own) are not allowable. The lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the grant cycle.</p> <p>Building means any permanent structure that is designed or intended for support, enclosure, shelter or protection of person, animals or property having a permanent roof that is supported by columns or walls.</p>
<p><b>Contingency Provisions</b></p>	<p>Unallowable for miscellaneous and similar rainy-day funds for events the occurrence of which cannot be foretold with certainty as to the time or intensity, or with an assurance of their happening. Unallowable for working capital for activities/items not already in place.</p>
<p><b>Contractual/ Consultant Costs (Professional Services)</b></p>	<p><i>Allowable subject to limitations below.</i> Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for contractor/consultant employee rates that do not exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in your area (for more information please go to <a href="https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/">https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/</a> . This does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses. Please note that any statutory limitations on indirect costs also apply to contractors and consultants.</p> <p>If rates exceed this amount, one of the following justifications must be provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A description of the steps you took to hire a contractor, which includes obtaining a cost/price analysis. The purpose of the analysis is to review and evaluate each element of cost to determine reasonableness, allocability, and allowability.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Due to the complexity or uniqueness of the project, the pool of available and qualified contractors is limited. Therefore, the selected contractor’s specialized qualifications necessitate hiring at a rate beyond a GS-15 step 10. (Please outline the unique qualifications of the contractor.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Contributions and Donations</b></p>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for contributions or donations, including cash, property, and services, from the recipient or subrecipient to other entities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A non-profit entity using grant funds to purchase produce to donate to other entities and individuals is unallowable.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Machines</b></p>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for the purchase/lease of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) EBT equipment.</p> <p>The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has existing funding to expand the availability of SNAP EBT equipment and services at farmers markets through the Farmers Market Coalition and State SNAP agencies. Recipients should review the below options to determine which is most appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Farmers Market Coalition provides SNAP-authorized farmers markets and direct marketing farmers with free SNAP EBT equipment.</li> <li>• State SNAP agencies or farmers market associations offer free SNAP EBT equipment to newly authorized farmers markets and direct marketing farmers.</li> <li>• FNS SNAP and Farmers Markets resources provide additional EBT information.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Entertainment</b></p>	<p><i>Unallowable.</i> Entertainment costs include amusement, diversion, and social activities and any costs directly associated with such costs (such as bands, orchestras, dance groups, tickets to shows, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, and gratuities).</p>
<p><b>Equipment, Buildings, and Land</b></p>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for acquisition costs of general purpose equipment, vehicles, buildings and land.</p> <p><i>Allowable with conditions</i> for renting or leasing of general purpose equipment, buildings, vehicles, and with prior approval for land. Vehicles may be leased, but not purchased. The lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the grant cycle.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for lease agreements to own (i.e., lease-to-own or rent-to-own). The lease or rental agreement must terminate at the end of the grant cycle.</p> <p>For vehicle and equipment leases or rentals with an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000, rates should be in light of such factors as: rental costs of comparable vehicles and equipment, if any; market conditions in the area; alternatives available; and the type, life expectancy, condition, and value of the vehicle or equipment leased.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> with prior approval for acquisition costs and rental costs of special purpose equipment provided the following criterion is met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Necessary for the research, scientific, or other technical activities of the grant award;</li> <li>2) Not otherwise reasonably available and accessible;</li> <li>3) The type of equipment is normally charged as a direct cost by the organization;</li> <li>4) Acquired in accordance with organizational practices;</li> <li>5) Must only be used to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops;</li> <li>6) More than one single commercial organization, commercial product, or individual must benefit from the use of the equipment;</li> <li>7) Must not use special purpose equipment acquired with grant funds to provide services for a fee to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent services; and</li> <li>8) Equipment is subject to the full range of acquisition, use, management, and disposition requirements under <a href="#">2 CFR part 200.313</a> as applicable.</li> </ol>

	<p><b>Equipment Definitions</b></p> <p>Equipment is defined as tangible personal property (including information technology systems) having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost which equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established by the non-Federal entity for financial statement purposes, or \$5,000.</p> <p>Acquisition cost means the cost of the asset including the cost to ready the asset for its intended use. 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.</p> <p>General Purpose Equipment means equipment that is not limited to technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, modular offices, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, air conditioning equipment, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.</p> <p>Special Purpose Equipment is equipment used only for research or technical activities. Examples include grape harvesters, high tunnels, fruit or vegetable coolers, vegetable washing machines, fruit or vegetable processing equipment, etc.</p>
<p><b>Equipment – Information Technology Systems</b></p>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for information technology systems having a useful life of more than one year and a per-unit acquisition cost that equals or exceeds the lesser of the capitalization level established in accordance by Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) by the recipient for financial statement purposes or \$5,000. Acquisition costs for software includes those development costs capitalized in accordance with GAAP.</p> <p>Information technology systems include computing devices, ancillary equipment, software, firmware, and similar procedures, services (including support services), and related resources. Computing devices means machines used to acquire, store, analyze, process, and publish data and other information electronically, including accessories (or “peripherals”) for printing, transmitting and receiving, or storing electronic information. Examples of unallowable information technology systems include service contracts, operating systems, printers, and computers that have an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for website development, mobile apps, etc., that are not considered to be information technology systems, but rather social media applications.</p>
<p><b>Fines, Penalties, Damages, and Other Settlements</b></p>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs resulting from violations of, alleged violations of, or failure to comply with, Federal, State, tribal, local or foreign laws and regulations.</p>
<p><b>Foreign Travel</b></p>	<p>For purposes of this provision, “foreign travel” includes any travel outside Canada, Mexico, the United States, and any United States territories and possessions. However, the term “foreign travel” for a governmental unit located in a foreign country means travel outside that country. An applicant with a proposal that involves foreign market development must</p>

	<p>determine if the project is more appropriate for grant programs administered by the Foreign Agricultural Service or funded through the State-Regional Trade Groups. SCBGP recommends that applicants search the Foreign Agricultural Service database of GAIN reports (<a href="https://gain.fas.usda.gov/#/">https://gain.fas.usda.gov/#/</a>) to ensure that proposals will not duplicate information that already exists. Any proposal involving foreign travel must be well justified.</p> <p>See <a href="#">Travel</a> in this table for more information on travel costs.</p>
<b>Fundraising</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for organized fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions, regardless of the purpose for which the funds will be used. This includes salaries of personnel involved in activities to raise capital.</p>
<b>General Costs of Government</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Salaries and expenses of the Office of the Governor of a State or the chief executive of a local government or the chief executive of an Indian tribe;</li> <li>2) Salaries and other expenses of a State legislature, tribal council, or similar local governmental body, such as a county supervisor, city council, school board, etc., whether incurred for purposes of legislation or executive direction;</li> <li>3) Costs of the judicial branch of a government;</li> <li>4) Costs of prosecutorial activities unless treated as a direct cost to a specific program if authorized by statute or regulation (however, this does not preclude the allowability of other legal activities of the Attorney General as described in <a href="#">§200.435 Defense and prosecution of criminal and civil proceedings, claims, appeals and patent infringements</a>); and</li> <li>5) Costs of other general types of government services normally provided to the general public, such as fire and police, unless provided for as a direct cost under a program statute or regulation.</li> </ol>
<b>Goods or Services for Personal Use</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs of goods or services for personal use of the recipient's or subrecipient's employees regardless of whether the cost is reported as taxable income to the employees.</p>
<b>Health and Nutrition Messaging</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> when health and nutrition information complies with regulations and policies of the:</p> <p><i>Federal Trade Commission</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.ftc.gov/about-ftc/bureaus-offices/bureau-consumer-protection">https://www.ftc.gov/about-ftc/bureaus-offices/bureau-consumer-protection</a></p> <p>AND</p> <p><i>U.S. Food and Drug Administration</i></p> <p><a href="https://www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition">https://www.fda.gov/food/food-labeling-nutrition</a></p> <p>Nutrition and health claims must be truthful, not misleading or deceptive, and include adequate disclaimers if appropriate.</p> <p>Health and nutrition information should align with the most up-to-date <a href="#">Dietary</a></p>

	<u><a href="#">Guidelines.</a></u>
<b>Lobbying</b>	<i>Unallowable</i> as defined in <u><a href="#">2 CFR § 200.450.</a></u>
<b>Meals</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for business meals when individuals decide to go to lunch or dinner together when no need exists for continuity of a meeting. Such activity is considered an entertainment cost.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for breakfasts for conference attendees because it is expected these individuals will have sufficient time to obtain this meal on their own before the conference begins in the morning.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for meal costs that are duplicated in meeting participant’s per diem or subsistence allowances.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for lunch or dinner meals if the costs are reasonable and a justification is provided that such activity maintains the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the meeting participants.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for meals consumed while in official travel status. They are considered per diem expenses and should be reimbursed in accordance with the organization’s established written travel policies.</p>
<b>Memberships, Subscriptions, and Professional Activity Costs</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs of membership in any civic or community organization.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> for costs of membership in business, technical, and professional organizations.</p>
<b>Organization Costs</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> with prior approval for organization costs per <u><a href="#">2 CFR 200.455.</a></u></p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs of investment counsel and staff and similar expenses incurred to enhance income from investments.</p>
<b>Participant Support Costs</b>	<i>Allowable</i> for such items as stipends or subsistence allowances, and registration fees paid to or on behalf of participants or trainees (but not employees) in connection with approved conferences, training projects, and focus groups.
<b>Political Activities</b>	<i>Unallowable</i> for development or participation in political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act ( <u><a href="#">5 U.S.C. 1501-1508</a></u> and <u><a href="#">7324-7326</a></u> ).
<b>Printing and Publications</b>	<i>Allowable</i> to pay the cost of preparing informational leaflets, reports, manuals, and publications relating to the project; however, the printing of hard copies is discouraged given the prevalence of electronic/virtual publication means
<b>Selling and Marketing</b>	<i>Allowable with conditions (see specific costs below)</i> if the primary purpose is to promote the sale of an eligible specialty crop by either stimulating interest in a particular specialty crop
<b>Costs</b>	or disseminating technical information or messages for the purpose of increasing market share for the specialty crops.

<p><b>Selling and Marketing Costs- Promotion of an Organization’s Image, Logo or Brand Name</b></p>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs designed solely to promote the image of an organization, general logo, or general brand rather than eligible specialty crops.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A promotional campaign to increase sales of “STATE/COUNTY Grown” Watermelon is acceptable while increasing brand awareness of “XYZ Grown” generically is not.</li> <li>• Promoting tomatoes while including an organization’s logo in the promotion is acceptable, while generally promoting an organization’s logo is not.</li> <li>• Promotional items could say “Buy STATE/COUNTY Grown Apples” but not “XYZ Grown”, which promotes XYZ generically.</li> <li>• A promotional campaign to increase producer sales of “STATE/COUNTY Grown fruits and vegetables” is acceptable while increasing membership in “STATE/COUNTY Grown” generically is not.</li> </ul> <p>MDAC must approve all advertising and promotional materials purchased with grant funds including, but not limited to, radio, television, and print advertisements, brochures, and posters before publicized or finalized.</p> <p>The following copy must be included on all print materials and advertisements related to the project:  “Funding [or project] was supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service through the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.”</p>
<p><b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Promotion of Non-Specialty Crop Activities</b></p>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs for promotion at non-specialty crop specific venues, tradeshow, events, meetings, programs, conventions, symposia, seminars, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advertisements could say “Buy Sweet Corn! It is the Best!” but not “Buy Local!”</li> <li>• Advertising educational sessions at a conference that solely benefits specialty crop growers are acceptable, while advertising a non-specialty crop specific local food conference is not.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Promotional Items, Gifts, Prizes, etc.</b></p>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for promotional items, swag, gifts, prizes, memorabilia, and souvenirs.</p>
<p><b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Food for Displays, Tastings, Cooking Demonstrations</b></p>	<p><i>Allowable</i> for food for displays, tastings, and cooking demonstrations with prior approval.</p>
<p><b>Selling and Marketing Costs – General Marketing Costs</b></p>	<p>Unallowable for costs designed solely to promote the image of an organization, general logo, or general brand.</p> <p>Allowable for costs designed to promote products that align with the purpose of the grant program.</p>

<b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Sponsorships</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs associated with sponsorships. A sponsorship is a form of advertising in which an organization uses grant funds to have its name and/or logo associated with certain events and where the organization does not necessarily know how the funds associated with sponsorship costs will be used. These costs are considered a contribution or donation and only benefit the organization offering funding. This limits the beneficiaries to the sponsor organization, which conflicts with the restriction that projects affect and produce measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual.</p> <p>Unallowable for the costs associated with fees for individuals or companies to have their specialty crop products placed at retail markets (i.e., slotting fees or allowances).</p>
<b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Coupons, Incentives or Other Price Discounts</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs of coupon/incentive redemptions or price discounts. Costs associated with printing, distribution, or promotion of coupons/tokens or price discounts (i.e., a print advertisement that contains a clip-out coupon) are allowable only if they solely promote the specialty crop rather than promote or benefit a program or single organization.</p>
<b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Use of Meeting Rooms, Space, Exhibits for Non-Specialty Crop Activities</b>	<p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs associated with the use of trade shows, meeting rooms, displays, demonstrations, exhibits, and the rental of space for activities that do not solely promote specialty crops.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting the participation of raspberry and blueberry producers at a non-specialty crop specific international trade show to promote berries to an international audience is allowable, while renting a booth space for berry producers as well as wheat producers at an international trade show is not allowable.</li> <li>• Supporting the participation of farmers’ market managers at a national conference that is not specific to specialty crops is not allowable.</li> <li>• Supporting a portion of a national conference that is not specific to specialty crops is not allowable, while supporting a session on specialty crops at a national conference that is not specific to specialty crops is allowable.</li> <li>• Funding an “XYZ State Grown” booth at a specialty crop-specific venue where all exhibitors in the booth are specialty crop producers is allowable, but funding an “XYZ Grown” booth at a non-specialty crop specific venue is not allowable.</li> </ul>
<b>Selling and Marketing Costs – Cookbooks, Cooking Demonstrations, Recipe Cards, Food Pairings</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> for costs promoting the specialty crops in processed products (products prepared or created for the purposes of promoting a specialty crop but that require other ingredients are considered a processed product). A processed product is defined as a product that constitutes greater than 50% of the specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for costs of separate complementary non-specialty crop products. A separate complementary non-specialty crop product means a product closely associated with a specialty crop product, the purchase of one encouraging consumers to buy the other (i.e., cheese and wine).</p>
<b>Supplies and Materials</b>	<p><i>Allowable</i> for costs incurred for materials, supplies, and fabricated parts necessary to carry out a Federal award. Purchased materials and supplies must be charged at their actual prices, net of applicable credits. Withdrawals from general stores or stockrooms</p>

	<p>should be charged at their actual net cost under any recognized method of pricing inventory withdrawals, consistently applied. Incoming transportation charges are a proper part of materials and supplies costs. Only materials and supplies actually used for the performance of a Federal award may be charged as direct costs.</p>
<p><b>Tele-communications and Video Surveillance</b></p>	<p>Prohibited from obligating or expending loan or grant funds for covered telecommunications equipment or services from items provided by Huawei Technology Company, ZTE Corporation, or any of their many subsidiaries or affiliates.</p>
<p><b>Travel</b></p>	<p><i>Allowable</i> when travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, the lowest reasonable commercial airfares must be used.</p> <p><i>Allowable</i> with prior approval for government officials per <a href="#">2 CFR part 200.444</a>.</p> <p>Applicants and subapplicants that do not have formal travel policies and for-profit subapplicants' allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <a href="http://www.gsa.gov">http://www.gsa.gov</a>. If an applicant or subapplicant organization has no formal travel policy, those regulations will be used to determine the amount that may be charged for travel costs.</p> <p>Applicants and subapplicants are strongly encouraged to take advantage of discount fares for airline travel through advance purchase of tickets if travel schedules can be planned in advance.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to the use of alternative technologies such as teleconferencing or videoconferencing if they are available, appropriate for the project, and less costly.</p> <p><i>Unallowable</i> for travel costs for conferences, venues, tradeshow, events, meetings, programs, conventions, symposia, workshops seminars, etc. that include non-specialty crop activities such as farmers' market annual conferences and general marketing tradeshow where these costs cannot be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to activities that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Example: Travel costs for personnel to travel to a farmers' market conference is unallowable, while travel to a vegetable food safety educational session is allowable.</li> </ul>

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST

All applications must contain the applicable elements outlined in the guidelines. The following checklist has been prepared to assist in ensuring that the application is complete prior to submission.

### Required Documents

- Signed Acknowledgement
- Proposal Narrative
- Letter of Support

### Proposal Narrative

- Applicant Information with DUNS or Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number
- Project Title
- Project Partner and Summary
- Priority Area
- Project Purpose with Objectives, Beneficiaries, Work plan
- External Project Support
- Expected Measurable Outcomes
- Budget Narrative (Itemized Budget and Narrative)

Completed application packets must be received by 5:00 p.m. on April 1, 2026. No late applications will be accepted. An electronic version of the application, in Microsoft Word format, is required.

If you do not have access to internet and need to mail the application, ensure it is received by MDAC by the April 1, 2026, deadline, and let me know in advance:

Susan Lawrence, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program  
Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce  
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Jackson, MS 39215  
Email: [susan@mdac.ms.gov](mailto:susan@mdac.ms.gov)  
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