



Agriculture & Food Systems Support Division

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Pre-Award Workshop

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Today's Topics

- SCBGP Overview
- Eligible Applicants
- Eligible Projects
- Instructions for Downloading Forms and Submitting Completed Application Packets
- *Application Packet*
- Application Checklist
- Application Deadline
- *Evaluation Process*

SCBGP Overview

Program authority

Definition

Purpose

Previous funding cycles

Current funding cycle

Program Authority

- Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7.U.S.C. 1621 note)
- Amended under Sec. 10109 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the 2008 Farm Bill) Mandatory outlays in FY09 - \$49M; FY10 – FY12 each \$55M
- Extended by the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 (H.R. 8), section 701 for FY13.
- Agricultural Act of 2014 (Farm Bill) provided \$72.5M in FY14-FY17 and \$85M in FY18.
- Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (Farm Bill) provides \$85M in FY19-FY23. Enactment of a continuing resolution, appropriations act, or other authorizing legislation may affect the availability or level of funding for this program.
- Under the Act, the Secretary of Agriculture is directed to make grants to state departments of agriculture to be used to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. USDA – Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) is the administrator.
- Allocation formula that calculates grant amounts based on the average of specialty crop cash receipts and specialty crop acreage in each state.

Definition

Specialty Crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and nursery crops (including floriculture).

Also includes:

Christmas Trees

Cut Flowers

Maple Syrup

Honey

Hops

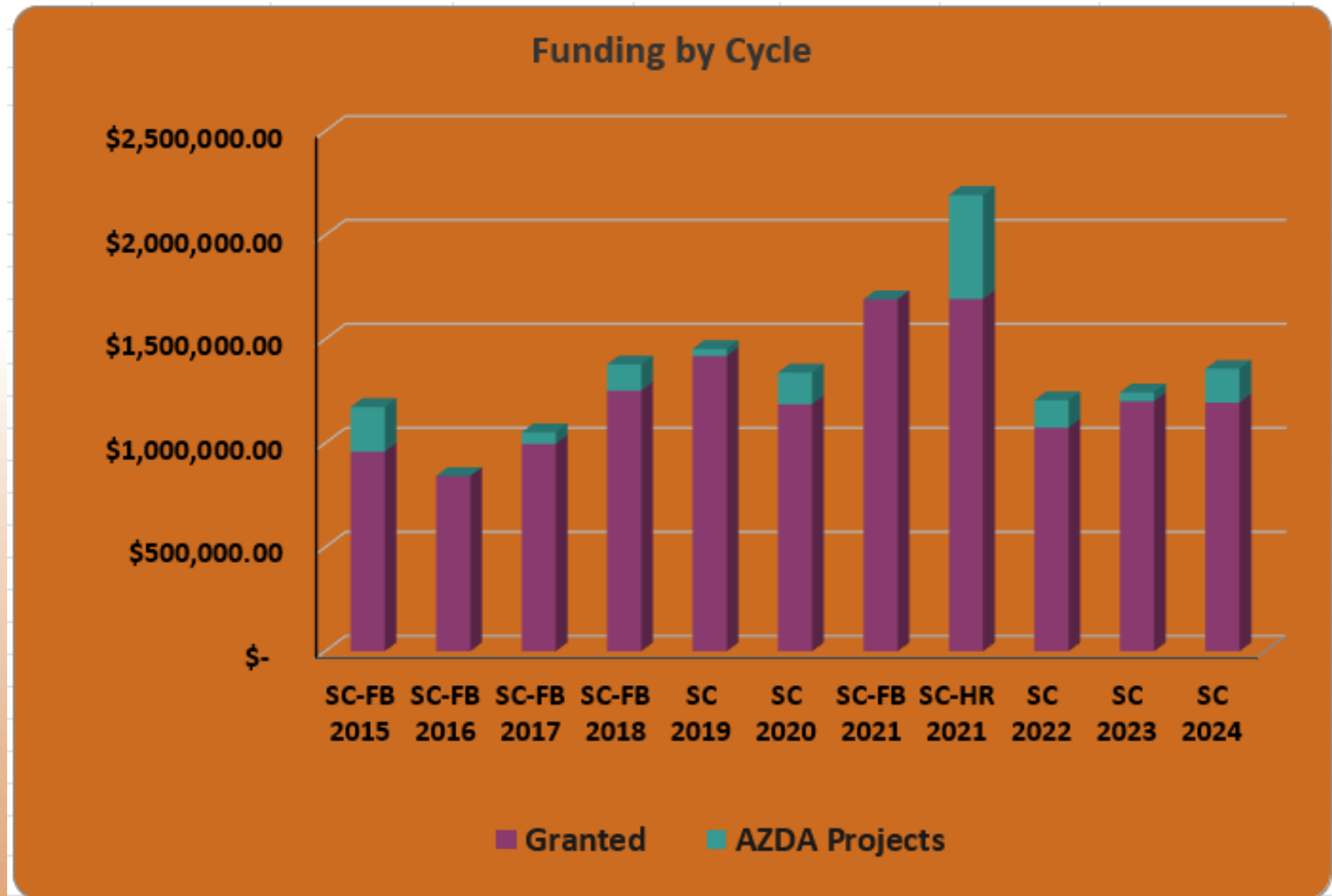
Tea Leaves

More at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>

Purpose

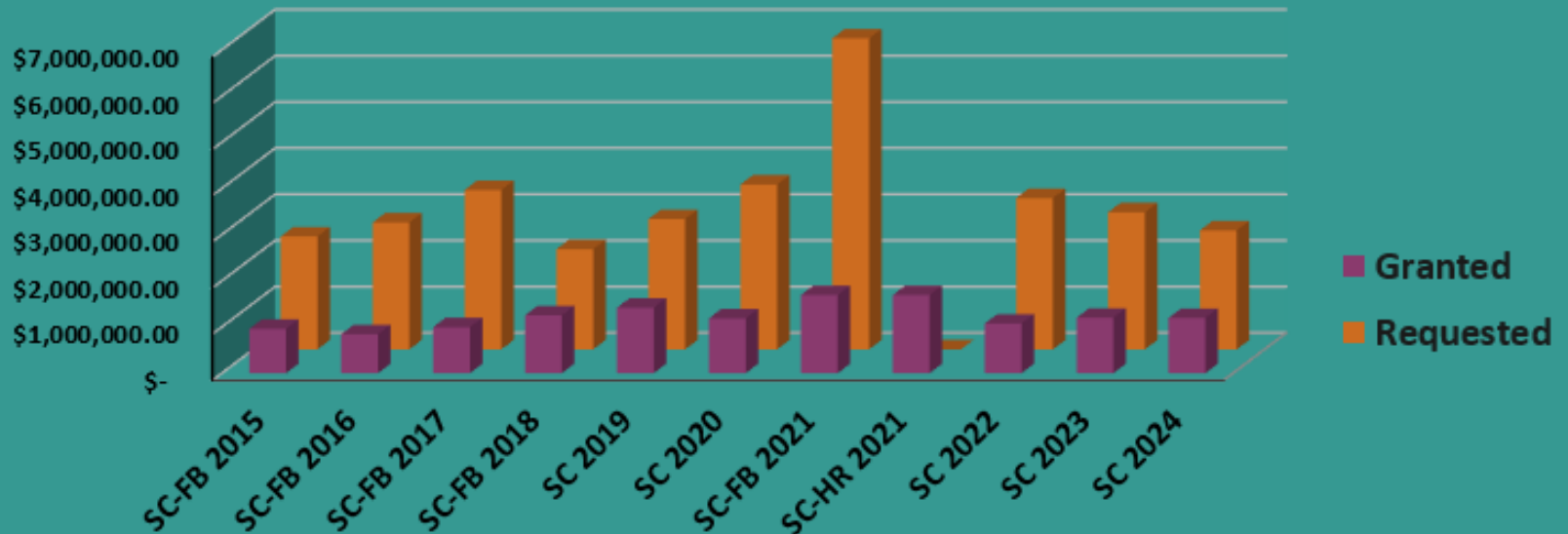
- Enhance the competitiveness of U.S. or U.S. territory grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets, including—
 - 1) by leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops;
 - 2) by assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops;
 - 3) by expanding availability and access to specialty crops;
 - 4) by addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers; and
 - 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.
- Benefit more than one commercial product, organization or individual

Previous Funding Cycles



Previous Funding Cycles

Funding Requested/Granted by Cycle



Current SCBGP-2025 Cycle

- AMS has not announced what Arizona's allocation will be for 2025.
- AZDA projects that approximately \$1,250,000 will eventually be available for this funding cycle. **Subject to change.**
- AZDA plans to award multiple grants from these funds.
- Grant requests cannot exceed \$100,000.00.
- AZDA may place an additional per application cap on grant awards.
- USDA, as the funding source, has the final approval over all grant projects.

Eligible Applicants

Applicants

Requirements

Eligible Applicants

- State and/or local organizations
- Producer associations/non-profits
- Academia
- Community based organizations/non-profits
- Other specialty crop stakeholders
- For-Profit entities and Individuals are eligible, but they must demonstrate a benefit to others as well.

Eligible Applicants

- As single entities or in combined efforts
- Regional or multi-state projects should apply under the SCMP
- More than one application per applicant may be submitted
- Prioritize submissions

Eligibility Requirements

- Must provide a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number
- Register in SAM.gov if awarded
- Register and participate in the E-verify program if defined as an employer in [A.R.S. § 23-211\(4\)](#)
- Provide evidence of lawful presence in the United States

Eligible Projects

Purpose

Stakeholder priorities

Examples

Restrictions and limitations

Purpose

- Enhance the competitiveness of U.S. or U.S. territory grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets, including—
 - 1) by leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops;
 - 2) by assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops;
 - 3) by expanding availability and access to specialty crops;
 - 4) by addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers; and
 - 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.
- Benefit more than one commercial product, organization or individual

Funding Priorities

AZDA conducted a survey of specialty crop stakeholders and other agricultural community organizations to help identify funding priorities for SCBGP in Arizona that align with AZDA's strategic plan. Below is a list of funding categories identified along with some examples:

Production:

- Facilitating the implementation of water-conscious agricultural practices and increased market strength
- Enhancing food safety and assisting all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing “Good Agricultural Practices” (GAP)
- Investing in specialty crop research, including organic research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes; pest and disease control; developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops

Resiliency:

- Improving sustainability, efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems
- Cost-share arrangements for funding GAP audits for small farmers, packers and processors
- Increase food retail opportunities for specialty crop farmers via farm-to-institution frameworks, food access (ex. food banks, pantries), and food assistance retail opportunities

Funding Priorities

Marketing and Promotion:

- "Buy Local" Programs
- Farm to Cafeteria resources and programs to assist with food safety, marketing value added products, and procurement processes for specialty crop producers to expand markets and build relationships with food entrepreneurs, school cafes, and local businesses

Education:

- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops
- Beginning Farmer Assistance Programs to support funding through scholarships to attend workshops/educational events or host networking events
- Participation of industry representatives at meetings of international standard setting bodies in which the U.S. Government participates

Examples of Unacceptable Projects

- A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop for the purpose of making a profit, or to expand production of a single business.
- A State requests grant funds to make grants to individual specialty crop businesses or roadside stands to promote their individual business.
- A sole proprietor requests grant funds to redesign her/his logo in order to make her/his specialty crop value-added product stand out at the local farmers market.
- A company that develops specialty crop value-added products requests funds to train its employees how to make its value-added products.
- A specialty crop producer requests funds to promote their asparagus at a roadside stand.

Examples of Acceptable Projects

- A State requests funding to contract with a university to conduct research on the feasibility of planting, cultivating, and growing a specialty crop in a particular area, the results of which can be shared with many growers throughout the State.
- A single grower requests funds to demonstrate the viability of organic small fruit production and partners with Cooperative Extension to publicize the working model of diversification to other regional growers.
- A single company requests funds to provide a viable pollination alternative to specialty crop stakeholders in the region, which currently does not have one.
- A single specialty crop organization requests funds to conduct an advertising campaign that will benefit their specialty crop members.
- A single farmer erects high tunnels on their property to extend the growing season of tomatoes and lettuce and conducts a field day and farm tour to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the production methods.

Other Projects

- Projects that support biobased and bioenergy programs should visit the USDA energy website at: <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/initiatives/energy>
- Projects that support farmers' markets that do not solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops should visit the Farmers' Market Promotion Program website at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp/>

Other Projects

- 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 Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>
- Section 10107 of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 provides funding specifically for multistate projects. Guidelines for the Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP) can be found at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scmp>.

Restrictions and Limitations

- Political and lobbying activities
- Supplement State funds, not replace
- Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land is unallowable as direct and indirect charges
- Capital expenditures for special purpose equipment over \$10,000 need prior approval
- Rental costs of buildings and equipment is allowable

Project Duration

- Approximate time period

September 30, 2025* – September 29, 2027

*Start date can be adjusted to accommodate pre-award costs.

- Limited no-cost extensions
- Must allow time to complete projects, collect and analyze data to report on measurable outcomes and submit reports

Application Process

- Step 1 - Download the Application Packet files
- Step 2 - Complete the Application Packet files
- Step 3 - Submit the Application Packet files

Instructions

- It is highly recommended that you visit the webpage and review the instructions in Appendix G of the Grant Manual as soon as possible to become familiar with the following application steps.
- They are general instructions based on the use of Windows 10 Pro as the operating system and Google Chrome as the browser. The use of a different operating system and/or a browser other than Google Chrome, i.e. Internet Explorer, Safari or Firefox may vary the process of saving or downloading files to your computer.
- If you have technical difficulties during the process, please contact us during regular business hours.

System Requirements

- To complete the application steps, your computer system must have the following:
 - Internet access
 - Adobe Acrobat Reader
- Access the SCBGP solicitation web page at:
<http://tinyurl.com/SCBGP2025>

Application Packet

Application packet requirements

Application cover sheet

Project profile template

Application Packet

- Each application packet is made up of 2 major elements:
 - Application Cover Sheet
 - Project Profile Template

Application Packet

- Each application packet must include required sections in the proper format
- Each application cover sheet must be signed by an authorized signer (defined on page 3 of the Grant Manual)
- Must use form and template available on-line

Application Cover Sheet – Appendix B

- Must use fillable PDF form available on-line
- Company/Organization Name – *The name of the company/organization that the grant award agreement will be with*
- Grant Project Contact– *person directly responsible for executing the objectives in the project proposal*
- Grant Management Contact – *person directly responsible for the administration of the grant (i.e. budget reports, amendments, etc.)*
- Provide UEI # - *or indicate whether one has been requested*
- Project Title
- Must be signed by an authorized signer
- Upon completion, the form must be printed, signed and scanned as a new PDF document.

Application Cover Sheet – Appendix B

APPENDIX B

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Application Cover Sheet

Company/Organization Name _____

DBA: _____

Grant Project Contact: _____
Principal Investigator for Universities

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____ Fax: _____

Email Address: _____

Grant Management Contact: _____
Administration

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Cell: _____ Fax: _____

Email Address: _____

Tax ID: _____ UEI # _____ UEI# Requested?

Yes No

County of Project: _____

Legislative District: _____ Congressional District: _____

Is this a multi-state project? Yes No List partnering state(s): _____

Project Title: _____

Project Begin Date: _____ Project End Date: _____

Funding Amount Requested: _____ (NOT TO EXCEED \$100,000.00)

Specific Specialty Crop(s) deriving benefit from grant (For example: "Iceberg Lettuce" instead of "Vegetables or "Lettuce." _____

I hereby certify that the information in the application packet is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Authorized Signature _____ Date: _____

Printed Name _____

Title _____

Project Profile – Appendix C

- Must use dynamic PDF template available on-line
- Must be downloaded to computer's hard drive
- Cannot be completed in a browser
- Updated version available on-line

Project Profile Template – Appendix C



APPENDIX C

SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM PROJECT PROFILE TEMPLATE

AWARD YEARS 2022 FORWARD

The State Plan should include a series of project profiles that detail the necessary information to fulfill the goals and objectives of each project. The following information must be included in each project profile.

ORGANIZATION DETAIL

Organization Name	<input type="text"/>
Organization Contact Name	<input type="text"/>
Phone	<input type="text"/>
Organization Email	<input type="text"/>
Organization Fax	<input type="text"/>

Mailing Address

Street:	<input type="text"/>				
City:	<input type="text"/>	State:	<input type="text"/>	Zip:	<input type="text"/>

PROJECT TITLE

DURATION OF PROJECT

Start Date	<input type="text"/>
End Date	<input type="text"/>

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. The project's purpose, deliverables, and expected outcomes; and
3. A description of the general tasks/activities 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.

Project Profile Template – Appendix C

Please wait...

If this message is not eventually replaced by the proper contents of the document, your PDF viewer may not be able to display this type of document.

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<https://www.zoomgov.com/rec/play/qwcZMcOwrsB81MH0-DmC-JYd-MHu1slkXX0FN-TwMxejYJvxhXSwLcCmqhOWVOb81CQz9rmAjazL4swv.KCKO4FnveZRRbXCR>

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Duration of Project

- The start date is subject to approval and pre-award cost restrictions indicated in the Budget Narrative section.
- The end date can be no later than September 29, 2027. The project duration must include time for completing all proposed objectives, data collection and reporting on Objectives, Outcomes and Indicators.

Applicant Org and Summary

- Include a project summary of 250 words or less suitable for dissemination to the public. A Project Summary provides a very brief description of your project. A Project Summary includes:
 - 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,
 - Any applicable project partners,
 - A concise outline of the project's outcome(s), and
 - A description of the general tasks to be completed during the project period to fulfill this goal.

Summary 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.

Project Purpose and Objectives

- What is the specific issue, problem, interest or need to be addressed? *(5,000 character limit)*
- Provide a listing of the objectives that the project hopes to achieve.

Project Impact

- Number of beneficiaries.
- Socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher?
- Beginning farmer or rancher?
- Enhancing Specialty Crops Statement.
- Project continuation? *(Character limits)*
- Support from other programs? *(1,500 character limit)*

External Project Support

Describe the specialty crop stakeholders (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project) who support this project and why. *(1,500 character limit)*

Expected Measurable Outcomes

- You must choose at least one of the outcomes/indicators listed in the Project Profile Template - Appendix C, which were approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to evaluate the performance of the SCBGP on a national level.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Outcome 1, Indicator 1. Total number of consumers who gained knowledge about specialty crops 132.
- Outcome 1, Indicator 1.a. Adults 100.
- Outcome 1, Indicator 1.b. Children 32.

- You are only required to select ONE outcome/indicator. However, if you have multiple outcomes/indicators, repeat for each outcome/indicator.
- Please remember that the progress of each outcome/indicator must be reported in the Quarterly Performance Reports and the result in the Final Performance Report.

Expected Measurable Outcomes

- Miscellaneous outcome measures – not recommended
- Data collection to report on outcomes and indicators

Budget Narrative

- Please do not use arbitrary estimates when developing a project's budget. If awarded, the project budget may require further detail and the estimates provided will need to have some research behind them to justify each budget line item.
- Clearly show the federal funds that support the project – in whole dollars only.
- Use tables provided in Project Profile Template.

Budget Narrative

- No administrative/indirect costs may be allotted to the budgeted project.
- Consult Appendix D for more details on allowable/unallowable costs and activities.
- Matching funds are no longer an application rating criteria – can be described in External Project Support section

Pre-award Costs

- Pre-award costs are allowable, if such costs are necessary to conduct the project or program, and would be allowable under the grant, if awarded. A grantee may incur pre-award costs as early as July 1, 2025 without prior approval from the AZDA, at its own risk. The incurrence of pre-award costs in anticipation of an award imposes no obligation on the AZDA or AMS SCBGP to award funds for such costs.
- Pre-award costs are defined as those costs incurred prior to the effective date of the Federal award directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the Federal award where such costs are necessary for efficient and timely performance of the scope of work. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the Federal award and only with the written approval of the Federal awarding agency and the AZDA. [2 C.F.R. § 200.458](#)

Budget Narrative (cont.)

- Personnel

- Name/position title, percent of FTE, corresponding salary for FTE, total

- Fringe Benefits

- Name/position title, rate and total

- Travel

- Details per table in template
- Justification for each trip
- Conforming with travel policy*

Budget Narrative (cont.)

- Special Purpose Equipment – 1 year useful life and cost of \$10,000 or more
 - Details per table in template
 - Justification for each
- Supplies – cost under \$10,000
 - Details per table in template
 - Justification for each (categorize like items)

Budget Narrative (cont.)

- Contractual

- Details per table in template
- Justification and details for each contract
- Contractor/Consultant hourly rates may not exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in your area, excluding travel and subsistence costs. See www.OPM.gov
- Conforming with procurement standards

Budget Narrative (cont.)

- Other – provide details per table
 - Conferences/Meetings – no meals
 - Communications
 - Speaker/Trainer Fees
 - Publication costs
 - Data collection
 - Etc.

Budget Narrative (cont.)

- Program Income
 - Indicate the nature or source of program income, how you will reinvest the income to be used to further enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops and the estimated amount

Exclusions

- No administration/indirect costs may be allotted to the budgeted projects.
- Travel expenses associated with the project shall follow the Arizona State Travel Policy as outlined in Section II-D of the State of Arizona Accounting Manual, which can be viewed at: <https://gao.az.gov/state-arizona-accounting-manual-saam>
- Funding cannot be utilized for meals, with the exception of per diem meals consumed during periods of official travel.
- Grant funds may not be used to fund political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. 1501-1508 and 7324-7326).
- For more exclusions see Appendix D – Allowable/Unallowable Costs and Activities.

Application Checklist – Appendix A

Provided to help facilitate the completeness of your application

Application Checklist – Appendix A

- Application packets must be submitted electronically on-line at:
<http://tinyurl.com/SCBGP2025>
- Signed Application Cover Sheet – PDF Form
 - No more than 1 page
- Project Profile Template – PDF Form

Application Checklist– Appendix A

APPENDIX A

SCBGP CHECKLIST

- Application packets must be submitted electronically on-line at: <https://tinyurl.com/SCBGP-2025>**

It is highly recommended that applicants visit the webpage above and review the instructions in Appendix G as soon as possible to become familiar with the on-line application process.

Each application packet should include the following:

- Eligible Specialty Crop**

The commodity(s) deriving benefit from the grant is/are eligible under the USDA-AMS "Definition of Specialty Crops". See Section I.J.

- Signed Application Cover Sheet**

Must be completed in fillable PDF form, printed, signed and scanned into a new PDF document. Not more than ONE page. Grant request not more than \$100,000.00.

- Project Profile**

Must be completed in the fillable PDF form SCBGP Project Profile Template.
The project period can be no more than 2 years (24 months) duration.

**COMPLETED APPLICATION PACKETS MUST BE SUBMITTED NO
LATER THAN 11:59:59 p.m. (MST), MARCH 17, 2025**

Application Packet Deadline

- Early review is no longer available.
- **Please follow instructions in Appendix G to submit application packets for early review.**
- Final Application deadline is:
Monday, March 17, 2025 @ 11:59:59 pm (MST)

Evaluation Process

Pre-screening process

Evaluation criteria

Timelines

Pre-Screening

- At least three AZDA staff will screen the application packets according to the Application Packet Screening Criteria in the grant manual (Page 16). Only application packets that adequately address the criteria listed will receive further consideration for an award.

Evaluation Criteria

The Evaluation Team will first assess to what extent the proposed project does the following:

- i. enhances the competitiveness of the specialty crop(s) benefiting from the project;
- ii. **clearly defines a challenge** that is facing today's Specialty Crop industry or a lack of education about and/or access to specialty crops and indicates a project that **assists in finding a solution**;
- iii. includes well justified and appropriate budget information; and
- iv. is feasible.

Evaluation Criteria

For those application packets not eliminated by the screening process in III.A (page 16). and not recommended for funding by evaluation process in III.B. (page 17), the Evaluation Team will use the following criteria (page 17) to rate the application packets and make recommendations for funding to the AZDA Director.

Evaluation Criteria

WEIGHT	CRITERIA	RATING
35%	To what extent will the proposed project enhance the competitiveness of the specialty crop(s) benefiting from this project?	0 to 5 with 0 being the lowest and 5 being the highest
25%	To what extent does the proposal clearly define a challenge that is facing today's Specialty Crop industry and indicate a project that assists in finding a solution?	0 to 5 with 0 being the lowest and 5 being the highest
25%	To what extent will the proposed project address the funding priorities listed in Section I.K. on page 9?	0 to 5 with 0 being the lowest and 5 being the highest
15%	Does the budget align with the activities of the project and only contain necessary costs?	0 to 5 with 0 being the lowest and 5 being the highest

Reporting Requirements

- Quarterly reports are required
- Expenses are only reimbursed quarterly
- Source documentation, receipts, invoices, etc. are required

Reporting Periods

September 30 – December 31

January 1 – March 31

April 1 – June 30

July 1 – **September 29**

Report Due on or before

January 31

April 30

July 31

October 31

Timelines

SCBGP-2025 Timeline

March 17, 2025 – 11:59:59 pm (MST)	Final application deadline
March 18, 2025 – 8:00 am	Reading of applications into public record
March 18 – March 21, 2025	Pre-screening and distribution to evaluators for review and scoring
Week of April 7, 2025	Evaluator meeting and recommendations to the Director

Timelines

SCBGP-2025 Timeline (Cont'd)

Mid to Late April, 2025	Notification of AZDA award and inclusion in the State Plan (contingent upon approval from AMS)
Mid April thru September , 2025	AZDA sub-grantees work with Grant Coordinator on necessary revisions for State Plan
<i>May 2, 2025</i>	State Plan deadline to AMS
August or September, 2025	Notification of State Plan approval
September 2025	Grant Award Agreements in place – effective no sooner than September 30 th

SCBGP Contacts

For questions, please contact:

Lisa James
SCBGP Grant Program Manager
Phone: (602) 542-3262
E-mail: ljames@azda.gov

Ashley Estes
SCBGP Grant Program Coordinator
Phone: (602) 542-0972
E-mail: aestes@azda.gov

scbgp@azda.gov

Toll Free Outside Maricopa County: (800) 294-0308

Fax: (602) 364-0830

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QUESTIONS?