



2023 Illinois Specialty Crop Grant Program

Funded by the United States Department of Agriculture's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp)

CFDA#
10.170

Proposal Submission Guide

DESCRIPTION OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

The Illinois Department of Agriculture has been allocated funds next federal fiscal year from the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). These funds will support projects beginning in calendar year 2023 that are intended to expand the availability of fresh, locally-grown produce and strengthen the competitiveness of the state's specialty crop industry. Illinois currently devotes more than 100,000 acres of farmland to growing specialty crops, which produce nearly \$500 million in sales for Illinois farmers. To encourage further expansion of this industry, and to take full advantage of the allocated funds, the department invites the development of projects 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 ([21 U.S.C. Chapter 27](#)), for example, developing "Good Agricultural Practices," "Good Handling Practices," "Good Manufacturing Practices," and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems (including USDA GroupGAP) 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;
- Sustainability.

Grants will be awarded through a competitive review process that includes the use of an independent committee of stakeholders from the agricultural community. Project proposals are due **April 15, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.** Those selected for funding will be notified after their application has been approved by the USDA, which is anticipated in **September**. Work on the selected projects may begin Jan. 1, 2023, after contracts between the department and grantees have been signed.

ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

To be eligible for grant funding, a proposal must solely enhance the competitiveness of Illinois-grown specialty crops in domestic or foreign markets. Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture. For a complete list of eligible specialty crops, visit the USDA's SCBGP [website](#).

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Proposals should describe how the project potentially impacts and produces measurable outcomes for either the entire specialty crop industry or public as opposed to a single organization, institution or individual. Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a benefit to a single organization, institution or individual. Single organizations, institutions and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

- Proposals will be accepted from non-profit organizations, producer organizations, government agencies, universities and other organizations related to Illinois' specialty crops industry.
- Proposals cannot be accepted from individuals, individual producers, for-profit businesses or commercial entities **unless** the project is focused on research, education, demonstration or in some way benefits the entire specialty crop industry.
- Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a benefit or profit to a single organization, institution or individual.
- Projects must have a very strong information dissemination and outreach component where results from the project are shared with others so that others may benefit from the project.
- Proposals that involve collaboration or partnerships between producers, industry groups, academics, or other organizations are encouraged.
- Applicants may cooperate with any public or private organization involving agricultural development, research, and/or marketing to enhance Illinois' specialty crop industry.
- If two or more individuals or organizations propose a joint project, they must submit one application as co- applicants.

EXAMPLES

ELIGIBLE 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 non-profit 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.

INELIGIBLE 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 either at cost or at a higher price than the purchase price while competing with other private companies that sell produce in the area.
- A sole proprietor requests grant funds to redesign his logo in order to make his specialty crop value-added product stand out at the local farmer's market.
- A single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase its membership.

PROJECTS MORE SUITABLE 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 [Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grants 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](#) and [Local Food Promotion Program](#).
- Projects that support bio-based products and bioenergy and energy programs, including biofuels and other alternative uses for agricultural and forestry commodities, should visit the [USDA energy website](#) for information on how to submit those projects for consideration to the energy programs supported by USDA.

To demonstrate its impact on the competitiveness of an eligible specialty crop, projects **must** include at least one of the seven outcomes listed in the [SCBGP Evaluation Plan \(Performance Measures Website\)](#) and at least one of the indicators listed in the selected outcome(s). Recipients cannot use grant funds to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services. They also cannot use funds to disparage the mission, goals, or actions of another organization.

**HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION**

All proposals must be sent in word or pdf form to agr.iscbg@illinois.gov by
April 15, 2022 4:00 pm.

EXPENSES

All costs must be associated with project activities that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. The program **does not** have a cost-sharing or matching requirement. However, in some cases applicants may need to propose cost-sharing or matching contributions to ensure all grant funds benefit only eligible specialty crops. Indirect costs are limited to 8 percent of the total funds provided per [Sec. 101\(k\) \(2\) of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 113-79](#). The list below summarizes the program's funding restrictions. It is not intended to be all-inclusive. Applicants should consult the most recent [USDA General Terms and Conditions](#) for a complete list of eligible and ineligible expenses.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- Compensation for Personnel Services
 - Salaries, wages, and fringe benefits
- Consultant Services or Subcontractors
 - Costs of professional and consultant services rendered by persons who are members of a particular profession or possess a special skill.
- Materials and Supplies
 - Costs incurred for materials, supplies, and fabricated parts necessary to carry out the grant project. Purchased materials and supplies shall be charged at their actual prices, net of applicable credits.
- Equipment and other Capital Expenditures
 - Lease/rental or depreciation costs
 - Capital expenditures for special purpose equipment are allowable as direct costs, provided that items with a unit cost of \$5000 or more have the prior approval of the USDA.
- Travel Costs
 - Expenses for airfare, lodging, meals, mileage, parking, etc. are allowable if directly related to, and necessary for, grant activities, and accounted-for in the budget.
- Other Miscellaneous Costs
 - For example: telephone, meetings, publications, etc.

INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- Capital Expenditures for General Purpose Equipment, Buildings and Land (Equipment)
- Bad Debts
- Lobbying, Political and Other Governmental Activities

- Entertainment and Alcohol
 - Alcoholic beverages except when the costs are associated with enhancing the competitiveness of wine grapes and prior approval is given from the awarding agency.
 - Amusement, diversion, and social activities and any costs directly associated with such costs (such as tickets to shows or sports events, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, and gratuities) are not allowed.
- Contributions to a contingency reserve or any similar provision
- Fines, penalties, damages, and other settlements resulting from violations (or alleged violations) of, or failure of the governmental unit to comply with, Federal, State, local, or Indian tribal laws and regulations
- Costs of goods or services for personal use of the governmental unit's employees regardless of whether the cost is reported as taxable income to the employees
- 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
- Costs of investment counsel and staff and similar expenses incurred to enhance income from investments
- Contributions or donations, including cash, property and services, made by the governmental unit, regardless of the recipient
- Grant funds shall supplement the expenditure of State funds in support of specialty crops grown in that State, rather than replace State funds

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Proposal Deadline: April 15, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.

- Proposals must meet **all** specified requirements. Failure to follow and complete all requirements will result in the proposal not being considered for funding.
- Electronic submissions of proposals (Microsoft Word or PDF documents) will be the only form accepted.
 - Submissions should be sent to agr.iscbg@illinois.gov
 - Please do not send scanned copies of your application.
- **Applications received after 4:00 p.m., April 15, 2022 will not be considered for funding.**
- All proposals, including the cover page, must be typed or computer generated.
- The acceptable font size for the narrative is 11 or 12 pitch. All margins should be set at 1 inch.

- The application cover page provided by the Department must be the first page of the proposal packet. Proposals should not include more than one cover sheet or instruction pages.
- Copies of the required proposal forms may be requested from the Illinois Department of Agriculture and also are available on the Illinois Department of Agriculture's [website](#).
 - Note: The forms are included in this packet, too.
- Applicants must include a W-9 form (<http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>) with their packet.

APPLICATION REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Grant proposals will be assessed by an internal review committee comprised of Illinois Department of Agriculture employees as well as an external review committee of representatives from throughout the agricultural community utilizing the “2023 Illinois Specialty Crop Grant Program, Proposal Packet Requirements, IDOA Internal Review Committee Questions and Scoring Criteria.”

Selected proposals will be submitted to the United State Department of Agriculture for final approval as part of Illinois’ State Plan Application.

If approved by the USDA for funding, the organization responsible for the successful project and the Department will enter into a grant agreement. By signing the document, the grantee will agree to 1) execute all aspects of the grant agreement according to applicable state and federal regulations (or as they may be later revised) and successive published regulations as appropriate; 2) complete activities outlined in the approved proposal, any approved revisions thereto, and the approved project budget; and 3) adhere to the SCBGP General Award Terms and Conditions as set forth within the grant agreement.

PROGRAM PAYMENTS

Grantees will receive payments on a reimbursement basis and will be paid quarterly. The Project Coordinator identified in the USDA-approved Project Profile, or his or her fiscal agent, shall request reimbursements from the Department within thirty (30) days of the end of the quarter using a Department-provided template that categorizes expenditures according to their line item in the Grantee’s approved budget.

Payment is dependent upon the Department receiving the requested funds from the USDA and the grantee having a certified W-9 on file with the Illinois Comptroller’s Office. Any expenses incurred after September 29, 2025, the end of the grant term, will not be eligible for reimbursement.

The Department will require written justification if grant funds are not drawn down in the first year of the grant term and at reasonable intervals thereafter. It reserves the right to reduce or terminate the obligation of funds to a project without further cause unless the grantee commences a timely drawdown of funds.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Both interim and final performance reports are required to track the progress made toward the completion of each objective within the approved Project Profile. The frequency of the interim reports depends upon the method of payment chosen. Grantees that opt to receive cash advances are required to submit monthly progress reports, while grantees that opt to be reimbursed for project expenses need only to submit quarterly progress reports. All projects are required to submit a final performance report, regardless of the method of payment chosen, and may need to submit annual reports as well if their work spans more than one year.

Interim Performance Reports - Monthly performance reports are due no later than the end of the first, full week of the month after the period covered in the report. Quarterly performance reports are due no later than thirty (30) days after the end of each fiscal quarter. If the Grantee is unable, because of extenuating circumstances, to meet the appropriate filing deadline, the Grantee shall notify the Department and may request an extension of time in which to submit the report. The Department shall not withhold approval of such a request without good cause. However, only one extension of time is permitted per report. These interim report requirements will remain in place until such time as the required Final Performance Report is submitted to the Department. The Department will provide to the Grantee the format to be used for these reports, which will include the following information:

- A. A brief summary of the activities performed, and milestones achieved for each objective of the project.
- B. A description of any problems or delays that have been encountered as well as any favorable or unusual developments.
- C. An outline of future project plans.
- D. A narrative explaining the grant funds and matching contributions, if any, that have been expended on the project.

Annual Performance Reports - Annual Performance Reports are required if a grant period is more than one year in length and are due the first business day in December. A Grantee potentially could submit as many as two Annual Performance Reports, one in each of the first two years of their Agreement. In the third, and final, year of the Agreement the Grantee must complete and submit a Final Performance Report. If the grant period is one year or less, then only a Final Performance Report is required. The Annual Performance Report should cover only the most recent one-year period. The Department will provide the Grantee with a template for this report, which will include the same categories as the Interim Performance Report.

Final Performance Reports - A final, written report describing the work performed and results obtained is due no later than 90 days after the end date of the grant Agreement, unless an extension has been granted. The Final Performance Report covers the entire grant period of the award and shall include the following sections: Project Summary, Project Approach, Goals and Outcomes Achieved, Lessons Learned, Beneficiaries, Contact Person and Additional Information. A budget worksheet that details all grant-funded expenditures also is a required component of the Final Performance Report, as are copies of source documentation such as invoices from grant-related expenditures.

Final Performance Reports are an important vehicle for sharing award findings with the public. Like with the Interim and Annual reports, the Department will provide a template to use for this report.

Grantees who do not submit the required performance reports, or who submit incomplete reports, may have funds withheld or be required to return previously distributed funds.

PROGRAM POLICIES

The Illinois Department of Agriculture reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals received.
- Request additional information on project proposals.
- Provide partial funding for a proposal that may be less than the full amount requested in the grant application.
- Require a good faith effort from the project sponsor to work with the Department subsequent to project completion to develop reporting data or implement the project results, where applicable.
- Withhold any payments that do not meet grant conditions.
- Require the refunding of any grant monies used for ineligible or unauthorized expenditures.

Grantees must:

- Agree to comply with all applicable federal, state and local laws, codes, regulations, rules and orders. The grant will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the state of Illinois. Information submitted in the grant proposals is subject to Illinois law.
- Be accountable for all grant funds awarded.
- Maintain books, records, receipts and accounting procedures and practices sufficient to reflect all costs claimed to have been incurred for the performance of the grant agreement.
- Complete required reports that document all grant expenditures and activities. Failure to meet report deadlines can result in the Department terminating the grant agreement and requesting the refund of all grant monies from the grantee.

- Make receipts, books, and records available for audit or examination as specifically outlined in the grant agreement.
- Obtain prior approval from the Department, which will notify USDA, to reallocate budget funds between categories if a material change (20 percent of the total grant amount or greater) is needed during the project period.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Legislative authority is provided under section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 ([7 U.S.C. 1621 note](#)) and amended under section 10010 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 113-79 (the Farm Bill). SCBGP is currently implemented under [7 CFR part 1291](#) (published March 27, 2009; 74 FR 13313).

USDA ADMINISTRATIVE 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 subrecipients are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable Federal regulations.

DUNS NUMBER REQUIREMENT

Applicants, except for individuals, must have a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number at the time of application. A DUNS number is a unique number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc., to identify organizations. **On April 4, 2022**, the Federal government will stop using DUNS and start using a Unique Entity Identifier created in SAM.gov. For more information, please visit gsa.gov/entityid.

SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT

To receive a specialty crop block grant, applicants also 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). SAM registration must be updated annually and be active and always maintained with current information during which the applicant 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 should visit <https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM/#1>. Questions about SAM should be directed to askSAM@gsa.gov.

CHECKLIST OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

- ✓ State law now requires entities to register and pre-qualify online at grants.illinois.gov before they can apply for a state grant. For further details, see the Notice of Funding Opportunity posted below.
- ✓ 2023 Illinois Specialty Crop Grant Program
Application Cover Sheet
 - *This form is required for the project proposal and should be included as the first page of the proposal packet when submitted to the Department.*
- ✓ 2023 Illinois Specialty Crop Grant Program
Project Profile
 - *This document is provided to the applicant for use during the development of the proposal. This document outlines in detail the USDA, AMS requirements for Project Profiles to be submitted within the State's Plan. All content must be included in the Proposal Packet submitted to IDOA for consideration of funding.*
- ✓ Internal Revenue Service W-9 Form (Rev. 3)
 - *This form is required for payments by the Illinois Office of the Comptroller.*
 - <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw9.pdf>

2023 Illinois Specialty Crop Grant Program

IDOA Internal Review Committee Questions and Scoring Criteria

This form is provided for reference purposes only. It will be utilized by the IDOA Internal and External Review Committees during their review of all submitted applications.

For Word versions of all documents visit:

<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/agr/Assistance/IllinoisFarmPrograms/specialty-crop-grants/Pages/default.aspx>