



Request for Applications

Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry 2024 Specialty Crop Program Requirements and Guidelines

State Agency

Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry (LDAF or State)

State Agency Contact

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Deadline for Receiving Completed Application Packet

Applications must be received by the State Agency Contact **no later than the close of business (4:30 p.m. CST) on Friday, March 15, 2024.**

Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
SCBGP	<u>Specialty Crop Block Grant Program</u>
Sub-grantee	<u>A firm, organization or institution who is awarded a contract through LDAF</u>
Application	<u>A response to an RFA</u>
Applicant	<u>A firm or individual who responds to an RFA</u>
RFA	<u>A request for applications</u>
Shall, Must, or Will	<u>Denotes mandatory language; a requirement that must be met without alteration</u>
Should, Can, or May	<u>Denotes desirable, non-mandatory language</u>
Underserved Farmer	<u>A farmer who is a member of an Underserved Group. An Underserved Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and, where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program</u>
Beginning Farmer	<u>An individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation</u>
Veteran Farmer	<u>A producer who served in the United States Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard, including the reserve component thereof, was released from service under conditions other than dishonorable, and has not operated a farm or ranch or has operated a farm or ranch for no more than 10 years or who first obtained status as a veteran during the most recent 10-year period.</u>

General Information

On December 21, 2004, the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) authorized the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide grants to state Departments of Agriculture to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops and it was amended by section 10107 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (Pub. L. No.115-334) (Farm Bill).

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) assists State departments of agriculture in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by -

1. leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops;
2. assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops;
3. expanding availability and access to specialty crops; and
4. addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers.

Specialty crops are fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture, nursery crops (including floriculture).

NOTE: Funding for the 2024 SCBGP is contingent upon federal USDA fund availability. Grant funds will only be allocated if these federal funds are received.

With approval of funding, each state department of agriculture that submits a state application that is reviewed and approved by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is to receive an estimated base grant of approximately \$243,001.17 and an amount based on the average of the most recent available value of specialty crop cash receipts in the State (2021 calendar year estimates) and the acreage of specialty crop production in the State (2017 Census of Agriculture). The data source for specialty crop cash receipts and acreage is the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service and National Agricultural Statics Service.

USDA SCBGP announcement of their Request for Applications from states has not been issued to date; however, LDAF anticipates at least **\$350,000.00 to be allocated for Louisiana**. If funds become available, LDAF will be awarding project funding through a competitive application process. LDAF will develop a state plan requesting these federal funds to implement the selected projects that meet program guidelines to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

This request for applications has been developed to provide information and encourage interested parties to apply for reimbursable funding of individual projects to be included in the LDAF state plan as sub-grantee partners. LDAF will only consider applications received **no later than the close of business (4:30 p.m. CST), Friday March 15, 2024**, for inclusion in LDAF's state plan.

Applicants shall describe how the project will affect and produce measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. 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.

Projects will be reviewed and scored by a panel that will provide recommendations to the LDAF Commissioner. LDAF reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested. Unallowable costs will be removed from the selected projects proposed budgets that are selected prior to inclusion in the LDAF state plan.

Eligibility Qualifications to be Considered

1. To be eligible for funding consideration the project(s) must enhance the competitiveness of Louisiana grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Reference the SCBGP-FB website at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/scbgpdefinitions> for a list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities.
2. Individual farms are **NOT** eligible to apply for grant funds for profit. Producer associations, state and/or local organizations, state or local governments, qualified educational institutions, non-profits, and other specialty crop stakeholders are eligible recipients.
3. Grant funds can be awarded for sub-grantee projects lasting up to two years and eleven months. The project start period may not begin prior to October 1, 2024, and should end no later than August 30, 2027.
4. Applications should describe how the project potentially impacts and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. Grant funds **will not** be awarded for projects that directly benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. Single organizations, institutions, and individual producers are encouraged to participate as project partners for projects that benefit industries as a whole.
5. Multi-state projects are encouraged to apply for funding consideration through the USDA Multi-State Specialty Crop Grant. That grant opportunity can be reference by clicking the following link: [Specialty Crop Multi-State Program | Agricultural Marketing Service \(usda.gov\)](#).
6. To be eligible applicants **must** provide a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number. If you don't currently have a number, you can apply for the number by clicking on the provided link: www.gsa.gov/entityid.
7. For organizations that are governed by a board/committee, a signed resolution by the authorized representative of the entity stating approval to conduct the project and to seek funding **must** be provided at the time of the application submission to be eligible.
8. USDA applications are not eligible unless they are project partners with producer associations, state and/or local organizations, state or local governments, qualified educational institutions, non-profits, or other specialty crop stakeholders in Louisiana.
9. Funds **will not** be awarded for projects that solely benefit a single organization, institution, or individual. For example, the 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program **will not** fund a project to start or expand a farm, purchase starter plants

or equipment or increase production of a single business or organization to make a profit. Grant funds **cannot** be used to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent projects or services.

Work to be Performed and Scope of Services Required

To be considered, projects must meet one or more of the following and support a program directed toward enhancing the competitiveness of Louisiana produced specialty crops. Each project must identify at least one expected measurable outcome that specifically demonstrates the project's impact in enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops.

1. Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
2. Increasing the competitiveness of specialty crop farmers, including Native American, beginning farmers, veteran farmers or underserved farmers by addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers;
3. Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems;
4. Assisting 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;
5. Specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
6. Enhancing food safety;
7. Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
8. Pest and disease control;
9. Specialty crop development of sustainability production practices;
10. Leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops

Administration of Grants

AMS applies federal grant uniform administrative requirements to the management of each grant award, and the State Departments of Agriculture shall in turn apply these requirements to the sub-grantees. This includes ensuring that subrecipients maintain appropriate records and follow all applicable Federal statutes and regulations as well as the Grant Agreement and applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions.

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 sub-recipients are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable Federal and State regulations.

The code of Federal Regulations is accessible through the National Archives and Records Administration.

A complete list of current OMB Circulars can be found on the White House website.

Allowable/Unallowable Costs

Summary of allowable and unallowable costs under this SCBGP can be reviewed in common categories at the following USDA link beginning on page 10 section 8.2. [Agricultural Marketing Service Grants Division General Terms and Conditions Updated February 2023 \(usda.gov\)](#)

Reference Subpart E-Cost Principles of 2 CFR part 200 for a complete explanation of the allowability of costs. [eCFR :: 2 CFR Part 200 -- Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#)

Exceptions to the allowable costs found at the above links are included within this section below:

All travel related meals and incidentals will be reimbursed at the formal state policy rate or the federal per diem rate and not based on actual expenditures. Travel and other expenses must follow federal and state guidelines for use of federal funds.

- Indirect costs shall NOT be an allowable expense.
- Tuition remission costs shall NOT be an allowable expense.
- Out-of-state travel to present research or to attend a conference shall NOT be an allowable expense.

All awards and sub-awards are subject to those cost principles applicable to the organization concerned. For example, if a state government sub-awards to a university, the cost principles applicable to a university will apply. All costs must be associated with project activities that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

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 sub-recipients are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable Federal regulations.

The code of Federal Regulations is accessible through the National Archives and Records Administration.

A complete list of current OMB Circulars can be found on the White House website.

Application Due Date

LDAF must receive complete application packets containing all mandatory requirements **no later than 4:30 p.m. CST on Friday, March 15, 2024.** The signed application packet must be submitted to Michelle Estay, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry by email. The electronic version must be submitted to mestay@ldaf.state.la.us. All mandatory requirements, again, must be received no later than the deadline for receiving complete applications.

LDAF will reply to electronic version submissions to acknowledge receipt of the emailed application files. If applicants do not receive an acknowledgement receipt email soon after submission, it is the applicants' responsibility to contact Michelle Estay to verify that the application packet was received prior to the deadline. Email for inquiry at mestay@ldaf.state.la.us. No exceptions will be made regarding the receipt of complete applications by the required application deadline.

LDAF does not review submission(s) for content prior to the deadline to check if all mandatory requirements have been met. This is the sole responsibility of the applicant. A checklist has been provided to assist applicants with confirming a complete application packet has been accomplished. It is recommended that applicants double check that all mandatory requirements are met so that applications are not rejected on a technicality basis.

Mandatory Information Required in Application Packet and Submission Requirements

1. **ONE COMPLETE APPLICATION PACKET SHALL BE REQUIRED BY EMAIL.**
2. A completed **signed application cover page** form shall be required in the application packet.
3. In addition to a completed and signed **SF-424**, there shall be required in the application packet a completed **Project Profile**. The acceptable font pitch should be no smaller than 11. Project Profile Template should be used. Project Profile Template along with other mandatory packet documents and support materials can be found on the LDAF Specialty Crop Web Page. <https://www.ldaf.la.gov/food/selling/produce/specialty-crops/program>
4. Project Profile should be organized and have all the requested information in the outline sequence presented in the **Project Profile Template**. Complete all sections that apply, if a section doesn't apply then applicant should include N/A to acknowledge the section was addressed.
5. Project Profiles should provide detailed **budget narratives** within their Project Narrative section.

6. Applicants that are applying for grant funds shall include in their application packet at least **two letters of support** from potential beneficiaries of the project. (farmers/producers, commodity groups, industry stakeholders, etc...)
7. Organizations that are governed by a board/committee must include in their application packet a **resolution** signed by the secretary/chairman or their designee of the board/commission giving entity representative authorization to enter into agreement with LDAF and stating approval to conduct the project and seek funding. The resolution must be provided at the time of the application submission.
8. A completed **Grantee Self-Assessment of Internal Controls and Risks Document** must be completed by each applicant and shall be required in the application packet submitted. **The omission of this completed document will result in an incomplete application packet and disqualify the applicant from funding consideration.**

**

Be sure and take advantage of the **Application Packet Checklist** document to ensure you have included all application packet requirements before filing.

Project Profile Template Text

The acceptable font size should be 11 or 12 pitch. Project Profile Template along with other mandatory packet documents and support materials can be found on the LDAF Specialty Crop Web Page. <https://www.ldaf.la.gov/food/selling/produce/specialty-crops/program>

Organization Detail

Organization Name:

Project Contact Name:

Mailing Address:

Phone:

Email:

Project Title

Provide a descriptive project title in 20 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. 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 Purpose

Provide the Specific Issue, Problem or Need that the Project will Address.

Provide a Listing of the Objectives that this Project Hopes to Achieve

Include as many objectives as needed.

Objective 1

Objective 2

Objective 3

Project Beneficiaries

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

Does this project directly benefit socially disadvantaged farmers as defined in the RFA? Yes No

Does this project directly benefit beginning farmers as defined in the RFA? Yes No

Statement of Enhancing Specialty Crops

By checking the box to the right, I confirm that this project enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops in accordance with and defined by the Farm Bill. Further information regarding the definition of a specialty crop can be found at 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 you have selected "yes", please address the following:

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.

External Project Support

Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support this project and why (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project).

Expected Measurable Outcomes

Select the Appropriate Outcome(s) and Indicator(s)/Sub-Indicator(s)

All selected outcome measures and related indicators/sub-indicators must be achievable during the grant duration. Outcome measures and the associated indicators were developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Office of Management and Budget and cannot be altered or amended in any way.

You must choose at least one of the seven outcomes listed below and in the SCBGP Performance Measures [Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Outcomes and Indicators \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov), which were approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to evaluate the performance of the SCBGP on a national level. SCBGP Performance Measures can also be found on the LDAF Specialty Crop Web Page. <https://www.ldaf.la.gov/food/selling/produce/specialty-crops/program>

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. There must be quantifiable result numbers provided. Numbers should reflect what you anticipate your Outcome number to be upon completion of the project.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Outcome	Indicator	Indicator Description	Value
1	1.1a	Total number of consumers who gained knowledge about specialty crops, Adults	132

(EXPLANATION OF OUTCOME PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND INDICATORS)

Outcome Measures

Outcome 1: Increasing Consumption and Consumer Purchasing of Specialty Crops
(This outcome measure is available to any project, but it is mandatory for all marketing and promotion projects as defined below.)

Definition: Marketing and promotion projects focus efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, and generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue. These include, but are not limited to:

- Uses of social media to market and promote;

- Specialty crop local, regional, and national campaigns;
- Specialty crop only tradeshow;
- Website promotion and development;
- Use/development of billboards, radio, television, magazine and email ads, marketing materials such as direct mail, brochures;
- Agritourism;
- Export market development;
- Retail promotions including point-of-purchase items, labels, packaging etc.;
- Promotion of specialty crops at farmers market promotions; and
- Marketing and promotion campaigns with an education component directed to consumers.

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 ____.

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 ____.

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 ____.

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 ____.

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 ____.

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 ____.

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 ____.

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 the outcome and indicator. Detail the steps that will be taken to measure and record the data.

Budget Narrative

All expenses described in this Budget Narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP. Applicants should review the **Louisiana Request for Applications page 5 Allowable/Unallowable Costs and Exceptions** prior to developing their budget narrative and the USDA link on page 10 section 8.2. [Agricultural Marketing Service Grants Division General Terms and Conditions Updated February 2023 \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/AMSIS/AMSIS/AMSGD/AMSGD-2023-02)

Budget Summary	
Expense Category	Funds Requested
Personnel	
Fringe Benefits	
Travel	
Equipment	
Supplies	
Contractual	
Other	

Total Budget	
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Personnel

List the organization's employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

#	Personnel Name/Title	Level of Effort (# of hours OR % FTE)	Funds Requested
1			
2			
3			
4			

Personnel Subtotal	
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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 personnel by copying and pasting the existing listing or deleting personnel that aren't necessary.

Personnel 1: Description and justification

Personnel 2: Description and justification

Personnel 3: Description and justification
Add other Personnel as necessary.

Fringe Benefits

Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project’s salaried employees described in the Personnel section that will be paid with SCBGP funds.

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

Fringe Subtotal	
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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 <http://www.gsa.gov>.

#	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							

Travel Subtotal	
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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), Justification:

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

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

Add additional trips as necessary.

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.

Rental of "general purpose equipment" must also be described in this section. Purchase of general-purpose equipment is not allowable under this grant.

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

Equipment Subtotal	
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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: Description and justification

Equipment 2: Description and justification

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 enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. See USDA link beginning on page 10 section 8.2. [Agricultural Marketing Service Grants Division General Terms and Conditions Updated February 2023 \(usda.gov\)](#) for further information.

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

Supplies Subtotal	
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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).

Supply 1: Description and justification

Supply 2: Description and justification

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 an itemized list of contractors/consultants, detailing out the name, hourly/flat rate, and the overall cost of services performed.

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

Contractual/Consultant Subtotal	
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Contractual Justification

Provide for each of your real or anticipated contractors listed above a description of the project activities each contractor or consultant will accomplish to meet the objectives and outcomes of the project. Include timelines for each activity. Each section should also include a justification for why contractual/consultant services are to be used to meet the anticipated outcomes and objectives. 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/2022/general-schedule/>), provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses. See USDA link beginning on page 10 section 8.2. [Agricultural Marketing Service Grants Division General Terms and Conditions Updated February 2023 \(usda.gov\)](#) Contractual and Consultant Costs for acceptable justifications.

Contractual 1: Description and justification

Contractual 2: Description and justification

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 USDA link beginning on page 10 section 8.2. [Agricultural Marketing Service Grants Division General Terms and Conditions Updated February 2023 \(usda.gov\)](#), Meals for further guidance.

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

Other Subtotal	
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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).

Other 1: Description and justification

Other 2: Description and justification

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs **are not** an allowable expense by sub-grantees.

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 enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops	Estimated Income

Selection Procedure

1. All applications received, **no later than the close of business (4:30 p.m. CST) Friday, March 15, 2024**, will be reviewed by internal administrative screening to determine if the applicant is eligible, if the project is eligible and if all mandatory application information is provided. Eligible applications will then be evaluated by a review panel scoring the applications on the merits of the proposals based on criteria listed below.

2. The following criteria will be used by the review panel:
 - A. Significance to the industry
 - B. Detailed project work plan
 - C. Expected measurable outcomes
 - D. Reasonableness of budget
 - E. Overall application

Each of the five (5) categories will be rated on a point system as specified in #3 below. Applications receiving highest averaged panel scores will be recommended to the LDAF for funding. LDAF Commissioner will review scores and panel recommendations to determine projects that will be included in LDAF's state plan. The LDAF Commissioner will make the final selection of projects and determine the amount to be allocated to each.

In the case of a tie in the final scores, the project that received the higher (A) Significance score will be ranked higher. If there is a need to still address a tie, then (D), (C), (E) and (B) scores will be used in this order until the tie is broken, and the projects will be ranked accordingly.

3. The five (5) criteria will be scored on a point system according to the following aspects of their application:
 - A. Significance (1-25 points) – Scored based upon the extent to which the project, if successfully completed, will make an important and/or original contribution to the enhancement of the competitiveness of Louisiana produced specialty crops.

 - B. Work Plan (1-20 points) – Scored based upon the feasibility and reasonableness of the project period of performance, how the activities relate to the project objectives and expected measurable outcomes; and how likely project will become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on federal funding.

 - C. Expected Measurable Outcomes (1-15 points) – Scored based upon the extent to which the project includes one or two measurable outcomes that directly support the project's purpose, the direct importance to the beneficiaries and the detailed plan for monitoring the performance toward meeting each outcome.

- D. Reasonableness of Budget (1- 25 points) – Scored based upon reasonable cost for services rendered and total proposed cost of the project, the need of budgeted items to complete the project and the adequate explanation of the budget narrative of each line item.
- E. Overall Plan Application (1-15 points) – Scored based upon the likelihood that the proposed work can be accomplished within the proposed budget by the applicant, given staff experience, available resources, institutional/organizational commitment, and stakeholder support.

Scoring Penalty

Past Compliance (negative 10 points) – Subtracted based on prior SCBGP award compliance with reporting requirements and project management by PI/Sub-grantee lead for lack of compliance or poor project management. LDAF will determine if this reduction is applicable.

Funding

Projects must demonstrate strong justification for the requested budget. Funding will be available for projects extending no more than two years and eleven months beyond the state project start date. More than one award may be granted. LDAF reserves the right to fund proposals partially or fully depending on the number of applications and the amount of Louisiana grant funding. LDAF reserves the right to reject any or all applications received.

LDAF may choose to use a portion of the funds available for projects conducted internally, such as specialty crop marketing campaigns, promotions, surveys, etc.

Selected projects will receive funding on a cost reimbursement basis. Funds will not be advanced to sub-grantees. Detailed invoicing is required, and receipts must be retained and maintained in project document records.

Sub-grantees awarded grant funding shall have thirty days from receipt of project contract to expedite and deliver signed originals of contract to LDAF. If a sub-grantee fails to meet this requirement, funds allotted to the sub-grantee project in question may be reassigned to another qualified project unless the delay was caused by circumstances outside the control of the sub-grantee, which will be the decision of LDAF. The withdrawal of the grant offer will be conducted in writing and sent certified mail to the sub-grantee. The withdrawal will be effective as of the delivery date of the certified mail.

Sub-grantees that receive grant fund awards will relinquish claim to any unexpended balance of awarded grant funds at the end of their project term. These funds will be reassigned to another project's activities or released to the USDA.

Any relinquished funds will be extended to unfunded projects based on scoring results. If those projects do not wish to conduct that project or cannot carry-out the project based on time remaining in the grant period or insufficient funding to carry-out the project, then funding will be extended to LDAF projects or to current project recipients to enhance, expand or extend their project activities.

Funds awarded to sub-grantees can be requested returned at any time based on insufficient project progress, non-compliance to all state and federal laws and regulations and failure to comply with the terms of the grant award contract. This includes reporting and expenditure documentation.

Award Information

LDAF will select projects to be developed into one LDAF grant submission to AMS. LDAF is under no legal or other obligation to award a grant based on a response to this RFA and reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications submitted.

Announcement of the selected projects to be included in Louisiana's State Plan will be made in writing by email to all applicants by **April 17, 2024**.

Selected projects may be required to provide additional detailed information or make revisions/adjustments to a project's work plan, budget and measurables prior to inclusion into the LDAF state plan or upon request by USDA.

All sub-grantee projects selected to receive funding will be required to execute a grant contract with the LDAF in order to receive grant funds. Each grant recipient will be required to designate a project manager. The project manager will be responsible for timely implementation of the approved scope of work, providing required fiscal reports, documenting expenditures for grant contract payment, and submitting grant activity reports to LDAF.

Sub-grantees awarded grant funding shall have thirty days from receipt of project contract to expedite and deliver signed originals of contract to LDAF. If a sub-grantee fails to meet this requirement, funds allotted to the sub-grantee project in question may be reassigned to another qualified project unless the delay was caused by circumstances outside the control of the sub-grantee, which will be the decision of LDAF. The withdrawal of the grant offer will be conducted in writing and sent certified mail to the sub-grantee. The withdrawal will be effective as of the delivery date of the certified mail.

Selected projects will begin after AMS has made their official award to LDAF and contracts have been entered into by and between LDAF and the sub-grantee(s) as required by the laws of the State of Louisiana.

Selected project sub-grantees will be required to register the organization with the federal System for Award Management (<http://www.sam.gov>). Registration with this site allows the organization to do business with the federal government and ensures that federal funds are not paid to organizations which have been suspended or debarred.

Contracts will NOT be entered into between LDAF and sub-grantees until their registration of good standing in sam.gov is confirmed by LDAF staff. Any change in good standing or debarment must be reported to LDAF within a week of the status change.

Payments

Selected project sub-grantees will be required to complete the **Electronic Vendor Payment Selection Form**, which can be found at the link below. It has been provided for your review and information. The form does not have to be included in the application packet but will be required once your project has been selected for funding.

<http://www.doa.la.gov/pages/osp/vendorcenter/regnhelp/index.aspx>

Requests for payments must be submitted at least quarterly so that all project funds are dispersed by the end of the project performance period. LDAF cannot reimburse expenses incurred after the grant performance period has ended. Any project funds remaining unused will be redirected at the discretion of LDAF.

Post Award Reporting Requirements

All correspondence for the program **MUST** be submitted electronically by email. This includes quarterly reports and final reports. Pictures, charts, graphs, etc. can be attached to reporting email as needed.

Quarterly Performance Reports must be completed by the sub-grantee and submitted to LDAF. Sub-grantees who do not submit the quarterly reports or who submit reports that do not meet all reporting requirements may be required to return all previously disbursed funds to LDAF. Failure to submit reports timely and failure to respond to additional information requests may affect funding consideration of future grant year applications. Report requirements should include a summary of activities conducted, challenges, and expenditure activities.

A **Final Performance Report** will be required following the end date of the grant contract with LDAF. The final report must include the project's detailed activities during the life of the project.

A reporting **template** for quarterly and final reporting will be provided to sub-grantees post award.

Sub-grantee shall be required to clarify or provide additional information, if requested, until USDA final report approval has been obtained from USDA.

LDAF reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the project. Information submitted in any report to LDAF will be subject to the public record law.

Sub-grantee shall notify LDAF of program income anticipated or realized. Sub-grantee shall comply with LDAF use determination of said income. Sub-grantee must provide detailed listing of expenditures to LDAF explaining how program income is to be spent to benefit specialty crops within the program activities. Use of program income must comply in accordance with 2 CFR §200.307(e).

Scope and Budget Prior Approval Requirements

If a change in project scope is needed during the project period, a prior written request must be made to LDAF to request adding or removing project activities that will change the scope. Written justification for the change and description of the change is required.

If a change of 10% of a project's total budget is needed, a prior written request must be submitted to LDAF for approval consideration. A written justification for the change and description of the change is required.

If a change in duration of the project becomes necessary, a prior written request must be submitted to LDAF for approval consideration. A written justification for the time extension, a description of what is to be conducted with the additional time, and the new end date requested must be provided. No extension shall be permissible beyond September 28, 2027.

No change in budget or change in scope is allowed without prior written approval by LDAF and/or the USDA. The total budget amount as dictated by the approved grant award cannot be adjusted without written approval by LDAF and a change in the existing contract between the agencies.

Absence or change in sub-grantee/project management - When a sub-grantee/project manager plans to relinquish active direction of the project for a period of more than three consecutive months, the sub-grantee shall submit a written notification (email is acceptable) to LDAF. LDAF will submit the request to USDA for approval. The written notification shall contain the new manager's name as well as justification for the change.

If Special Purpose Equipment or Travel, **not included in the original project award**, is deemed needed by the sub-grantee, prior written approval must be obtained. These changes are not permissible without USDA approval. A written request must be made to LDAF providing the need for said equipment or travel, the description, and price of equipment or travel. Requests will be forwarded to the USDA for final approval.

Acknowledge Requirements

As required in 2 CFR § 415.2, grant recipients and sub-grantees must acknowledge USDA AMS support in all publications written or published with USDA AMS grant or cooperative agreement support. This includes reports, pamphlets, posters, and brochures, and, if feasible, any publication reporting the results of, or describing, a grant supported activity. Recipients must also acknowledge USDA AMS support on any audio or video product including live or prerecorded radio or television programs, audio recordings and multimedia presentations.

The following acknowledgment of USDA funding **must** appear in all published materials or products, in any format (web sites, audiovisuals, etc.), that are substantially based upon or developed under an AMS award:

Funding for **[Project or Publication]** was made possible by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service through grant Award **[Number to Be Provided to Selected Sub-grantees]**. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.

Sub-grantee is encouraged to use the USDA logo in their financial acknowledgment. Any other logo use requires approval in writing from AMS prior to finalizing documents for publication or printing. When using the USDA logo, please use the logo acknowledgment images provided at this link by [USDA AMS](#).

Sub-grantee's appointed project coordinator shall be responsible for providing Agency proof that acknowledgment of USDA is made by submitting copies with performance reporting.

Permitting Requirements

Projects may include work that requires permits and clearances. LDAF does not determine which, if any, permits are required. Applicants are responsible for determining, obtaining, and paying for all necessary permits that apply to their project.

Closeout

USDA-AMS will close out the Federal award when it determines that all applicable administrative actions and all required work of the Federal award are completed by the LDAF. Therefore, “Closeout” of the sub-grantee project will not be completed until official notification is received by the LDAF from USDA-AMS and LDAF provides the sub-grantee project coordinator with a personalized “Closeout” letter or email including the date of the official close out, the official retention date of records, and any equipment disposition instructions, if applicable.

Record Requirements

Sub-grantees shall be responsible for setting up and maintaining a project file that contains all appropriate books and records to document time, effort, and expenses related to the work under this grant. Sub-grantees shall maintain such books and records for the period of (3) years following the date the final Federal Financial Report (SF 425) and the Final Performance Report (PPR) is submitted by LDAF to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program—AMS staff and grant award is closed by USDA. This date is estimated to be June 30, 2028. Therefore, record retention would be required through **June 30, 2031. LDAF will provide official dates to sub-grantees once USDA “Closeout” has been issued.** (If there is an audit and finding investigation, this period could be extended.) See 2 CFR 200.334 for record retention and access requirements.

Site Visits

LDAF reserves the right to conduct periodic site visits of all sub-grantees to review project accomplishments, monitor progress, review financial and performance records, organizational procedures, financial control systems, and provide technical assistance as required. LDAF will make every effort to notify the grant recipient at least two weeks in advance of a visit.

Non-Discrimination

Sub-grantee agrees to abide by the requirements of the following as applicable: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, Federal Executive Order 11246 as amended, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Vietnam Era Veteran's Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, as amended, and Sub-grantee agrees to abide by the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Sub-grantee agrees not to discriminate in its employment practices and will render services under this sub-grant without regard to race, color, religion, sex (including

gender identity and sexual orientation), national origin, veteran status, political affiliation, disability, or age in any matter relating to employment. Any act of discrimination committed by Sub-grantee, or failure to comply with these statutory obligations when applicable shall be grounds for termination of a sub-grant.

Any person who believes himself/herself or any specific class of individuals to be subjected to discrimination prohibited by the regulations may by himself/herself or by an authorized representative file with the Secretary or any Agency a written complaint. A complaint must be filed not later than 180 days from the date of the alleged discrimination unless the time for filing is extended by the Agency or by the Secretary. Such complaint shall be promptly referred to the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. The complaint shall be investigated in the manner determined by the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights and such further action taken by the Agency or the Secretary as may be warranted.

Complaints can be submitted by:

1. mail: Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
Commodity Promotion and Research
47076 North Morrison Blvd.
Hammond, LA 70401: or
2. fax: (225)923-4881; or
3. email: estay@ldaf.state.la.us

Questions

All requests for additional information and/or questions regarding this RFA should be directed to Michelle Estay at the email address on page 1 and must be submitted in writing. LDAF staff will be available to provide information on the panel review process and requirements and make suggestions to strengthen proposals for review; however, to ensure that all applications receive equal treatment, LDAF staff cannot provide applicant preparation services.