



LOUISIANA
**DEPARTMENT of
AGRICULTURE
& FORESTRY**

MIKE STRAIN, DVM *Commissioner*

LDAF.LA.GOV

2026 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Request for Applications

Executive Summary

The Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) will accept applications for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP or Grant Program), 2026 State plan, under the United States Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA-AMS) for projects to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Dates

Applications must be received no later than the close of business (4:30 p.m. CST) Thursday, April 30, 2026.

DISCLAIMER: *USDA has not yet announced funding availability for this year's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). To allow adequate time for proposal development, LDAF is issuing this Request for Applications (RFA) in anticipation of potential funding; however, funding is not guaranteed, and LDAF cannot confirm if or when funds will become available. LDAF will issue any additional details or revisions to this RFA as they become available.*

2026 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

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Please read all materials before preparing and submitting the application. Failure to follow the instructions and requirements in this Request for Application (RFA) may result in the disqualification of the application.

Statement of Purpose

Section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note), as amended under Section 10107 of the Agricultural Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-79) (the 2014 Farm Bill), and as further amended by Section 10107 of the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (Public Law 115-334) (the 2018 Farm Bill), collectively referred to herein as the “Farm Bill,” authorizes the U.S. Department of Agriculture to make grants to be used by state departments of agriculture solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops under the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP or Grant Program). The SCBGP is implemented under [7 CFR Part 1291](#).

The purpose of the SCBGP is to increase consumption of specialty crops and improve the competitiveness of specialty crop producers. Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture). Refer to the following website for a list of common specialty crops:

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

In accordance with the Federal statutes, and for 2026 SCBGP funding consideration, LDAF will prepare and submit, for approval by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, a State Plan to carry out the purposes of the SCBGP.

LDAF is accepting grant applications to consider for the 2026 State Plan to USDA-AMS for projects to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, including:

- Leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops;
- Assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops;
- Expanding availability and access to specialty crops;
- Addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers; and
- 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.

SCBGP funds will be made available to Louisiana from the USDA 2026 fiscal year budget.

Although USDA-AMS has not officially announced SCBGP funding levels to the states, LDAF anticipates approximately \$350,000 will be available for Louisiana projects. This figure is subject to change upon the formal Notice of Funding posted by USDA-AMS.

Projected Timeline of Events*

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| • Application Availability | March 20, 2026 |
| • Application Deadline | April 30, 2026 |
| • Review and Selection of Applications | May 1 – May 30, 2026 |
| • USDA review of projects selected | June 2026 – August 2026 |
| • Final Award Announcements | September 2026 |
| • Start Date of Project | December 1, 2026 |
| • End Date of Project | September 30, 2028 |

**Dates are subject to change based on timeline updates provided by the USDA.*

Eligibility

Eligible applicants include Louisiana state agencies, universities, institutions, and producer, industry, or community-based organizations engaged in promoting horticulture and specialty crops.

Key Requirements

- Projects must enhance the competitiveness of a Louisiana specialty crop industry.
- Funds may only be used for activities that benefit specialty crops.
- Projects must benefit multiple entities-not a single individual, organization, or institution.
- Projects cannot solely promote a specific commercial product or generate profit for a single entity.

Program Contact

Grant Program Support is available Monday – Friday from 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM (CST)

LDAF staff is available to answer questions regarding the Grant Program and to provide clarifying information concerning this RFA. LDAF staff will not review any grant applications prior to the application deadline.

Kelly Ransome
SCBG Program Administrator
Phone: (225) 922-2903
Email: SCBG@ldaf.state.la.us

Project Areas and Priorities

LDAF encourages applicants to propose projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops within one of the following five (5) key focus areas:

1. Food Safety,
2. Nutrition,
3. Plant Health,
4. Value-Added and Industry Development, or
5. Marketing.

Applicants are responsible for selecting the key focus area that best fits their project.

Research projects should emphasize applied research and results made available to producers, processors and/or consumers within one (1) to two (2) years of the grant term date. Projects with significant research components will be evaluated on their ability to document and share/transfer results to the industry.

LDAF may allocate a portion of the funds for internal projects, including, but not limited to, outreach activities, nutrition, regulatory, or marketing. These projects will also undergo the competitive evaluation process.

1. Food Safety

LDAF will consider projects that support specialty crop production with practices that assist in maintaining and enhancing safe production of food in the world.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Assisting entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing “Good Agricultural Practices”, “Good Handling Practices”, or “Good Manufacturing Practices;”
- Researching new methods to improve food safety; and/or
- Marketing or outreach to specialty crop producers/distributors regarding new or upcoming food safety requirements.

2. Nutrition

LDAF will consider projects that improve or expand access to and consumption of specialty crops. Ensuring access to healthy foods in underserved areas of Louisiana and increasing Louisianans’ access to and consumption of fruits, vegetables, and tree nuts is a key strategy to improve overall public health.

All projects must increase the competitiveness of specialty crops and clearly demonstrate a benefit to the specialty crop industry. LDAF will also consider projects that integrate human health and nutrition when these efforts show a direct and measurable impact on specialty crop production, marketing, or consumption.

- Food Security

Project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Increasing participation in under-utilized federal nutrition assistance programs;
- Developing innovative projects that support local and regional food systems; and/or
- Improving access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in ways that foster self-reliance, enhance dignity and assure environmental sustainability.

- Healthy Eating

Project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Increasing consumption of specialty crops among all populations;
- Developing farm-to-fork networks that include schools, worksites, retail, and restaurant outlets to connect local agriculture with nearby communities; and/or
- Promoting and/or demonstrating the health benefits of Louisiana specialty crops.

Research projects improving crop nutrition that focus on biofortification, genetic engineering, breeding for taste, microbiome engineering or other similar activities should not be included in this category.

3. Plant Health

LDAF will consider projects that address pests and diseases affecting the production of Louisiana specialty crops. Eligible projects may include research on the risk, impact, and management of invasive pests, diseases, and weeds, as well as the development of tools to detect, control, or eradicate them. Research results should be made available to producers, processors, and/or consumers within one (1) to two (2) years of the grant term date.

LDAF will also consider projects that enhance conservation or improve the quality of agricultural land, water, habitat, and biodiversity, and those that support specialty crop adaptation to or mitigation of climate change.

- Plant Health and Pest Challenges
Project examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Enhancing the speed and reliability of detection,
 - Developing new tools for eradication,
 - Developing plant resistance to pests and disease, and/or
 - Evaluating organic and sustainable practices.

- Environmental Concerns and Conservation
Project examples include, but are not limited to:
 - Evaluating water use efficiency regarding current drought conditions and for climate change adaptation;
 - Assisting growers to adapt to climate change by conducting research and demonstrating the implementation of strategies where technologies are already available – especially water use efficiency and invasive pest detection, control, and management; and/or
 - Accelerating implementation of Best Management Practices (BMP) manual for specific specialty crops.

4. Value-Added and Industry Development

LDAF will consider projects that increase the value of specialty crops or develop new products, tools, or innovations that strengthen and expand the specialty crop industry’s overall benefit and competitiveness.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Providing support for development of value-added processing facilities;
- Strengthening specialty crop agricultural career technical education through establishment of certification programs for critical job training;
- Improvement of distribution methods both domestically and internationally;
- Evaluating industry feasibility or development of a new industry;
- Conducting market research of consumer preference;
- Researching a new tool to improve marketability; and/or
- Developing new and improved specialty crop variety/use, technology advancements and growing season extensions to diversify and strengthen specialty crop production.

5. Marketing

LDAF will consider projects that educate consumers and increase awareness of Louisiana specialty crops through outreach and promotional activities. Projects may also focus on

expanding long-term sales, consumption, and market competitiveness of specialty crop products, including initiatives that support domestic and international marketing and trade.

- Agriculture Education/Outreach

Project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Promoting Louisiana specialty crops and strengthening the connection between specialty crops and agriculture;
- Extending science-based information to specialty crop growers and other key stakeholders;
- Educating consumers about Louisiana’s specialty crops and agriculture;
- Reconnecting communities with specialty crop production;
- Educating the public about the identity and threat of invasive species to Louisiana specialty crops; and/or
- Promoting/marketing specialty crop certification and/or education program opportunities that further enhance critical job skills.

- Market Enhancement and Promotion

Project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting statewide promotion and awareness activities of specialty crops;
- Targeting specialty crop marketing concepts on the unique characteristics of local and regional areas such as culture, geography, history, and types of agricultural production;
- Developing cooperative marketing and promotions such as cross-menu promotions of specialty crops;
- Marketing agritourism as it relates to specialty crops; and/or
- Creating innovative consumer/trade promotions in foreign markets.

Funding Parameters, Award Information, and Notification

- State, local, or Indian tribal governments, non-profit organizations, colleges, and universities will be subject to [2 CFR Part 200](#), Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.
- Grant Applicants may be awarded funding at varying levels depending on the nature of the project.
- Grant Applications must demonstrate strong justification for the requested budget, as well as the potential for providing significant demonstrable benefits to Louisiana specialty crops.

- Where more than one (1) application on an eligible topic is acceptable for funding, LDAF may request cooperation between applicants or revision/adjustment to an application to avoid duplication and to realize the maximum benefit to the state.
- LDAF reserves the right to accept or reject any or all grant applications submitted.
- LDAF is under no legal or other obligation to execute a grant based on a response submitted to this RFA. LDAF shall not pay for any cost incurred by any entity in responding to this RFA.
- Written notifications on award decisions will be made to all applicants and their affiliated agencies, organizations, or institutions. Favorable decisions will indicate the amount of award, duration of the grant, and any special conditions associated with the project.

Application Submission Requirements

Applications will be accepted by LDAF via email at SCBG@ldaf.state.la.us. The signed application packets containing all mandatory documents must be submitted to the email address above no later than the deadline for submission.

LDAF will reply to electronic submissions acknowledging receipt of the application files. If applicants do not receive an acknowledgement of receipt within one (1) business day after submission, it is the applicant's responsibility to contact the Program Administrator to verify receipt. 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 verify that 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 has been accomplished. It is recommended that the applicants double check that all mandatory requirements are met to prevent rejection based on technicalities.

Submission Instructions

LATE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Applicants must submit one complete, electronically signed grant application. The online grant application and all other required backup documents must be submitted by April 30, 2026. It is the grant applicant's responsibility to ensure the timely delivery of all required material. *Mailed or faxed grant applications will not be accepted.*

For questions regarding submission of the grant application and/or LDAF requirements, please contact LDAF by email at SCBG@ldaf.state.la.us.

Late or Ineligible Applicants

- LDAF will only consider grant applications received by the published due date, unless the deadline has been extended for all grant applicants.
- Applications submitted by ineligible grant applicants will not receive funding consideration.
- Applications that are not fully responsive to the RFA will not be considered during the competitive review process.
- Determinations of late or ineligible grant applications are final and not subject to an appeal process.
- Problems with computer systems at the applicant organization, Adobe compatibility settings issues, failure to follow instructions in the RFA, or failure to complete the required registrations (e.g. [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov), [Sam.gov](https://www.sam.gov), UEI Number, etc.) by the submission deadline are NOT considered government system issues and do not constitute grounds for an appeal.
- The RFA explains the time required to complete the registration requirements. It is the grant applicant's responsibility to ensure that enough time is committed to meet all registration and submission deadlines.
- All required letters and attachments must be appropriately attached to the application.
- Failure to attach documents to the grant application package correctly are not considered system issues.

Evaluation and Selection Information

All applications will be evaluated on comprehensiveness, completeness, and overall quality. LDAF will conduct an administrative review to confirm that each submission meets all RFA requirements. Only responsive applications from eligible applicants will advance to the competitive review.

LDAF will also consider the applicant's performance on prior SCBCP awards, including progress on open projects, timely use of funds, reporting compliance, and risk assessment scores. Applicants without prior SCBGP awards will not be disadvantaged.

A review team composed of internal and external experts will evaluate applications competitively within their selected focus area based on each project's potential to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Applicants are responsible for selecting the correct focus area as defined in the "Project Areas and Priorities" (page 5) section. Applications submitted under an incorrect focus area may receive a zero score and will not be reassigned to another category.

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

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

Each application is independently scored by individual evaluators. Individual evaluator scores are combined to produce a cumulative application score, to which the risk assessment points are added to determine the final total score. Applications are then ranked within their selected focus area (as defined in the “Project Areas and Priorities” section, page 5).

LDAF selects projects based on rank within each focus area while also ensuring diversity across Louisiana specialty crop industries. Final funding decisions depend on the total USDA allocation, the number and quality of applications received within each focus area, and the range of commodities represented.

An application may receive a high score but may not be funded due to limited program funds. The funding range reflects the total amount available for SCBGP projects as allocated by USDA–AMS in its RFA.

USDA-AMS concludes the final approval process in August.

Projects that are selected to be included in LDAF’s State Plan must show a direct benefit to specialty crops.

Preference may be given to projects showing specialty crop industry support and/or collaboration.

Budget Development Information

A. Payment. *The grant will be reimbursed on a cost basis, but only after the recipient has spent and documented grant expenditures.* Grant Recipients will be required to submit payment requests at least quarterly, but no more frequently than monthly, to show significant financial and programmatic progress. Payment requests must include sufficient documentation that details each expense. Acceptable documentation may include, but is not limited to, invoices, receipts, or detailed information regarding personnel costs, as determined by LDAF, in its sole discretion. *Payment requests shall only be submitted by the Grant Recipient to LDAF for reimbursement after the Grant Recipient purchases the approved budget item.*

All requests for reimbursement and documentation of expenditures shall be reported no later than sixty (60) days after the completion of the grant project or after the expiration or termination of the grant agreement (Agreement), whichever occurs first.

Selected grant recipients will be required to register as a [LaGov Supplier](#). To check your LaGov vendor status, [click here](#). Completion is not required prior to submission of the packet but will be required once your project has been selected for funding.

B. Matching. No in-kind donations or matching funds are required.

C. Payment Schedule. LDAF will approve reimbursement of up to 90% of the total grant award upon timely receipt of payment requests and documentation, prior to the submission of the Final Performance Report.

The final 10% of funds will be released once all required reports, including but not limited to the Final Performance Report, have been submitted and approved.

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

1. Personnel costs – both salary and benefits directly related to project implementation;
2. Contracts – agreements made with a third-party to perform a portion of the project;
3. Travel – mileage reimbursement, transportation and lodging; reimbursement for travel is limited to the federal Domestic Per Diem Rates at the time of travel;
4. Printing and publications;
5. Training;
6. General Purpose Equipment rental and Special Purpose Equipment purchase;

7. Direct operating expenses (other) – any expenses that do not fall into the other categories directly related to the proposed activities.

E. Ineligible Expenses. Expenses may be prohibited by state or federal law or determined to be ineligible by Grant Program guidelines. Ineligible expenses must be reimbursed to Grantor within 30 days of notice of ineligibility from LDAF. Examples of these expenditures include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Alcoholic beverages;
2. Entertainment;
3. Tips/ gratuity;
4. Contributions, charitable or political;
5. Expenses not within the grant agreement term;
6. Expenses for items not listed in the original approval project budget or that fail to meet the intent of the program;
7. Expenses that are not adequately documented;
8. Advertising and Public Relations costs designed solely to promote the image of an organization, general logo, or general brand rather than eligible specialty crops;
9. Coupon/incentive redemptions or price discounts. Costs associated with printing, distribution, or promotion of coupons/tokens or price discounts (i.e., a print advertisement that contains a clip-out coupon) are allowable only if they solely promote the specialty crop rather than promote or benefit a program or single organization; and
10. Costs associated with the use of trade shows, meeting rooms, displays, demonstrations, exhibits, and the rental of space are allowable only if they solely promote the specialty crop. Cost sharing to promote both specialty crops and non-specialty crops is not allowable for these types of expenses.

F. Post-Award Reporting

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 grant recipient and submitted to LDAF. Grant Recipients who do not submit quarterly reports or who submit reports that do not meet all the 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 will 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 Grant Recipients post award.

Grant Recipients 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 the reporting requirements during the project. Information submitted in any report to LDAF will be subject to public record law.

Grant Recipients shall notify LDAF of program income anticipated or realized. Grant Recipients shall comply with LDAF use determination of said income. Grant Recipients 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](#).

Please reference Allowable and Non-allowable Costs Contained in [2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E - Cost Principles](#) and the [USDA-AMS Grants Division General Terms and Conditions](#), section 8.2, for additional guidance and details on eligible and ineligible expenses.

Risk Assessment and Monitoring

In accordance with [2 CFR §200.331](#), LDAF will evaluate each applicant's risk of noncompliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and terms and conditions of the grant award for the purposes of determining the appropriate monitoring.

To evaluate this risk and determine the appropriate level of monitoring, the applicant must complete and submit the Grant Recipient Self-Assessment of Internal Controls and Risks as part of the grant application package by the deadline stated in this RFA.

Grant Recipient Responsibilities and Accountability

Selected applicants (Grant Recipients) will be responsible for the conduct of the grant project and for the results described in the application. Each grant recipient shall monitor the day-to-day performance of the grant funds to assure adherence to statutes, regulations, and grant terms and conditions. The Grant Recipient must carry out the activities described in the approved scope of work.

Grant Recipients will be accountable for documenting the use of grant funds and must ensure funds are used solely for authorized purposes. The grant recipient must ensure:

- Funds are used only for activities covered by the approved project;
- Funds are not used in violation of the restrictions and prohibitions of the grant agreement or applicable law; and
- All budget and performance reports are completed in a timely manner.

Each Grant Recipient must ensure he or she has an adequate accounting system in place and good internal controls to ensure expenditures and reimbursements are properly reported to LDAF. Complete records relating to the grant project, including accounting records, financial records, progress reports and other documentation, must be maintained for three (3) years after the conclusion of the grant project or longer if required by LDAF.

Grant Recipients 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. Grant Recipients 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, 2029. Therefore, record retention would be required through **June 30, 2032. LDAF will provide official dates to grant recipients 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.

Reporting Requirements

Grant Recipients will be required to submit periodic performance reports. Reporting timelines are incorporated into the grant agreement. As part of LDAF's ongoing monitoring of grant funds, Grant Recipients must demonstrate programmatic and financial progress toward achieving grant project goals. Failure to comply with reporting requirements may result in withholding requests for reimbursement and/or termination of the award.

Performance Reports must be in a narrative format prescribed by LDAF and detail the accomplishments of the grant project objectives for that period.

An Annual Performance Report is due each year of performance on the State Plan to USDA. Grant Recipients will provide an annual report in a narrative format prescribed by LDAF, documenting the accomplishments of their grant project for that period.

The Final Performance Report is due thirty (30) days after the grant project completion, or termination of the Grant Agreement, whichever occurs first. This report must be in a narrative format prescribed by LDAF. Similar to the annual performance reports, the final performance reports will be provided to USDA documenting Louisiana's progress on the 2026 State Plan.

The following schedule is a sample of the reporting terms:

GRANTEE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Contract Term: 12/1/2026 - 9/30/2028		
	Due Date	Reporting Period
Performance Report 1	4/1/2027	12/1/2026 - 2/28/2027
Performance Report 2	7/1/2027	3/1/2027 - 5/31/2027
Performance Report 3	10/1/2027	6/1/2027 - 8/31/2027
Annual Performance Report	11/1/2027	12/1/2026 - 9/30/2027
Performance Report 4	1/1/2028	9/1/2027 - 11/30/2027
Performance Report 5	4/1/2028	12/1/2027 - 2/29/2028
Performance Report 6	7/1/2028	3/1/2028 - 5/31/2028
Final Performance Report	11/1/2028	12/1/2026 - 9/30/2028

General Information

Selected grant applicants will receive a Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) letter and an official Grant Agreement from LDAF. The NOGA is not legally binding until a grant agreement is fully executed.

LDAF reserves the right to fund projects partially or fully. LDAF reserves the right to negotiate individual elements of any application and to reject any and all applications. Where more than one application is acceptable for funding, LDAF may request cooperation between grant recipients or revisions/adjustments to an application to avoid duplication and to realize the maximum benefit to the state. Selected projects will receive funding on a cost reimbursement basis.

Funding

Projects must demonstrate strong justification for the requested budget. Funding will be available for projects extending no more than two (2) years and eleven (11) months beyond the state project start date. More than one (1) award may be granted. LDAF reserves the right to fund applications 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 grant recipients. Detailed invoicing is required, and receipts must be retained and maintained in project document records.

Grant recipients awarded grant funding shall have thirty (30) days from receipt of project contract to expedite and deliver signed originals of contract to LDAF. If a grant recipient fails to

meet this requirement, funds allotted to the grant recipient project in question may be reassigned to another qualified project unless the delay is caused by circumstances outside the control of the grant recipient, which will be the decision of LDAF. The withdrawal of the grant offer will be conducted in writing and sent certified mail to the grant recipient. The withdrawal will be effective as of the delivery date of the certified mail.

Grant recipients 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 grant recipients can be requested to be returned at any time based on insufficient project progress, non-compliance with 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.

Applications

LDAF reserves the right to reject all applications and is not liable for costs incurred by the grant applicant in the development, submission, or review of the application, or costs incurred by the grant applicant prior to the effective date of the grant agreement.

Right to Amend or Terminate Program

LDAF reserves the right to alter, amend, or clarify any provisions, terms, or conditions of this program or any grant awarded as a result thereof, or to terminate this program at any time prior to the execution of an agreement, if LDAF deems any such action to be in the best interest of LDAF and the State of Louisiana. The decision of LDAF will be administratively final in this regard.

Proprietary Information/Public Information

In the event that a public information request for the application is received, LDAF shall process such request in accordance with Louisiana Public Records Law, [La. R.S. 44:1 et seq.](#) Grant Applicants are advised to consult with their legal counsel regarding disclosure issues and to take appropriate precautions to safeguard trade secrets or any other proprietary information.

If an applicant believes that any portion of the application contains proprietary or confidential information that should be exempt from disclosure under the Louisiana Public Records Law, the applicant must clearly identify such information and provide the specific legal basis for the exemption. The Louisiana Department of Agriculture & Forestry will make the final

determination regarding disclosure. If confidential, proprietary, trade secret or privileged material is essential to the application, please contact LDAF.

Conflict of Interest

The grant applicant is required to disclose any existing or potential conflicts of interest relative to this grant program. Failure to disclose any such relationship may result in the applicant's disqualification or termination of any resulting grant agreement.

Additional Information

- In accordance with federal civil rights laws and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.
- To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: 1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; 2) fax: (202) 6907442; or 3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Contracts will NOT be entered into between LDAF and Grant Recipients until their registration of good standing at 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.

General Compliance Information

1. Grant recipient (an applicant who receives a grant under this program) must comply with LDAF's reporting requirements and financial procedures outlined in the grant agreement. Any delegation by grant recipient to a subcontractor regarding any duties and responsibilities imposed by the grant award must be approved in advance by LDAF and shall not relieve grant recipient of his/her responsibilities to LDAF for performance of those duties.
2. Grant recipient must remain in full compliance with state and federal laws and regulations. Non-compliance may result in termination of the grant or ineligibility for reimbursement of expenses.
3. Grant recipient must keep separate records and a bookkeeping account (with a complete record of all expenditures) for a grant project. Records shall be maintained for a minimum of three (3) years after the completion of the grant project, or as otherwise agreed upon with LDAF. If any litigation, claim, negotiation, audit, or other action is initiated prior to the expiration of the three-year retention period, then all records and

accounts must be retained until their destruction is authorized in writing by LDAF. LDAF reserves the right to examine all books, documents, records, and accounts relating to the grant project, including all electronic records, at any time throughout the duration of the agreement until all litigation, claims, negotiations, audits, or other action pertaining to a grant is resolved, or until the expiration of the three-year retention period or a final judgment in litigation, whichever is longer. LDAF shall have access to: all electronic data or records pertaining to the grant project; paper or other tangible documents or records, including the physical location where records are stored; and all locations related to grant project activities.

4. If the grant recipient has a financial audit performed during the time the grant recipient is receiving funds from LDAF, upon request, LDAF shall have access to information about the audit, including the audit transmittal letter, management letter, any schedules, and the final report or result of such audit.
5. 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.

Site Visits

LDAF reserves the right to conduct periodic site visits of all grant recipients 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.

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, 2028.

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 grant recipient/project management - When a grant recipient/project manager plans to relinquish active direction of the project for a period of more than three

consecutive months, the grant recipient 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, meeting meals or travel, **not included in the original project award**, is deemed needed by the grant recipient, 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, meeting meals or travel, the description, and price of equipment, meeting meals or travel. Requests will be forwarded to the USDA for final approval.

Acknowledgement Requirements

As required in [2 CFR § 415.2](#), grant recipients 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 (websites, 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 Grant Recipients]**. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the USDA.

Grant recipients are 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](#).

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

Closeout

USDA-AMS will close out the Federal award when it is determined that all applicable administrative actions and all required work of the Federal award are completed by the LDAF. Therefore, "Closeout" of the grant recipient project will not be completed until official notification is received by the LDAF from USDA-AMS and LDAF provides the grant recipient 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.

Non-Discrimination

The Grant Recipient agrees to comply, as applicable, with all federal nondiscrimination laws and requirements, including: Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972), Executive Order 11246 (as amended), the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Vietnam Era Veterans' 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 the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Filing a Discrimination Complaint

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete USDA Form AD-3027 at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or request a copy by calling (866) 632-9992. Submit the completed form or a written complaint containing the requested information by:

- Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
- Fax: (202) 690-7442
- Email: program.intake@usda.gov

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

Questions

All requests for additional information and/or questions regarding this RFA should be directed to Kelly Ransome in writing at the email address SCBG@ldaf.state.la.us. LDAF staff will be available to provide information on the panel review process and requirements and make suggestions to strengthen applications for review; however, to ensure that all applications receive equal treatment, LDAF staff cannot provide applicant preparation services.