



# Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

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**Fiscal Year 2021 Request for Applications**

**Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-21-0003**

**Publication Date: April 13, 2021**

**Application Due Date: 11:59 PM Eastern Time on June 11, 2021**

## Program Solicitation Information

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**Funding Opportunity Title:** Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill

**Funding Opportunity Number:** USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-21-0003

**Announcement Type:** Initial

**Assistance Listing Number (formerly CFDA):** [10.170](#)

**Dates:** Applications must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 11, 2021, through [Grants.gov](#). Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

**Executive Summary:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) to award grants to eligible State departments of agriculture to carry out projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Not including AMS administrative costs, approximately \$72.9 million in annual **Farm Bill funding** is available for applications under this solicitation. An additional \$97 million (without AMS administrative costs) is also available for applications under this solicitation. Congress has provided this funding due to COVID-19 impacts to the food system. These additional funds are referred to as **H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding** throughout this Request for Applications (RFA).

This announcement identifies the eligibility criteria for SCBGP projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a SCBGP award.

AMS encourages applications that benefit smaller farms and ranches, new and beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, veteran producers, and/or underserved communities. For grants intending to serve these entities, applicants should engage and involve those beneficiaries when developing projects and applications.

**Stakeholder Input:** AMS seeks comments about this RFA. We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program. Email written stakeholder comments within one year of the publication date of this RFA to: [AMSGrants@ams.usda.gov](mailto:AMSGrants@ams.usda.gov). This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not requesting information or forms. In your comments, please state that you are responding to the **Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**.

## 2021 Highlights and Changes

Below are highlights of major changes to the program since last year.

- The RFA and [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) were updated to reflect changes to the Uniform Guidance (2 CFR §200).
- The SCBGP Rule ([7 CFR § 1291](#)) previously noted in [section 1.1](#) is in the process of being removed, as it conflicts with the newly updated Uniform Guidance (2 CFR 200). This action has been approved for posting in the Federal Register.
- Starting in June 2018, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) began an audit of the SCBGP. The final audit report was published in October 2020. Based on recommendations in the audit report, the Grant Administration Template ([section 4.3.2](#)) was updated. Additionally, a section was added to the RFA on how Grant Administration funds should be used ([section 4.7.1](#)).
- FY 2021 funding is based on [H.R.133 – the Consolidated Appropriations Act](#) (H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding) and annual Farm Bill Funding. The following updates were made to the RFA:
  - The FY 2021 available award amount has increased due to additional FY 2021 funding. It includes annual Farm Bill funding (\$72.9M) and H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding (\$97M), available until expended. The two funding sources will be offered under this one RFA via two separate application mechanisms (sections [2.4](#) and [4.2](#)).
  - Congress has provided additional funding due to COVID-19 impacts to the food system. AMS encourages states to prioritize subawards from the H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding to respond to priority needs relating to COVID-19 impacts. This RFA includes information on flexibilities offered due to the exigent circumstances of the pandemic (sections [1.3.1](#), [3.3.2](#), and [4.7.2](#)).

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## 1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

### 1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Legislative authority is provided under section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 ([7 U.S.C. § 1621 note](#)) and amended under section 10107 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Public Law 115-343 (the Farm Bill).

### 1.2 PURPOSE

SCBGP assists State departments of agriculture in the 50 States, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands to enhance the competitiveness of 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.

For purposes of this FY 2021 RFA, USDA considers response to the COVID-19 pandemic necessary to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, and projects that respond to the pandemic are considered to be responsive to item 4 above, addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers.

Specialty crops are fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). A State department of agriculture is the agency, commission, or department of a State government responsible for agriculture within the State.

### 1.3 PROJECT TYPES

For Farm Bill funding, States are encouraged to develop projects pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry, as in prior years, and may also fund projects that respond specifically to COVID-19 impacts:

- Enhancing food safety;
- Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act ([21 U.S.C. Chapter 27](#)), for example, developing “Good Agricultural Practices,” “Good Handling Practices,” “Good Manufacturing Practices,” and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems (including USDA GroupGAP) for small farmers, packers and processors;
- Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
- Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
- Pest and disease control;
- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems; and
- Sustainability.

For H.R. 133 Stimulus funding, states are encouraged to prioritize projects that respond to COVID-19 impacts. This may include projects to organizations to assist farmworkers, projects to fund farmers, food businesses, and other relevant entities to respond to risks and supply chain disruptions, and other projects that meet the definition of a project as described in section [1.4.4 Definition of a Project](#). Specific information on allowable costs is located in section [4.7.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#).

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### 1.3.1 PROJECTS MORE RELEVANT FOR OTHER FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS

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

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

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

## 1.4 DEVELOPMENT OF PROPOSALS

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### 1.4.1 STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RESPONSIBILITIES

State departments of agriculture are responsible for developing proposals and overseeing funded projects. This includes ensuring that subrecipients maintain appropriate records and follow all applicable Federal statutes and regulations as well as the Grant Agreement and [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

State departments of agriculture must ensure that proposals are appropriate for the SCBGP by reviewing section [1.2 Purpose](#). Contact a specialist listed in section [7.0 Agency Contacts](#) if there is any question about whether or not a project qualifies for SCBGP.

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### 1.4.2 OUTREACH TO IDENTIFY FUNDING PRIORITIES

State departments of agriculture are encouraged to perform outreach to interested parties, including socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, new and beginning farmers or ranchers, veteran producers, and underserved communities, prior to the development and release of the State's request for proposals or applications, through a transparent process of receiving and considering public comment to identify State SCBGP funding priorities. The State department of agriculture should conduct this outreach to ensure that the grant applications it submits to the SCBGP have been developed with proven and justified public support.

**Beginning Farmer or Rancher** is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

**Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher** is a farmer or rancher who is a member of a Socially Disadvantaged Group. A Socially Disadvantaged 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.

**Veteran Farmer or Rancher** is 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.

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### 1.4.3 COMPETITIVE GRANT APPLICATION REVIEW PROCESS

State departments of agriculture are encouraged to develop their State Plans through a competitive review process to ensure maximum public input and benefit. The competitive review process should follow State policies and procedures and include the use of an independent review panel of experts or qualified individuals, overseen by State officials. This review should include the factors and reasons for selecting an applicant and any changes in project proposal ranks/scores that may occur during the review process. All documentation affecting the decision to approve, disapprove, defer, or otherwise not fund an application should be maintained in an accessible, centralized program file.

State departments of agriculture must abide by [2 CFR § 400.2](#). Review panel members must be free from conflicts of interest and conduct fair and impartial reviews.

In addition, the SCBGP encourages State departments of agriculture to notify successful and unsuccessful grant applicants about the outcome of the competitive process as it relates to the applicants' proposals.

Finally, the SCBGP encourages State departments of agriculture during their competitive review process to examine funding requests carefully for previously funded activities to ensure:

- The projects are likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds;
- Funding decisions are based on the applicant's/subrecipient's past performance; and
- Specialty crop stakeholders, other than the applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the continuation of the project.

For the **H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding**, the State departments of agriculture may use the first year of the four-year agreement to administer their competitive review process and submit the project narratives to AMS by email once that process has taken place. Otherwise, the above-mentioned guidance remains the same.

When prioritizing COVID-related projects as part of the **H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding**, it is recommended that the states include a method in their review process for determining how one entity was more impacted by COVID-19 than another and/or other factors for how these projects are selected. This process must be described in the Grant Administration Template ([4.3.2 State Plan Narrative](#)).

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### 1.4.4 DEFINITION OF A PROJECT

A project is a set of interrelated tasks with a cohesive, distinct, specified, and defined goal. It follows a planned, organized approach over a fixed period of time and within specific limitations (cost, performance/quality, etc.). Additionally, it uses resources that are specifically allocated to the work of the project and usually involves a team of people.

Projects are different from other ongoing operations in an organization because, unlike operations, projects have a definitive beginning and end – they have a limited duration. A project has an overarching goal that the applicant wants to accomplish through a series of individual activities or tasks. Examples of projects include:

- Researching new cultivars
- Providing outreach opportunities on specialty crops to youth, families, seniors, and the overall community
- Marketing apples through a targeted promotional campaign

Activities or tasks that could be a part of such projects might include:

- Hiring personnel
- Purchasing special purpose equipment

- Holding an educational workshop
- Planting specialty crops
- Distributing product promotional materials

#### 1.4.5 MULTI-STATE PARTNERSHIPS

A multi-state partnership is a project that implements activities with measurable outcomes that benefit two or more U.S. States and/or Territories. Multi-state partnerships are encouraged and should provide solutions to problems that cross state boundaries including, but not limited to, food safety; plant pests and disease; research; crop-specific projects addressing common issues; and marketing and promotion. State departments of agriculture with multi-state partnership projects can also consider submitting those projects to the [Specialty Crop Multi-State Program \(SCMP\)](#).

## 2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

### 2.1 TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS will use a Grant Agreement to provide support to successful applicants.

### 2.2 TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

**New application.** AMS will review all new applications for conformity with the criteria in section [5.0 Application Review Information](#) and may require the applicant to provide additional information or clarification by a specified date.

### 2.3 AVAILABLE FUNDING AND FEDERAL AWARD PERIOD DURATION

For FY 2021, AMS is offering two mechanisms to fund applications under this solicitation, for varying periods of performance.

	Available Funding	Award Period	Start Date	End Date
<b>Farm Bill Funds (annual funding)</b>	\$72.9 million*	3 years	September 30, 2021	September 29, 2024
<b>H.R. 133 Stimulus Funds (no-year funding)</b>	\$97 million*	4 years	No later than September 30, 2021	September 29, 2025

\*Amounts do not include AMS administrative costs. Federal continuing resolutions or appropriations may affect program availability or funding levels.

The applicant must indicate the start and end dates on the SF-424, “Application for Federal Assistance” in block 17. AMS encourages State departments of agriculture to allow ample time for completion of all projects.

### 2.4 BLOCK GRANT AMOUNTS AVAILABLE TO EACH APPLICANT

Subject to the amount of available funding as set forth above in section [2.3 Available Funding and Federal Award Period Duration](#), each eligible State department of agriculture applicant that submits an application that the AMS reviews and accepts is eligible to receive the available grant allocation as indicated below. Each State department of agriculture is eligible to receive an estimated base grant of approximately \$243,001.17 (Farm Bill) and \$323,333.33 (H.R. 133 Stimulus) and an amount based on the average of the most recent available value of specialty crop cash receipts in the State (2019 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 Statistics Service. FY 2021 funding is based on [H.R.133 – the Consolidated Appropriations Act](#) (H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding) and annual Farm Bill Funding.

State Department of Agriculture	Available Grant Allocation - Farm Bill	Available Grant Allocation – H.R. 133
Alabama	525,279.50	698,928.22
Alaska	253,112.91	336,787.85
American Samoa	268,511.95	357,277.56
Arizona	1,760,027.80	2,341,863.88
Arkansas	358,766.93	477,369.34
California	23,744,447.42	31,593,969.03
Colorado	814,844.28	1,084,218.33
Connecticut	396,980.84	528,216.15
Delaware	349,796.76	465,433.78
District of Columbia	243,001.17	323,333.33
Florida	3,790,425.10	5,043,476.95
Georgia	1,415,219.92	1,883,068.21
Guam	245,540.24	326,711.78
Hawaii	477,626.10	635,521.39
Idaho	2,074,218.32	2,759,920.59
Illinois	588,796.12	783,442.37
Indiana	484,079.59	644,108.30
Iowa	353,288.25	470,079.50
Kansas	338,128.88	449,908.70
Kentucky	348,397.32	463,571.71
Louisiana	408,030.84	542,919.08
Maine	608,430.27	809,567.26
Maryland	482,905.04	642,545.47
Massachusetts	456,784.49	607,789.89
Michigan	1,944,804.33	2,587,724.47
Minnesota	1,337,358.32	1,779,466.86
Mississippi	424,967.61	565,454.88
Missouri	428,179.63	569,728.73
Montana	3,069,901.08	4,084,759.60
Nebraska	818,230.50	1,088,723.97
Nevada	273,616.86	364,070.07
New Hampshire	299,216.91	398,133.07
New Jersey	754,392.29	1,003,781.91
New Mexico	597,064.83	794,444.58
New York	1,228,645.26	1,634,815.07
North Carolina	1,262,582.50	1,679,971.39
North Dakota	3,256,915.38	4,333,597.74
Northern Mariana Islands	244,538.06	325,378.30
Ohio	571,406.83	760,304.48

State Department of Agriculture	Available Grant Allocation - Farm Bill	Available Grant Allocation – H.R. 133
Oklahoma	599,596.19	797,812.77
Oregon	2,061,401.44	2,742,866.66
Pennsylvania	1,050,895.88	1,398,304.67
Puerto Rico	481,842.40	641,131.53
Rhode Island	273,496.95	363,910.51
South Carolina	600,017.58	798,373.47
South Dakota	401,737.62	534,545.43
Tennessee	553,013.11	735,830.09
Texas	1,581,971.82	2,104,945.54
U.S. Virgin Islands	244,595.30	325,454.45
Utah	368,005.91	489,662.58
Vermont	325,443.80	433,030.13
Virginia	549,487.29	731,138.69
Washington	4,600,355.98	6,121,157.59
West Virginia	309,367.10	411,638.74
Wisconsin	1,260,842.59	1,677,656.30
Wyoming	339,818.64	452,157.06

### 3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

#### 3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Eligible applicants are State departments of agriculture in the 50 States, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the United States Virgin Islands. A State department of agriculture is the agency, commission, or department of a State government responsible for agriculture within the State.

AMS expects that State departments of agriculture will consult with specialty crop growers, processors, and/or distributors before developing SCBGP project applications to ensure maximum public input and benefit. These stakeholders should play an important role in development of project goals and objectives, in implementing the project plan, and in evaluating and disseminating project results and outcomes.

#### 3.2 ENHANCE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF SPECIALTY CROPS

Projects must enhance the competitiveness of U.S. or U.S. territory-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. See the [SCBGP website](#) for a definition of specialty crops and processed products, including a list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities.

#### 3.3 BENEFIT MORE THAN ONE PRODUCT OR ORGANIZATION

##### 3.3.1 FARM BILL FUNDED PROJECTS

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.

AMS will not award grant funds for projects whose products or services promote or provide profit that solely benefits a single organization, institution, or individual. In addition, recipients and subrecipients cannot use grant funds to compete

unfairly with companies that provide equivalent products or services. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

#### Examples of Acceptable Projects:

- A non-profit organization requests funds to demonstrate the viability of organic small fruit production and partners with Cooperative Extension to publicize the working model of diversification to other regional growers.
- A single farmer implements food safety practices or models on his/her property to meet food safety requirements and conducts a field day and training services to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the methods.

#### Examples of Unacceptable Projects:

- A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop to make a profit or to expand production of a single business or organization.
- A single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase its membership.

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### 3.3.2 H.R. 133 STIMULUS PROJECTS

For **H.R. 133 Stimulus-funded projects**, costs may be considered *allowable* for individual businesses and producers, as well as nonprofit and community-based organizations, with prior approval. States choosing to fund individual businesses for COVID-related costs must do so in a way that fairly and equitably funds specialty crop entities in the state and provides adequate outreach to the range of businesses that could qualify for such funding. Such project proposals may include funding individual producers, businesses, or nonprofit or community-based organizations who wish to:

- Purchase and provide certain supplies (including PPE) costing less than \$5,000 per unit.
- Make certain facility adjustments (Rearrangement and Reconversion Costs) to protect employees and the public from potential COVID-19 exposure.
- Implement market adaptations related to COVID-19 for projects that benefit a variety of businesses.

More information on allowable costs is located in section [4.7.2 Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities](#).

### 3.4 COST-SHARING AND MATCHING

This funding opportunity does not have a Federal cost-sharing or matching requirement and should not be included in the submitted application nor subsequent performance or financial reports.

### 3.5 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

AMS is required to report on the outcomes of the SCBGP on a national scale to demonstrate the performance of this program. To fulfill this requirement, AMS collaborated with stakeholders, including OMB, to develop a listing of measurable outcomes and indicators that quantifiably measure performance toward fulfilling the program's purpose of enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops. By collecting, aggregating, and reporting performance data across all States and Territories, AMS can share the impact of the SCBGP with all stakeholders, including OMB, U.S. Congress, the agricultural community, and the public.

Each project submitted in the State Plan **must** include at least one of the eight outcomes listed in the [SCBGP Evaluation Plan](#) and at least one of the indicators listed in the selected outcome(s). The progress of the one or more outcomes and indicators selected will need to be reported in the Annual Performance Report, and the results will be reported in the Final Performance Report. Please refer to the [SCBGP Evaluation Plan](#) for more information.

It should be noted that AMS recently completed a year-long evaluation to assess its current performance measure. The state departments of agriculture were highly involved in this effort, and the results will be implemented in the FY 2022 RFA.

## 4.0 APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### 4.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. AMS strongly encourages applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process, see Grants.gov’s [Apply for Grants](#) webpage. This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in section [4.8.1 How to Register to Apply Through Grants.gov](#).

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number “10.170” or the SCBGP Funding Opportunity Number “USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-21-0003.”

### 4.2 APPLICATION CHECKLIST

#### 4.2.1 FARM BILL FUNDED APPLICATIONS

The application must include the following:

- Standard Form (SF) 424 – Application for Federal Assistance
- Grant Administrative Template
- Project Profile Template(s)

#### 4.2.2 H.R. 133 STIMULUS FUNDED APPLICATIONS

The application must include the following:

- Standard Form (SF) 424 – Application for Federal Assistance
- Grant Administrative Template

*Note: For the H.R. 133 Stimulus funds, Project Profile Templates may be submitted at the time of application through Grants.gov OR within one year of the start date on the grant agreement by email to AMS. It should be clear from the Grant Administrative Template which option the State department of agriculture will choose.*

### 4.3 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

#### 4.3.1 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

**Required:** The SF-424 is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the instructions. However, you must use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on the SF-424. A separate SF-424 must be submitted for each of the two applications listed under this RFA – one for the Farm Bill funds and another for the H.R. 133 Stimulus funds.

Block	Instruction
#1 Type of Submission	Check Application.
#2 Type of Application	Check New.
#4 and #5	Not applicable.

Block	Instruction
# 8c Organizational Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS)	Applicant DUNS# for the Organization submitting the application. See <a href="#">D&amp;B Request a DUNS Number</a> .
#8d Address	Enter the State department of agriculture street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes will not be accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code.
#10 Name of Federal Agency	AMS, USDA
#11 Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (Assistance Listing Number)	Enter 10.170 – Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill.
#12 Funding Opportunity Number	Enter USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-21-0003.
#13 Competition Identification Number	Not applicable.
#14 Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, States affected by project.
#15 Descriptive Title of Applicant’s Project	A detailed description of each project is not necessary.
#16a Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where your main office is located.
#16b Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be performed. Write “All” if the projects will be performed in more than one location.
#17 Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	<i>Farm Bill Funding:</i> The performance period may not be more than 3 years long. The grant must start date no later than September 30, 2021 and end no later than September 29, 2024.  <i>H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding:</i> The performance period may not be more than 4 years long. The grant must start no later than September 30, 2021 and end no later than September 29, 2025.
#18 Estimated Funding	Ensure that the Farm Bill and H.R. 133 Stimulus funds are included on two separate SF-424s.  Federal = Total SCBGP funds requested.
#19 Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See section <a href="#">4.5 Intergovernmental Review</a> .

#### 4.3.2 STATE PLAN NARRATIVE (REQUIRED)

**Farm Bill Funding:** The applicant must submit a State Plan that includes the content required in the [Grant Administration Template](#) and [Project Profile Template](#). The Grant Administration Template will be provided once at the beginning of the State Plan; the applicant will use the Project Profile Template for each project submitted through the State Plan.

**H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding:** The applicant must submit the SF-424 and [Grant Administration Template](#) by the application due date. Within the first year of the grant agreement, or sooner, the applicant must submit the Project Profile Templates for each project submitted to AMS by email. If the Project Profile Templates are available by the application due date, they may be submitted at that time through Grants.gov.

For both Project Narrative types, page size must be 8.5 inches by 11 inches. The acceptable font size is 11 or 12 pitch with all margins at 1 inch. Each State Plan should include a series of project profiles that detail the information necessary to fulfill the goals and objectives of the project. For examples of acceptable formats, please see [Grant Administration Template](#), [Project Profile Template](#), and the [Sample State Plan](#).

#### 4.4 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications via [Grants.gov](#) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 11, 2021. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. (See [AMS’ Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications Policy](#))

## 4.5 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This program is not subject to [Executive Order 12372](#), which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials.

## 4.6 FUNDS NOT APPLIED FOR

Eligible State department of agriculture applicants who do not apply for or do not request all available funding during the specified grant application period will forfeit all or that portion of available funding not requested. AMS will allocate funds not applied for, by a date determined by AMS, pro rata to the remaining State department of agriculture applicants.

## 4.7 FUNDING RESTRICTIONS

### 4.7.1 LIMIT ON ADMINISTRATION COSTS

Administration costs are defined as indirect costs and are limited to 8 percent of the total Federal funds provided under the award per section 101(k)(2) of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note), as amended by section 10107 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Public Law 115-343 (the Farm Bill). The State department of agriculture must notify sub-applicants of the limit on indirect costs in its request for proposals/applications so that indirect costs requested by sub-applicants plus indirect administration costs requested by the State department of agriculture do not exceed 8 percent of the State's grant request. If the State department of agriculture does not take the full 8 percent of indirect costs, individual subapplicants may claim the remaining portion of these costs at the discretion of the State. State-approved indirect costs in subapplicant projects may not exceed 8 percent of that project's budget. See the information below on presenting direct and indirect costs consistently.

#### *Presenting Direct and Indirect Costs Consistently*

Applicants are responsible for presenting direct and indirect costs appropriately and consistently and must not include costs associated with their organization's indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, a cost may not be allocated as an indirect cost if it also incurred as a direct cost for the same purpose and vice versa. For further information on how to determine if a cost is indirect or direct, please see the [Indirect Cost Decision Tree](#).

**Direct costs** are costs that can be identified specifically with a particular award, project or program, service, or other organizational activity or that can be directly assigned to such an activity relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy. Typically, direct costs include, but are not limited to, compensation of employees who work directly on the award to include salaries and fringe benefits, travel, equipment, and supplies directly benefiting the grant-supported project or program.

**Indirect costs** (also known as "facilities and administrative costs") defined at [2 CFR § 200.1](#) are costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted without effort disproportionate to the results achieved. Refer to [2 CFR §§ 200.413](#) and [414](#) for additional information on determining if costs charged to the award are direct or indirect.

The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should typically be treated as indirect costs. However, charging these costs as direct costs may be appropriate where all the following conditions are met:

- (1) administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity;
  - (2) individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;
  - (3) such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency;
- and

(4) the costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

### **Typical Indirect Costs by Organization Type**

Type of Organization	Typical Indirect Costs
<b>Non-Profits</b>	General administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment, and the costs of operating and maintaining facilities.
<b>Colleges and Universities</b>	Equipment and capital improvements, operation and maintenance expenses, library expenses, general administration and general expenses, departmental administration, sponsored projects administration, student administration and services, depreciation and use allowances, and interest on debt associated with certain buildings.
<b>State and Local Governments</b>	State/local-wide central service costs, general administration of the applicant department or agency, accounting and personnel services performed within the applicant department or agency, depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment, and the costs of operating and maintaining facilities.

### **Benefit of Using Indirect Costs for Grant Administration**

AMS encourages all grant applicants to include the grant administrative funds, up to 8 percent of their total Federal award, in their budget narrative, which can be used for costs such as monitoring subrecipients, ensuring grant recipient and subrecipient compliance with regulations and requirements, and grant management training. Grant recipients are encouraged to conduct periodic site visits to review project accomplishments and monitor progress, to review financial and performance records, organizational procedures and financial control systems and to provide technical assistance to subrecipients as required. These recommended site visits are meant to support accountability, compliance with regulations and requirements, and achievements of subrecipients.

Given the large amount of funding available this year, it is imperative that States consider the capacity of support staff to manage these grant funds to not only ensure that subrecipients are paid in a timely way, but also that Federal funds are managed appropriately.

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#### **4.7.2 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES**

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

For **H.R. 133 Stimulus Funding**, applicants should consider the following allowable and unallowable project costs, which are also included in sections [1.3.1 Considerations in FY 2021 for H.R. 133 Stimulus Projects](#) and [3.3.2 Individual costs for H.R. 133 Stimulus Projects](#).

Some examples of *allowable* projects costs may include, but are not limited to:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): Single items must not cost more than \$5,000 per unit price. (e.g. one box of masks counts as a unit, not each separate mask).

- Facility adjustments as “Rearrangement and Reconversion Costs,” including installation of plexiglass barriers and other spacing adjustments to protect employees and the public from potential COVID-19 exposure. However, individual items should be considered supplies and must cost less than \$5,000 per item.
  - General purpose equipment over \$5,000 is allowable if it is rented or leased.
- Vaccination costs, such as paying stipends to cover leave and travel time.
- Worker housing to protect employees from COVID-19 exposure, as a direct cost connected to the purpose of the SCBGP and the objectives of the project. This does not include construction or expansion of facilities.

Costs that remain *unallowable* include:

- Worker transportation, unless it can be directly connected to the project activities and is meant to “enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.” Specific travel costs for obtaining COVID-19 vaccines is allowable, as stated above.
- Specialty crop donations.
- Marketing costs to promote individual brands, logos, etc.
- Pre-award costs prior to 180 calendar days before the start date on the grant agreement.

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#### 4.7.3 SUPPLANTING

Funds must supplement the expenditure of State funds in support of specialty crops grown in that State, rather than replace State funds. Additionally, Federal funding may not replace State funding that is required under [section 101\(d\)\(3\) of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 \(7 U.S.C. § 1621 note\)](#). In instances where a question of supplanting arises, the applicant or recipient will be required to substantiate that the reduction in non-Federal resources occurred for reasons other than the receipt or expected receipt of Federal funds.

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

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

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#### 4.7.4 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

Recipients are expected to attend AMS sponsored grant management meetings during the project’s period of performance. It is also possible that meetings may be conducted virtually. The State department of agriculture’s *Grant Administration Budget Narrative* should include travel funds for the Coordinator and any additional key personnel as reasonably determined by the recipient and AMS. This is not necessary if the eligible applicant has already committed funds for this purpose under another AMS grant agreement.

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### 4.8 GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

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#### 4.8.1 HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

The applicant organization registration process can take **up to four weeks** to complete. Therefore, complete your registration allowing sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

If individual applicants eligible to apply for this grant funding opportunity, refer to:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html>

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here:

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

- 1) *Obtain a DUNS Number:* All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a [Data Universal Numbering System \(DUNS\) number](#) from Dun & Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form.
- 2) *Register with SAM:* In addition to having a DUNS number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with the [System for Award Management \(SAM\)](#). All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.**
- 3) *Register with Grants.gov:* The next step in the registration process is to [create an account with Grants.gov](#). Applicants must know their organization's DUNS number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need to request the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role.
- 4) *Authorize Grants.gov Roles:* After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and [authorize the appropriate roles](#), which may include the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.
- 5) *Track Role Status:* After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you [to track your status](#).
- 6) *Electronic Signature:* When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR who submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC **must** authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

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#### 4.8.2 HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO AMS VIA GRANTS.GOV

Applicants can apply using Grants.gov Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different web forms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement (FOA), an applicant creates individual instances of a workspace.

- 1) *Create a Workspace:* This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.
- 2) *Complete a Workspace:* Add participants to the Workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.
  - a. *Adobe Reader:* If you decide not to apply by filling out the webforms, you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or AMS forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, and then accessed through Adobe Reader. NOTE: You may need to visit the [Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov](#) to download the appropriate version of the software. There is no cost for Adobe Reader Software.
  - b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms:* Fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color are mandatory fields you must complete to successfully submit your application.

- c. *Complete SF-424 Fields First:* The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant name, address, and DUNS number. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.
- 3) *Submit a Workspace:* Submit your application through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for AMS required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in section [4.3 Content and Form of Application Submission](#) are included.

- 4) *Track a Workspace:* After successfully submitting a Workspace package, Grants.gov automatically assigns a Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) to the package, which will be listed on the Confirmation page generated after submission.

*Applicant Support:* Grants.gov provides additional [training resources, including video tutorials](#).

Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email [support@grants.gov](mailto:support@grants.gov). Grants.gov will issue a ticket number to which you and Grants.gov can refer if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact individuals mentioned in section [7.0 Agency Contacts](#).

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#### 4.8.3 TIMELY RECEIPT REQUIREMENTS AND PROOF OF TIMELY SUBMISSION

All applications must be received by the due date established in section [4.4 Submission Date and Time](#). Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov using an electronic date/time stamp generated when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov Tracking Number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

When AMS successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will electronically acknowledge receipt of the application to the applicant AOR's email address. Again, proof of timely submission shall be an email with the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov tracking number that Grants.gov assigns to your application.

AMS will not accept application packages by fax, email, or postal mail. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by AMS. See [AMS' Policy on Late and/or Nonresponsive Applications](#).

*Special Note for Applicants with Slow Internet Connections.* Applicants using slow internet connections, such as dial-up connections, may experience significantly longer transmission times when submitting their application to Grants.gov, especially if there are large attachments contained in the upload. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error message or a successfully received transmission notification via email to the applicant AOR.

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#### 4.8.4 TIPS FOR APPLICANTS

- Register and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE.**
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all the instructions provided by AMS.
- Review the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#) to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Apply for the correct grant program

- Assistance Listing number “10.170” and Funding Opportunity Number “USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-21-0003”.
- Make sure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with [Grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) software. Grants.gov supports Adobe Reader version 9.0.0 and higher.
- Limit Application File Size/ File Name Characters (50 or less).
- When uploading attachments, click the “Add Attachments” button (do NOT use the “paperclip” icon in Adobe Reader).
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are “accepted”.
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names (\$, %, &, \*, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- Input the correct DUNS number on the SF-424 cover page.
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:
  - <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html>
  - <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html>

## 5.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

AMS will review grant applications to ensure each State Plan meets the statutory purpose of the program, all application criteria are fulfilled in accordance with section [4.0 Application and Submission Information](#), and that all costs are allowable. AMS will also assess an organization’s ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these monies using the guidance provided by [2 CFR § 200.206](#).

AMS will notify the individual listed on the SF-424 “Application for Federal Assistance” in block 8f. if additional information is required after the initial review of the application. An applicant should ensure that all sub-applicants are aware that additional information may be required from them because of the review of their grant proposal. Failure to provide requested information in a timely manner may result in a project not receiving funding.

## 6.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

### 6.1 AWARD NOTICES

Upon announcement of the Federal awards, AMS will prepare and send a Notice of Award and Grant Agreement Face Sheet (AMS-33) to each recipient for signature by the appropriate official. The AMS-33 will be signed by AMS and the AOR.

The Notice of Award and AMS-33 will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in [2 CFR § 200.211](#) and a reference to the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

### 6.2 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

As part of the Notice of Award and Grant Agreement, all AMS grant recipients must abide by the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#), which reference applicable *Administrative and National Policy Requirements*.

### 6.3 REPORTING

Reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#). If there are any program or award-specific award terms, they will be identified in the award.

## 7.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

### 7.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the SCBGP staff by e-mail with questions about the grant program at [SCBlockGrants@usda.gov](mailto:SCBlockGrants@usda.gov).

For additional information, please visit the SCBGP Website: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp>

### 7.2 ADDRESS

**Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**  
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Room 2055 South Building  
Stop 0201  
Washington, DC 20250-0264

### 7.3 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on the SCBGP website (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp>) that may be helpful to applicants, including webinar information, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), descriptions of funded projects, and required application forms. AMS staff is available to provide timely technical assistance.

## 8.0 OTHER INFORMATION

### 8.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

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

### 8.2 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

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

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 1671-S, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: [AMS.FOIA@usda.gov](mailto:AMS.FOIA@usda.gov).

### 8.3 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 ([44 U.S.C. § 3501 et seq.](#)), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0240. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.