

Guidelines

IDALS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship

Background, Authority, and Purpose

On December 21, 2004, the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) authorized the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide grants to State departments of agriculture solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) amended the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 and authorized the USDA to provide grants to States for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2012 to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

The purpose is for states to receive funds to develop projects solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops pertaining to the issues affecting the specialty crops industry.

Funding Source

USDA Agricultural Marketing Services provides the funds to the Iowa Department of Agriculture (IDALS) to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in the state. IDALS will award grants from these funds and the program will be the IDALS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (IDALS SCBGP). Grant awards will be considered up to a maximum of \$20,000.

Projects that support biobased projects and bioenergy and energy programs, including biofuels and other alternative uses for agricultural and forestry commodities, should visit the USDA Energy website at: <http://www.energymatrix.usda.gov/> for information on how to submit those projects for consideration.

Projects that support farmers markets that do not solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops should visit the farmers market promotion program at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fmpp> for information on how to submit those projects for consideration.

Projects that support research and extension activities to solve critical specialty crop industry issues should visit the USDA website at: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/fo/specialtycropresearchinitiative.cfm> for more information on how to submit those projects for consideration.

Eligible Entities

IDALS will only accept proposals for consideration for specialty crop block grant funds from Iowa non-profit organizations, cooperatives, specialty crop industry associations/organizations and producer groups (hereinafter referred to as “eligible applicants”). However, individuals, institutions, and single organizations (hereinafter referred to as “partnering entities”) may participate in this grant program by developing and submitting proposals, through an eligible applicant. If an eligible applicant is partnering with a partnering entity, the eligible applicant will be the grantee with IDALS for the block grant funds be the party responsible for the completion of the grant and associated requirements. Eligible applicants must reside, and/or conduct their business or organization in Iowa and must be in good standing.

Eligible Specialty Crops

Specialty crops are defined in law as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.” USDA – Agricultural Marketing Service list plants commonly considered fruits and tree nuts, vegetables, culinary herbs and spices, medical plants and nursery, floriculture, and horticultural crops at: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?template=TemplateN&navID=DefinitionofSpecialtyCrops&rightNav1=DefinitionofSpecialtyCrops&topNav=&leftNav=CommodityAreas&page=SCBGPPcedures&resultType=&acct=fvgrntprg>

Ineligible commodities are also listed.

Eligible Grant Uses

To be eligible for a grant, the project(s) must solely enhance the competitiveness of Iowa grown specialty crops pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry:

Food Safety: Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) education, training, auditing, traceability, crisis management, developing GAP standards, risk analysis, certification programs, cost share programs for GAP and water testing.

Marketing: Promoting specialty crops; developing new and existing markets focusing on consumers, retail, foodservice, institutions, and processors; consumer/buyer awareness/education; increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops; new product development; marketing/economic surveys.

Research: specialty crop production, harvesting and post harvest handling; developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops; pest and disease control; improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems.

Examples of Unacceptable Projects

A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop for the purpose of making a profit, or to expand production of a single business.

Individual specialty crop businesses or roadside stands requesting funds to promote their individual businesses.

Examples of Acceptable Projects

A single specialty crop organization requests funds to conduct an advertising campaign that will benefit their specialty crop members.

An eligible applicant partners with a partnering entity to conduct research on the feasibility of planting, cultivating, and growing a specialty crop in a particular area, the results of which can be shared with many growers throughout the State.

Administration of Grants

IDALS follows the AMS USDA federal grant uniform administrative requirements, 7 CFR 3015 and CFR 3016 as outlined in Appendix E.

IDALS applies the following federal grant uniform administrative requirements to the management of each subgrantee awarded based on the type of organization through their contractual or cooperative linkages. Please reference AMS/USDA Appendix E for sections applicable to your organization.

- State and Local Governments and Indian Tribal Governments – 7 CFR 3015 and CFR 3016
- Colleges and Universities 7 CFR 3015 and CFR 3019
- Non-Profits 7 CFR 3015 and CFR 3019
- For Profits 7 CFR 3015 and CFR 3019

Appendix E Statutes, Regulations and Policy Requirements

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5075989>

7 CFR 3015 http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title07/7cfr3015_main_02.tpl

7 CFR 3016 http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title07/7cfr3016_main_02.tpl

7 CFR 3019 http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title07/7cfr3019_main_02.tpl

Allowable Costs

IDALS and subgrantees are subject to those federal cost principles applicable to the particular organization concerned. Please refer to the applicable cost principles when developing project activities and budget. Please reference Appendix A List of Selected Items of Cost Contained in OMB Cost Principles Regulations to locate the principles applied in establishing the allowability or unallowability of specific items of cost. Links are provided in AMS/USDA Appendix A to CFR Sections and Circulars.

- State and Local Governments and Indian Tribal Governments – 2 CFR 225 (OMB Circular A-87)
- Colleges & Universities 2 CFR 220 (OMB Circular A-21)
- Non-Profits 2 CFR 230 (OMB Circular A-122)
- For Profits 48 CFR Part 31.2

All costs must be associated with project activities that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Appendix A List of Selected Items of Cost Contained in OMB Cost Principles Regulations

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5075580>

Restrictions and Limitations on Grant Funds

Grant funds will not be awarded for the following:

- Any request that solely benefits a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organizations, institution, or individual.
- Any request that seeks to replace operational funding for ongoing projects that have suffered losses of state or federal funding, or to replace other local, state or federal funding.
- Any request to pay for “indirect costs” associated with a project.
- Any request for reimbursement of travel expenses where the cost is over the State government travel requirements.
- Any request to pay for government services normally paid for with general taxpayer funds, such as research equipment or faculty salaries.

- Any request for reimbursement of expenses for activities completed prior to submission and approval of a proposal.
- Any requests to pay for Administrative Costs. However, compensation (salary) of employees for the time devoted and identified specifically to implement the project is allowable.

Evaluation

Proposals will be reviewed by a review committee appointed by Iowa Secretary of Agriculture, Bill Northey. The committee will review, evaluate, and score proposals that meet all the requirements using the evaluation criteria as follows. The committee will make recommendations on the proposals to the Secretary. The Secretary will make the final decision on proposal funding.

Evaluation Criteria
IDALS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The following nine evaluation criteria total 100 points. An additional 10 bonus points are available for non-required items.

1. Project Purpose (15 points)
 - Is the purpose clearly defined and have a sound and reasonable explanation of why it is important and timely?
 - Are the objectives clear and appropriate to the project purpose?
 2. Potential impact (15 points)
 - Who is impacted by the project, how are they impacted, and how many are impacted?
 - What is the amount of potential impact (economic or otherwise) on a local, regional, and/or statewide basis?
 - Is the impact quantified and are beginning and ending measurements incorporated?
 3. Expected measurable outcome(s) (15 points)
 - Are the outcome(s) clearly defined and appropriate for the project?
 - Do the events, occurrences, or conditions have appropriate indicators for gauging the project performance?
 4. Work Plan (10 points)
 - Are the activities appropriate to the project specific enough to show how the objectives of the project will be met?
 - Are the individuals performing activities identified?
 - Is the timeline appropriate for the scope of the project?
 5. Budget narrative (15 points)
 - Is the budget reasonableness for scope of project?
 - Do the expenditures correlate with the activities in the work plan?
 - Are the expenditures explained in sufficient detail to demonstrate that grant funds are being expended on eligible activities that meet the purpose of the program?
 6. Project oversight (10 points)
 - Does the proposal demonstrate sufficient capacity, experience, and knowledge to ensure proper and efficient administration of the project?
 7. Project commitment (10 points)
 - Does the proposal adequately describe how all grant partners commit to and work toward the goals and outcome measures of each proposed project?
 8. Feasibility (5 points)
 - What is the likelihood of the project to be accomplished given budget, staff, experience, expertise, resources, and commitment?
 9. Quality of proposal (5 points)
 - Is the proposal clear, concise, and complete?
 - Does the proposal follow the required formatting
- Bonus points
- To what degree is the proposal innovative unique and/or original? (5 points)
 - To what degree are cash or in-kind contributions used to match grant funds? (5 points)