Reviewer Information
2015 IDALS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) is requesting nominations of qualified individuals active in the specialty crop industry, academia and public sectors to establish a professionally diverse Review Committee for the upcoming IDALS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (IDALS SCBGP). Members of the Review Committee will review, evaluate, and make recommendations to IDALS on submitted Iowa Specialty Crop Block Grant Program proposals.

Reviewers should have knowledge of specialty crops, and/or grant writing or grant management experience, and the ability to devote the necessary time to complete the review process. Reviewers will be appointed by Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Bill Northey. Reviewers will provide their time and service as a volunteer with no compensation.

To nominate yourself as a potential reviewer, complete and sign the Reviewer Application Form and e-mail to Stephanie.groom@iowaagriculture.gov or fax to 515-242-5015

or mail to
Stephanie Groom
Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
Wallace State Office Building
502 E. 9th Street
Des Moines, IA 50319

Application deadline is Friday, March 27, 2015 at 4:00 p.m.

Definition

"Specialty Crops" are defined as: "fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture." A list is provided at www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp and contains commonly considered specialty crops and also a list of ineligible commodities.

The Review Process:

- Reviewers will be notified by April 17th of 2015 of their selection to serve on the Review Committee.
- Reviewers will participate in an Orientation Pre-review conference call on a date and time to be determined.
- Reviewers will be provided grant proposals to evaluate following the Orientation Pre-review conference call;
- Reviewers will participate in a face-to-face IDALS SCBGP Reviewer Meeting on June 5th, 2015 at the Wallace State Office Building in Des Moines, Iowa.

Responsibilities:

- Reviewers should be dedicated to high quality, fair reviews, and be able to devote sufficient time to the review process.
- Reviewers will utilize their knowledge and expertise to evaluate grant proposals and provide scores and written comments about proposals from eligible entities that are applying for IDALS SCBGP grants.

The review process for IDALS SCBGP grants requires that the reviewer be:

- Objective and impartial
- Free of organization, project, or racial biases
- Able to maintain confidentiality
- Able to participate in the Orientation Pre-review conference call and the IDALS SCBGP Reviewer Meeting
- Forthcoming in declaring conflicts of interest

Reviewers should be knowledgeable of how to objectively evaluate and assess grant proposals for objectives, work plans and expected results in determining the potential for project success.

Reviewers write comments to assess the strengths and weaknesses of each application. The review criteria is specific to the IDALS SCBGP, meets the needs of the specialty crop stakeholders priorities identified by outreach activities, and IDALS goals and objectives.

Reviewers rank proposals against the evaluation criteria and make recommendations to the Iowa Secretary of Agriculture. Reviewers DO NOT choose the proposals which will be funded by IDALS and the USDA

Reviewers must sign the Policy on Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality. The confidentiality policy requires that Reviewers refrain from sharing with anyone the discussions, comments, scores, recommendations, selections or non-selections made before, during or after the IDALS SCBGP proposal review process.

Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), applicants may request a copy of the materials documenting the Grant Review Committee's evaluation/comments of their application. Applicants are entitled to this information. In these situations, reviewers' information is removed from the evaluation/comments.