



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

2017 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

Request for Concept Proposals

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE 10.170

Released:
February 1, 2017

Concept Proposals Due:
March 1, 2017
No late submissions accepted

Email Concept Proposals to:
casey.foster@nebraska.gov
Save Concept Proposals as a Microsoft Word .docx file type extension

Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Ag Promotion and Development
PO Box 94947
Lincoln, NE 68509
(402) 471-4876
<http://www.nda.nebraska.gov>

Table of Contents

About the Program.....	2
Other Federal Grant Programs.....	3
Solicitation Process and Timeline.....	4
Funding Areas	6
Expected Measurable Outcomes and Indicators.....	7
Concept Proposal Questions, Scoring, and Review Criteria.....	13
Requirements and Limitations.....	17
Review and Notification.....	19

About the Program

Purpose

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) is pleased to announce a competitive solicitation process to award Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds for projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, dried fruit, tree nuts, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture. Please visit USDA's web site at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbqp> to view a comprehensive list of eligible specialty crops, ineligible commodities, and examples of projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops under the SCBGP.

Funding and Duration

NDA anticipates that approximately \$600,000 will be awarded to projects solely enhancing the competitiveness of Nebraska specialty crops. A maximum grant award does not exist and neither NDA nor the SCBGP requires a cost sharing or matching requirement. During the FY 2015 and 2016 funding cycles, the average amount of funding, per award, totaled \$45,299 and \$38,045, respectively. All projects are subject to the availability of funds. Grant funds cannot be expended before September 30, 2017, or after September 29, 2020. NDA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.

Eligibility Requirements

Projects must **solely** enhance the competitiveness of U.S. or U.S. territory-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Each project must identify at least one expected measurable outcome that specifically demonstrates the project's impact in solely enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. Funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. In addition, grant funds cannot be used to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners. Proposals should be initiated by organizations, industry groups, or academic institutions, or should involve collaboration or partnerships between producers, industry groups, academics, or other organizations. Applicants may cooperate with any public or private organization or two or more individuals or organizations may propose a joint project. Applicants 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. Multi-state projects are allowed, but should provide solutions to problems that cross state boundaries. Multi-state partnership proposals must explain the impact the projects will have on a multi-state or national level.

Other Federal Grant Programs

Projects More Relevant to Other Grant Programs

Projects that support the increase 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 Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program at <http://nifa.usda.gov/program/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentive-fini-grant-program>.

Projects that support domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities, or 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 (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp>) or the Local Food Promotion Program (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp>).

Projects designed to solve critical United States specialty crop issues, priorities, or problems through the integration of research and extension activities that use systems-based, trans-disciplinary approaches can also apply for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI). The intent of the SCRI program is to solve the needs of the various specialty crop industries through the promotion of collaboration, open communication, the exchange of information, and the development of resources that accelerate application of scientific discovery and technology. The SCRI program will give priority to projects that are multistate, multi-institutional, or trans-disciplinary, and include clearly defined mechanisms to communicate results to producers and the public. For more information, go to <http://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/specialty-crop-research-initiative-scri>.

Projects designed to explore new market opportunities for U.S. food and agricultural products, and encourage research and innovation aimed at improving the efficiency and performance of the U.S. agricultural marketing system and have an applied research and marketing focus should consider applying for a Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program (FSMIP) grant. Land grant institutions, state universities or colleges, or other state agencies are eligible to apply. For more information, go to <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fsmip>.

Solicitation Process and Timeline

Competitive Grant Application Review Process

NDA's competitive solicitation process will be divided into two phases: Phase I, Concept Proposal and Phase II, Grant Proposal. Concept Proposal instructions are listed below. Projects with the highest combined scores will serve as recommendations to the Director of Agriculture as to which applicants should be invited to complete a Grant Proposal. All applicants will be notified of their grant application status, and whether they have been selected to complete the Phase II, Grant Proposal application. Instructions and completion deadline for Phase II will be given at that time. All Grant Proposals must fully describe the project's purpose, objectives, beneficiaries, external support, measurable outcomes, indicators, data collection, budget narrative, oversight, and commitment. An applicant's failure to meet eligibility criterion by the application deadline may result in NDA's rejection of the award prior to or after the application review.

Phase I, Concept Proposal

In Phase I, interested, eligible non-profit organizations, local, state, and federal government entities, for-profit organizations, producer groups, and colleges or universities must submit Concept Proposals. Concept Proposals are due to NDA by **March 1, 2017**, and must briefly describe the project in a clear, concise manner and be responsive to the categories identified in the Concept Proposal. NDA's Concept Proposal, application instructions, and Technical Evaluation Criteria Score Sheet from which applications will be scored are accessible via NDA's web site at <http://www.nda.nebraska.gov/promotion/scbgb/index.html>.

Once the Concept Proposals have been collected by NDA and the submission deadline has expired, NDA will determine whether the submitted Concept Proposals meet SCBGP grant eligibility requirements and will assess all applicants' past grant performances (if any). An SCBGP Field Review Panel will then be formed, which will likely be comprised of representatives from public agencies and non-profit entities with an interest and expertise in specialty crop food and agricultural systems. The panel will rank proposals against the evaluation criteria and questions listed on the Technical Evaluation Criteria Score Sheet. Depending on the nature of the Concept Proposals, the panel may seek additional peer review for more specialized proposals.

Phase II, Grant Proposal

The panel will make recommendations to the Director of Agriculture as to which applicants should be invited to submit a Phase II, Grant Proposal, which will be included in NDA's FY 2017 SCBGP State Plan. The Director will ultimately decide which projects will be invited to Phase II. **Applicants invited to Phase II will be required to participate in a webinar hosted by NDA. The webinar will be held on March 31, 2017, at 10:00 a.m. Central Time and will provide instructions on how to write a Grant Proposal.**

Concept Proposal Submission Instructions

Interested applicants can apply by completing the Nebraska Concept Proposal application, which is accessible via NDA's web site at <http://www.nda.nebraska.gov/promotion/scbqp/index.html>. All Concept Proposals must be emailed to casey.foster@nebraska.gov. **If possible, please save Concept Proposals as a Microsoft Word .docx file type extension.**

Concept Proposals must be emailed on or before **March 1, 2017**. Questions regarding this grant and/or the competitive solicitation process should be directed to NDA at 800-422-6692 or casey.foster@nebraska.gov.

Phase I: Concept Proposal	
Release Request for Concept Proposals	February 2017
Concept Proposals Due	March 1, 2017
Phase II: Grant Proposal (<i>by invitation only</i>)	
Invitation to Submit Grant Proposals	March 30, 2017
Webinar for Grant Proposal Applicants	March 31, 2017 10 a.m. Central Time
Grant Proposals Due	May 1, 2017
Grant Proposals Sent to USDA for Approval	June 2017
Award	
Announcement of Award Funding	October 2017

Funding Areas

Funding areas are intended to clearly define the 2017 SCBGP priorities and help prospective applicants to both develop their projects and submit their projects in the most appropriate category.

In practice, Concept Proposals might seem to address elements from multiple funding areas. However, applicants must select one of the areas listed in the Concept Proposal.

Concept Proposals should:

- Demonstrate a high likelihood of success;
- Describe the specialty crop grower benefit and grower connection to the project;
- Be scalable to the larger community;
- Demonstrate industry need and support;
- Illustrate a sustainable funding source beyond the life of the proposed grant; and
- Include an outreach component addressing how project results, research findings, and conclusions will be extended to specialty crop growers

Funding Areas:

- Agriculture Education and Outreach
- Nutrition Education and Consumption
- Environmental Crop Research/Conservation
- Enhancement of Food Safety/Food Security
- Plant Pest and Disease Control
- Trade Enhancements/Innovations
- Good Agricultural Practices
- Good Handling Practices
- Good Manufacturing Practices
- Organic and Sustainable Production Practices

Expected Measurable Outcomes and Indicators

Each project submitted must include at least one of the eight outcomes listed below and at least one of the indicators listed underneath the selected outcome(s). If there are multiple sub-indicators under the selected indicator, select at least one.

If the indicator(s) below the selected outcome(s) are not relevant to a project, a project specific indicator(s) may be developed which will be subject to approval by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

Applicants must clearly explain how they will collect the required data to report on the outcome(s) and indicator(s). The progress of each indicator must be reported in the Annual Performance Report and the result in the Final Performance Report.

AMS will aggregate the data collected to assess the overall impact of the program and report to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Congress on these national outcome measures.

AMS will review the quality of the information received in subsequent performance reports and modify the outcomes and indicators as needed over time to lead to better results in showing the impact of the SCBGP.

Outcome Measures and Indicators:

Outcome 1: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales **(required for all marketing and promotion projects)**

Indicator:

1. Sales increased from \$_____ to \$_____ and by ___ percent, as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities.

Please note that there is only one indicator for Outcome 1.

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

- Uses of social media to market and promote;
- Specialty crop local, regional and national campaigns;
- Specialty crop only tradeshow;
- Website promotion and development;
- Use/development of billboards, radio, television, magazine and email ads,
- Marketing materials such as direct mail, brochures;
- Agritourism; and
- Export market development.

It is **MANDATORY** for all marketing and promotion projects that the specific measure is expressed as a dollar value and percentage increase in sales of one or more specialty crops in one or more states or foreign markets as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities. For example, an expected outcome of growth in sales from 5% to 10% is not acceptable by itself, but in combination with an increase in sales of \$1 million to \$2 million it is acceptable. This requirement means that an established baseline of sales in dollars must already exist at the time of application. For projects that do not already have a baseline of sales in dollars, one of the objectives of the project must be to determine such a baseline in order to meet the requirement to document the value of sales increases by the end of the project.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Outcome 1, Indicator 1.

Sales increased from \$1 million to \$2 million and by 10 percent, as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities.

Outcome 2: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption.

Indicators:

1. Of the _____ total number of children and youth reached,
 - a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops
 - b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops
 - c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops

2. Of the _____ total number of adults reached,
 - a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops
 - b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops
 - c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops

3. Number of new and improved technologies and processes to enhance the nutritional value and consumer acceptance of specialty crops (excluding patents) _____

4. Number of new specialty crops and/or specialty crop products introduced to consumers _____

FOR EXAMPLE:

Outcome 2, Indicator 1.a.

Of the 150 total number of children and youth reached, 132 will gain knowledge about eating more specialty crops.

Outcome 3: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access and awareness.

Indicators:

1. Of the _____ total number of consumers or wholesale buyers reached,
 - a. The number that gained knowledge on how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
 - b. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
 - c. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/preserved/obtained/prepared

2. Of the _____ total number of individuals (culinary professionals, institutional kitchens, specialty crop entrepreneurs such as kitchen incubators/shared-use kitchens, etc.) reached,
 - a. The number that gained knowledge on how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
 - b. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
 - c. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/prepared/preserved/obtained

3. Number of existing delivery systems/access points of those reached that expanded and/or improved offerings of specialty crops
 - a. _____ farmers markets
 - b. _____ produce at corner stores
 - c. _____ school food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.)
 - d. _____ grocery stores
 - e. _____ wholesale markets
 - f. _____ food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops
 - g. _____ home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers
 - h. _____ lawn and garden centers
 - i. _____ other systems/access points, not noted
 - j. _____ total (if not reported above)

4. Number of new delivery systems/access points offering specialty crops
 - a. _____ farmers markets
 - b. _____ produce at corner stores
 - c. _____ school food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.)
 - d. _____ grocery stores
 - e. _____ wholesale markets
 - f. _____ food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops
 - g. _____ home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers
 - h. _____ lawn and garden centers
 - i. _____ other systems/access points, not noted

j. _____ total (if not reported above)

Outcome 4: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through greater capacity of sustainable practices of specialty crop production resulting in increased yield, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and/or conservation of resources.

Indicators:

1. Numbers of plant/seed releases (i.e., cultivars, drought-tolerant plants, organic, enhanced nutritional composition, etc.) _____
2. Adoption of best practices and technologies resulting in increased yields, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and conservation of resources (select at least one below).
 - a. Number of growers/producers indicating adoption of recommended practices _____
 - b. Number of growers/producers reporting reduction in pesticides, fertilizer, water used/acre _____
 - c. Number of producers reporting increased dollar returns per acre or reduced costs per acre _____
 - d. Number of acres in conservation tillage or acres in other best management practices _____
3. Number of habitat acres established and maintained for the mutual benefit of pollinators and specialty crops _____

Outcome 5: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems.

Indicators:

1. Number of new or improved innovation models (biological, economic, business, management, etc.), technologies, networks, products, processes, etc. developed for specialty crop entities including producers, processors, distributors, etc. _____
2. Number of innovations adopted _____
3. Number of specialty crop growers/producers (and other members of the specialty crop supply chain) that have increased revenue expressed in dollars _____
4. Number of new diagnostic systems analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases _____ [Diagnostic systems refer to, among other things: labs, networks, procedures, access points]
5. Number of new diagnostic technologies available for detecting plant pests and diseases _____ [The intent here is not to count individual pieces of equipment or devices, but to enumerate technologies that add to the diagnostic capacity]

6. Number of first responders trained in early detection and rapid response to combat plant pests and diseases_____
7. Number of viable technologies/processes developed or modified that will increase specialty crop distribution and/or production_____
8. Number of growers/producers that gained knowledge about science-based tools through outreach and education programs _____

Outcome 6: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety.

Indicators:

1. Number of viable technologies developed or modified for the detection and characterization of specialty crop supply contamination from foodborne threats _____
2. Number of viable prevention, control and intervention strategies for all specialty crop production scales for foodborne threats along the production continuum_____
3. Number of individuals who learn about prevention, detection, control, and intervention food safety practices and number of those individuals who increase their food safety skills and knowledge_____
4. Number of improved prevention, detection, control, and intervention technologies_____
5. Number of reported changes in prevention, detection, control, and intervention strategies_____

Outcome 7: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of the ecology of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources.

Indicators:

Number of projects focused on:

1. Increased understanding of fecal indicators and pathogens _____
2. Increased safety of all inputs into the specialty crop chain _____
3. Increased understanding of the roles of humans, plants and animals as vectors _____
4. Increased understanding of preharvest and postharvest process impacts on microbial and chemical threats _____
5. Number of growers or producers obtaining on-farm food safety certifications (such as Good Agricultural Practices or Good Handling Practices) _____

Outcome 8: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through enhancing or improving the economy as a result of specialty crop development.

Indicators:

1. Number of new rural careers created _____
2. Number of new urban careers created _____
3. Number of jobs maintained/created _____
4. Number of small businesses maintained/created _____
5. Increased revenue/increased savings/one-time capital purchases (in dollars)

6. Number of new beginning farmers who went into specialty crop production _____
7. Number of socially disadvantaged farmers who went into specialty crop production

Additional information:

- Difference between "jobs" and "careers": jobs are net gain of paid employment; new businesses created or adopted can indicate new careers.
- Beginning Farmer 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 is a farmer 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.

Concept Proposal Questions, Scoring, and Review Criteria

Applicants must respond to the following questions in the Concept Proposal. Failure to fully complete the Concept Proposal will result in disqualification.

Organization/Business Type (not a scored question):

Select the organization type that best describes the applicant.

Organization/Business Name (not a scored question):

Legal name of the organization that will be the lead applicant, serve as lead for the project, and will receive grant funds.

Address/Phone Number/Email Address (not a scored question):

Enter the organization's mailing address, phone number, and email address.

DUNS Number (not a scored question):

List the applicant's Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number. Instructions on how to obtain a DUNS number can be found at <http://bit.ly/dunsnumber>.

Federal Tax ID Number (not a scored question):

Enter the applicant's Federal Tax Identification Number.

Project Title (not a scored question):

Concisely describe the project in 15 words or less.

Requested Grant Amount (not a scored question):

Enter the total amount of SCBGP funds requested for the project. The number must match the amount listed in the Projected Budget.

Project Coordinator (not a scored question):

Name of the individual overseeing the project.

Has the Organization Previously Received Grant funds Through the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (not a scored question)?

Answer yes or no.

Has the Organization Received Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Funds in Previous Years (not a scored question)?

Answer yes or no.

Beginning or Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher (not a scored question)?

Indicate whether the applicant is a Beginning Farmer or Rancher or a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher. A Beginning Farmer or Rancher means an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than ten (10) years and substantially participates in the operation. A Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher means 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.

Multi-State Partnership (not a scored question)?

Is the application a multi-state partnership? Answer yes or no.

If a Multi-State Partnership, Name the Other State(s) (not a scored question):

If the application is a multi-state partnership, name the other state(s).

Funding Area (not a scored question):

Select the most appropriate funding area for the project. Failure to select a funding area will result in disqualification.

Project Purpose (30 points):

In two or three paragraphs, identify the specific and existing issue, problem, or need the project will address, and explain why the proposal is important and timely for the specialty crop industry. If the project builds upon a prior-year project, describe how the project differs from, complements, or builds upon the previous work.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on how clearly the proposal states the specific issue, problem, or need the project will address, the timeliness and relevance to the specialty crop industry, if it will provide a direct benefit to the specialty crop industry, and if the approach is rational and sound.

Duration of Project (not a scored question):

All projects will begin no later than September 30, 2017, and end no later than September 29, 2020. There is no penalty if projects end prior to September 2020.

Expected Measurable Outcomes (10 points):

Proposals must result in at least one of the eight outcomes as predetermined by USDA. Identify the outcome measure(s) the project will achieve and the indicator of success for each outcome. Outcomes are measurable changes in behavior or conditions that reflect a positive impact to the specialty crop industry. Refer to the Outcome Measures listed on pages 7-12 of this document for additional information on the required outcomes.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the outcome(s) selected and the project's likelihood of success and relevance to the specialty crop industry.

Outcome Indicators (20 points):

Provide at least one indicator for each outcome and the related quantifiable results. If there are multiple outcomes and/or indicators, repeat this for each outcome/indicator.

Refer to the Outcome Indicators listed on pages 7-12 of this document for additional information on the required indicators.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the predetermined indicators listed under the outcome outcome(s) identified, and the quantifiable results written for each indicator(s) selected.

Explanation to Accomplish Project (25 points):

Using the space provided in the Concept Proposal application, explain how the data will be collected and how the project will accomplish the outcomes measure(s) and indicator(s) selected.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based up on how the data will be collected and how well the project will accomplish the outcomes(s) and indicator(s) selected.

Projected Budget (15 points):

Complete the budget template. All budget items should solely support enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops and correlate to the purpose of the project.

Complete each budget category by entering the amount of grant funds budgeted for each category. The budget template includes limited space to provide a brief description of the costs or activities associated with each budget category. Failure to complete the required budget template may result in disqualification.

If applicable, under Cash Match and In-Kind Match, enter the total amount of matching funds and/or in-kind contributions committed to this project from other sources. Under the Total column and row, enter the sum of funds requested, plus match.

Please note that matching funds are not a requirement of the SCBGP. However, matching funds are encouraged and may serve as evidence to demonstrate industry commitment to, or support for, the project.

Scoring Criteria: Scoring will be based on the extent to which the budget is reasonable and consistent with the project's purpose, outcome(s), and indicator(s). Are matching funds or in-kind contributions anticipated? Is it feasible that the proposed work can be accomplished given the proposed budget?

Personnel: Estimate the salary and wage costs for individuals employed by the applicant organization that will receive grant funding. Salary and wage costs for individuals not employed by the applicant organization must be listed under Contractual.

Fringe Benefits: Estimate the total fringe benefit costs for the project participants. Fringe benefit costs for individuals not employed by the applicant organization must be listed under Contractual.

Travel: Calculate the costs for the travel by taking into account destinations, number of trips, days traveling, transportation costs, estimated lodging and meal costs, and estimated mileage rate. Travel costs for individuals not employed by the applicant organization must be listed under Contractual.

Special Purpose Equipment: Estimate the costs for any special purpose equipment to be purchased. Special purpose equipment is an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds \$5,000 to be used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities. Within the description column, indicate the type of special purpose equipment to be purchased. If purchasing or renting equipment, identify the item and its value. Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land are unallowable. If the cost per unit is under \$5,000, then include this item(s) under Supplies.

Supplies: Estimate the costs for supplies to be purchased. Supplies are items with an acquisition cost of less than \$5,000 per unit that are used exclusively for the objectives of the project. Within the description column, provide a brief explanation of the types of supplies needed for the project. General use office supplies (paper, printer ink, pens, et cetera) are considered indirect costs under the SCBGP.

Contractual: Estimate the costs for any work on the project that will be performed by individuals not employed by the applicant organization (consultants, contractors, partner organizations, et cetera).

Other: Estimate all other costs for each year of the project such as conferences or meetings, speaker/trainer fees, publication costs, data collection, and other budgeted costs associated with the project.

Indirect Costs: Indirect costs cannot exceed eight percent (8%) of the project's budget. Indirect costs represent the expenses of doing business that are not readily identified with a particular grant, contract, project function or activity, but are necessary for the general operation of the organization and the conduct of activities it performs.

Program Income: Estimate the amount of income (if any) that may be generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the award. Within the description column, explain how program income may be generated. Program income cannot be used as profit for an organization and must be reinvested back into the project.

Total number of points in the Concept Proposal: 100.

Requirements and Limitations

Federal Cost Principles

Federal cost principles are regulations based on organization type used to determine allowable costs and ensure consistent treatment of costs. Applicants are responsible for identifying the federal cost principles appropriate to their organization and consistent application of cost principles to the SCBGP grant funds. They are used to ensure contractors or consultants comply with federal cost principle requirements.

- State, local or Indian tribal governments, non-profit organizations, colleges and universities will be subject to 2 CFR 200.
- For-profit organizations will be subject to 48 CFR Subpart 31.2.

Indirect Costs

The maximum indirect cost rate is eight percent (8%) of project's budget.

Applicants are responsible for presenting costs incurred for the same purpose in like circumstances consistently and must not include costs associated with an established indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, applicants cannot allocate a cost as a direct cost if it is also incurred as an indirect cost for the same purpose and vice versa.

Direct costs are costs that can be identified specifically with a particular award, project, 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 that is necessary for the project, and equipment and supplies used solely for the project to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Indirect costs (also known as "facilities and administrative costs") are costs incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be identified specifically with a particular project, program, or organizational activity. Below are typical indirect costs for specific types of organizations. The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should normally be treated as indirect costs. Direct charging of these costs may be appropriate where all of the following conditions are met:

- Administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity;
- Individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;
- Such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the federal awarding agency; and
- The costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

The following are considered indirect and should not be included in the Projected Budget as direct costs:

- Information Technology services;
- Rent;
- Utilities and internet service;
- Telephone service (mobile and land-line);
- General office supplies; and
- Insurance.

Disqualifications

The following will result in the disqualification of a project proposal:

- Proposals from applicants with an active exclusion on the federal System for Award Management (SAM). Visit <http://www.sam.gov> for additional information to register your organization or to verify the status of your organization;
- Incomplete proposals, including proposals with one or more unanswered question and/or missing, blank, unreadable, corrupt, or otherwise unusable attachments;
- Proposals that include activities outside the grant duration; and
- Proposals with unallowable costs or activities necessary to complete the project.

Review and Notification

Review Criteria

NDA's intent is to fund projects that can produce the highest degree of measurable benefits to Nebraska specialty crop producers in relation to each dollar spent. Applicants' Concept Proposals will be evaluated on the criteria set forth in the Concept Proposal Questions, Scoring, and Review Criteria section of this document.

Review Process

NDA will conduct two levels of review during the Concept Proposal process. The first level is an administrative review to determine whether Concept Proposal requirements are met and will assess applicants' past NDA grant performances (if any). The second level is a technical review to evaluate the merits of the Concept Proposals. The NDA SCBGP Field Review Panel will perform the technical review. This panel is comprised of growers and representatives from public agencies and non-profit entities with an interest and expertise in specialty crop food and agricultural systems. The panel will rank proposals against the evaluation criteria and questions listed on the Technical Evaluation Criteria Score Sheet.

Notification and Feedback

Projects that are disqualified utilizing the criteria above and those not invited to Phase II will be notified. Successful applicants will be invited to Phase II and will receive instructions for submitting a Grant Proposal. **All applicants invited to Phase II are required to attend a webinar hosted by NDA prior to submission of their Grant Proposal.** The webinar will be held on March 31, 2017, at 10:00 a.m. Central Time. Applicants not invited to participate in Phase II may contact NDA and request feedback on their Concept Proposals.

Assistance and Questions

Questions regarding this grant and/or the competitive solicitation process should be directed to NDA at 800-422-6692 or casey.foster@nebraska.gov.