

**SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM – FARM BILL
FISCAL YEAR 2010
Request for Applications
Nebraska Department of Agriculture**

Program Purpose

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) is pleased to announce a competitive solicitation process to award Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill (SCBGP-FB) funds for projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined by USDA as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture. Please visit USDA's web site at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp.html> to view a comprehensive list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities under the SCBGP-FB. Examples of "enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops" include, but are not limited to: increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops; improving the efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems; developing "Good Agricultural Practices," "Good Handling Practices," "Good Manufacturing Practices," including cost-share arrangements for funding audits of small farmers, packers, and processor systems; investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes; enhancing food safety; developing new and improved specialty crop varieties; pest and disease control; and fostering organic and sustainable production practices. Grants that increase the competitiveness of specialty crop farmers include Native Americans and disadvantage farmers. Increasing competitiveness may include developing local and rural food systems and improving food access in underserved communities. For a complete list of eligible USDA SCBGP-FB project areas that pertain to this grant, refer to the USDA's Notice of Funds Availability document located at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5082395>.

Legislative Mandate

SCBGP was authorized on December 21, 2004, by Section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004. The Act authorized the USDA to provide grants to states to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. In 2008, Section 10109 of the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (the Farm Bill) amended the Act, which established the SCBGP-FB. State departments of agriculture are eligible to apply for grant funds directly to the USDA. The minimum base grant each state is eligible to receive is equal to the higher of \$100,000, or 1/3 of 1 percent of the total amount of funding made available for that fiscal year. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) allocates the remainder of the grant funds based on the value of specialty crop production in each state in relation to the national value of specialty crop production using the latest available cash receipt data.

On February 3, 2010, AMS announced the availability of \$55,000,000 in grant funds, less USDA administrative costs, to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Each interested state department of agriculture must submit an application for SCBGP-FB grant funds before July 29, 2010, which necessitates a short application period. State departments of agriculture interested in obtaining grant program funds are invited to submit applications to USDA.

Award Amount

USDA-AMS has provided Nebraska with the opportunity to access up to \$352,417.68 in SCBGP-FB funds for the 2010 fiscal year funding cycle.

Before USDA will award Nebraska these funds, NDA must submit a detailed state plan explaining how this money will be used to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. **NDA has decided to utilize a competitive grant process in order to provide all interested parties an opportunity to access these funds.** NDA's goal is to fund meaningful projects that have the highest likelihood of significant, positive impact on specialty crop production in Nebraska.

Eligibility Requirements

In order to remain in compliance with USDA rules, grants cannot be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. Additionally, eligible applicants must reside or their business or educational affiliation must be in Nebraska. 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 proposing joint projects are not required to form a legal entity but must show, in their application, how the project potentially impacts and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public, rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. 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.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria for assessing technical and business merit include significance, approach, and feasibility. Significance is the extent to which the project, if successfully carried out, will make an important and/or original contribution to the field of endeavor. Approach is the extent to which the concept, design, methods, analyses, and technologies are properly developed, well-integrated, and appropriate to the project aims. Feasibility is the likelihood that the proposed work can be accomplished within the proposed budget by the applicant, given their staff experience and expertise, past progress, available resources, institutional/organizational commitment and (if

appropriate) access to technologies. These criteria will be considered when the SCBGP Field Review Panel evaluates the Concept Proposals.

NDA's competitive solicitation process will be divided into two phases: Phase I, Concept Proposal and Phase II, Grant Proposal.

Phase I, Concept Proposal

In Phase I, interested, eligible non-profit organizations, local, state, and federal government entities, for-profit organizations, and colleges or universities must submit Concept Proposals for projects that enhance the competitiveness of and access to Nebraska's specialty crops. Concept Proposals are due to NDA **April 29, 2010**, and must briefly describe the project in a clear, concise manner and be responsive to the following categories:

- Organization Type
- Organization/Business Name
- Organization/Business Contact Information
- Project Title
- Receipt of Prior NDA Grant Funds
- Receipt of Prior SCBGP Funds
- Area of Focus
- Beginning Farmer or Rancher
- Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher
- Project Purpose
- Estimated Timeline
- Goals and Objectives
- Expected Measurable Outcomes
- Preliminary Project Work Plan
- Budget Template

Once the Concept Proposals have been collected by NDA and the submission deadline has expired, a SCBGP Field Review Panel will determine whether the submitted Concept Proposals meet SCBGP-FB grant eligibility requirements and, if applicable, will assess any of the applicant(s) past grant performances. The Field Review Panel 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. Depending on the nature of the Concept Proposals, the Panel may seek additional peer review for more specialized proposals. The Panel will rank proposals against the evaluation criteria established in this RFA and will make recommendations to the Director of Agriculture as to which applicants should be invited to submit a grant proposal to be included in NDA's FY 2010 SCBGP-FB state plan. NDA's Concept Proposal outline and application and the Technical Evaluation Criteria Score Sheet from which applications will be scored are accessible via NDA's web site at www.agr.ne.gov.

Phase II, Grant Proposal

Upon the Director of Agriculture's approval, the Panel's highest ranked Concept Proposals will be invited to participate in Phase II, Grant Proposal. NDA will inform all Concept Proposal applicants as to whether they are invited to submit a Grant Proposal that will be included in Nebraska's state plan. Invited applicants will submit a Grant Proposal that will be an expansion on the Concept Proposal submitted under Phase I. The Grant Proposal will fully describe the project's purpose, potential impact, measurable outcomes, work plan, budget narrative, oversight, and commitment. Grant Proposals must be 11 or 12 pitch font, 1 inch margins, and cannot exceed six pages in length. Grant Proposals are due to NDA by **July 9, 2010**.

Concept Proposal Submission Instructions:

Interested applicants can apply by completing Nebraska's Concept Proposal application, which is accessible via NDA's web site at www.agr.ne.gov. Concept Proposals can be either sent or e-mailed to:

Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Ag Promotion and Development Division
P.O. Box 94947
Lincoln, NE 68509
agr.promo@nebraska.gov

Concept Proposals must be postmarked or e-mailed on or before **April 29, 2010**.

Grant Proposal Submission Instructions:

Remember, only Concept Proposals that rank high enough will be invited to complete a full Grant Proposal application. Grant Proposals can be either sent or e-mailed to:

Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Ag Promotion and Development Division
P.O. Box 94947
Lincoln, NE 68509
agr.promo@nebraska.gov

Grant Proposals must be postmarked or e-mailed on or before **July 9, 2010**.

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

Fiscal Year 2010 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT – FARM BILL



CONCEPT PROPOSAL

Contact Name:

Project Director:

Project Title:

Has the Organization ever received grant funds through Nebraska Department of Agriculture?
 No Yes

APPLICANT DETAILS

Organization Type:
 Non-Profit
 Local Government Agency
 For-Profit
 College or University
 State Government
 Organization / Business Name:

Federal Tax ID:

Address:

Phone Number:

Fax Number:

Web Site:

E-mail Address:

Requested Grant Amount:

Has the Organization received prior Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funds?
 No Yes

AREA OF FOCUS *(check only one category)*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural Education and Outreach | <input type="checkbox"/> Nutrition Education and Consumption |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Crop Research / Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Agricultural Practices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enhancement of Food Safety / Food Security | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Handling Practices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plant Pest and Disease Control | <input type="checkbox"/> Good Manufacturing Practices |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Trade Enhancements / Innovations | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic and Sustainable Production Practices |

Are you a Beginning Farmer or Rancher? No Yes

Are you a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher? No Yes

Project Purpose *(In one or two paragraphs, clearly state the specific issue, problem, interest, or need, and how our project will address it. Explain why your project is important and timely):*

Estimated timeline for the proposed project	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 year <input type="checkbox"/> 2 years <input type="checkbox"/> 3 years
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Expected Measurable Outcomes
 Describe the overall goal(s) and objective(s) and describe at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that directly and meaningfully supports the project's purpose.

PRELIMINARY PROJECT WORK PLAN *(List the major tasks of the proposed project)*

Task(s)	4.
1.	5.
2.	6.
3.	7.

Projected Budget
 Complete the below budget for the proposed project.

Category	SCBGP	Cash	In-Kind	Total	Comments
Personnel					
Travel					
Equipment					
Supplies					
Contractual					
Indirect Costs					
Total					

When complete send or e-mail this document to:

Nebraska Department of Agriculture
 Ag Promotion and Development Division
 P.O. Box 94947
 Lincoln, NE 68509
agr.promo@nebraska.gov

Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA)
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill
2010 Concept Proposal Instructions

NDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) process is a two-phase application process. The first phase is the development of a Concept Proposal. This step allows applicants to explain the main points of their project without the high level of detail that is necessary during the second phase of the application process. Concept Proposals are competitively ranked and scored and only those that rank high enough will be asked to complete the second phase of the application process.

1. **ORGANIZATION / BUSINESS TYPE** – Select the applicant's organization / business type (e.g., non-profit, local government agency, for-profit, college or university, state government).
2. **ORGANIZATION / BUSINESS INFORMATION** – List the organization / business name. Include the Federal Tax Identification Number, along with the contact information and the amount of grant funds the entity is requesting.
3. **CONTACT INFORMATION** – Name the contact and director of the proposed project.
4. **ORGANIZATION HISTORY** – Indicate whether the organization has ever received prior NDA or SCBGP grant funds.
5. **AREA OF FOCUS** – Select a funding area from the choices below.
 - a. Agricultural Education and Outreach
 - b. Environmental Crop Research / Conservation
 - c. Enhancement of Food Safety / Food Security
 - d. Plant Pest and Disease Control
 - e. Trade Enhancements / Innovations
 - f. Nutrition Education and Consumption
 - g. Good Agricultural Practices
 - i. Good Handling Practices
 - h. Good Manufacturing Practices
 - j. Organic and Sustainable Production Practices
6. **BEGINNING FARMER OR RANCHER OR SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMER OR RANCHER** – 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 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.

7. **PROJECT PURPOSE** – In one or two paragraphs, the applicant must clearly state the specific issue, problem, interest or need, and how the project will address it. Explain why the project is important and timely.
8. **ESTIMATED TIMELINE** – Enter the estimated timeline for the proposed project.
9. **EXPECTED MEASURABLE OUTCOMES** – What are the goals and objectives of the project? How do the objectives support the goals? (Goals are long-term broad visions and may take time to achieve. Objectives are significant steps that must be completed to achieve the goal. Objective statements should focus on the outcome rather than the methods used. Each goal should have one or more objectives.) Describe at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that directly and meaningfully supports the project's purpose. Typically, outcomes are those measures that are quantifiable, measure direct benefit and are documented through data or information collection.
10. **PRELIMINARY PROJECT WORK PLAN** – List the major tasks of the proposed project.
11. **BUDGET TEMPLATE** – Complete the budget for the proposed project. Note that if an applicant's project is selected to be included in the state plan, much more detailed budget information will later be requested in the second phase of the application process.

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**2010 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Phase I, Concept Proposal
Technical Evaluation Criteria Score Sheet**

Name of Applicant:

Title of Project:

NON-SCORING CRITERIA	Yes	No
Does the project address an area of emphasis identified in the Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)?		
Does the project build on a previous project funded under the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program?		
SCORING CRITERIA	Maximum Points	Points Received
1. Applicant Details and Area of Focus	10	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Did the applicant describe the organization type and provide all of the requested contact information? b. Did the applicant list the grant amount requested for the project? c. Has the organization ever received prior NDA or SCBGP funds? d. Did the applicant identify an Area of Focus for this project? e. Did the applicant state if they are a Beginning Farmer or Rancher or a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher? 		
2. Project Purpose	20	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How well does the applicant describe the project? b. How well does the applicant define the issue, problem, interest, or need and will the project address it? c. Is the approach rational and sound? d. Is the project feasible? 		
3. Estimated Timeline	10	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Is the timeline reasonable? 		
4. Expected Measurable Outcomes	35	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How clear and appropriate are the project's goals and objectives? b. Does the project include at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that can be reported and tracked over time? c. Does the project make good business sense? d. Does the project provide a direct benefit to Nebraska's agricultural and specialty crop industry? 		
5. Preliminary Project Work Plan	10	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How well do the tasks relate to the goals and objectives of the project? 		
6. Projected Budget	15	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. How reasonable and appropriate is the amount requested and budgeted for the project? b. Are the expected benefits commensurate with total investment? c. Are matching funds or in-kind donations provided or anticipated? 		
TOTAL	100	
Should the applicant be invited to submit a Grant Proposal?	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO