

**Nebraska Department of Agriculture  
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program  
FISCAL YEAR 2008 FUNDS**

**Guidance and Application Document**

Applications Due: **Thursday, December 18, 2008**

Applications must be in our office by 5:00 p.m. CT on the above date

Submit Applications to:

Nebraska Department of Agriculture  
Ag Promotion and Development Division  
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program  
PO Box 94947  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4947  
[agr.promo@nebraska.gov](mailto:agr.promo@nebraska.gov)

Nebraska Department of Agriculture Contact:

Casey Foster, Ag Promotion Coordinator  
Ag Promotion and Development Division  
800-422-6692

Reminder:

Application must include one original and three copies.

## Introduction

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is inviting state departments of agriculture to submit applications for grant funds under the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). The USDA has funded several rounds of SCBGP funds the past couple of years, and a new round of funding is now available. Funds for this program are designed to enhance the competitiveness of U.S. specialty crops.

Each state must submit a state plan for review and approval by the USDA in order to receive a base grant of \$100,000, plus an amount that represents the proportion of the value of specialty crop production in the state in relation to the national value of specialty crop production. With these criteria, during this funding cycle, Nebraska can access a maximum of \$108,530 to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Before USDA will award Nebraska these funds, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) must submit a detailed state plan explaining how this money will be used to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. NDA has developed this grant proposal 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.

## Funding Cap

The maximum grant award will be \$25,000. NDA reserves the right to consider larger requests for projects with exceptional merit.

## Grant Eligibility

Under USDA rules, grants cannot be awarded for projects that directly benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single company or individual. Therefore, 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 involving agricultural development, research, and/or marketing to enhance Nebraska's specialty crop industry. If two or more individuals or organizations propose a joint project, they may submit one application as co-applicants. 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.

Specialty crops are defined by USDA as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops (including floriculture). Specific examples of eligible and ineligible crops can be found at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/scbqp.html> under the Frequently Asked Questions section.

Examples of "enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops" include, but are not limited to: research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, trade enhancement, food safety, food security, plant health programs, education, "buy local" programs, increased consumption, increased innovation, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems, environmental concerns and conservation, product development, and developing cooperatives.

## **Program Policies**

Nebraska Department of Agriculture reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals received;
- Request additional information on project proposals;
- Recommend partial funding for a proposal, that may be less than the full amount requested in the grant application;
- Tie the release of project funds to completion of necessary, timely progress reports.

## **Funding Allocation**

For projects with less than a six-month timeline, funding will be allocated 50% upon awarding the grant and signing of contract and 50% on project completion and receipt of final report.

For projects with longer than a six-month timeline, funding will be awarded at 50% upon signing of the grant contract, 25% after the interim report is received, and 25% on project completion and receipt of final report. Interim reports are due to NDA six months after the contract is signed; final reports are due 60 days from when the contract expires. Grantee project reporting timelines will be tied to NDA's reporting obligations to USDA.

### ***The Program will NOT fund the following expenses:***

- *Paying off existing debt.*
- *Substituting existing efforts or research already funded.*
- *Purchase of equipment, land, or buildings.*
- *Business entertainment or business gifts.*
- *Lobbying or political efforts.*

## **Grant Proposal Review and Selection**

Grant applications will initially be assessed by a review committee of NDA staff, with input from relevant entities. NDA staff will make final recommendations to the Director of Agriculture.

## **Questions and Scoring Criteria**

There will be 100 points possible, outlined below by section.

## **Application Instructions**

All applications should include the following information:

### **A. Cover Page**

1. Project Title
2. Name of Specialty Crop

3. Name of applicant whose name should be used on all correspondence. Include contact information (address, phone/fax, e-mail) for one individual. This person will be responsible for the tracking and accounting of project funds, all reports, and ensuring the completion of this project.
  - a. If the person listed as applicant is not the person whose name should appear on the grant agreement, please include information indicating the name or entity to be listed on the grant application.
  - b. List the Federal ID Tax Number for the entity applying.
4. Listing of all other individuals, entities, organizations, or businesses involved with the project.
5. Abstract of 200 words or less for the proposed project.

**B. Project Purpose (5 points)**

In one or two paragraphs, clearly state the specific issue, problem, interest, or need to be addressed. Explain why the project is important and timely.

**C. Potential Impact (10 points)**

In one page or less, discuss the number of people or operations affected, the intended beneficiaries of the project, and/or potential economic impact if data from the project are available.

**D. Financial Feasibility (25 points)**

Describe the intended use of grant funds. Provide a breakdown of the components of the proposal and where the grant funds fit into the overall project financing. Prioritize funding needs, if possible. Provide budget estimates for the total project cost.

Administrative costs should not exceed 10 percent of a proposed budget. A financial match is not required for this program; however, proposals with a match will be considered favorably. This question requires a one page or less narrative and a one page or less standard budget outline.

Major consideration will be given to whether:

- *The grant funds are being targeted for spending, as indicated in the project work plan to make the project successful;*
- *The project makes good business sense, according to the proposed expenses and activities noted in the budget;*
- *The budget supports the anticipated benefits and whether the benefits are commensurate with the total project financing;*
- *The project coordinating entity has a process in place to track and account for grant fund expenditures; can accounting and project records be readily retrieved and reported?*

**Sample Budget**

Category	SCBGP	Cash	In-Kind	Total	Comments
Personnel			\$1,000	\$1,000	50 hours @ \$20/hour by whom
Equipment lease/rental		\$500		\$500	50 hours @ \$10/hour by whom
Supplies			\$500	\$500	What and by whom
Travel		\$405		\$405	500 miles @ \$.29/mile and 10 days @ \$26/day for meals
Consultant	\$2,500			\$2,500	Consultant fee
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$2,500</b>	<b>\$905</b>	<b>\$1,500</b>	<b>\$4,905</b>	

**E. Expected Measurable Outcomes (10 points)**

Describe at least two distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcomes that directly and meaningfully support the project's purpose. How will success of the project be determined, i.e., what elements will be monitored or evaluated, by whom, how often, and for how long? The outcome measures must define an event or condition that is external to the project and that is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries and/or the public.

A major consideration here is:

- *Can project benefits be measured, reported, and tracked over time?*

**F. Goals (5 points)**

Describe the overall goal(s) of the project in one or two sentences.

**G. Work Plan (35 points)**

On two pages or less, describe the proposal and its expected benefit to the Nebraska specialty crop industry. Explain how each goal and measurable outcome will be accomplished. Be clear about who will do the work. Include appropriate timelines. Expected measurable outcomes may be long term that exceed the grant period. If so, provide a timeframe when long-term outcome measures will be achieved.

The major considerations here are:

- *Does the project provide an overall economic benefit to Nebraska's agricultural and specialty crop industry?*
- *Does the project make good business sense and does it have a high likelihood of success?*
- *Are the expected benefits of the proposal commensurate with total investment?*

Other consideration will be given to:

- *Does the project contribute to a positive image of Nebraska specialty crops and agriculture?*
- *Does the project provide educational benefits to the public about Nebraska specialty crops and agriculture?*
- *Does the project enhance capacity development, infrastructure, or create jobs?*

**H. Project Oversight (5 points)**

On one page or less, describe the oversight practices that provide sufficient knowledge of grant activities to ensure proper and efficient administration.

**I. Project Commitment (5 points)**

On one page or less, describe the partnerships, alliances, networks, or other collaborative efforts that will be created to implement this project. List all parties involved and describe what each contributes in skills and abilities to make this proposal succeed and work toward the goals and outcomes, as well as the commitments for each party (in-kind, monetary, labor, etc.).

Major consideration will be given to whether:

- *The project creates collaborative efforts that enable multiple organizations or individuals to achieve collective results that would not be possible by individual entities;*
- *The applicants demonstrate commitment by way of in-kind time, resources, or other means.*

**J. Signed Agreements Page (attached)**

**Agreement:**

I/we the undersigned applicants, \_\_\_\_\_  
( name/names)

of \_\_\_\_\_, Nebraska, hereby make application for specialty  
(city/cities)

crop block grant program funds, under the terms and conditions of the Nebraska  
Department of Agriculture, in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_. The total cost  
(amount requested)

of the project is \$\_\_\_\_\_.  
(total project amount)

The undersigned hereby warrants to the State of Nebraska that to the best of my/our knowledge, all information presented in this grant application is factual and true; that I/we understand that if this proposal is funded, I/we will be required to sign a grant agreement and other necessary documentation containing terms and conditions upon which funds will be released; and that I/we understand that I/we will be required to submit progress report(s) and a final report at the completion of the project as a condition to participating in this grant program.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_