



**Oklahoma Department  
of  
Agriculture, Food, & Forestry**

# **Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**

## **Grant Application Manual**

### **Fiscal Year 2020 Funding Cycle**

(10/1/2020 - 9/30/2023)

#### **Grant Proposal Application Due Date: March 19, 2020**

Copies of this publication may be obtained at the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry website at: <http://www.ag.ok.gov/mktdev/scg.htm>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	Page 3
Important Dates	Page 3
Purpose	Page 4
Eligible Grant Projects	Page 4
Funding Priorities	Page 4
Examples of Unacceptable Projects	Page 5
Examples of Acceptable Projects	Page 5
Eligible Applicants	Page 5
Eligible Specialty Crops	Page 5
Expenditures	Page 6
Letters of Support	Page 6
General Compliance	Page 6
DUNS	Page 6
Federal Funding Accounting & Transparency Act	Page 6
Records Requirements	Page 6
Grant Award Agreement and Payment	Page 7
Non-Availability of Funds	Page 7
Reporting Requirements	Page 7
Monitoring	Page 7
Budget and Grant Period Adjustments	Page 8
Application Packet Details	Page 8
Project Evaluation Criteria	Page 8
Evaluation Sheet	Page 10
Application Checklist	Page 11
Submission of Application	Page 11
Contact Information	Page 11

This is the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food & Forestry’s (ODAFF) application manual for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG) through the United States Department of Agriculture-Ag Marketing Service (USDA-AMS). The funding is from federal allocations. ODAFF conducts an annual competitive proposal process to award grant funds.

## Background

USDA-AMS is charged with distributing block grant funds to State Departments of Agriculture, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in fiscal year 2020 (October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021). Oklahoma Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) funds will be distributed to the specialty crop industry through a competitive review process. Successful project application funding is contingent upon the available funding from USDA-AMS. The USDA-AMS is the funding entity and has the final approval for projects submitted to the USDA-AMS for the Specialty Crop Block Grant. Although ODAFF and a review panel of industry representatives will make the initial review and award recommendations to the Secretary of Agriculture, who will approve the state plan for submittal to USDA-AMS, the USDA-AMS will make the final decision concerning grant awards. ODAFF reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.

For the purpose of this program, Section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) and amended under [section 10010 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 113-79](#) (the Farm Bill) defines specialty crops as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). Eligible plants must be cultivated or managed and used by people for food, medicinal purposes, and/or aesthetic gratification to be considered specialty crops. Processed products shall consist of greater than 50% of the specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water.

SCBG funds may be awarded for projects up to 2 years in duration with funding request ranging from a minimum of \$10,000.00 to a maximum of \$100,000.00. Matching funds, either in cash and/or in-kind contribution of 20% of the total project budget will be required by applicants. Travel expenses associated with the project shall follow the ODAFF travel policy. Grant funds may not be used to fund political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. 1501-1508 and 7324-7326).

## Important Dates

February	2020	Announce grant opportunity and publish request for proposals
March 19	2020	Submission deadline for proposals
April	2020	Proposals evaluated and selected for inclusion in Oklahoma’s State Plan to USDA-AMS
May	2020	Submit Oklahoma’s State Plan to USDA-AMS
October	2020	Award announcement from USDA-AMS

## Purpose

ODAFF Specialty Crop Block Grants fund projects that enhance the competitiveness of Oklahoma specialty crops. The funds can be used for projects involved in promotion, marketing, research, nutrition, trade enhancement, food safety, food security, plant health programs, education, increased child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption, increased innovation, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems, environmental concerns and conservation, product development, good agricultural practices, good handling practices, and good manufacturing practices.

## Eligible Grant Projects

To be eligible, project(s) must enhance the competitiveness of an Oklahoma specialty crop, and must benefit a specialty crop segment as a whole. Grant 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. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners. Projects must include a plan to disseminate results to the targeted segment or industry.

ODAFF and USDA-AMS encourages projects that benefit beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers and projects that address problems or opportunities that cross state boundaries.

- Beginning Farmer is defined as 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 or Rancher is 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

## Funding Priorities

Applicants are to develop projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Major areas of Focus: (Not limited to these issues affecting the specialty crop industry)

- Enhancing food safety
- Good Agricultural Practices
- Good Handling Practices
- Increasing Specialty Crop nutrition education and consumption
- Specialty Crop research, pest and disease control
- Developing or improving marketing channels for specialty crops
- Developing new and improved seed varieties

## 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.
- A State requests grant funds to make grants to individual specialty crop businesses or roadside stands to promote their individual business.
- A sole proprietor requests grant funds to redesign her/his logo in order to make her/his specialty crop value-added product stand out at the local farmers market.
- A company that develops specialty crop value-added products requests funds to train its employees how to make its value-added products.
- A specialty crop producer requests funds to promote their asparagus at a roadside stand.

## Examples of Acceptable Projects

- A State requests funding to contract with a university 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.
- A single grower requests funds to demonstrate the viability of organic small fruit production and partners with Cooperative Extension to publicize the working model of diversification to other regional growers.
- A single company requests funds to provide a viable pollination alternative to specialty crop stakeholders in the region, which currently does not have one.
- A single specialty crop organization requests funds to conduct an advertising campaign that will benefit their specialty crop members.
- A single farmer erects high tunnels on their property to extend the growing season of tomatoes and lettuce and conducts a field day and farm tour to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the production methods.

## Eligible Applicants

State, local or, tribal governments, individual producers, producer associations, colleges and universities, community based organizations, processors and other specialty crop stakeholders are eligible to apply either as single entities or in combined efforts. Proposals that involve collaboration or partnerships between producers, industry groups, academics, or other organizations are encouraged and will be given priority. Under USDA-AMS rules, grants cannot be awarded for projects that only benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single company or individual.

## Eligible Specialty Crops

Commonly recognized specialty crops are fruits, tree nuts, vegetables, culinary herbs and spices, medicinal plants, as well as nursery, floriculture, and horticulture crops. Please see <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbqsp/specialty-crop> for a comprehensive listing.

## **Expenditures**

Generally, expenses that are necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient performance and administration of the project are eligible. Grant funds may not be used to supplant normal business costs but instead must be used to cover the cost incurred for the approved proposed activities. All budget items should support enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops and correlate to the goal(s) of the project. Before completing the budget template, review the SCBG Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities Table – Page 11

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/AMSGrantsTermsandConditions.pdf>

## **Letters of Support**

Letters of support must accompany each application. Proposals must have a letter of support from a minimum of three (3) specialty crop producers in Oklahoma. Letters can be sent as an attachment and will not count against the page total of the application.

## **General Compliance**

All awarded grant projects must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and the terms of the grant award.

## **DUNS**

All recipients of SCBG funds must have a DUNS number. Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) Provides a DUNS Number, a unique nine digit identification number, for each physical location of your business. DUNS Number assignment is FREE for all businesses required to register with the US Federal Government for contracts or grants. DUNS numbers may be obtained by visiting <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

## **Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA)**

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires that all entities receiving federal funds register in the Federal System for Award Management (SAM) database and submit required information as determined in the FFATA regulation. SAM is a Federal Government owned and operated free website that consolidates the capabilities in CCR/FedReg, ORCA, and EPLS. As such, all selected applicants shall register in the SAM database, <https://www.sam.gov/portal/SAM/#1>, and submit any additional forms and/or documentation requested to fulfill the FFATA reporting requirements as outlined by the NCDA&CS. SAM registration must be maintained and the SAM account must remain active during the entire life of the Grant Award Contract.

## **Records Requirements**

The grantee will be responsible for setting up and maintaining a project file that contains all records of correspondence with ODAFF, receipts, invoices and copies of all reports and documents associated with the project. All records shall be subject to inspection and audit by state personnel at reasonable times. Upon request, the grantee shall

produce a legible copy of any or all such records. All applicants must submit a final report for their project specifying how the goals and results were met.

## **Grant Award Agreement and Payment**

Prior to beginning work on the proposed project or receiving funding, each approved applicant will be required to sign a Grant Award Agreement with ODAFF indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks, report results, and authorizing ODAFF to monitor the progress of the proposed project.

Eligible expenses must not occur until approval is received and all parties have signed the agreement and a purchase order number has been assigned to the project. Funds are disbursed on a reimbursement basis and upon the approval of properly submitted paperwork. Up to 10% of the total grant funds may be retained until receipt and approval of a final report.

## **Non-Availability of Funds**

Every payment obligation of the State under a Grant Award Agreement will be conditioned upon the availability of funds appropriated or allocated for the payment of such obligation. If funds are not allocated and available for the continuance of the Agreement, it may be terminated by the State at the end of the period for which funds are available. No liability shall accrue to the State in the event this provision is exercised, and the State shall not be obligated or liable for any future payments or for any damages as a result of termination under this paragraph.

## **Reporting Requirements**

An invoicing progress report is required with each invoice. These reports shall summarize project activities and progress made since the last report submitted and a summary of cost and reimbursements requested.

Annual reports are required for projects that span more than one year. A final performance report will be required within 60 days of the end date of the grant agreement. Templates for these reports can be viewed at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbqp/administer>

Organizations failing to provide grant reporting (annual, expenditure, and final) and response to ODAFF and/or USDA-AMS requests may be required to return previously disbursed funds to ODAFF and will be ineligible to apply for future SCBG funding.

## **Monitoring**

ODAFF reserves the right to perform site monitoring visits to any and all grantees to ensure that work is progressing within the required time frame and that fiscal procedures are followed accurately and appropriately. Monitoring includes both financial and program information as well as site visits.

## Budget and Grant Period Adjustments

If a project budget adjustment is needed during the project period, a written request must be made to ODAFF describing the reallocation, redefining of project dates or other significant changes to the project submitted and approved. However, the total budget amount, as dictated by the approved grant, cannot be adjusted. Grantees may not spend funds from line items not approved in the Contract Award. Changes and adjustments are subject to ODAFF and/or USDA-AMS approval. A change/extension form will be signed by an ODAFF representative once USDA-AMS approval has been granted.

## Application Packet Details

1. Proposals must be typed, single spaced in 12 pt. font.
2. Application packets should not exceed 15 pages in length. *This does NOT include the Grant Application Cover sheet.*
3. An electronic version of the completed Specialty Crop Grant Program Application (available on the ODAFF website <http://www.oda.state.ok.us/mktdev/scg.htm> ), must be emailed as a Word document to Jason Harvey at [jason.harvey@ag.ok.gov](mailto:jason.harvey@ag.ok.gov).
4. Submit **FIVE** complete original application packets signed by the person authorized to receive funds to the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry at the address on page 12.
5. Minimum of three (3) letters of support must accompany each application. Letters will not count against maximum page length.
6. Each page must be numbered.
7. Do not bind application packets. The application packet should be stapled in the upper left-hand corner.

An application packet must be submitted in entirety. An incomplete application packet will not be given further consideration.

**Indirect costs:** Indirect costs are only allowable as in-kind matching funds under Oklahoma's grant program. Indirect costs should not exceed 8% of any proposed budget. A cost may not be allocated as an indirect cost if it is incurred for the same purpose under SCBG as a direct cost and vice versa.

## Project Evaluation Criteria

The grant projects that meet all the requirements listed in this publication will be evaluated by a review panel selected by ODAFF. No incomplete applications will be accepted. The panel will score applications that meet all the requirements by using the evaluation criteria on the next page. The panel will then provide their comments on the applications to the Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture. The Secretary will then make the final decision on what projects receive funding.

Applicants may be requested to modify or adjust their application and provide additional data to reports and results. These are time sensitive and failure to provide requested information may mean applicants being withdrawn from consideration.

## Evaluation Sheet

Project Information		
Title:		Total Funds Requested:
Proposal Grading Criteria		
Please rate the following areas using the scale: Low:1-2 pts Average: 3-4 pts High 5pts	Maximum Points Available	Points Received
1. Project Purpose		
How well does the applicant define the need for and the purpose of the project?	5	_____
Rate the achievability of the project.	5	_____
Rate the level of the projects timeliness and importance.	5	_____
2. Potential Impact		
How effective will the project be at enhancing the competitiveness of the industry?	5	_____
Rate the positive impact this project will have on Oklahoma Specialty Crops.	5	_____
Does the applicant clearly demonstrate how the project will have an impact on more than one grower?	5	_____
Rate the ability of the project to have an impact within the next five years.	5	_____
3. Expected Measurable Outcomes		
How well does the measurable outcome support the projects purpose?	5	_____
Are the outcomes definable and measurable?	5	_____
Is there outreach to share information learned with the public?	5	_____
4. Work Plan		
How well do the activities relate to the objectives and goals?	5	_____
How well do the activities match the needs or problems that are being addressed?	5	_____
Rate the timeline associated with each activity.	5	_____
5. Budget		
Is the requested budget reasonable?	5	_____
Are the budget items clearly outlined and justified?	5	_____
Are the expected benefits proportionate to the total investment?	5	_____
Does the applicant utilize the appropriate amount of matching funds?	5	_____
6. Additional Information		
Rate the level of long-term benefits after the end of this project.	5	_____
Rate the level of support this project demonstrates; are stakeholders actively involved or have they pledged their support of the projects goals?	5	_____
Rate the degree of proposed innovation including use of novel methods of approaches.	5	_____
<b>Total</b>		100 _____

## Application Checklist

### What to include in the Specialty Crop Block Grant Application.

<input type="checkbox"/> Applicant Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Expected Measurable Outcomes
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Information	<input type="checkbox"/> Budget
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Summary	<input type="checkbox"/> Budget Narrative & Justifications
<input type="checkbox"/> Project Purpose	<input type="checkbox"/> Signature
<input type="checkbox"/> External Project Support	<input type="checkbox"/> Letters of Support

### Submission of Application

1. An electronic grant application must be emailed to Jason Harvey at [jason.harvey@ag.ok.gov](mailto:jason.harvey@ag.ok.gov) no later than **5 pm on Thursday March 19, 2020** as a Word document. ***Applications must be received by the grant deadline.*** Applications that do not adhere to this deadline will not be accepted.
2. **Five** printed copies of the application signed by the person authorized to receive funds must be received by the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry at the address below no later than **5 pm on Thursday March 19, 2020**.

**Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, & Forestry**  
**Attn: Jason Harvey**  
**P.O. Box 528804**  
**Oklahoma City, OK 73152**

### **Contact Information**

Jason Harvey  
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Cell: (405) 606-1477  
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