

2014 North Dakota Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

CFDA # 10.170

Request for Proposals (RFP) & Grant Manual

Packet includes:

- General program information
- Application instructions/requirements
- Grant awards and reporting requirements
- Evaluation Sheet/Scoring criteria

Application Due:

May 23, 2014, 4:00 P.M.

Questions/Contact:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	General Information	
	A. Background	2
	B. Available Funds and Project Duration	2
	C. Application and Funding Timing	2
	D. Eligible Projects	2
	E. Eligible Applicants	3
	F. Multi-State Partnerships	3
	G. Eligible Specialty Crops	4
	H. Ineligible Commodities	4
	I. Eligible Expenses	4
	J. Ineligible Expenses	4
	K. General Compliance	5
	L. Records Requirement	5
	M. Monitoring	5
	N. Liability	5
	O. Open Records	5
	P. Other Considerations	6
II.	Application Packet Information	
	A. Application Format Requirements	6
	B. Exclusions	9
	C. Application Due Date	9
	D. Contact Information	10
	E. Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Checklist	10
III.	Grant Awards and Reporting	
	A. Application Packet Evaluation	10
	B. Notification of Award	10
	C. Notice of Grant Award and Payment	10
	D. Reporting Requirements	11
	E. Evaluation Sheet scoring criteria	12

FY14 NORTH DAKOTA SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM

Request for Proposals (RFP) & Grant Manual

I. General Information

In anticipation of receiving Specialty Crop Block Grant (SCBG) Funds from the USDA, the North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) is announcing a competitive solicitation process to award USDA SCBG funds for projects that enhance the competitiveness of North Dakota's specialty crop industries. Applications that are selected by a review panel will be included with North Dakota's state plan which is submitted to the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) for approval.

A. Background

USDA-AMS has customarily been authorized by the farm bill to distribute 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.

B. Available Funds and Project Duration

The bulk of the North Dakota SCBG will be distributed through a competitive review process. Competitive grants will be awarded for projects up to \$100,000. Additional funds may be available due to changes in the 2014 Farm Bill. SCBG-FB grant funds will be awarded for projects up to 18 months in duration. Applications that build on a previously funded SCBG project should clearly state how the project complements previous work.

More than one project application per applicant may be submitted. Projects may be submitted by a single organization or for combined specialty crop efforts. Multi-state projects are also eligible to provide a growing need for solutions to problems that cross state boundaries.

C. Application and Funding Timing

The NDDA is requesting proposals for fiscal year 2014-FB grant cycles. Funds will be disbursed when program applications have been submitted and approved by both the NDDA and the USDA. Selected grant projects will not be able to begin project activity and incur eligible project expenses until this approval has been received and grant awards have been signed between NDDA and the grantee. It is anticipated this will be late fall or early winter 2014.

Anticipated Timeline

Applications due to NDDA	May 23, 2014
Applications scored and selected by review committee	May/June 2014
Selected applications notified by NDDA	June 2014
State Plan submitted to USDA.....	July 2014
Anticipated USDA approval	October 1, 2014
Anticipated project state date.....	November -December, 2014
Projects conclude no later than	June 30, 2016

D. Eligible Projects – Funding Priorities

To be eligible for a grant, the project(s) must solely enhance the competitiveness of a ND specialty crop and they must benefit the specialty crop industry as a whole; grant funds will not be awarded for projects that provide profit to, or directly benefit, a particular commercial product or single business, organization, institution, or individual.

USDA and NDDA encourages projects that benefit beginning farmers, socially disadvantaged farmers, and projects that address problems or opportunities that cross state boundaries (multi-state). A “Socially Disadvantaged Group” is defined as one 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 part of an individual’s income is derived from any public assistance program.

NDDA 2014 funding priorities:

- Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops
- Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems
- Assisting all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing “Good Agricultural Practices”, “Good Handling Practices” and “Good Manufacturing Practices”
- Investing in specialty crop research, including organic research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes
- Enhancing food safety
- Developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops
- Pest and disease control

E. Eligible Applicants

Proposed projects must be supported by the impacted specialty crop growers or industry sector. This may be illustrated by support from the industry sector organization or by individual letters of support from impacted growers.

Proposals will be accepted from individuals, groups, businesses and organizations involved in North Dakota agriculture. Projects should describe 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. Proposals may involve collaborations or partnerships between producers, industry, academia or agricultural organizations. Applicants may cooperate with any public or private organization.

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 eligible to participate as project partners.

Employees of NDDA and family members (*i.e. mother, father, brother, sister, spouse, and children*) are not eligible to submit an eligible competitive grant proposal.

All applicants must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number. DUNS number means the nine-digit number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities. A DUNS number may be obtained or updated from D&B by telephone (currently 866-705-5711) or online (currently at <https://iupdate.dnb.com/iUpdate/viewiUpdateHome.htm>).

F. Multi-State Partnerships

Multi-state projects are encouraged to provide a growing need for solutions to problems that cross state boundaries such as, but not limited to: addressing good agricultural practices, research on crop productivity or quality, enhancing access to federal nutrition programs, pest and disease management, or commodity-specific projects addressing common issues in multi-state regions.

A project is multi-state when an organization receives SCBGP-FB funding from more than one state to

execute the same or multiple components of the same project. The project must be identified as a multi-state project through the inclusion of a multi-state section in the State Plan project profile (see [Appendix C: State Plan Format](#) and [Appendix D: Application Checklist](#) for more information). In addition, all States reviewing the proposal need to be aware that the project is multi-state so that they can collectively decide to fund it.

If interested in working with a particular state or states, please contact NDDA for further details.

G. Eligible Specialty Crops

Specialty crops are defined in law as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture.” The USDA maintains a list of eligible specialty crops on its website that will be updated as USDA gets new questions. See: www.ams.usda.gov/scbgrp

H. Ineligible Commodities

The USDA maintains a list of eligible specialty crops on its website. See: www.ams.usda.gov/scbgrp

I. Eligible Expenses - Allowable Costs

All costs must be associated with project activities that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Failure to mention a particular item of cost in these sections is not intended to imply that it is unallowable. See [2 CFR Part 225](#) for further guidance on cost principles. Eligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:

- Compensation for Personnel Services
 - Salaries, wages and fringe benefits
- Consultant Services or Subcontractors
 - Costs of professional and consultant services rendered by persons who are members of a particular profession or possess a special skill.
- Materials and Supplies
 - Costs incurred for materials, supplies, and fabricated parts necessary to carry out the grant project. Purchased materials and supplies shall be charged at their actual prices, net of applicable credits.
- Equipment and other Capital Expenditures
 - Lease/rental or depreciation costs
 - Capital expenditures for special purpose equipment are allowable as direct costs, provided that items with a unit cost of \$5000 or more have the prior approval of AMS.
- Travel Costs
 - Expenses for airfare, lodging, meals, mileage, parking, etc. are allowable if directly related to, and necessary- for grant activities, and accounted-for in the budget. The State of North Dakota contractual cost limits for travel applies.
- Other Miscellaneous Costs
 - For example: telephone, meetings, publications, etc.

J. Ineligible Expenses - Unallowable costs/expenses include:

Failure to mention a particular item of cost in this section is not intended to imply that it is allowable. Please see [2 CFR Part 225](#) for further guidance on cost principles.

- Capital Expenditures for General Purpose Equipment, Buildings and Land (Equipment)
- Bad Debts
- Lobbying, Political and Other Governmental Activities
- Entertainment and Alcohol
 - Alcoholic beverages except when the costs are associated with enhancing the competitiveness

of wine grapes and prior approval is given from the awarding agency.

- Amusement, diversion, and social activities and any costs directly associated with such costs (such as tickets to shows or sports events, meals, lodging, rentals, transportation, and gratuities) are not allowed.
- Other Ineligible Expenses
 - Indirect costs (administrative support) & grantee tuition
 - Contributions to a contingency reserve or any similar provision
 - Fines, penalties, damages, and other settlements resulting from violations (or alleged violations) of, or failure of the governmental unit to comply with, Federal, State, local, or Indian tribal laws and regulations
 - Costs of goods or services for personal use of the governmental unit's employees regardless of whether the cost is reported as taxable income to the employees
 - Organized fundraising, including financial campaigns, solicitation of gifts and bequests, and similar expenses incurred to raise capital or obtain contributions regardless of the purpose for which the funds will be used
 - Costs of investment counsel and staff and similar expenses incurred to enhance income from investments
 - Contributions or donations, including cash, property, and services, made by the governmental unit, regardless of the recipient
 - Grant funds shall supplement the expenditure of State funds in support of specialty crops grown in that State, rather than replace State funds

K. General Compliance

All awarded grant projects must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and the terms of the grant award. Specific federal requirements may be found on the Office of Management & Budget website "Circulars" information area <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/circulars/>. Each applicant is responsible for identifying and complying with all circulars relevant to the applicant's organization type.

L. Records Requirements

The grantee will be responsible for setting up and maintaining a project file that contains all records of correspondence with NDDA, receipts, invoices and copies of all reports and documents associated with the project. The grantee shall retain all data and other records relating to the acquisition and performance of the Grant Award Agreement for a period of three years after the completion of the agreement. 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.

M. Monitoring

NDDA reserves the ability 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.

N. Liability

NDDA will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any firm for work performed in the preparation and production of a proposal, nor for any work performed prior to the formal execution of the grant award.

O. Open Records

Proposals submitted for funding and all related grant awards and reports shall be subject to disclosure under the North Dakota open records law.

P. Other Considerations

All proposals submitted in response to this RFP become the property of NDDA. NDDA reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, otherwise use, and to authorize others to use materials produced under this grant agreement.

NDDA also reserves the right to:

- Post funded proposals or final reports to the NDDA website
- Reject any or all proposals received
- Waive or modify minor irregularities in proposals received after prior notification and agreement of applicant
- Use any or all ideas submitted unless those ideas are covered by legal patent or proprietary rights
- Clarify the scope of this program, within the RFP requirement and with appropriate notice to potential applicants, to best serve the interests of the State of North Dakota
- Amend program specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to potential applicants
- Require a good faith effort on part of the project sponsor to work with NDDA subsequent to project completion to develop or implement project results
- Withhold any payments when grant award conditions are not met

II. Application Instructions & Requirements

A. Application Format Requirements

Applications must be submitted via email using the application template which is posted on the NDDA website: <http://www.nd.gov/ndda/program/specialty-crop-block-grant-program>. If you cannot access the site or have trouble with the application, please contact the SCBG administrator at edlund@nd.gov or 701-328-2191.

All applicants must adhere to the following instructions, in addition to other requirements as stated in this grant manual to be considered eligible for grants. Applications missing any of the subsequent information may be deemed ineligible.

- Proposals should not exceed seven pages in length. Attachments or letters of support do not count toward the total.
- Proposals should be typed, single spaced with 12 pt. Times New Roman font and 1 inch margins.
- The application cover page is a fillable PDF. Fill in the information on the form, save a copy of the document to your computer, and submit by e-mail to edlund@nd.gov.
- The application format is a word document. Fill in the information as requested, save a copy, and submit with the application cover page.
- NDDA must receive an electronic copy of the proposal by the stated deadline- 4:00 p.m. on May 23, 2014.

Cover Page

Each application must include the completed Application Cover Page, including contact information for the applicant administering the project under grant agreement with NDDA, a title that describes the project, DUNS number, and check appropriate boxes. Please use the form provided on the website. If you are unable to attach an electronic signature, you may print, sign, scan, and e-mail the cover sheet of the

application form. Do not modify the format of the cover page or make your own form.

1. Project Description

Provide a one-sentence description of what your project is about. Should your project be chosen for funding, this will be used to describe your project in press releases, USDA reports, and other times when a brief description of your project is necessary.

2. Project Abstract

Describe your project in 200 words or less, including goals and methods to be employed. This will be used for project summaries to give an overview of your project to the general public.

3. Project Purpose

Clearly state the specific issue, problem, interest or need to be addressed. The following questions should be addressed in this section:

- What is the specific issue, problem or need to be addressed by the project?
- Why is the project important and timely?
- What are the objectives of the project?
- If the project builds on a previously approved project, how does this project complement work done previously?
- Has the project been submitted to or funded by another Federal or State grant program?
If yes, indicate funding source.

4. Potential Impact

Discuss the number of people or operations affected, the intended beneficiaries of each project, and/or the potential economic impact, if such data is available and relevant to the project(s). This section should show how the project potentially impacts the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. The following questions should be answered:

- Who are the beneficiaries of the project?
- How many beneficiaries will be impacted?
- How will the beneficiaries be impacted by the project?
- What is the potential economic impact of the project if available?

5. Expected Measurable Outcomes

The following questions should be answered in this section.

- What is at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that directly and meaningfully supports the project's purpose and is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries? The measurable outcome should include the following:
 - * Goal- what you hope to achieve
 - * Performance Measure- what you will use to measure your success
 - * Benchmark- current status of achievement
 - * Target- status of achievement you expect to attain
- How will performance toward meeting the outcome(s) be monitored?
 - * Who/What are your data sources?
 - * How will data be collected?
 - * If using a survey, provide information on the nature of the questions that will be asked, the methodology to be used, and the population to be surveyed.
- How will data gathered be used to correct deficiencies and improve performance, both as it is

- gathered and analyzed and in subsequent project periods?
- Describe format for project results and how it will be disseminated to impact industry.

Examples of outcome measures may include, but are not limited to: per capita consumption, consumer awareness as a percent of target market reached, market penetration based on sales by geographic region, dollar value of exports, or web site hits. Be sure to pick an outcome you have the capacity to measure at or near the end of your project as these will become the standards upon which your project reporting will be based.

6. **Work Plan**

The following information should be included in this section.

- Identify the activities necessary to accomplish the project objectives.
- Indicate who will do the work of each activity and how they are qualified to do this work. If collaborative arrangements or subcontracts are used, make sure you specify their role and responsibilities in performing project activities.
- Include timelines for accomplishing each activity. Make sure to include the month and year the project is scheduled to begin and conclude.
- Include plan for disseminating project results as detailed in Expected Outcomes (Section 5).

The work plan section may be in any format you choose as long as it contains the appropriate information.

7. **Budget Summary & Narrative**

The budget should contain a table summary and a narrative for each project cost item.

Personnel

Persons employed by the grantee or sub-grantee organization should be listed in this category. The duties must be directly related to the project application.

For each project participant, indicate their title, percent of full time equivalents (FTE), and corresponding salary for the FTE.

Fringe Benefits

Provide the rate of fringe benefits for each project participant's salary described in the personnel section.

Equipment

This category includes items of property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more. If the cost is under \$5,000, then include these items under supplies. Anything classified as equipment is not an allowable cost for this grant program except for lease/rental or depreciation costs, unless prior approval is received

Supplies

List all items with acquisition cost under \$5,000. This includes anything from office supplies and software to educational or field supplies. List all items you intend to purchase. For non-typical materials & supply items, include a brief narrative of how the items fit with the project.

For example:

Office supplies such as pens, paper, toner, etc. - \$500

Gardening supplies such as soil and fertilizer - \$500

Contractual

Provide a short description of the services each contract covers and include the flat rate fee OR the total hourly rate fee for each contract. Note: federal rules may limit the hourly rate for contracts that are not specified as “flat-rate”.

Compensation for contractor/consultant services should be reasonable and consistent with that paid for similar services in the marketplace. Contractor/consultant rates shall not exceed \$500 per eight-hour day.

Other

Provide a detailed description of all other direct costs such as:

- Conferences/Meeting - Costs of holding a conference or meeting are included in this category. Details of costs for each conference or meeting should be broken out and provided in the budget.
- Communications – Mailings, postage, express mail, faxes, and telephone long distance charges. Provide the estimated cost for this category.
- Speaker/Trainer Fees- Provide the amount of the speaker’s fees and a description of the services they are providing.
- Publication Costs –Provide the estimated cost of printing of brochures and other program materials or scientific or technical journals.
- Data collection - Provide the estimated cost of collecting performance data to measure the project outcome measures.

Project Income

Indicate the nature or source of program income (ex: registration fees), estimated amount, and indicate how the income will be used to further enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

8. Project Oversight

The following questions and information should be addressed in this section:

- Who will oversee the project activities?
- How will oversight be performed?

9. Project Commitment

Provide the following information in this section:

- Who supports this project?
- How is the North Dakota Specialty Crop Industry support demonstrated?
- How will grant partners work toward the goals and outcomes of the project?

Letters of Support

Letters of support and commitment are encouraged from impacted industry partners. Letters of support and commitment must be submitted with the project application by the deadline, but they may be attached as separate documents.

B. Exclusions

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).

C. Application Due Date

NDDA must receive completed applications, electronically, no later than 4:00 p.m. on Friday, May 23, 2014.

D. Contact Information:

Applications must be emailed in appropriate format to:

edlund@nd.gov

Contact:

North Dakota Department of Agriculture
Attention: Emily Edlund
600 E Boulevard Ave Dept. 602
Bismarck ND 58505-0020
Phone: 701-328-2191
Fax: 701-328-1870

E. Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Checklist

Each submission must use the application format provided and must include:

- Completed and Signed Cover Page (electronic signature is acceptable)
- Complete Project Proposal that details
 1. Project Description
 2. Project Abstract
 3. Project Purpose
 4. Potential Impact
 5. Expected Measurable Outcomes
 6. Work Plan
 7. Budget Summary and Narrative
 8. Project Oversight
 9. Project Commitment
- Letters of Support

III. Grant Awards and Reporting

A. Application Packet Evaluation

All applications will be reviewed by a team of NDDA and external reviewers after the grant application submittal deadline. The external review committee may include growers, private industry members, universities, public agencies and representatives from non-profits with an interest and expertise in specialty crops, food marketing and agricultural systems. Applications are evaluated on the merits of the proposals based on the scoring criteria listed on the last page of the RFP. Applicants will be notified during the review process if monetary adjustments to grant requests, project proposal scope of work and/or project budgets are necessary.

All applicants will be notified by NDDA after the review process whether or not the proposal was selected for submission to USDA. Proposals that are approved by NDDA will be included in the North Dakota State Plan which will be submitted to USDA- AMS in July 2014 for approval.

B. Notification of Award

Upon approval of the North Dakota State Plan by USDA AMS, applicants will be notified in writing as to whether or not they received a grant award. Successful applicants will also be sent a Notice of Grant Award to sign. NDDA anticipates that grant awards and notification will be made in late 2014.

C. Notice of Grant Award and Payment

Prior to beginning work on the proposed project or receiving funding, successful applicants will be required to sign a Notice of Grant Award with the NDDA indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks, report results, and authorizing NDDA to monitor the progress of the proposed project.

Notice of Grant Awards must be signed and returned to NDDA within 30 days of receipt. Failure to submit an executed copy of the Notice of Grant Award within 30 days of receipt may result in the loss of awarded grant funds, unless the delay was caused by circumstances outside the control of the grantee.

Requests for reimbursements will be accepted on a quarterly basis. Each reimbursement request must include an itemized invoice and documentation of the work or expenses for which payment is requested. Itemization shall include the purpose, amount and date incurred. Grantees must provide assurance that the work has been completed (i.e. include receipts, invoices) and clearly outline expenditures. Ten percent of the total grant funds will be retained until receipt of the complete final report including receipts for all expenditures.

D. Reporting Requirements

NDDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the course of the project. Information submitted in any report to NDDA will be a public record. All quarterly, annual, and final reports must be submitted using the required format.

Quarterly Reports

Quarterly reports are required for projects and will summarize project activities and progress made. The quarterly report is formatted the same as the annual report to make the annual report easier to compile. The quarterly report will include the following information:

Activities Performed, Problems and Delays, Future Project Plans, and Funding Expended to Date

Annual Reports

Annual reports are required for projects that span more than one year and will summarize project activities and progress made. The annual report will include the following information:

Activities Performed, Problems and Delays, Future Project Plans, and Funding Expended to Date

Final Reports

A final performance report will be required on the last day of the grant agreement. The final report may be posted on the USDA-AMS and NDDA websites and is important for sharing project findings with Federal and State agencies and the public. The final report will include the following:

Project Summary, Project Approach, Goals and Outcomes Achieved, Lessons Learned, Beneficiaries, Contact Person, and Additional Information

In addition to the final project report NDDA reserves the right to conduct a follow-up survey of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts of the project.

Reporting Compliance

Applicants who do not submit the quarterly reports, annual reports, final report, or who submit incomplete reports may be required to return previously distributed funds to NDDA.

Budget Adjustments

If a material change (20% of the total grant amount of greater) in the budget is needed during the project period, a written request must be made to NDDA to reallocate budget funds between budget categories.

E.

**North Dakota
FY2014 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Evaluation Criteria**

PROJECT NUMBER:	Maximum Points	Points Received
1. Project Purpose	15	
How well does the applicant define the need for and purpose of the project? Are the project objectives clear and appropriate? Is the project important and timely? Is the project feasible?		
2. Potential Impact	20	
Does the project have a positive impact on the targeted specialty crop industry? How effective will the project be at enhancing the competitiveness of that industry? How great is the potential impact on North Dakota? Will the impact of the project be realized within the next five years?		
3. Expected Measurable Outcomes	15	
Does the project include one or two measurable outcomes that directly support the project's purpose? Are they of direct importance to beneficiaries? Does each measurable outcome include a specific goal, target, benchmark, and performance measure? How clear, appropriate, and realistic are the goals and objectives?		
4. Work Plan	15	
Is the work plan complete? Is the work plan feasible? Is the timeline reasonable? Do the tasks relate to the project objectives and expected measurable outcomes?		
5. Budget and Narrative	5	
Is the amount requested reasonable? Are line items reasonable and appropriate? Does the Budget narrative adequately explain the line items?		
6. Project Oversight	10	
Does the project have adequate oversight to ensure proper administration?		
7. Project Commitment	10	
Is industry support for the project demonstrated? Are stakeholders actively involved in the project? Do stakeholders have an active role in any activities outlined in the project work plan? Are industry stakeholders providing matching or in-kind contributions?		
8. Overall	10	
Is the proposal complete, well thought out and written, and has demonstrated an appropriate amount of preliminary work to justify further research and development work on the project?		
TOTAL	100	
FINAL SCORE	100	

COMMENTS: