**March 26, 2024**

Dear Agricultural Organization Representative:

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) requests applications for the funding available through the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service’s (AMS) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), and the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 (H.R. 133) to carry out projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops[[1]](#footnote-1).

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to build upon the SCBGP’s mission to enhance New Jersey’s specialty crop industry through our community of underserved farmers, including those who are Socially Disadvantaged, Beginning or Military Veteran farmers of Specialty Crops in the state of New Jersey.

This program is available to qualified businesses and producers, as well as nonprofit and community-based organizations who seek to develop projects that will increase production, marketing, and research of specialty crops.

To be eligible for a grant, applicants must identify as members of at least one (1) of the following groups, as defined in [section 1.4.2](https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/2021_SCBGP_RFA.pdf) of the FY21 USDA SCBGP RFA:

1. Beginning Farmer;
2. Socially Disadvantaged Farmer;
3. Veteran Farmer; and/or

Examples of projects include:

* Researching new cultivars
* Providing outreach opportunities on specialty crops to youth, families, seniors, and the overall community
* Marketing specialty crops through a targeted promotional campaign

Activities or tasks that could be a part of such projects might include:

* Hiring personnel
* Purchasing special purpose equipment
* Holding an educational workshop
* Planting specialty crops
* Distributing product promotional materials

The NJDA requests that all interested and eligible organizations representing New Jersey’s underserved specialty crop industry submit project proposals **via email to** **NJDA.grants@ag.nj.gov** for consideration for this funding **on or before Friday, May 3rd**, at 5:00 PM EST. Any applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

Funding for projects up to $5,000 will be available to selected and approved applicants after **July 1, 2024**.

All applications must abide by the guidelines set by the FY21 USDA-AMS Specialty Crop Block Grant program, and the USDA-AMS General Terms and Conditions. For program information, go to the NJDA’s “Underserved Farmers Mini-Grant” webpage.

Please see the enclosed application information and PDF application form. Organizations are required to use the attached template form to apply for funding. To open the form, please save the PDF to your computer and open the file with Adobe Reader or Adobe Acrobat (TIP: right click on the file, and select *Open With -> Adobe Reader/Acrobat*).

***Once you submit an application, you should receive a confirmation of receipt via e-mail within 24 hours. If you do not receive that confirmation, please call or e-mail me.* *Please feel free to forward this application to other appropriate parties as needed.***

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email NJDA.grants@ag.nj.gov.

Sincerely,

Deelip Mhaske

Grants Administrator

Division of Marketing & Development

New Jersey Department of Agriculture

Phone: 609-913-6628 Fax: 609-984-2508

PO Box 330, Trenton, NJ 08625-0330

E-mail: deelip.mhaske@ag.nj.gov

1. For the purpose of this grant program, “specialty crops” are defined as: vegetables and fruits, including grapes for wine, nuts, horticultural products including Christmas trees, honey, herbs, potatoes, sweet corn, and other specialty crops, including algae. Agricultural commodities which are NOT eligible for these grant funds include, but are not limited to: feed crops, food grains, seafood, livestock, dairy, and poultry products, including eggs, range grasses, and oilseed crops. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)