USDA Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Specialty Crop Multi-State Program

Fiscal Year 2023 Request for Applications

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-23-0020

Publication Date: August 24, 2023

Application Due Date (Multi-State Partners to Participating States and directly to AMS): 5:00 PM Eastern time on, December 22, 2023

Application Due Date (Participating States to AMS): 11:59 PM Eastern Time on January 31, 2024

This Request for Application (RFA) is an updated version. The application deadline has been extended an additional 30 days for participating states.

Effective: Date 9/25/2023

PROGRAM SOLICITATION INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Title: Specialty Crop Multi-State Program – Farm Bill

Funding Opportunity Number: USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-23-0020

Announcement Type: Initial

Assistance Listing Number (formerly CFDA): 10.170

Dates: Applications from multi-state partners must be submitted to Participating States by 5:00 PM Eastern time December 22, 2023. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Applications from Participating States must be received by AMS no later than 11:59 PM Eastern time January 31, 2024, through Grants.gov. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered for funding.

Executive Summary: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), requests applications for the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP). AMS will competitively award funds to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through collaborative, multi-state projects that address the following regional or national level specialty crop issues: food safety; plant pests and disease; research; crop-specific projects addressing common issues; and marketing and promotion.

Approximately $10 million are available to fund applications under this solicitation. In FY 2021 application cycle, AMS received 81 applications and was able to fund 14 (6%) of the applications. To be competitive, applications must meet all program requirements and be of high quality.

This announcement identifies the eligibility criteria for SCMP projects and applicants, and the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for a SCMP grant.

USDA promotes climate-resilient landscapes and rural economic systems, including tools to support agriculture, forests, grazing lands, and rural communities. AMS encourages applicants to consider including goals and activities related to mitigating or adapting to climate change in their project's design and implementation.

Stakeholder Input: AMS seeks your comments about this Request for Applications (RFA). We will consider the comments when we develop the next RFA for the program. Submit written stakeholder comments by the deadline set forth in the DATES portion of this Notice via e-mail to: AMSgrants@usda.gov. (This e-mail address is intended only for receiving comments regarding this RFA and not for requesting information or forms.) In your comments, please state that you are commenting on the **Specialty Crop Multi-State Program RFA**.

2023 HIGHLIGHTS AND CHANGES

Below are highlights of changes to the program since last publication.

- On April 4, 2022, the Federal government stopped using DUNS to uniquely identify entities and started using a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) created in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). For more information, please visit gsa.gov/entityid.
- The RFA includes reference to the updated program performance measures (Outcomes and Indicators) for applicants to use in their application.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

AMS expects applicants to read the entire RFA prior to submitting their application to ensure that they understand the program's requirements. This application checklist provides the required and conditionally required documents for an application package.

SCMP requires that **all application packages** include the following:

- ☐ SF-424 – Application for Federal Assistance (Grants.gov)
- ☐ SF-424A – Budget Summary (Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Abstract Summary (Grants.gov)
- ☐ Project Narrative Form (PDF Attachment) (section *5.2.4*)

  - o Ensure the required template is used
  - o Ensure the executive summary is no more than 250 words
  - o Ensure the Project Narrative does not exceed the page limit (section *5.2.4*)
  - o Ensure project excludes unallowable costs and activities (section *4.3*)

TIPS FOR APPLICATION

- To do business with the Federal Government and to submit your application electronically using Grants.gov, you must —
  - o Have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN);
  - o Be registered in SAM.gov, the Government's primary registrant database;
  - o Provide your UEI number and TIN on your application; and
  - o Maintain an active SAM registration with current information throughout the application review period and, if you are awarded a grant, during the project period.
- Register in Grants.gov and submit applications early. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE DAY OF THE APPLICATION DEADLINE**. AMS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks before the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.
- Thoroughly read this RFA and follow all instructions.
- Thoroughly review the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions to understand allowable and unallowable costs.
- Ensure the application excludes unallowable costs and activities per section *4.3*.
- Ensure the narrative does not exceed the page limit specified per section *5.2.4*.

- Apply to the correct grant program in Grants.gov using the correct Assistance Listing "**10.170**" and "**USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-23-0020.**"
- Ensure you have the most recent copy of Adobe Reader installed on your computer and that it is compatible with Grants.gov software. Please visit https://www.grants.gov/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html for Adobe reader compatibility.
- Limit Application File Size and File Name Characters (50 or less).
- Avoid Special Characters in File Names ($, %, &, *, Spanish "ñ", etc.).
- When uploading attachments, click the "Add Attachments" button (do NOT use the "paperclip" icon in Adobe Reader).
- Do not password-protect your documents and make sure all tracked-changes are "accepted".
- Review the Grants.gov Applicant User and Registration Guides:

  http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/applicant-faqs.html
  https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/workspace-overview.html

TIMING TO OBTAIN AND SUBMIT GRANTS.GOV REQUIRED ELEMENTS

Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
AMS Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through Grants.Gov	December 22, 2023 – 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time
Obtaining Your Organization's UEI Number (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days
Establishing an Active SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one)	7-10 business days
Obtaining a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one)	Up to 2 weeks
Creating your Grants.gov profile and registering your Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) authorization	Up to 4 weeks

1.0 FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

1.1 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Legislative authority is provided in section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) as amended by section 10107 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, Public L. No. 115—343 (the Farm Bill).

1.2 PURPOSE

The SCMP supports collaborative multi-state partnerships to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through competitively funded projects. A multi-state partnership is a project that implements activities with measurable outcomes that benefit specialty crops growers from two or more U.S. States and/or Territories. The focus is to address regional or national level specialty crop issues, including, but not limited to, food safety, plant pests and disease, research, crop-specific projects addressing common issues, and marketing and promotion. Projects must enhance the competitiveness of U.S. or U.S. territory-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets.

1.2.1 DEFINITION OF SPECIALTY CROPS

Specialty crops are fruits and vegetables, dried fruits, tree nuts, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). See the SCBGP website for a definition of specialty crops and processed products, including a list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities.

1.3 PROJECT AREA TYPES

Multi-state partners must develop projects that bring together teams for solutions to practical problems that cross State boundaries and address the needs of specialty crop growers in the areas described below. Projects should lead to measurable benefits for specialty crop growers, encourage partnerships among specialty crop organizations, and reduce duplication of effort among participating organizations. An SCMP project must:

(1) Address one or more regional or national (multiple-State) issues described below;
(2) Define the geographic target area of impact of the project such as the specific states or foreign markets;
(3) Define the specific specialty crop(s) that are the focus of the project; and
(4) Involves at least two partners located in different states.

1.3.1 FOOD SAFETY

Projects that address the handling, preparation, and storage of specialty crops in ways that reduce foodborne threats may include, but are not limited to:

- Improving detection, monitoring, control, and response to potential food safety hazards in the production, processing, and handling of specialty crops;

- Conducting research focused on issues related to (1) water quality; or (2) the use of biological soil amendments of animal origin on similar Agro-ecological regions or localities; and/or

- Strengthening regional and national traceback systems; promoting an outbreak response system that shortens the time between outbreak detection, resolution, and recovery; and improving methods for communicating with consumers about traceback of foodborne illness outbreaks.

1.3.2   PLANT PESTS AND DISEASE

Projects that address threats from pests and diseases may include, but are not limited to:

- Developing safe, effective, and economical pest and disease management solutions for growers of specialty crops;

- Developing monitoring systems to enhance capabilities to predict pest and disease incidence, estimate damage, and identify valid action thresholds;

- Developing treatments for quarantine pests and diseases to maintain or open healthy markets with U.S. trading partners; and/or

- Developing diagnostic tools, particularly new ones, for plant pests and diseases and for detection of pesticide resistance in pest populations, including weeds.

1.3.3   RESEARCH

Research projects are systematic studies directed toward fuller scientific knowledge or understanding of the subject studied. Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting research in plant breeding, genetics, and genomics to improve crop characteristics;

- Improving production, processing, storage, and distribution efficiencies for conventionally or organically grown specialty crops;

- Reducing environmental impacts; and

- Improving supply chain logistics.

1.3.4   CROP-SPECIFIC PROJECTS ADDRESSING COMMON ISSUES

Crop-specific projects involve collaborative efforts to address issues that affect a specific specialty crop. An acceptable project would involve a specific specialty crop that is grown commercially in several distinct and widely dispersed geographic areas or regions of the country. Projects may include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting research to determine consumer preferences, including studies of agricultural product price decision, value-added, sensory evaluations, focus groups; and
- Other evaluative research methods that will enhance the impacts of agricultural marketing and promotion efforts.

1.3.5   MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Marketing and promotion projects focus on multiple-state efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, generate publicity, attract new customers, enhance food transportation, and raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue.

1.3.6   PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES NOT ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Projects are not eligible for funding if the proposed activities:

- Duplicate the content of food safety training curricula or any resources or materials already developed;
- Provide direct financial assistance to producers or processors to offset the cost of, or to cost share for, funding audits of production, handling, or management systems;
- Benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. Funds cannot be used to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services; or
- Generate no direct, assessable benefits for the U.S. specialty crop producers or agricultural community.

2.0 AWARD INFORMATION

2.1   TYPE OF FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

AMS will use a Grant Agreement to provide support to successful applicants.

2.2   TYPE OF APPLICATIONS

New application. All new applications will be reviewed competitively using the evaluation criteria and selection process described in section *6.0 Application Review Information*.

2.3   AVAILABLE FUNDING

The amount available to fund SCMP awards in FY 2023 is approximately $10 million.

Enactment of continuing resolutions or appropriations acts may affect the availability or level of funding for this program. There is no commitment by USDA to fund any particular application, to guarantee minimum funding levels, or to make a specific number of awards.

2.4   GRANT AMOUNTS AVAILABLE PER INDIVIDUAL PROJECT TO EACH APPLICANT

AMS expects applicants to complete their projects within the performance period of the grant. It is acceptable to complete a project before the scheduled performance period end date. However, AMS encourages applicants to take the full grant period to allow ample time to complete projects. The applicant must indicate the start date and end date on Block 17 of the SF-424 "Application for Federal Assistance".

Applicants may not request less than or more than the respective minimum/maximum amounts. Applicants must justify the requested funding amounts within the Project Narrative.

Project types	Award Period	Start Date	End Date	Minimum award	Maximum award
All Project Area Types	3 years	September 30, 2024	September 29, 2027	$250,000	$1,000,000

3.0 ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

3.1 ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

All applicants must be domestic entities owned, operated, and located within the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, or the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Eligible applicants include:

Entity Type	Description
Participating States	State Departments of Agriculture that elect to submit proposals to AMS on behalf of interested entities as well as oversee the administration of awarded agreements. Note: AMS recognizes that some States may not have the resources for SCMP administration or have additional restrictions or requirements related to project costs, administration, or activities. Participating States may use Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) administrative funds to offset costs related to SCMP pre- and post-award activities.
Nonparticipating States	State Departments of Agriculture that do not elect to submit proposals to AMS on behalf of interested entities and will not oversee the administration of awarded agreements.
Entities in Nonparticipating States	Local governments, Indian tribes, institutions of higher education, or nonprofit organizations residing in Nonparticipating States. Entities located in a Nonparticipating State would apply directly to AMS.
Nonprofit Corporations	Any organization or institution, including nonprofits with State or IRS 501 (c) status and accredited institutions of higher education, where no part of the organization or institution's net earnings of which inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual.

- Entities residing in a [participating state](#) must apply through their State Department of Agriculture. Entities residing in a participating state are ineligible to apply directly to AMS.
- Entities in a non-participating state may apply to AMS directly or choose to contact an adjacent participating state to apply on behalf of the entity.
- Non-profits entities must apply directly to AMS.
- Partnerships must include two or more states/territories.

Note: See eligibility decision diagram in section *10.0 Appendix I: Eligibility Decision Diagram*.

3.2   PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Engagement with partners and collaborators strengthens SCMP projects. The applicant may subcontract or subaward with partners and collaborators (section *5.2.5 Letters of Commitment from Partners and Collaborators*), or may engage with them without funding obligations. For instance, a project may have partners or collaborators who have their own funding or who are contributing to the project financially, such as by providing a cash or in-kind match. Only the applicant must meet the eligibility requirements. Project partners and collaborators do not need to meet these eligibility requirements provided in section *3.1*.

- A *partner* is in a relationship involving close cooperation with the applicant and shares responsibilities in the management of the project.
- A *collaborator* is a person or an organization unaffiliated with the applicant that cooperates with the applicant in the conduct of the project and is not immediately connected to the management of the project.

Partners and collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit, or nonprofit entities.

Regardless of whether there is a subcontract or subaward relationship, applicants must show evidence of existing community or industry support and engagement. Applications should demonstrate a commitment to engage potential project beneficiaries as active participants.

The applicants must disclose in writing any potential conflict of interest to the USDA/AMS or pass-through entity (See [2 CFR § 200.112](#)). Partners and collaborators may come from private or public, for-profit, or nonprofit entities.

3.3   BENEFIT MORE THAN ONE PRODUCT OR ORGANIZATION

Applications should describe how the project potentially affects and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual.

AMS will not award grant funds for projects whose products or services promote or provide profit that solely benefits a single organization, institution, or individual. In addition, recipients and subrecipients cannot use grant funds to compete unfairly with companies that provide equivalent products or services. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

The following are some examples of acceptable and unacceptable projects:

Acceptable Projects	Unacceptable projects
A non-profit organization 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 company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop to make a profit or to expand production of a single business or organization.
A single farmer implements food safety practices or models on his/her property to meet food safety requirements and conducts a field day and training services to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the methods.	A single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase its membership.

3.4   PERFORMANCE MEASURES

AMS is required to report on the outcomes of the SCBGP, including SCMP, on a national scale to demonstrate the performance of this program. In 2021 AMS, in conjunction with the State Departments of Agriculture, completed a year-long evaluation to assess its current performance measures. Additional information regarding the update to the performance measures can be found on the AMS Grant Performance Measures website. By collecting, aggregating, and reporting performance data across all States and Territories, AMS can share the impact of the SCBGP and SCMP with all stakeholders, including the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), U.S. Congress, the agricultural community, and the public.

Each proposal submitted **must** include at least one of the seven outcomes listed in the SCBGP Performance Measures and at least one of the indicators listed in the selected outcome(s). The progress of the one or more outcomes and indicators selected will need to be reported in the Annual Performance Report, and the results will be reported in the Final Performance Report. Please refer to the SCBGP Performance Measures for more information.

4.0 FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

4.1   COST SHARING AND MATCHING

This funding opportunity does not have a federal cost-sharing or matching requirement.

4.2 INDIRECT COSTS

4.2.1 LIMIT ON ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

Administrative costs are defined as indirect costs and are limited to 8 percent of the total Federal funds provided under the award per section 101(k)(2) of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note), as amended by section 10107 of the Farm Bill. The State Department of Agriculture must notify sub-applicants of the limit on indirect costs in its request for proposals/applications so that indirect costs requested by sub-applicants plus indirect administrative costs requested by the State department of agriculture do not exceed 8 percent of the State's grant request. If the State department of agriculture does not take the full 8 percent of indirect costs, individual sub-applicants may claim the remaining portion of these costs at the discretion of the State. State-approved indirect costs in sub-applicant projects may not exceed 8 percent of that project's budget. See the information below on presenting direct and indirect costs consistently.

Presenting Direct and Indirect Costs Consistently

Applicants are responsible for presenting direct and indirect costs appropriately and consistently and must not include costs associated with their organization's indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, a cost may not be allocated as an indirect cost if it also incurred as a direct cost for the same purpose and vice versa.

> **Direct costs** are costs are defined at 2 CFR § 200.413, and are costs that can be identified specifically with a particular award, project or program, service, or other organizational activity or that can be directly assigned to such an activity relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy. Typically, direct costs include, but are not limited to, compensation of employees who work directly on the award to include salaries and fringe benefits, travel, equipment, and supplies directly benefiting the grant-supported project or program.

> **Indirect costs** (also known as "facilities and administrative costs") are defined at 2 CFR § 200.414 and are costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted without effort disproportionate to the results achieved.

The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should typically be treated as indirect costs. However, charging these costs as direct costs may be appropriate where all the following conditions are met:

(1) administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity;

(2) individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity;

(3) such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the Federal awarding agency; and

(4) the costs are not also recovered as indirect costs.

Typical Indirect Costs by Organization Type

Type of Organization	Typical Indirect Costs
Non-Profits	General administration and general expenses, such as the salaries and expenses of executive officers, personnel administration, and accounting, depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment, and the costs of operating and maintaining facilities.
Colleges and Universities	Equipment and capital improvements, operation and maintenance expenses, library expenses, general administration and general expenses, departmental administration, sponsored projects administration, student administration and services, depreciation and use allowances, and interest on debt associated with certain buildings.
State and Local Governments	State and local-wide central service costs, general administration of the applicant department or agency, accounting and personnel services performed within the applicant department or agency, depreciation or use allowances on buildings and equipment, and the costs of operating and maintaining facilities.

Benefit of Using Indirect Costs for Grant Administration

AMS encourages all grant applicants to include the grant administrative funds, up to 8 percent of their total Federal award, in their budget narrative, which can be used for costs such as monitoring subrecipients, ensuring grant recipient and subrecipient compliance with regulations and requirements, and grant management training. Grant recipients are encouraged to conduct periodic site visits to review project accomplishments and monitor progress, to review financial and performance records, organizational procedures, and financial control systems, and to provide technical assistance to subrecipients as required. These recommended site visits are meant to support accountability, compliance with regulations and requirements, and achievements of subrecipients.

It is imperative that states and territories consider the capacity of support staff to manage these grant funds to not only ensure that subrecipients are paid in a timely way, but also that Federal funds are managed appropriately.

4.2.2 SUPPLANTING

Funds must supplement the expenditure of state funds in support of specialty crops grown in that State, rather than replace state funds. Additionally, Federal funding may not replace State funding that is required under section 101(d)(3) of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note). In instances where a question of supplanting arises, the applicant or recipient will be required to substantiate that the reduction in non-Federal resources occurred for reasons other than the receipt or expected receipt of Federal funds.

General Supplanting Definition. A State organization reduces State funds for an activity specifically because Federal funds are available (or expected to be available) to fund that same activity.

Example: State funds are appropriated for a stated purpose and Federal funds are awarded for that same purpose. (If a State has $50.00 budgeted for a specialty crop program and the Federal government awards a $100.00 grant for the same specialty crop program, the total project must expend $150.00 – the State cannot remove the original $50.00 and use it for something else).

4.3 ALLOWABLE AND UNALLOWABLE COSTS AND ACTIVITIES

All AMS awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions.

4.4 COORDINATOR MEETING TRAVEL

Recipients are expected to attend AMS sponsored grant management meetings during the project's period of performance. It is also possible that meetings may be conducted virtually. The State department of agriculture's Grant Administration Budget Narrative should include travel funds for the State Department of Agriculture Coordinators as reasonably determined by the recipient and AMS. This is not necessary if the eligible applicant has already committed funds for this purpose under another AMS grant agreement. If the conference is performed virtually, recipients will be able to reallocate those funds to another allowable item.

5.0 APPLICATION AND SUMBISSION INFORMATION

5.1 ELECTRONIC APPLICATION PACKAGE

Only electronic applications may be submitted via Grants.gov in response to this RFA. AMS strongly encourages applicants to submit early to the Grants.gov system. For an overview of the Grants.gov application process, see Grants.gov's Apply for Grants webpage. This RFA contains the information needed to obtain and complete required application forms and AMS-specific attachments. More information about applying through Grants.gov can be found in section *5.3.1 How to Register to Apply Through Grants.Gov*.

Applicants can find the opportunity under either the Assistance Listing number "**10.170**" or the SCMP Funding Opportunity Number "**USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-23-0020**."

5.1.1 PARTICIPATING STATES AND ENTITIES WITHIN THEM

Entities in Participating States must submit their applications to their respective Participating State using that State's instructions.

Participating states will submit each application received from entities that meets the requirements outlined in this RFA as separate application packages through Grants.gov, including each applicable component listed in section *5.2 Content and Form of Application Submission*.

5.1.2 NONPARTICIPATING STATES AND ENTITIES WITHIN THEM

Nonparticipating states and entities within them will submit their applications through Grants.gov, including each applicable component listed in section *5.2 Content and Form of Application Submission*.

5.2 CONTENT AND FORM OF APPLICATION SUBMISSION

5.2.1 SF-424 APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL ASSISTANCE

Required. The SF-424 form is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or are adequately explained in the instructions. However, you must use the following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on form SF-424.

Block	Instruction
1 - Type of Submission	Select Application type
2 - Type of Application	Select New
4 - through #7	Not required
8.a - Legal Name	Must match SAM.gov exactly
8.c - Organizational Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)	Enter applicant UEI# for the organization submitting the application. Note: On April 4, 2022, the federal government stopped using DUNS and start using a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) created in SAM.gov. For more information, please visit gsa.gov/entityid.
8.d - Address	Enter the organization street address as it appears in SAM.gov. P.O. Boxes will not be accepted. Enter a 9-digit zip code.
10 - Name of Federal Agency	AMS, USDA
11- Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number (Assistance Listing Number)	Enter "**10.170**"
12 - Funding Opportunity Number	Enter "**USDA-AMS-TM-SCMP-G-23-0020**"
13 - Competition Identification Number	Not applicable.
14 - Areas Affected by Project	Enter cities, counties, States affected by project.
15 - Descriptive Title of Applicant's Project	Provide a short description of the project.
16a - Congressional Districts for Applicant	Enter the Congressional district where the applicant is located.
16b - Congressional Districts for Program/Project	Enter the Congressional district where your project will be implemented. Write "All" if the projects will be implemented in more than one location.
17 - Proposed Project Start Date and End Date	Enter Start Date: September 30, 2024. End date: September 29, 2027. The project period cannot be more than 36 months (3 years) in length.
18.a - Estimated Funding – Federal	Enter the total Federal amount requested
18.b -18.f Estimated Funding – Applicant	N/A

Block	Instruction
19 - Is Applicant Subject to Review by State Under Executive Order 12372 Process?	See section *5.6 Intergovernmental Review*.

5.2.2   SF-424A BUDGET INFORMATION

Required: The SF-424A is available via the opportunity at Grants.gov. Most information blocks on the required form are either self-explanatory or adequately explained in the instructions. The following supplemental instructions associated with specific blocks on form SF-424A should be used for this RFA. **Do not** use instructions found in Grants.gov or elsewhere on the internet for these blocks.

 Please complete **only** sections A and B. (**Do not** complete sections C- F.)

Section A – Budget Summary

Box	Instructions
1.a – Grant Program Function or Activity	Enter "SCMP – Federal"
1.b – Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number	Enter "10.170"
1.e – Federal	Enter the amount of Federal funding requested for the project
1.f – Non-Federal	Enter the "0" There is no match contribution amount provided for the SCMP.

Section B – Budget Categories

Box	Instructions
6.a – 6.j – Object Class Categories	Enter the same expense types in the column headings for Section 6. Please note the Grants.gov form will auto fill these headers. For 1) Project totals, enter the total for all proposed projects under "contractual". For 2) Grant Administration, enter the total expenses for each class category (e.g., Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, etc.) and sum the amounts in column 5 and row K. Note that totals will also auto fill when using the Grants.gov form.

5.2.3   PROJECT ABSTRACT SUMMARY

Required. The Project Abstract Summary form will be used as the award description for the overarching Federal award. This is required for all project area types and is separate from the SCMP Executive Summary from the Project Narrative. The Project Abstract Summary box must include:

- Project purpose;
- Activities to be performed;
- Deliverables and expected outcomes;
- Intended beneficiary(ies): Who will benefit from this beyond the applicant organization; and
- Subrecipient, key partner, and collaborator activities. Identify the key partners, collaborators and subrecipients you know will be part of the work and how their engagement will support the program goals.

5.2.4   PROJECT NARRATIVE

Required. The Project Narrative must be submitted as a PDF, attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under form SF-424 item #15. Handwritten applications or applications in MS Word will not be accepted. The Project Narrative must be typed, single-spaced, in an 11-point font, not to exceed fifteen (15) 8.5 x 11 pages.

Prior to submitting an application to Grants.gov, make sure that it is in final form (e.g., if you used the "track changes" function, accept all changes before submitting so that the mark-up is not visible upon final submission). **The supporting documents in the subsequent sections do not count against the 15-page limit for the Project Narrative.**

(1) Executive Summary

Include a summary of 250 words or less, suitable for dissemination to the public. This summary should include a concise outline of the project's purpose; activities to be performed, including subawards (when applicable); deliverables and expected outcomes; intended beneficiaries; and any other pertinent information.

(2) Alignment and Intent

(i) Clearly state the purpose of the project and Project Area Type identified in section *1.3 Project Area Types*. Describe the specific issue, problem, or need that the project will address in relation to the statutory language of the program (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note). Include data and/or estimates that describe the extent of the issue, problem, or need.

(ii) List the objectives of the project. The objectives must be related to addressing the issue(s), problem(s), or need(s) in relation to the statutory language of the program, as described in section (2)(i).

(iii) Provide a description of the benefits you intend to achieve as a result of the project, including the number of affected producers or processors.

(3) Technical Merit

(i) Provide a Work Plan that describes the activities and timeline associated with each project objective. Include the following information for each objective listed pursuant to the Alignment and Intent section above: a timeline for each activity and major output, including the anticipated date of completion; how and where the activities will take place; required resources; milestone(s) for assessing

progress and success; the person(s) responsible for completing the activity, including collaborative arrangements or subcontractors; if conducting training and technical assistance, how participants will be recruited; and how you will help guide program development and delivery.

(ii) If the proposed project has been or will be submitted to another federal program for funding, provide the grant program name.

(iii) If the proposed project builds on work previously funded by a federal program, including AMS grant programs, provide the year and grant program name and describe how the proposed project, if funded, would not duplicate work previously funded by the federal government.

(4) Achievability

(i) Provide at least one distinct, assessable project outcome and associated indicator. If the outcome measures are long-term and occur after the project's completion, identify an intermediate outcome that occurs during the term of the grant, and is expected to help lead to the fulfillment of long-term outcomes. Please refer to the SCBGP Performance Measures for more information.

(ii) For each completed, quantitative outcome indicator, describe how you derived the numbers, how you intend to measure and achieve each relevant outcome and indicator, and any potential challenges to achieving the estimated targets and action steps for addressing them.

(iii) For each completed, qualitative outcome, describe the methodology, rationales, how you intend to assess and achieve each relevant outcome and indicator, and any potential challenges to achieving the estimated targets and action steps for addressing them.

(iv) Provide a clear description of the plan to disseminate the project results (positive and negative) to similar organizations, stakeholders, and others that may be interested in the project results or in implementing a similar project.

(5) Expertise and Partners

(i) List key staff, including personnel and external project partners and collaborators, that comprise the Project Team, their roles, and their relevant experience and past successes in developing and operating projects similar to this project. Ensure that you have included Letters of Commitment from each Multi-State partner and collaborator organization to support the information. Disclose all potential concerns of conflicts of interest. For example, if you recruit your spouse, relatives, and/or business partner, provide solid evidence and clear explanation of your decisions, including a detailed monitoring and risk management plan.

(ii) Describe your management plan for coordinating, communicating, and sharing data and reports among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, both internally to personnel and externally to partners and collaborators.

(iii) Describe how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project's period of performance (without grant funds).

Provide a one- to two-page resume or summary of relevant experience and/or qualifications of the principal investigator(s) and for each of the other major project participants. R*esumes longer than two pages will be disregarded*. **The resume or summary does not count against the page limit for the Project Narrative.**

(6) Fiscal Plan and Resources

The Fiscal Plan and Resources includes the Budget Spreadsheet and Budget Narrative. The Budget Spreadsheet must show the relevant expenditure categories in the far-left column. Relevant cost categories include:

- Personnel
- Fringe Benefits
- Travel
- Special Purpose Equipment
- Supplies
- Contracts/Consultants
- Indirect Costs
- Program Income
- Other

In a table across the page, there must be a column showing the dollar amount of funds requested. Provide separate Year 1, Year 2, Year 3, and cumulative budgets.

The Budget Narrative must break-down and explain how the dollar amounts for each category shown on the Budget Spreadsheet were derived and what they cover. All costs must be costs considered allowable for the purpose of the project. See section 8 of the corresponding *AMS General Terms and Conditions* for a full listing of allowable and unallowable costs.

The supporting documents in the subsequent sections do not count against the page limit for the Project Narrative.

5.2.5   LETTERS OF COMMITMENT FROM PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Required: Applicants must provide letters of commitment (in MS Word or PDF) from all project partners and collaborators. More information on partners and collaborators can be found in section *3.2 Partners and Collaborators.* The letter must state the partner or collaborator agrees to the project management plan presented in the Project Narrative. Emails will not be accepted. The Letter of Commitment must include the following:

- Project applicant;
- Project title;
- A short introduction describing the partnering organization's mission and its interest in SCMP development;
- What the organization commits to participating in and supporting;
- The time period of the partnership;

- Roles of the participating individuals, as applicable, and any individual time commitment; and
- A statement that these individuals and the organization agree to abide by the management plan contained in the application.

Submit *Letters of Commitment* on letterhead and address them to the applicant (i.e., Project Director). Clearly indicate at the top of the documents that they are **LETTERS OF COMMITMENT**. Letters must accompany the proposal at the time of application. Unsigned letters will not be accepted.

PLEASE NOTE: SCMP does not require Congressional letters of support and such letters do not carry additional weight during the evaluation process.

5.2.6   NEGOTIATED INDIRECT COST RATE AGREEMENT (NICRA)

SCMP has a statutory indirect cost cap of 8 percent. Negotiated indirect cost rates that exceed 8 percent will not be accepted. Refer to section *4.2.1 Limit on Administrative Costs* for more information.

If the applicant prefers any indirect cost rate lower than 8 percent based on a previous negotiated indirect rate, USDA AMS requires the submission of the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). The NICRA must be in PDF format **and** attached to the Grants.gov application package using the "Add Attachments" button under SF-424 item #15.

5.3   GRANTS.GOV APPLICATION SUBMISSION AND RECEIPT PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS

5.3.1   HOW TO REGISTER TO APPLY THROUGH GRANTS.GOV

The applicant organization registration process can take **up to four weeks** to complete. Therefore, complete your registration allowing sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required application submission deadlines.

If individual applicants eligible to apply for this grant funding opportunity, refer to: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html

Organization applicants can find complete instructions here: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html

1) Obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number: All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Unique Entity Identifier from SAM.gov. Applicants must enter the UEI number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational UEI" on the SF-424 form.

2) Register with the System for Award Management (SAM): In addition to having a UEI number, organizations applying online through Grants.gov must register with SAM. Current SAM.gov registrants have already been assigned their UEI and can view it within SAM.gov. All organizations must register with SAM to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov. **SAM.gov accounts must be updated annually, and your organization must have an active SAM.gov account to submit your application to Grants.gov.**

3) Create a Grants.gov Account: The next step in the registration process is to create an account with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's UEI number to complete this process. Completing this process automatically triggers an email request for applicant roles to the organization's E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) for review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need the Authorized Organization Role (AOR).

4) Authorize Grants.gov Roles: After creating an account on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying him or her of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, including the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.

5) Track Role Status: After registering with Grants.gov and authorizing the applicant AOR, Grants.gov allows you to track your status.

6) Electronic Signature: When applications are submitted through Grants.gov, the name of the organization's AOR who submitted the application is inserted into the signature line of the application, serving as the electronic signature. The EBiz POC must authorize individuals who are able to make legally binding commitments on behalf of the organization to act as an AOR; **this step is often missed, and it is crucial for valid and timely submissions.**

5.3.2   HOW TO SUBMIT AN APPLICATION TO AMS VIA GRANTS.GOV

Applicants can apply using Grants.gov Workspace. Workspace is a shared, online environment where members of a grant team may simultaneously access and edit different web forms within an application. For each funding opportunity announcement (FOA), an applicant creates individual instances of a workspace.

1) *Create a Workspace*: This allows you to complete your Workspace online and route it through your organization for review before submitting.

2) *Complete a Workspace*: Add participants to the Workspace, complete all the required forms, and check for errors before submission.

a. *Adobe Reader*: If you decide not to apply by filling out the webforms, you can download individual PDF forms in Workspace so that they will appear similar to other Standard or AMS forms. The individual PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your local storage device, network drive(s), or external drives, and then accessed through Adobe Reader. NOTE: You may need to visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software. There is no cost for Adobe Reader Software.

b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms:* Fields marked with an asterisk and a different background color are mandatory fields you must complete to successfully submit your application.

c. *Complete SF-424 Fields First*: The forms are designed to fill in common required fields across other forms, such as the applicant's name, address, and UEI number. To trigger this

feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

3) *Submit a Workspace*: Submit your application through Workspace by clicking the Sign and Submit button on the Manage Workspace page, under the Forms tab. Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package **at least 24-48 hours prior to the close date** to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that may disrupt the application submission.

    SPECIAL NOTE: Grants.gov **does not** check for AMS required attachments. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required attachments listed in section *5.2 Content and Form of Application Submission* are included.

4) *Track a Workspace*: After successfully submitting a Workspace package, Grants.gov automatically assigns a Tracking Number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) to the package, which will be listed on the Confirmation page generated after submission.

Applicant Support: Grants.gov provides additional [training resources, including video tutorials](#).

Applicants may also call the 24/7 toll-free support number 1-800-518-4726, or email support@grants.gov. Grants.gov will issue a ticket number to which you and Grants.gov can refer if the issue is not resolved. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact individuals mentioned in section *8.0 Agency Contacts.*

5.4   APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

AMS will not consider any applications received after the deadline, any applications submitted by fax, email, or postal mail and any applications not responsive to the requirements of this RFA (eligibility, incomplete application, missing required attachments documents, etc.). See [AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy.](#)

Ensure that all components are complete before submission. Allow enough time for the application process, as it may take more than one attempt before your application is successfully submitted. AMS encourages you to submit your application at least two weeks before the application deadline to ensure all certifications and registrations are met.

Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov using an electronic date/time stamp generated when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant AOR will then receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number (GRANTXXXXXXXX) from Grants.gov. Applicant AORs will also receive the official date/time stamp and Grants.gov tracking number in an email serving as proof of their timely submission.

Special Note for Applicants with Slow Internet Connections: Applicants using slow internet, such as dial-up connections, may experience significantly longer transmission times when submitting their application to Grants.gov, especially if there are large attachments contained in the upload. Again, Grants.gov will provide either an error message or a successfully received transmission notification via email to the applicant AOR.

5.5 SUBMISSION DATE AND TIME

Applicants must submit applications via Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on December 22, 2023. AMS cannot consider applications received after this deadline for funding. (See AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy)

5.6 INTERGOVERNMENTAL REVIEW

This program is not subject to Executive Order 12372, which requires intergovernmental consultation with state and local officials.

6.0 APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

6.1 PROJECT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Each application that meets the initial qualifications screening requirements will be reviewed and scored competitively using the criteria and scoring listed below.

Alignment and Intent..**25 Points**

1) The extent to which the application provides a clear and concise description of the specific issue, problem, or need and objectives for the project.

2) The extent to which the project enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops through collaborative, multi-state projects that address the following regional or national level specialty crop issues: food safety, plant pests and disease, research, crop-specific projects addressing common issues, or marketing and promotion.

3) The extent to which the applicant includes an estimated number of beneficiaries and how they will benefit. The application demonstrates a commitment to engage potential project beneficiaries as active participants in partnership activities.

Technical Merit..**25 Points**

1) The extent to which the application presents a clear, well-conceived, and suitable overall methodology for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the proposed project.

2) The extent to which the application presents a realistic schedule for implementing the proposed project during the period of performance.

3) If the project and/or entity was previously funded, the extent to which the previous lessons learned are incorporated into the proposed project.

4)   The application complies with all written instructions and requirements described within the RFA and Project Narrative.

Achievability..**15 Points**

1) The extent to which the Outcomes and Indicator(s) are feasible for the scale and scope of the project including:

a. How indicator numbers were derived, with a clear means to collect feedback to evaluate and achieve each relevant Outcome indicator; and

b. The anticipated key factors that are predicted to contribute to and restrict progress toward the applicable indicators, including action steps for addressing identified restricting factors.

c. The accessibility of any proposed outcomes and indicators.

2) The extent to which the proposed project can be adaptable to other regions, communities, and/or agricultural systems.

3) The extent to which the applicant provides a comprehensive plan to disseminate the project's results (both positive and negative) electronically and in person to target audiences, stakeholders, and interested parties.

4) Provide a detailed and clear risk management plan.

Expertise and Partners **25 Points**

1) The extent to which the proposed project represents a substantial, effective, and diverse array of relevant partnerships and collaborations to accomplish the project's goals and objectives and meet the needs of the intended beneficiaries, including:

a. Commitment from the key staff, demonstrated through Letters of Commitment from Partner and Collaborator organizations;

b. The key staff who will be responsible for managing the projects and the names and titles of the individuals who comprise the Project Team; and

c. The expertise and experience of the Project Team necessary to successfully manage and implement the proposed project.

2) The extent to which the application describes plans for coordination, communication, data sharing, potential conflicts of interest, and managerial plan, and reporting among members of the Project Team and stakeholder groups, both internal applicant personnel **and** external partners and collaborators.

3) The extent to which the application describes how the project, and its partnerships and collaborations, will be sustained beyond the project's period of performance (without grant funds).

Fiscal Plan and Resources **10 Points**

1) The extent to which the application budget narrative/justification provides a clear, detailed, narrative description for each budget line item including:

a. How the budget is consistent with the size and scope of the project; and

b. How the budget relates logically to the narrative describing the project.

2) The extent to which the application provides evidence that critical resources and infrastructure that are necessary for the initiation and completion of the proposed project that are currently in place.

6.2 REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Step 1: Initial Qualification Screening

Each application is initially reviewed for overall completeness, as well as compliance with eligibility and program requirements as set forth in this RFA. If an application does not meet these requirements, it is removed from consideration. Please see AMS' Late Applications, Denials and/or Appeal Procedures Policy for more information.

Step 2: Technical Review

Each application that passes initial screening (Step 1) is evaluated by a panel of independent peer reviewers. AMS makes every attempt to match reviewers with applications in their areas of expertise. Each reviewer signs a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement regarding any assigned applications. The peer review panels evaluate their assigned applications using instructions prepared by AMS officials. Individual reviewers score applications and then confer with other panel members. The scoring and discussion serve as the basis for awarding and allocating grant funds and focuses on strengths and weaknesses of each proposal.

Step 3: Administrative Review

AMS will conduct a final administrative evaluation of each review panel's top recommendations. In addition to the rank and scores, AMS reviews each application to ensure that potential recommended projects align with the scope of the RFA, allowability of budget items, available funding, geographic diversity, and USDA priorities. AMS staff will work with top-ranked applicants to negotiate any revisions as necessary. AMS will also assess an organization's ability to account for the use of Federal funds and monitor the performance associated with these monies using the guidance provided by 2 CFR § 200.206.

7.0 AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

7.1 AWARD NOTICES

Upon announcement of the Federal awards, AMS will prepare and send a Notice of Award (NOA) to each recipient for signature by the appropriate official. The NOA will be signed by AMS and the AOR.

The NOA will provide pertinent instructions and information including, at a minimum, the information described in 2 CFR § 200.211 and a reference to the applicable *AMS General Terms and Conditions*.

7.2 UNSUCCESSFUL PROPOSALS

Unsuccessful applicants will be contacted by AMS via email as soon as possible after the awards are announced to inform them of the results. AMS will email unsuccessful applicants anonymous review panel consensus comments regarding their proposal as feedback.

7.3 ADMINISTRATIVE AND NATIONAL POLICY REQUIREMENTS

As part of the NOA and Grant Agreement, all AMS recipients must abide by the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions, which reference applicable *Administrative and National Policy Requirements*.

7.4 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Reporting and award closeout requirements are included in the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions. If there are any program or award-specific award terms, those will be identified in the award.

7.5 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF USDA SUPPORT

Proper acknowledgement of your USDA-AMS funding in published solicitations (e.g., for state competitions), presentations, press releases, and other communications is critical for the success of our agency's programs. Grantees must meet the acknowledgement requirements outlined in the applicable AMS General Terms and Conditions.

8.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

8.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

After closely reviewing this RFA in its entirety, applicants and other interested parties are encouraged to contact the SCMP staff by e-mail with questions about the grant program at sagpgrants@usda.gov.

8.2 AVAILABLE RESOURCES

AMS provides resources and information on the SCMP website (https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scmp) that may be helpful to applicants, including webinar information, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's), descriptions of funded projects, and required application forms. AMS staff are available to provide timely technical assistance.

8.3 ADDRESS

Specialty Crop Multi-State Program
USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 1510-S
Stop 0264
Washington, DC 20250-0269
https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scmp

8.4 GRANTS.GOV QUESTIONS

All questions regarding Grants.gov technical assistance must be directed to Grants.gov's Applicant Support.

9.0 OTHER INFORMATION

9.1 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

9.2 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

The Freedom of Information Act of 1966 (5 U.S.C. § 552) (FOIA) and the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. § 552a), as implemented by USDA's regulations (7 CFR § 1, Subpart A) govern the release or withholding of information to the public in connection with this Federal award. The release of information under these laws and regulations applies only to records held by AMS and imposes no requirement on the recipient or any subrecipient to permit or deny public access to their records.

FOIA requests for records relating to this Federal award may be directed to USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, FOIA/PA Officer, Room 2055-S, Mail Stop 0201, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-0273, Telephone: (202) 302-0650; or email: AMS.FOIA@usda.gov.

9.3 PAPERWORK REDUCTION

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. 3501), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0581-0240. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 4 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering, and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

10.0 APPENDIX I: ELIGIBILITY DECISION DIAGRAM

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Application Submission
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Are you an entity residing in a Participating State?

— Yes → Entities residing in a participating state **must** submit through a SCMP participating state.

— No ↓

Are you an entity residing in a Non-Participating State?

— Yes → **Do you want to apply through AMS?**

- Yes → Entities may apply directly to AMS through Grants.gov.
- No → Contact your adjacent participating state to request permission to apply. → **Permission Granted**
  - Yes → End
  - No → Entities may apply directly to AMS through Grants.gov.

— No ↓

Are you a Nonprofit entity?

→ Non-profit entities must apply directly to AMS.