



VERMONT

AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS

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Vermont Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

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<https://agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/specialtycrop>

Webinar Basics

- Please mute your phone while you are not speaking.
- Type questions in the “conversations” box or hold questions for the Q&A period at the end of the webinar.
- If you are listening using a computer with a microphone, please ensure the microphone is muted to eliminate any background noise for the group.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

- Federally funded program
- Authorized by the 2004, 2014 & 2018 Farm Bills
- Administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
- Awarded to the 50 States, the District of Columbia & U.S. Territories
- Enhances the competitiveness of U.S. specialty crops



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Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Purpose: **“to enhance the competitiveness of U.S. specialty crops” by –**

- (1) leveraging efforts to market and promote specialty crops;
- (2) assisting producers with research and development relevant to specialty crops;
- (3) expanding availability and access to specialty crops; and
- (4) addressing local, regional, and national challenges confronting specialty crop producers.

Source: USDA-AMS 2019 Request For Applications

Program Overview

Specialty Crops

- U.S. statute defines specialty crops as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture)”
- Includes honey, hops, maple syrup, mushrooms & Christmas trees
- Eligible processed products must consist of greater than 50% of the specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water
- <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>

Block Grant

A grant awarded to state or local government from the federal government with general guidelines as to how it should be spent

Vermont Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Sub-awards funds to projects that enhance the competitiveness of Vermont and regionally-grown specialty crops

<https://agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/specialtycrop>

Quick Facts

- **Eligibility**

- Any entity may apply, but all funded projects must benefit more than one specialty crop business, individual, or organization
- Projects to establish or expand a single specialty crop business are not eligible

- **Available Funds & Maximum Award**

- We anticipate awarding approximately \$200,000 in SCBGP funds in 2020
- No minimum or maximum award; successful proposals are often awarded \$10,000–\$30,000 per project year

- **Project Length**

- Multi-year projects are eligible
- Projects can be funded for up to 2 ½ years, or 30 months

Previously Funded & Multi-State Projects

Projects that build on a previous SCBGP project

- Indicate how the project complements previous work
- Describe the likelihood that the project will become self-sustaining

Multi-state projects that address challenges & opportunities in 2+ states

- Submit a SCBGP application to each state where organizations will serve as project partners
- OR apply to the Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP)

Matching Funds

- All proposals must show **matching funds** equaling at least 50% of the grant request.
 - *Example:* A proposal with a request of \$10,000 must show a minimum of \$5,000 in matching funds.
- Under limited circumstances, the match requirement may be reduced or waived for projects that can justify a waiver
 - Waiver requests must outline the impact of the project and indicate any special circumstances that justify this consideration



Matching Funds

- May be any combination of cash and in-kind funds
 - Funds in the bank, funds contributed by another organization, applicant labor, and compensation of employees.
 - Goods or services provided during the grant period for which no expenditure is made (e.g., contractors, consultants, supplies or equipment provided for the project, volunteer labor, and/or supplies donated to the project)
 - Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”)
- May be used to ensure all SCBGP funds will **enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops**
 - *Example:* A project promotes specialty crops through marketing agritourism. Non-specialty crop farms make up 40% of the farms participating in the agritourism program; therefore a 50% match will account for any benefit the non-specialty crops farms could gain from the proposed project.

Eligible & Ineligible Projects

- Eligible projects benefit and produce measurable outcomes for multiple specialty crop businesses and/or the public rather than a single business, organization, or individual.
- Single businesses, organizations, or individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.



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Eligible & Ineligible Projects

A specialty crop organization requests funds to promote its organization.

Ineligible

An organization requests funds to conduct research on the feasibility of planting, cultivating, and growing a crop in a particular area and to share results with growers throughout the state.

Eligible

An organization requests funds to promote Vermont specialty crops to new markets. Access to these markets will benefit a variety of producers.

Eligible

A farm requests funds to purchase equipment to expand production capacity.

Ineligible

Eligible & Ineligible Projects

A company requests funds to promote its brand of specialty crops.

Ineligible

A grower requests funds to establish a new cooperative that will help other specialty crop producers diversify their operations and meet market demand.

Eligible

A group requests funds to launch a promotion campaign to increase brand awareness of “Vermont Grown.”

Ineligible – Unless matching funds are used to ensure SCBGP funds will **enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops**

A group requests funds to launch a promotional campaign to increase sales of “Vermont Grown pumpkins.”

Eligible

State Funding Priorities

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, in partnership with statewide specialty crop stakeholders, has identified these funding priorities (eligible project types) for 2020. *Funding priorities are not ranked.*

- Research, development, and dissemination of innovative production practices to enhance farm viability and/or natural resource conservation
- Pest and disease management
- Enhancing food safety and improving the capacity of specialty crop businesses to comply with Food Safety Modernization Act or food safety audit program requirements
- Value chain enhancement—including strengthening relationships between producers, aggregators, processors, distributors, retail businesses, and consumers
- Technical assistance to address efficiency, conservation, business viability, workforce development, labor issues, succession planning, and challenges facing beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers
- Market access (local, regional, national, or international), marketing, branding, and consumer education
- Producer collaboration—including establishing or strengthening producer associations and cooperatives

USDA Evaluation Plan

- USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is required to report SCBGP outcomes at a national scale to demonstrate the program's performance.
- By collecting, aggregating, and reporting performance data across all states and territories, AMS can share the impact of the SCBGP with all stakeholders, including the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Congress, the agricultural community, and the general public.
- Each funded proposal must include at least one of eight specified **outcome measures** and at least one **indicator** that gives a quantifiable result.
- AMS will aggregate the data collected to assess the overall impact of the program and report to OMB and Congress on these national outcome measures.

Outcome Measures (a.k.a. Expected Measurable Outcomes)

Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through—

1. ... increased sales
required for marketing & promotion projects
2. ... increased consumption
3. ... increased access
4. ... greater capacity of sustainable practices of specialty crop production resulting in increased yield, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and/or conservation of resources

Outcome Measures

Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through—

5. ... more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems
6. ... increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety
7. ... increased understanding of the ecology of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources
8. ... enhancing or improving the economy as a result of specialty crop development

Marketing & Promotion Projects

Focus on efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, and generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue

- Website and/or social media-based promotion and development
- Specialty crop local, regional, and national campaigns
- Retail promotions including point-of-purchase items, labels, packaging, etc.
- Specialty crop tradeshow
- Export market development
- Farmers market promotions
- Use/development of billboards, radio, television, magazine and email ads
- Marketing materials such as direct mail or brochures
- Marketing and promotion campaigns with a consumer education component

Indicator for Marketing & Promotion Projects

- Outcome 1: To enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through **increased sales**
- *Indicator: Sales increased from \$ _____ to \$ _____ and by _____ percent as result of marketing and/or promotion activities*
- This requirement means that an established baseline of sales in dollars should already exist at the time of application.
- For projects that do not already have a baseline of sales in dollars, one of the project's objectives must be to determine a baseline in order to document sales increases by the end of the project.
- Factors and events that either positively or negatively impacted the sales of a project can be explained in the performance report.

Outcome 2: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption

Indicators

1. Of the _____ total number of children and youth reached,
 - a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops
 - b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops
 - c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops
2. Of the _____ total number of adults reached,
 - a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops
 - b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops
 - c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops
3. Number of new and improved technologies and processes to enhance the nutritional value and consumer acceptance of specialty crops (excluding patents) _____
4. Number of new specialty crops and/or specialty crop products introduced to consumers _____

How to Apply

Submit a Pre-Application by February 26, 2020 at 11:59 PM

- A summary of your project & estimated timeline
 - The specific issue, problem, or need your project will address
 - The objectives your project hopes to achieve
 - Your project's impact on the specialty crop industry
- Explain who will benefit from your project and describe an outreach plan for reaching this audience or audiences
- Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support the project and explain why they support it
- Choose at least one **outcome measure**
- Describe your monitoring and evaluation plan
- Provide an estimated budget, including matching funds

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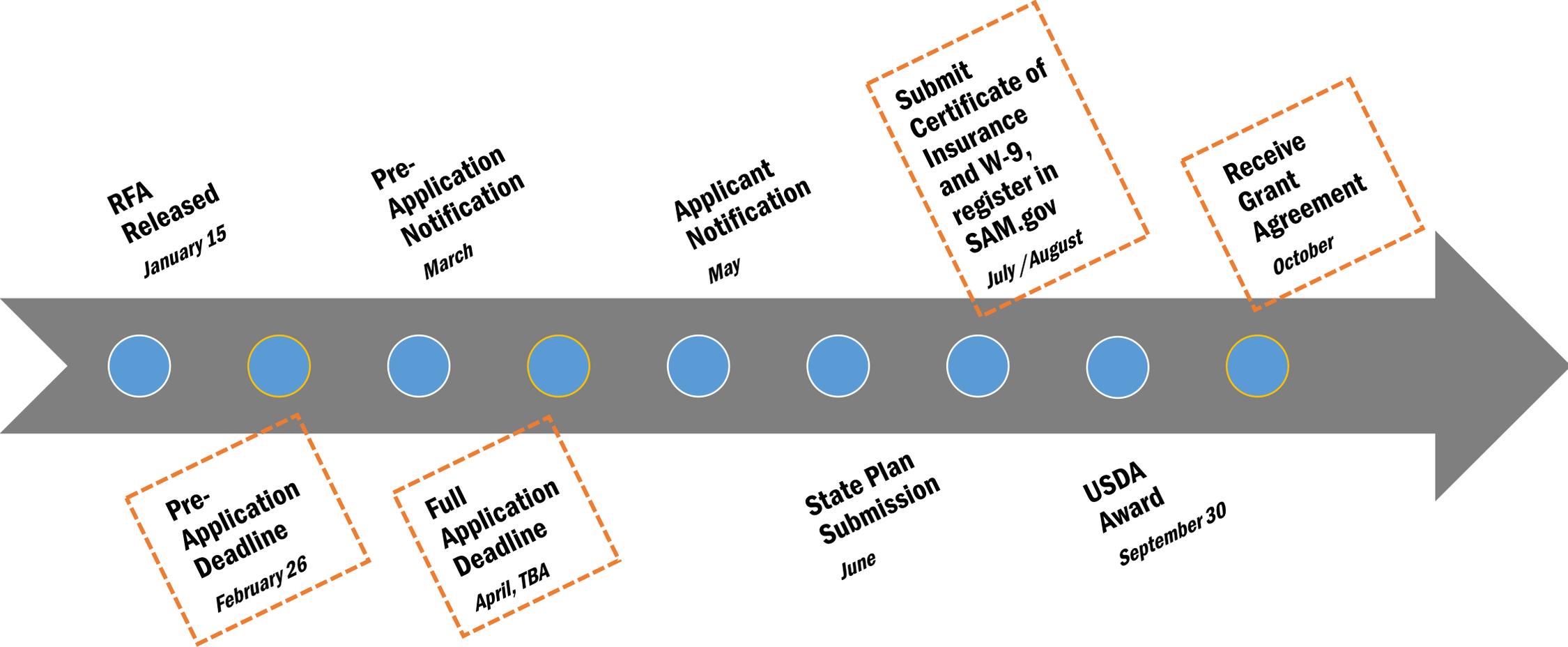
Estimated Project Budget

Category	SCBGP Request	Matching Funds	Match Source	Total Project Cost
Personnel (Salaries/Wages)				
Fringe Benefits				
Travel				
Equipment				
Supplies				
Contractual				
Other				
Total				

After reviewing pre-applications, the review committee will invite applicants with the top-ranking proposals to submit full applications.

<https://agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/specialtycrop>

Vermont SCBGP Timeline



<https://agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/specialtycrop>

Grants Management System (GMS) – WebGrants

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<https://agriculturegrants.vermont.gov>

WebGrants Application Guide:

<https://agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/howtoapply>

<https://agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/specialtycrop>

Questions?

- Contact Gina at (802) 585-6225 or AGR.SpecialtyCrops@vermont.gov
- Visit the Vermont SCBGP webpage at agriculture.vermont.gov/grants/specialtycrop
- Apply at agriculturegrants.vermont.gov
- Add agriculturegrants.vermont@webgrantsmail.com to your email contacts or “safe senders” list to ensure you receive messages and alerts