## RFP#201901012

**FY 19 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**

| RFP Coordinator | All communication regarding this RFP must be made through the RFP Coordinator identified below.  
**Name:** Leigh Hallett  
**Title:** Director of Market Development  
**Contact Information:** leigh.hallett@maine.gov |
| --- | --- |
| Submitted Questions Due | All questions must be received by the RFP Coordinator identified above by:  
**Date:** For 2019, submitted questions are due March 8, 2019, no later than 4:00 p.m., local time. For 2020 and beyond, submitted questions are due the first Friday of March, no later than 5:00 local time, of the application year. |
| Initial Application Submission | Applications must be received by the Division of Procurement Services by:  
**Submission Deadline:** For 2019, Applications are due March 27, 2019, no later than 4:00 p.m., local time. See Annual Application Submittals below for deadline in 2020 and beyond.  
**Submission Address:** Division of Procurement Services, Burton M. Cross Building, 111 Sewall Street - 4th Floor, Augusta, ME 04330 |
| Annual Application Submittals | After the initial RFP Application submission deadline in 2019, Applications may be submitted annually for evaluation. The annual application submission deadline in 2020 and beyond will be 4:00 p.m. on the 3rd Wednesday of March while the RFP is active. Applications are required to be submitted prior to the submission date and time to be considered for each annual enrollment period.  
A new application will be available annually while the RFP is active at [http://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/vendors/grants](http://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/vendors/grants)  
**Submission Address:** Division of Procurement Services, Burton M. Cross Building, 111 Sewall Street - 4th Floor, Augusta, ME 04330 |
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PUBLIC NOTICE

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State of Maine
Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
RFP#201901012
FY 19 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Division of Agricultural Resource Development has a requirement for grant Applications which, if approved, will become part of a State of Maine plan submitted for approval and funding from the USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

For 2019, the RFP, Application, any Question & Answer Summary and all amendments related to this RFP, can be obtained at the following website:
https://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/vendors/grants

For 2020 year and beyond, the RFP, Application, any Question & Answer Summary and all amendments related to this RFP can be obtained at the following website after January 31, 2020
http://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/vendors/grants

Applications must be submitted to the State of Maine Division of Procurement Services, located at the Burton M. Cross Office Building, 111 Sewall Street - 4th Floor, Augusta, ME 04330. Applications must be received by 4:00 pm, local time, on March 27, 2019, when they will be opened. Applications not received at the Division of Procurement Services’ aforementioned address by the aforementioned deadline will not be considered for contract award.

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RFP DEFINITIONS/ACRONYMS

The following terms and acronyms shall have the meaning indicated below as referenced in this RFP:

1. **AMS:** Agricultural Marketing Service, the division of the USDA that administers the SCBGP.
2. **Application:** A completed package containing all elements detailed in the RFP.
3. **Bid:** In this RFP, submitted proposals are referred to as Applications. In some contexts, they may be referred to as Bids.
4. **Block Grant:** Funding awarded by the federal government (in this case, via the USDA) to a state to administer locally within the parameters of the grant program priorities. The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is funded by the USDA, and in Maine the DACF administers the program, including establishing priority areas, coordinating the RFP process, contracting with successful applicants, and reporting on project progress to the USDA.
5. **Department or DACF:** Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
6. **Indicators:** The Agricultural Marketing Service lists measurable indicators for each possible project Outcome (found in Part IV of the RFP). Eligible projects must address at least one Indicator for each relevant Outcome.
7. **Letter of Support (LOS):** If an individual or producer applies, they must have an agricultural organization or commodity group as a partner who has an accepted role in the project and has included a Letter of Support. The project proposal and LOS must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to the individual or organization.
8. **OMB:** Office of Management and Budget
9. **Outcomes:** The Agricultural Marketing Service lists eight possible Outcomes (listed in Part IV of the RFP) which Specialty Crop Block Grants may address. Eligible projects must address at least one AMS Outcome.
10. **RFP:** Request for Proposals, the document containing details of how to apply for a Specialty Crop Block Grant.
11. **RFP Coordinator:** person designated by the DACF to coordinate all parts of the Specialty Crop Block Grant application process. All questions regarding the application process must be submitted to the RFP Coordinator listed on the first page of this RFP.
12. **SCBGP:** Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.
13. **Specialty Crop:** Section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) and amended under section 10010 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 113-79 (the Farm Bill) defines specialty crops as “fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).” Eligible plants must be cultivated or managed and used by people for food, medicinal purposes, and/or aesthetic gratification to be considered specialty crops. Processed products shall consist of greater than 50% of the specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water.
14. **State:** State of Maine
15. **USDA:** United States Department of Agriculture
PART I INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose and Background

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry (Department) is seeking proposals which, if approved, will become part of a State of Maine plan submitted for approval and funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) as defined in this Request for Proposals (RFP) document. This document provides instructions for submitting Applications, the procedure and criteria by which the successful Applicant(s) will be selected, and the contractual terms which will govern the relationship between the State of Maine (“State”) and the awarded Applicant(s).

The Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) authorized the USDA to provide grants to State departments of agriculture solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry is eligible to submit a State Plan for these funds. The state plan will include project Applications that are submitted, reviewed and approved through this formal RFP process.

B. General Provisions

1. From the time this RFP is issued until award notification is made, all contact with the State regarding this RFP must be made through the aforementioned RFP Coordinator. No other person/State employee is empowered to make binding statements regarding this RFP. Violation of this provision may lead to disqualification from the bidding process, at the State’s discretion.

2. Issuance of this RFP does not commit the Department to issue an award or to pay expenses incurred by a Applicant in the preparation of a response to this RFP. This includes attendance at personal interviews or other meetings and software or system demonstrations, where applicable.

3. All Applications should adhere to the instructions and format requirements outlined in this RFP and all written supplements and amendments (such as the Summary of Questions and Answers), issued by the Department. Applications are to follow the format and respond to all questions and instructions specified below in the “Proposal Submission Requirements” section of this RFP.

4. Applicants shall take careful note that in evaluating a proposal submitted in response to this RFP, the Department will consider materials provided in the proposal, information obtained through interviews/presentations (if any), and internal Departmental information of previous contract history with the Applicant (if any). The Department also reserves the right to consider other reliable references and publicly available information in evaluating a Applicant’s experience and capabilities.

5. The proposal shall be signed by a person authorized to legally bind the Applicant and shall contain a statement that the proposal and the pricing contained therein will remain valid and binding for a period of 180 days from the date and time of the bid opening.

6. The RFP and the selected Applicant’s proposal, including all appendices or attachments, shall be the basis for the final contract, as determined by the Department.
7. Following announcement of an award decision, all submissions in response to this RFP will be considered public records available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) (1 M.R.S. §§ 401 et seq.). [http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/1/title1sec401.html]

8. The Department, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in Applications received in response to this RFP.

9. The State of Maine Division of Procurement Services reserves the right to authorize other Departments to use the contract(s) resulting from this RFP, if it is deemed to be beneficial for the State to do so.

10. All applicable laws, whether or not herein contained, shall be included by this reference. It shall be the Applicant’s responsibility to determine the applicability and requirements of any such laws and to abide by them.

C. Eligibility to Apply

Individuals, commodity groups, agricultural organizations, buy local organizations, colleges and universities, producers including Native American and disadvantaged farmers, municipalities, state agencies, and agricultural nonprofit organizations, provided their Applications meet all the specifications in this Request for Proposals and the USDA’s Notice of Federal Assistance.

If an individual or producer applies, they must have an agricultural organization or commodity group as a partner who has an accepted role in the project and has included a Letter of Support. The project proposal must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to the individual or organization. SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. In addition, recipient and sub-recipients cannot use grant funds to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

Project(s) must solely enhance the competitive of U.S. or U.S. territory-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. See the SCBGP website ([https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp](https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp)) for a definition of specialty crops and processed products, including a list of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities.

D. Contract Term

The Department is seeking a cost-efficient proposal(s) to execute projects, as defined in this RFP, for the anticipated contract period defined in the table below. Please note that the dates below are estimated and may be adjusted, as necessary, in order to comply with all procedural requirements associated with this RFP and the contracting process. The actual contract start date will be established by a completed and approved contract.

The term of the anticipated contract, resulting from this RFP, is defined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Start Date</th>
<th>End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Period of Performance</td>
<td>November 1, 2019</td>
<td>September 1, 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsequent Years Period of Performance</td>
<td>November 1, 20xx</td>
<td>September 2, 20xx</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E. Number of Awards

The Department anticipates making multiple awards up to $100,000 each as a result of this RFP process. The Department may only include the first year of a multiple year project in the State Plan submitted to the USDA. Applications for multiple year projects must clearly separate each year of the proposed project into single year goals and objectives. If selected, only the first year of a multiple year project will be included and contracted. Projects that are for one single year only will still have a multi-year reporting requirement to observe the long-term outcomes of project, which is represented in the multi-year contract timeline.

F. Annual Application Submittals

This RFP offers an annual application submittal. Applicants must submit a new application on an annual basis. A new application will be released and available to applicants each year at http://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/vendors/grants. Applications will be accepted from any and all applicants per the details provided on the RFP cover page each year this RFP is active.
PART II  SCOPE OF SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED

A. PROJECT STRATEGIES

The SCBGP encourages States to develop projects solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry:

1. Enhanced Food Safety;
2. Improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, by developing “Good Agricultural Practices”, “Good Handling Practices”, “Good Manufacturing Practices”, and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems (including USDA GroupGAP) for small farmers, packers, and processors;
3. Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
4. Developing new and improved seed varieties for specialty crops;
5. Pest and disease control;
6. Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
7. Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems; and
8. Sustainability.

Contracts will not be awarded to projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product, organization, institute, or individual. Applications must demonstrate how the specialty crop industry or the public will benefit from the project.

Only one project may be proposed per application. Applications for multiple projects will not be considered for award and will be rejected without exception. However, if an entity chooses to do so, it may submit more than one proposal as long as each proposal is for a single project.

B. AGRICULTURAL MARKETING SERVICE REPORTING

DACF will collect reports from selected applicants in order to fulfill the reporting requirements of the block grant process. AMS is required to report on the outcomes of the SCBGP at a national scale to demonstrate the performance of this program. By collecting, aggregating, and reporting performance data across all states and territories, AMS can share the impact of the SCGBP with all stakeholders, including the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Congress, the agricultural community, and the general public. The following are AMS requirements:

1. Each project submitted in the State Plan must include at least one of the eight outcomes listed below, and at least one of the indicators listed underneath the selected outcome(s). If there are multiple sub-indicators under the selected indicator, select at least one.
2. If the indicator(s) below the selected outcome(s) are not relevant to a project, a project-specific indicator(s) may be developed which will be subject to approval by AMS.
3. The progress of each indicator must be reported in the Annual Performance Report and the result in the Final Performance Report.
4. 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.
5. AMS will review the quality of the information we receive in subsequent performance reports and modify the outcomes and indictors as needed over time to lead to better results in showing the impact of the SCGBP.
C. SPECIAL PRIORITY AREAS

The Commissioner of the DACF has established priorities for the coming year. Applications that incorporate one or more of the priorities below will be considered more favorably in the evaluation process.

They are:

1. Any application from the previous year which was for a multiple year term and was only funded for the first year of the project. For those projects that fit under this category, they must submit a new proposal and show progress from the first year’s funding in the work plan section of the proposal.

2. Enhancing food safety education, primarily in relation to new FDA rules regarding improved handling and processing of specialty crops.

3. Enhancing integrated pest management research and education for programs for specialty crops.

4. Research and demonstration of systems to market and distribute specialty crops to institutions.

5. Domestic and international market expansion of Maine Specialty Crops.
PART III  KEY RFP EVENTS

A. Questions

1. General Instructions
   a. It is the responsibility of all Applicants and other interested parties to examine the entire RFP and to seek clarification, in writing, if they do not understand any information or instructions.
   b. The Submitted Questions Form must be submitted by e-mail and received by the RFP Coordinator, identified on the cover page of this RFP, as soon as possible but no later than the date and time specified on the RFP cover page.
   c. Submitted Questions must include the RFP Number and Title in the subject line of the e-mail. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete/on time e-mail transmission and receipt.

2. Question & Answer Summary: Responses to all questions will be compiled in writing and posted on the following website no later than seven (7) calendar days prior to the proposal due date: https://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/vendors/grants. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain a copy of the Question & Answer Summary. Only those answers issued in writing on this website will be considered binding.

B. Amendments

All amendments released in regard to this RFP will also be posted on the following website: https://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/vendors/grants. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain amendments. Only those amendments posted on this website are considered binding.

C. Submitting the Application

1. Applications Due: Applications must be received no later than 4:00 p.m. local time, on the date listed on the cover page of this RFP, at which point they will be opened. Applications received after the 4:00 p.m. deadline will be rejected without exception.

2. Mailing/Delivery Instructions: The official delivery site is the State of Maine, Division of Procurement Services (Please refer to the RFP cover page for submission address).
   a. Only Applications received at the official delivery site prior to the stated deadline will be considered. Applicants submitting Applications are responsible for allowing adequate time for delivery. Postmarks do not count and fax or electronic mail transmissions of Applications are not permitted. Any method of hardcopy delivery is acceptable, such as US Mail, in-person delivery by Applicant, or use of private courier services.
   b. The Applicant must send its application submission in a sealed package and must include an original signed copy and one electronic copy of their complete application. The electronic copy of the application must be provided on a USB flash drive with the complete narrative and attachments in MS Word format. Any attachments that cannot be submitted in MS Word format may be submitted as Adobe (.pdf) files.
   c. Applicants’ submission packages are to be clearly labeled and contain the following information:
      - Proposal submission address provided on the RFP cover page
      - The Applicant’s full business name and address
      - The RFP Number and Title
   d. Applicant’s submission package must include:
- Proposal Cover Page (Appendix A)
- Debarment, Performance and Non-Collusion Certification (Appendix B)
- Litigation (Appendix C)
- Specialty Crop Block Grant Application (see Attachment 1)
PART IV APPLICATION SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

This section contains instructions for Applicants to use in preparing their Applications. The Applicant’s proposal must follow the outline used below, including the numbering and section and sub-section headings as they appear here. Failure to use the outline specified in this section, or to respond to all questions and instructions throughout this document, may result in the proposal being disqualified as non-responsive or receiving a reduced score. The Department, and its evaluation team for this RFP, has sole discretion to determine whether a variance from the RFP specifications should result in either disqualification or reduction in scoring of a proposal. The Department seeks detailed yet succinct responses that demonstrate the Applicant’s experience and ability to perform the requirements specified throughout this document.

A. Application Format

1. The Application shall include Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C and the SCBG Project Profile Template via the weblink in Attachment 1. The first page of the SCBG Project Profile Template in Attachment 1 shall be dated and signed by a person authorized to enter into contracts on behalf of the Applicant. Failure to complete and submit the appendix or attachment may result in the disqualification of the Applicant’s proposal, at the discretion of the Department.

2. It is the responsibility of the Applicant to provide all information requested in the RFP package at the time of submission. Failure to provide information requested in this RFP may, at the discretion of the Department’s evaluation review team, result in a lower rating for the incomplete sections and may result in the application being disqualified for consideration.

3. Cost proposal: The Applicant must submit a cost proposal that covers the entire period of the contract. Please use the expected “Period of Performance” dates stated in PART I, the cost proposal shall include the costs necessary for the Bidder to fully comply with the contract terms and conditions and RFP requirements. No costs related to the preparation of the proposal for this RFP or to the negotiation of the contract with the Department may be included in the proposal. Only costs to be incurred after the contract effective date that are specifically related to the implementation or operation of contracted services may be included.

B. Required Application Submission Components

As outlined above, the Application must include completed Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C and Attachment 1 (Specialty Crop Block Grant Project Profile Template).

- Appendix A – Proposal Cover Page (Pass/Fail)
- Appendix B – Debarment, Performance and Non-Collusion Certification (Pass/Fail)
- Appendix C – Litigation (Pass/Fail)

Attachment 1 will form a significant part of the Application and must include the following:

1. Project Purpose
   a. The purpose should include the specific issue, problem, interest or need to be addressed and why the project is important and timely.
   b. Include a listing of the objectives that this project hopes to achieve.
   c. Include how the objectives of the project address the issues that have been identified by USDA.
d. If this is a marketing program, show that funding will be used solely to enhance the competitiveness of Specialty Crops.

e. If any of the project activities or costs has the potential to enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops (ex: farmers market, general buy local, CSA etc.) describe the methods or processes you will implement to verify all grant funds are expended on activities and costs that only enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops.

f. If the project builds on a previous SCBGP or SCBGP-FB project, indicate clearly how the new project differs from and builds on the previous project’s work. For proposals requesting second year funding of last year’s project, summarize the outcomes in 3-5 sentences regarding the previous year and why it is important to continue to fund the project for the coming year(s). Provide lessons learned on potential project improvements from implementing and what will be incorporated to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting goals and objectives. Please describe the likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds.

g. For each project, indicate if the project will be, or has been, submitted to or funded by another Federal or State grant program and if the project duplicates efforts of the SCBGP-FB and the other Federal or State grant program. If it does not, how does it supplement.

2. Potential Impact

a. Discuss who is to be affected by the project, including whether this project benefits socially disadvantaged farmers or beginning farmers as defined by the USDA SCBGP.

b. Indicate an estimate of the number of people or operations who are considered beneficiaries and define who the intended beneficiaries of this project are.

c. Provide an assessment of the potential economic impact of the project if such data are available and relevant to the project.

d. Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support this project and why (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project).

3. Expected Measurable Outcomes

All projects must choose at least one of the eight outcomes listed below, which were approved by the OMB and are required by the USDA in order to evaluate the performance of SCBG at the national level. Please select the outcome measure(s) that are applicable to the project and select at least one of the related quantifiable indicators prescribed.

**Outcome 1: To enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales**

*THIS IS MANDATORY FOR ALL MARKETING AND PROMOTION PROJECTS.*

Marketing and promotion projects focus efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, and generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue. These include, but are not limited to:

- Uses of social media to market and promote;
- Specialty crop local, regional and national campaigns;
- Specialty crop only tradeshows;
- Website promotion and development;
- Use/development of billboards, radio, television, magazine and email ads, marketing materials such as direct mail, brochures;
- Agritourism;
- Export market development;
• Retail promotions including point-of-purchase items, labels, packaging etc.;
• Farmers market promotions; and
• Marketing and promotion campaigns with an education component directed to consumers.

The specific measure must be expressed as a dollar value and percentage increase in sales of one or more specialty crops in one or more States or foreign markets as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities. For example, an expected outcome of growth in sales from 5% to 10% is not acceptable by itself, but in combination with an increase in sales of $1 million to $2 million it is acceptable. This requirement means that an established baseline of sales in dollars must already exist at the time of application. For projects that do not already have a baseline of sales in dollars, one of the objectives of the project must be to determine such a baseline in order to meet the requirement to document the value of sales increases by the end of the project.

Indicator: Sales increased from $________ to $_________ and by ______ percent, as result of marketing and/or promotion activities

AMS understands that sales can be impacted by a host of unrelated issues including trade disputes, phytosanitary issues, export conditions, weather, and other factors affecting the farmer, supply chain, retailers, wholesalers and/or consumers. The above factors demonstrate that even a perfectly executed marketing campaign can result in sales remaining constant or even declining. These 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____

Outcome 3: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access and awareness

Indicators:
1. Of the ______ total number of consumers or wholesale buyers reached,
   a. The number that gained knowledge on how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
   b. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
   c. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/preserved/obtained/prepared
2. Of the _____ total number of individuals (culinary professionals, institutional kitchens, specialty crop entrepreneurs such as kitchen incubators/shared-use kitchens, etc.) reached,
   a. The number that gained knowledge on how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
b. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops
c. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they
produced/prepared/preserved/obtained

3. Number of existing delivery systems/access points of those reached that expanded and/or
improved offerings of specialty crops
   a. ______ farmers markets
   b. ______ produce at corner stores
   c. ______ school food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.)
   d. ______ grocery stores
   e. ______ wholesale markets
   f. ______ food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops
   g. ______ home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers
   h. ______ lawn and garden centers
   i. ______ other systems/access points, not noted
   j. ______ total (if not reported above)

4. Number of new delivery systems/access points offering specialty crops
   a. ______ farmers markets
   b. ______ produce at corner stores
   c. ______ school food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.)
   d. ______ grocery stores
   e. ______ wholesale markets
   f. ______ food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops
   g. ______ home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers
   h. ______ lawn and garden centers
   i. ______ other systems/access points, not noted
   j. ______ total (if not reported above)

Outcome 4: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops though 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.

Indicators:
1. Numbers of plant/seed releases (i.e., cultivars, drought-tolerant plants, organic, enhanced
   nutritional composition, etc.) ______
2. Adoption of best practices and technologies resulting in increased yields, reduced inputs,
   increased efficiency, increased economic return, and conservation of resources (select at least
   one below).
   a. Number of growers/producers indicating adoption of recommended practices ______
   b. Number of growers/producers reporting reduction in pesticides, fertilizer, water used/acre
      ______
   c. Number of producers reporting increased dollar returns per acre or reduced costs per acre
      ______
   d. Number of acres in conservation tillage or acres in other best management practices
      ______
3. Number of habitat acres established and maintained for the mutual benefit of pollinators and
   specialty crops_____

Outcome 5: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse,
and resilient specialty crop systems

Indicators:
1. Number of new or improved innovation models (biological, economic, business, management, etc.), technologies, networks, products, processes, etc. developed for specialty crop entities including producers, processors, distributors, etc. _______
2. Number of innovations adopted _______
3. Number of specialty crop growers/producers (and other members of the specialty crop supply chain) that have increased revenue expressed in dollars _______
4. Number of new diagnostic systems analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases. _______
   [Diagnostic systems refer to, among other things: labs, networks, procedures, access points.]
5. Number of new diagnostic technologies available for detecting plant pests and diseases. _______
   [The intent here is not to count individual pieces of equipment or devices, but to enumerate technologies that add to the diagnostic capacity.]
6. Number of first responders trained in early detection and rapid response to combat plant pests and diseases _______
7. Number of viable technologies/processes developed or modified that will increase specialty crop distribution and/or production _______
8. Number of growers/producers that gained knowledge about science-based tools through outreach and education programs _______

Outcome 6: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety

Indicators:
1. Number of viable technologies developed or modified for the detection and characterization of specialty crop supply contamination from foodborne threats _______
2. Number of viable prevention, control and intervention strategies for all specialty crop production scales for foodborne threats along the production continuum _______
3. Number of individuals who learn about prevention, detection, control, and intervention food safety practices and number of those individuals who increase their food safety skills and knowledge _______
4. Number of improved prevention, detection, control, and intervention technologies _______
5. Number of reported changes in prevention, detection, control, and intervention strategies _______

Outcome 7: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources

Indicators:
Number of projects focused on:
1. Increased understanding of fecal indicators and pathogens _______
2. Increased safety of all inputs into the specialty crop chain _______
3. Increased understanding of the roles of humans, plants and animals as vectors _______
4. Increased understanding of preharvest and postharvest process impacts on microbial and chemical threats _______
5. Number of growers or producers obtaining on-farm food safety certifications (such as Good Agricultural Practices or Good Handling Practices) _______

Outcome 8: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through enhancing or improving the economy as a result of specialty crop development.

Indicators:
1. Number of new rural careers created _______
2. Number of new urban careers created _______
3. Number of jobs maintained/created ______
4. Number of small businesses maintained/created ______
5. Increased revenue/increased savings/one-time capital purchases (in dollars) ______
6. Number of new beginning farmers who went into specialty crop production ______
7. Number of socially disadvantaged farmers who went into specialty crop production ______

Additional information:
• Difference between "jobs" and "careers": jobs are net gain of paid employment; new businesses created or adopted can indicate new careers.
• Beginning Farmer is an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.
• Socially Disadvantaged Farmer is a farmer who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A Socially Disadvantaged Group is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program.

For more information on the Specialty Crop Block Grant program visit: www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp

4. Data Collection Methods
Explain how you will collect the required data to report on the outcome and indicator.

5. Budget /Budget Narrative
   a. **The Department is limiting proposed project funding to a maximum of $100,000.**
      Each project budget should accurately reflect costs and be proportional to the benefit to be derived from the project (See scoring criteria on budget). Projects with proposed budgets over this amount may not be evaluated or considered for award, at the Department’s sole discretion. The budget worksheet included in this RFP must be completed and incorporated as part of the proposal.
   b. Include a budget narrative with sufficient information in paragraph format about the budget categories to demonstrate that grant funds are being expended on eligible grant activities that meet the purpose of the program. All expenses described in this Budget Narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP.
   c. All allowable costs should be budgeted in accordance with the USDA’s requirements. You can find these requirements outline in the most current 20xx Request for Applications document located on the USDA’s webpage.
      https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp
   d. Detail must be provided for any specialty equipment or supplies that will be purchased or leased as part of the project.
   e. Use the budget form included in the application.

6. Project Commitment
Describe how all grant partners commit to and work toward the goals and outcome measures of the proposed project. Attach any letters of partnership support, if required.
PART V  PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Evaluation of the submitted Applications shall be accomplished as follows:

A. Evaluation Process - General Information

1. An evaluation team, comprised of qualified reviewers, will judge the merits of the Applications received in accordance with the criteria defined in the RFP.

2. Officials responsible for making decisions on the selection of a contractor shall ensure that the selection process accords equal opportunity and appropriate consideration to all who are capable of meeting the specifications. The goals of the evaluation process are to ensure fairness and objectivity in review of the Applications and to ensure that the contract is awarded to the Applicant whose proposal provides the best value to the State of Maine.

3. The Department reserves the right to communicate and/or schedule interviews/presentations with Applicants if needed to obtain clarification of information contained in the Applications received, and the Department may revise the scores assigned in the initial evaluation to reflect those communications and/or interviews/presentations. Interviews/presentations are not required, and changes to Applications will not be permitted during any interview/presentation process. Therefore, Applicants should submit Applications that present their rates and other requested information as clearly and completely as possible.

B. Scoring Weights and Process

1. Scoring Weights: The score will be based on a 100-point scale and will measure the degree to which each application meets the following criteria (also detailed in Attachment 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scoring Category</th>
<th>Maximum Points Available</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The proposal is determined to be a Commissioner priority area.</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The proposal is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFP.</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The project addresses the issues put forth by USDA, as stated in the RFP.</td>
<td>25 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>The outcomes and indicators are clearly defined and are clearly measurable,</td>
<td>20 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>including methods of monitoring and data collection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The project proposed shows how Specialty Crops in Maine will impact the most</td>
<td>15 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>specialty crop producers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anticipated benefit in relation to proposed cost</td>
<td>30 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Points</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 points</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. **Scoring Process:** The review team will use a consensus approach to evaluate and score Appendix A, Appendix B, Appendix C and Attachment 1. Members of the review team will not score those sections individually but, instead, will arrive at a consensus as to assignment of points for each of those sections.

3. **Scoring the Cost Proposal:** Regarding the grant funds requested and the proposed work, the review team will consider the degree to which the project represents a good return for the investment (money, time, etc.) as well as whether the project work and cost estimates (tasks and budget) are reasonable for the expected

4. **Negotiations:** The Department reserves the right to negotiate with the successful Applicant to finalize a contract at the same rate or cost of service as presented in the selected proposal. Such negotiations may not significantly vary the content, nature or requirements of the proposal or the Department’s Request for Proposals to an extent that may affect the price of goods or services requested. The Department reserves the right to terminate contract negotiations with a selected Applicant who submits a proposed contract significantly different from the proposal they submitted in response to the advertised RFP. In the event that an acceptable contract cannot be negotiated with the highest ranked Applicant, the Department may withdraw its award and negotiate with the next-highest ranked Applicant, and so on, until an acceptable contract has been finalized. Alternatively, the Department may cancel the RFP, at its sole discretion.

C. **Selection and Award**

1. The final decision regarding the award of the contract will be made by representatives of the Department subject to approval by the State Procurement Review Committee.
2. Notification of contractor selection or non-selection will be made in writing by the Department.
3. Issuance of this RFP in no way constitutes a commitment by the State of Maine to award a contract, to pay costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this request, or to pay costs incurred in procuring or contracting for services, supplies, physical space, personnel or any other costs incurred by the Applicant.
4. The Department reserves the right to reject any and all Applications or to make multiple awards.
5. The Department will complete a State Plan document for USDA, and final award is contingent upon the acceptance of the State Plan by the USDA. The USDA also reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or to make adjustments to awards.

D. **Appeal of Contract Awards**

Any person aggrieved by the award decision that results from this RFP may appeal the decision to the Director of the Bureau of General Services in the manner prescribed in 5 MRSA § 1825-E and 18-554 Code of Maine Rules, Chapter 120 (found here: https://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/policies-procedures/chapter-120). The appeal must be in writing and filed with the Director of the Bureau of General Services, 9 State House Station, Augusta, Maine, 04333-0009 within 15 calendar days of receipt of notification of contract award.
PART VI  CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION AND CONDITIONS

A.  Contract Document

1. The successful Applicant will be required to execute a contract in the form of a State of Maine Agreement to Purchase Services (BP54). A list of applicable Riders is as follows:

Rider A: Specification of Work to be Performed  
Rider B: Method of Payment and Other Provisions  
Rider C: Exceptions to Rider B  
Rider D: Reporting Requirements  
Rider E: Certificate Regarding Compliance with Federal Audit Requirements  
Rider G: Identification of Country in Which Contracted Work Will Be Performed  
Rider H: Accepted Proposal

The complete set of standard BP54 contract documents may be found on the Division of Procurement Services’ website at the following link:  

Other forms and contract documents commonly used by the State can be found on the Division of Procurement Services’ website at the following link:  
https://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/forms

2. Allocation of funds is final upon successful negotiation and execution of the contract, subject to the review and approval of the State Procurement Review Committee. Contracts are not considered fully executed and valid until approved by the State Procurement Review Committee and funds are encumbered. No contract will be approved based on an RFP which has an effective date less than fourteen (14) calendar days after award notification to Applicants. (Referenced in the regulations of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Chapter 110, § 3(B)(i):  
https://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/policies-procedures/chapter-110)  

This provision means that a contract cannot be effective until at least 14 calendar days after award notification.

3. The State recognizes that the actual contract effective date depends upon completion of the RFP process, date of formal award notification, length of contract negotiation, and preparation and approval by the State Procurement Review Committee. Any appeals to the Department’s award decision(s) may further postpone the actual contract effective date, depending upon the outcome. The contract effective date listed in this RFP may need to be adjusted, if necessary, to comply with mandated requirements.

4. In providing services and performing under the contract, the successful Applicant(s) shall act as an independent contractor and not as an agent of the State of Maine.

B.  Standard State Agreement Provisions

1. Agreement Administration
   a. Following the award, an Agreement Administrator from the Department will be appointed to assist with the development and administration of the contract and to act as administrator
during the entire contract period. Department staff will be available after the award to consult with the successful Applicant in the finalization of the contract.

b. In the event that an acceptable contract cannot be negotiated with the highest ranked Applicant, the Department may withdraw its award and negotiate with the next-highest ranked Applicant, and so on, until an acceptable contract has been finalized. Alternatively, the Department may cancel the RFP, at its sole discretion.

2. Payments and Other Provisions
The State anticipates paying the Contractor on the basis of net 30 payment terms, upon the receipt of an accurate and acceptable invoice. An invoice will be considered accurate and acceptable if it contains a reference to the State of Maine contract number, contains correct pricing information relative to the contract, and provides any required supporting documents, as applicable, and any other specific and agreed-upon requirements listed within the contract that results from this RFP.

C. Federal Requirements

The resulting approved grant must follow all the requirements and procedures as outlined in the USDA-SCGBP 2018 Guidance Document. This document can be found at:

https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/apply

Or copies of the guidance document can be sent to the applicant by writing or calling the contact person for this RFP.

Successful applicants will be required to fill out Federal budget forms SF-424, Form SF-424A and B will be required to have and submit a DUNS number to USDA.

D. Post Award Reporting Requirements

All successful applicants will be required to provide annual performance reports and a final performance report following the format listed in the USDA-SCBGP 2018 Guidance Document in section IX: Reporting Requirements. These reports are required annually and include a full accounting of expenditures. All grant funds are subject to state and federal audits.

If grant funds are not expended appropriately or if reports are not submitted in a timely manner, the Department reserves the right to require the return of funds. Entities that do not submit timely reports may also be considered ineligible to apply for future Specialty Crop Block Grants.
PART VII LIST OF RFP APPENDICES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

1. Appendix A – Proposal Cover Page
2. Appendix B – Debarment, Performance and Non-Collusion Certification
3. Appendix C – Litigation
4. Appendix D – Submitted Question Form
5. Attachment 1 – Specialty Crop Block Grant Application
APPENDIX A

State of Maine
Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
PROPOSAL COVER PAGE
RFP#201901012
FY 19 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicant’s Organization Name:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive - Name/Title:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tel:</td>
<td>E-mail:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Headquarters Street Address:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Headquarters City/State/Zip:</td>
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</tbody>
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(Provide information requested below if different from above)

| Lead Point of Contact for Proposal - Name/Title: |  |
| Tel: | E-mail: |
| Headquarters Street Address: |  |
| Headquarters City/State/Zip: |  |

- This proposal and the pricing structure contained herein will remain firm for a period of 180 days from the date and time of the bid opening.
- No personnel currently employed by the Department or any other State agency participated, either directly or indirectly, in any activities relating to the preparation of the Applicant’s proposal.
- No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the Applicant to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit a proposal.
- The above-named organization is the legal entity entering into the resulting agreement with the Department should they be awarded the contract.
- The undersigned is authorized to enter contractual obligations on behalf of the above-named organization.

To the best of my knowledge, all information provided in the enclosed proposal, both programmatic and financial, is complete and accurate at the time of submission.

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<th>Name (Print):</th>
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<td>Authorized Signature:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
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APPENDIX B

State of Maine
Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
DEBARTMENT, PERFORMANCE and NON-COLLUSION CERTIFICATION
RFP# 201901012
FY 19 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

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<th>Applicant’s Organization Name:</th>
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By signing this document, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the aforementioned organization, its principals and any subcontractors named in this proposal:

a. Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, and declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from bidding or working on contracts issued by any governmental agency.

b. Have not within three years of submitting the proposal for this contract been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for:
   i. Fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a federal, state or local government transaction or contract.
   ii. Violating Federal or State antitrust statutes or committing embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property;
   iii. Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State or Local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (b) of this certification; and
   iv. Have not within a three (3) year period preceding this proposal had one or more federal, state or local government transactions terminated for cause or default.

c. Have not entered into a prior understanding, agreement, or connection with any corporation, firm, or person submitting a response for the same materials, supplies, equipment, or services and this proposal is in all respects fair and without collusion or fraud. The above-mentioned entities understand and agree that collusive bidding is a violation of state and federal law and can result in fines, prison sentences, and civil damage awards.

Failure to provide this certification may result in the disqualification of the Applicant’s proposal, at the discretion of the Department.

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Appendix C

State of Maine
Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
LITIGATION
RFP#201901012
FY 19 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

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<th>Applicant’s Organization Name:</th>
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**Litigation (Pass/Fail)**
Attach a list of all current litigation in which the Applicant is named and a list of all closed cases that have closed within the past five (5) years in which Applicant paid the claimant either as part of a settlement or by decree. For each, list the entity bringing suit, the complaint, the accusation, amount, and outcome. If no litigation will be included, write “none” on submitted attachment. (2 points)
# SUBMITTED QUESTIONS FORM

**RFP#201901012**  
**FY 19 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Name:</th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>RFP Section &amp; Page Number</strong></th>
<th><strong>Question</strong></th>
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* If a question is not related to any section of the RFP, state “N/A” under “RFP Section & Page Number”.  
** Add additional rows, if necessary.  

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State of Maine  
RFP#201901012  
Rev. 11/7/2018
ATTACHMENT 1

State of Maine
Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry
2019 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT APPLICATION
RFP#201901012
FY 19 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

For this grant, the application will be available in a separate file from the RFP document.

For 2019 the application will be available at:
http://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/vendors/grants

For 2020 and beyond, it is the intent of the Department to have the application available by February 1st or the first business day of February of each year:
http://www.maine.gov/dafs/procurementservices/vendors/grants