**STATE OF MAINE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**

**RFA SUBMITTED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SUMMARY**

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| **RFA NUMBER AND TITLE:** | RFA #202106095 HR-133 Specialty Crop Block Grant |
| **RFA ISSUED BY:** | Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry |
| **SUBMITTED QUESTIONS DUE DATE:** | July 30, 2021 |
| **QUESTION & ANSWER SUMMARY ISSUED:** | August 4, 2021 |
| **PROPOSAL DUE DATE:** | August 17, 2021 |
| **PROPOSALS DUE TO:** | Proposals@maine.gov  |

**Provided below are submitted written questions received and the Department’s answer.**

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| **1** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part I, C Pg. 6 | Can you specify or give examples of "Commodity Group or Agricultural Organization" that would qualify for the requirement to be met in RFA 202106095 HR-133 SCBG |
| **Answer** |
| The Maine State Pomological Society, the Wild Blueberry Commission, the Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association, the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets, and the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association are examples of commodity groups and agricultural organizations. |

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| **2** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Pg. 11 | In the described terms it states that equipment is any supply valued greater than $5,000 and this is not allowed in the program. Is this true? It seems strange when the project limit is $100,000 |
| **Answer** |
| Equipment is generally not an allowable expense in the SCBG program. Supplies are an allowable expense. The cost of any single item must be less than $5,000 or else it is considered equipment. |

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| **3** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part I, C Pg. 6 | I am looking for a little clarification on Part I, Section C) Eligibility to apply: "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 includes a Letter of Support: Would our parent company count as the "agricultural organization"? Or do we need additional partners to be eligible? |
| **Answer** |
| Projects that benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual are not eligible. It is more common for single organizations, institutions, and individuals to participate as project partners rather than as applicants. A corporation or other business entity may apply but will need to clearly demonstrate that other producers or a specialty crop sector will benefit from the project by submitting Letters of Support testifying to the anticipated benefit.  |
| **4** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part II, A Pg. 9 | How does the auditor determine if the project does not benefit just a single organization, or institution? |
| **Answer** |
| The project proposal must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to an individual or organization. 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. Letters of Support will be evaluated by Department staff and the review committee.  |

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| **5** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part II, A Pg. 9 | Would a project focusing on commercializing fruit or vegetable extracts for medical treatment purposes be eligible? |
| **Answer** |
| To be considered for Specialty Crop Block Grant funding, "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." See page 7 section C "Eligibility to Apply" in the RFA for more information. |

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| **6** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Application Pg.5 | Which activities do you support as part of the budget and which do you not? |
| **Answer** |
| Personnel, fringe, travel, and supply expenses may be allowable pursuant to the stipulations outlined in the RFA and application. Equipment expenses are generally not allowed. Indirect expenses are not allowed. All expenses must be reasonable and justified in the budget narrative.  |

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| **7** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part IV, A, 6 Pg. 19 | How many letters of support are expected? |
| **Answer** |
| 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 application and LOS must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to the individual or organization. Applicants are invited to submit more than one letter if they feel it strengthens their proposal. |

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| **8** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part II, A Pg. 9 | Our group is looking at considering adding a food safety and FSMA training to our current marketing and branding focused proposal. Are those two ideas close enough to be considered one project or should they be submitted as two separate applications? |
| **Answer** |
| Marketing/branding and food safety/FSMA training might be considered two separate projects.  Since the RFA notes, “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,” In this case a group should consider submitting two proposals rather than one combined application. |

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| **9** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part I, C Pg. 7 | Are the bidding parties required to be in Maine? What are the geographical requirements regarding Maine? |
| **Answer** |
| The purpose of DACF's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) is to enhance the competitiveness of fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture) grown in Maine. It is possible that a successful bidder might be located outside of Maine if the project was designed to benefit Maine specialty crop producers.  |

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| **10** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| NA | For this proposal is the university considered a contractor--providing specified services in support of a program, or a subrecipient--has its performance measured in relation to whether objectives of a federal program were met and has responsibility for programmatic decision making? |
| **Answer** |
| The university would be a subrecipient.  |

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| **11** | **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| NA | Is it okay to partner with a state agency for the implementation of the proposed project vs. in the preparation of the proposal? |
| **Answer** |
| For SCBG, it is permissible to partner with a state agency on the preparation and/or implementation of a proposal. If collaborating on the proposal, the applicant may strike through and initial the relevant clause on the application cover page.  |