

**State of Maine
Master Score Sheet**

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Bidder Name:		University of Maine System acting through the U. of Maine (Annis- Mummy Berry)	University of Maine System acting through the U. of Maine (Moran-Apples)	Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (FSMA PSR)
Proposed Cost:		\$99,390.00	\$24,430.00	\$89,561.00
Scoring Sections		Points Available		
i.	The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass/Fail	Pass	Pass
ii.	The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	9	10
iii.	The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10	10
iv.	The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10	10
v.	The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	8	10

		U. Maine System (Annis- Mummy Berry)	U. Maine System (Moran- Apples)	MOFGA (FSMA PSR)
vi.	The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10	10
vii.	The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	5	0
viii.	The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	5	4
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	4	5
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	5	5
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	14	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	15	15
TOTAL		<u>100</u>	<u>95</u>	<u>93</u>
				<u>92</u>

Bidder Name:		University of Maine System acting through the U. of Maine (Ginakes-Garlic)	North Spore, LLC	University of Maine System acting through the U. of Maine (Fanning- Wild Blueberry)
Proposed Cost:		\$54,849.00	\$99,784.68	\$99,457.00
Scoring Sections	Points Available			
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass/Fail	Pass	Pass	Pass
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10	9	8
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	10	10	10

		U. Maine System (Ginakes-Garlic)	North Spore, LLC	U. Maine System (Fanning- Wild Blueberry)
vi.	The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10	10
vii.	The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0	0
viii.	The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	5	5
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	5	3
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0	5
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15	14
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	15	14
TOTAL		<u>100</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>89</u>

Bidder Name:		University of Maine System acting through the U. of Maine (Jin- Potato)	University of Maine System acting through the U. of Maine (Burnett- Cut Flowers)	Meeting House Herb Farm
Proposed Cost:		\$86,729.00	\$88,667.00	\$98,840.00
Scoring Sections	Points Available			
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass/Fail	Pass	Pass	Pass
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10	10	10
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	10	10	10

		UMaine System (Jin- Potato)	UMaine System (Burnett Flowers)	Meeting House Herb
vi.	The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10	2
vii.	The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0	0
viii.	The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	5	4
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	5	4
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0	5
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	14	15
TOTAL		100	89	88

Bidder Name:		Maine Department of Corrections	Maine Flower Collective	Maine Cap N' Stem, LLC
Proposed Cost:		\$100,000.00	\$99,964.00	\$100,000
Scoring Sections	Points Available			
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass/Fail	Pass	Pass	Pass
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10	9	5
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10	10	6
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10	7	9
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	8	9	8

		Maine Dept. of Corrections	Maine Flower Collective	Maine Cap N' Stem	
vi.	The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10	2	7
vii.	The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0	0	0
viii.	The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	3	2	4
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	5	4	0
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	12	10	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	15	13	15
TOTAL		100	83	71	69

Bidder Name:		Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (Gardening & Food Education)	Maine Potato Board (Fungicide)	Maine Potato Board (Potato)
Proposed Cost:		\$99,900	\$62,512.00	\$95,359.54
Scoring Sections	Points Available			
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass/Fail	Pass	Pass	Pass
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10	2	2
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	3	0	0
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	3	0	0
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	5	5	5

		MOFGA Gardening & Education	Maine Potato Board Fungicide	Maine Potato Board Potato Promotion
vi.	The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	3	3
vii.	The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0	0
viii.	The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	1	1
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	2	0
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15	14
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	7	14
TOTAL		<u>100</u>	<u>49</u>	<u>35</u>

Bidder Name:		Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets	Danny A. Thibodeau	Zak Parsons/ Parsons Farm LLC
Proposed Cost:		\$88,066.66	\$85,000	\$80,000
Scoring Sections	Points Available			
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass/Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	n/a	n/a	n/a
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10			
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10			
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10			

vi.	The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10			
vii.	The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5			
viii.	The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5			
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5			
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5			
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15			
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15			
TOTAL		<u>100</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>



**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Janet T. Mills
Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Christopher Boynton, Director of Research Administration
University of Maine System
5717 Corbett Hall
Orono ME 04469-5717

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Christopher Boynton,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

- Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
 - Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project
- North Spore, LLC
 - Development of multimedia educational modules for more farmers to access mushroom cultivation using sustainable practices
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Annis)
 - Mitigating the Effects of Mummy Berry on Wild Blueberry Plant Health
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Moran)
 - New Tools for Increasing Apple Production Profitability
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Ginakes)
 - Creating a Maine Garlic Integrated Pest Management Program
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning)
 - Connecting Better Wild Blueberry Nutrients for Improved Pollination, Pollinator Health, and Pest Management
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin)
 - Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett)
 - Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

The applicants listed above received the evaluation team's highest rankings.

The evaluation team recommended the applicants listed above for subrecipient award to the Department Commissioner for approval to be submitted in the USDA SCBGP State Plan. Once the Department Commissioner authorizes the submission of the USDA SCBGP State Plan, all recommended applicants will be required to complete all USDA-requested changes to the submitted Project Profile Template and program-related documents and plans. The Department will complete a SCBGP State Plan proposal for the USDA, and the final contractual awards are contingent upon the acceptance of the State Plan by the USDA. The USDA reserves the right to reject any and all applications or to make adjustments to awards.

Upon approval of the Department Commissioner and the USDA AMS SCBGP, the Department will contact the aforementioned applicants to negotiate a contract. As provided in the RFA, the Notice of Conditional Contract Award is subject to execution of a written contract and, as a result, this Notice does NOT constitute the formation of a contract between the Department and the apparent successful vendor. The vendor shall not acquire any legal or equitable rights relative to the contract services until a contract containing terms and conditions acceptable to the Department is executed. The Department further reserves the right to cancel this Notice of Conditional Contract Award at any time prior to the execution of a written contract.

As stated in the RFA, following the announcement of this award decision, all submissions in response to the RFA are 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.; 5 M.R.S. § 1825-B (6).

This award decision is conditioned upon final approval by the State Procurement Review Committee and the successful negotiation of a contract. A Statement of Appeal Rights has been provided with this letter; see below.

Thank you for your interest in doing business with the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Webb".

Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

STATEMENT OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Any person aggrieved by an award decision may request an appeal hearing. The request must be made to the Director of the Bureau of General Services, in writing, within 15 days of notification of the contract award as provided in 5 M.R.S. § 1825-E (2) and the Rules of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of General Services, Division of Purchases, Chapter 120, § (2) (2).



**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Janet T. Mills
Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Sarah Alexander
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
PO Box 294
Unity ME 04988

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Sarah Alexander,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

- Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
 - Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project
- North Spore, LLC
 - Development of multimedia educational modules for more farmers to access mushroom cultivation using sustainable practices
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Annis)
 - Mitigating the Effects of Mummy Berry on Wild Blueberry Plant Health
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Moran)
 - New Tools for Increasing Apple Production Profitability
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Ginakes)
 - Creating a Maine Garlic Integrated Pest Management Program
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning)
 - Connecting Better Wild Blueberry Nutrients for Improved Pollination, Pollinator Health, and Pest Management
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin)
 - Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett)
 - Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

The applicants listed above received the evaluation team's highest rankings.

The evaluation team recommended the applicants listed above for subrecipient award to the Department Commissioner for approval to be submitted in the USDA SCBGP State Plan. Once the Department Commissioner authorizes the submission of the USDA SCBGP State Plan, all recommended applicants will be required to complete all USDA-requested changes to the submitted Project Profile Template and program-related documents and plans. The Department will complete a SCBGP State Plan proposal for the USDA, and the final contractual awards are contingent upon the acceptance of the State Plan by the USDA. The USDA reserves the right to reject any and all applications or to make adjustments to awards.

Upon approval of the Department Commissioner and the USDA AMS SCBGP, the Department will contact the aforementioned applicants to negotiate a contract. As provided in the RFA, the Notice of Conditional Contract Award is subject to execution of a written contract and, as a result, this Notice does NOT constitute the formation of a contract between the Department and the apparent successful vendor. The vendor shall not acquire any legal or equitable rights relative to the contract services until a contract containing terms and conditions acceptable to the Department is executed. The Department further reserves the right to cancel this Notice of Conditional Contract Award at any time prior to the execution of a written contract.

As stated in the RFA, following the announcement of this award decision, all submissions in response to the RFA are 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.; 5 M.R.S. § 1825-B (6).

This award decision is conditioned upon final approval by the State Procurement Review Committee and the successful negotiation of a contract. A Statement of Appeal Rights has been provided with this letter; see below.

Thank you for your interest in doing business with the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Webb".

Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

STATEMENT OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Any person aggrieved by an award decision may request an appeal hearing. The request must be made to the Director of the Bureau of General Services, in writing, within 15 days of notification of the contract award as provided in 5 M.R.S. § 1825-E (2) and the Rules of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of General Services, Division of Purchases, Chapter 120, § (2) (2).



**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Janet T. Mills
Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Elijah Thanhauser
North Spore, LLC
921 Riverside St
Portland ME 04103

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Elijah Thanhauser,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

- Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
 - Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project
- North Spore, LLC
 - Development of multimedia educational modules for more farmers to access mushroom cultivation using sustainable practices
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Annis)
 - Mitigating the Effects of Mummy Berry on Wild Blueberry Plant Health
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Moran)
 - New Tools for Increasing Apple Production Profitability
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Ginakes)
 - Creating a Maine Garlic Integrated Pest Management Program
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning)
 - Connecting Better Wild Blueberry Nutrients for Improved Pollination, Pollinator Health, and Pest Management
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin)
 - Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett)
 - Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

The applicants listed above received the evaluation team's highest rankings.

The evaluation team recommended the applicants listed above for subrecipient award to the Department Commissioner for approval to be submitted in the USDA SCBGP State Plan. Once the Department Commissioner authorizes the submission of the USDA SCBGP State Plan, all recommended applicants will be required to complete all USDA-requested changes to the submitted Project Profile Template and program-related documents and plans. The Department will complete a SCBGP State Plan proposal for the USDA, and the final contractual awards are contingent upon the acceptance of the State Plan by the USDA. The USDA reserves the right to reject any and all applications or to make adjustments to awards.

Upon approval of the Department Commissioner and the USDA AMS SCBGP, the Department will contact the aforementioned applicants to negotiate a contract. As provided in the RFA, the Notice of Conditional Contract Award is subject to execution of a written contract and, as a result, this Notice does NOT constitute the formation of a contract between the Department and the apparent successful vendor. The vendor shall not acquire any legal or equitable rights relative to the contract services until a contract containing terms and conditions acceptable to the Department is executed. The Department further reserves the right to cancel this Notice of Conditional Contract Award at any time prior to the execution of a written contract.

As stated in the RFA, following the announcement of this award decision, all submissions in response to the RFA are 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.; 5 M.R.S. § 1825-B (6).

This award decision is conditioned upon final approval by the State Procurement Review Committee and the successful negotiation of a contract. A Statement of Appeal Rights has been provided with this letter; see below.

Thank you for your interest in doing business with the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Webb".

Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

STATEMENT OF APPEAL RIGHTS

Any person aggrieved by an award decision may request an appeal hearing. The request must be made to the Director of the Bureau of General Services, in writing, within 15 days of notification of the contract award as provided in 5 M.R.S. § 1825-E (2) and the Rules of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, Bureau of General Services, Division of Purchases, Chapter 120, § (2) (2).



**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Janet T. Mills
Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Emily Springer
Meeting House Herb Farm
35A Hunnewell Rd
Scarborough ME 04074

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Emily Springer,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

- Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
 - Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project
- North Spore, LLC
 - Development of multimedia educational modules for more farmers to access mushroom cultivation using sustainable practices
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Annis)
 - Mitigating the Effects of Mummy Berry on Wild Blueberry Plant Health
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Moran)
 - New Tools for Increasing Apple Production Profitability
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Ginakes)
 - Creating a Maine Garlic Integrated Pest Management Program
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning)
 - Connecting Better Wild Blueberry Nutrients for Improved Pollination, Pollinator Health, and Pest Management
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin)
 - Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett)
 - Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

The applicants listed above received the evaluation team's highest rankings.

The evaluation team recommended the applicants listed above for subrecipient award to the Department Commissioner for approval to be submitted in the USDA SCBGP State Plan. Once the Department Commissioner authorizes the submission of the USDA SCBGP State Plan, all recommended applicants will be required to complete all USDA-requested changes to the submitted Project Profile Template and program-related documents and plans. The Department will complete a SCBGP State Plan proposal for the USDA, and the final contractual awards are contingent upon the acceptance of the State Plan by the USDA. The USDA reserves the right to reject any and all applications or to make adjustments to awards.

Upon approval of the Department Commissioner and the USDA AMS SCBGP, the Department will contact the aforementioned applicants to negotiate a contract. As provided in the RFA, the Notice of Conditional Contract Award is subject to execution of a written contract and, as a result, this Notice does NOT constitute the formation of a contract between the Department and the apparent successful vendor. The vendor shall not acquire any legal or equitable rights relative to the contract services until a contract containing terms and conditions acceptable to the Department is executed. The Department further reserves the right to cancel this Notice of Conditional Contract Award at any time prior to the execution of a written contract.

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This award decision is conditioned upon final approval by the State Procurement Review Committee and the successful negotiation of a contract. A Statement of Appeal Rights has been provided with this letter; see below.

Thank you for your interest in doing business with the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michelle Webb". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michelle" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Webb".

Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

STATEMENT OF APPEAL RIGHTS

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**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Janet T. Mills
Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Mark McBrine
Maine Department of Corrections
25 Tyson Dr.
Augusta ME 04333

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Mark McBrine,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

- Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
 - Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project
- North Spore, LLC
 - Development of multimedia educational modules for more farmers to access mushroom cultivation using sustainable practices
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Annis)
 - Mitigating the Effects of Mummy Berry on Wild Blueberry Plant Health
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Moran)
 - New Tools for Increasing Apple Production Profitability
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Ginakes)
 - Creating a Maine Garlic Integrated Pest Management Program
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning)
 - Connecting Better Wild Blueberry Nutrients for Improved Pollination, Pollinator Health, and Pest Management
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin)
 - Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett)
 - Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

The applicants listed above received the evaluation team's highest rankings.

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Thank you for your interest in doing business with the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Webb".

Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

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**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Janet T. Mills
Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Mary Lou Hoskins
Maine Flower Collective
154 Mills Rd
Exeter ME 04435

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Mary Lou Hoskins,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

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- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning)
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 - Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett)
 - Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

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Thank you for your interest in doing business with the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Webb".

Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

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**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
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Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Erik Lomen
Maine Cap N' Stem
1 Commonwealth St. Suite 2
Gardiner, ME 04345

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Erik Lomen,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

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- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning)
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- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin)
 - Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett)
 - Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

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Thank you for your interest in doing business with the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

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**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Janet T. Mills
Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Jeannie Tapley
Maine Potato Board
744 Main St. Suite 1
Presque Isle, ME 04769

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Jeannie Tapley,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

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 - Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms
- University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett)
 - Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

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Thank you for your interest in doing business with the State of Maine.

Sincerely,

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Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

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**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Janet T. Mills
Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Jimmy DeBiasi
Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets
PO Box 313
Freeport ME 04032

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Jimmy DeBiasi,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

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Sincerely,

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Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

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**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Janet T. Mills
Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Danny Thibodeau
276 Powers Rd
Caribou ME 04736

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Danny Thibodeau,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

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Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

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**STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION AND FORESTRY**

**Janet T. Mills
Governor**

**AMANDA E. BEAL
Commissioner**

CONDITIONAL AWARD NOTIFICATION LETTER

May 20, 2024

Zak Parsons
Parsons Dairy Farm, LLC
321 Buck St
Gorham ME 04038

SUBJECT: Notice of Conditional Contract Awards under RFA # 202402032,
2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)

Dear Zak Parsons,

This letter is in regard to the subject Request for Applications (RFA), issued by the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry for the 2024 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. The Department has evaluated the proposals received using the evaluation criteria identified in the RFA, and the Department is hereby announcing its conditional contract awards to the following applicants:

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Michelle Webb
Director of Agricultural Resource Development
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
90 Blossom Lane 28 SHS
Augusta, ME 04333-0028

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**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Annis- Mummy Berry)

PROJECT NAME: Mitigating the effects of mummy berry on wild blueberry plant health

DATE: March 27, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	9
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	8
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	5
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations	5	5

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Annis- Mummy Berry)

PROJECT NAME: Mitigating the effects of mummy berry on wild blueberry plant health

DATE: March 27, 2024

	involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).		
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	4
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	5
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	14
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	15
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>95</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Annis- Mummy Berry)

PROJECT NAME: Mitigating the effects of mummy berry on wild blueberry plant health

DATE: March 27, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a project to research and share knowledge of the most effective ways to control mummy berry disease, and to improve crop productivity amongst Maine wild blueberry growers. Results and recommendations on effective fertilizer use and mummy berry control will be disseminated to stakeholders in grower meetings, field days with demonstration plots, fact sheets, and other publications.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Annis- Mummy Berry)

PROJECT NAME: Mitigating the effects of mummy berry on wild blueberry plant health

DATE: March 27, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (9 Points)

Did not follow instructions completely for Program Summary contents to be included in File 2. The Applicant was directed to include the Project sustainability plan in File 2 and did not. The sustainability plan was scored by reviewers as it was provided in File 3.

iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (10 Points)

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific USDA Project Strategy as instructed in the RFA.

v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (8 Points)

The Applicant did not include a value for Outcome 6 Indicator 6.4 *Total number of research outputs published to industry publications and/or academic journals, and for each published research output* and did not select n/a on this indicator.

The Applicant did include a value of 90 for indicator 6.4a Number of views/reads of published research/data. Reviewers are unable to determine how many published outputs that will receive 90 views.

vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (10 Points)

The Applicant articulated a comprehensive dissemination plan to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Annis- Mummy Berry)

PROJECT NAME: Mitigating the effects of mummy berry on wild blueberry plant health

DATE: March 27, 2024

- vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (5 Points)**

The applicant did provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

- viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (5 Points)**

The Applicant provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that multiple specialty crop stakeholders support the Project.

- ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (4 Points)**

The Applicant began to describe how the Project may become self-sustaining, but more details would have provided a better understanding.

- x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (5 Points)**

Well-articulated within file 3. Referenced and described how a prior SCBGP Project or contract will influence this Project.

- xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (14 Points)**

Math error found in Travel section of budget.

- xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors or omissions found.

STATE OF MAINE TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Moran- Apples)

PROJECT NAME: New tools for increasing apple production profitability phase II

DATE: March 27, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	9
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	10
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	4

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Moran- Apples)

PROJECT NAME: New tools for increasing apple production profitability phase II

DATE: March 27, 2024

ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	5
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	5
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	15
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>93</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Moran- Apples)

PROJECT NAME: New tools for increasing apple production profitability phase II

DATE: March 27, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a Project to test strategies for reducing the risk of growing Honeycrisp apples. The research project will help apple producers to reduce food waste and identify and reduce bitter pit. Maine apple growers will be directly involved in the project and will receive project updates and results through apple grower meetings and newsletters. An online tool will be developed to benefit the broader apple industry.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Moran- Apples)

PROJECT NAME: New tools for increasing apple production profitability phase II

DATE: March 27, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

- ii. **The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (9 Points)**

The Applicant did not use the file name formatting required in the RFA.

- iii. **The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

- iv. **The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific USDA Project Strategy as instructed in the RFA.

- v. **The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (10 Points)**

The Applicant clearly defined in both File 2 and File 3 outcome(s) and indicator(s) and demonstrated how the project will be measured to achieve the selected outcome(s) and indicator(s).

- vi. **The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (10 Points)**

The Applicant articulated a comprehensive dissemination plan to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

- vii. **The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Moran- Apples)

PROJECT NAME: New tools for increasing apple production profitability phase II

DATE: March 27, 2024

- viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (4 Points)**

The Applicant made some reference to those who support the Project in the external support section of file 3. Stakeholders were also referenced in file 2. Though encouraged but not required, no letters of support were submitted.

- ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (5 Points)**

The Applicant clearly outlined the high likelihood that the project's outcomes will be adopted by producers, therefore leading to the project becoming self-sustaining.

- x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (5 Points)**

The Applicant was granted a SCBGP award in 2023. The new proposed Project will build upon the result and success of the prior awarded project. It was clearly articulated how lessons learned from prior years will be integrated into the newly proposed Project.

- xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors found.

- xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors or omissions found.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (FSMA PSR)

PROJECT NAME: Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project

DATE: March 25, 2024

Instructions:

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	10
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations	5	5

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (FSMA PSR)

PROJECT NAME: Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project

DATE: March 25, 2024

	involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).		
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	3
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	14
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>92</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (FSMA PSR)

PROJECT NAME: Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project

DATE: March 25, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a project to respond to Maine specialty crop produce farmers experiencing barriers in complying with the FSMA Produce Safety Rule. This Project seeks to enhance food safety and increase the number of Maine farms able to come into compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule, and/or a GAP/GHP audit, by providing workshops, demonstrations about food safety, one-on one technical assistance, financial resources, and educational trainings that incorporate FDA-approved content and a certificate that is needed to comply with FSMA.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (FSMA PSR)

PROJECT NAME: Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project

DATE: March 25, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

- ii. **The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (10 Points)**

The Application is fully complete and complies to the RFA.

- iii. **The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

- iv. **The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific USDA Project Strategy as instructed in the RFA.

- v. **The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (10 Points)**

Well-identified, articulated, and justified outcomes and indicators in both file 2 and file 3.

- vi. **The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (10 Points)**

The Applicant will create an online library for Maine specialty crop producers in addition to the training outlined in the Project.

- vii. **The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (FSMA PSR)

PROJECT NAME: Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project

DATE: March 25, 2024

- viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (5 Points)**

The Applicant provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that multiple specialty crop stakeholders support the Project.
- ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (3 Points)**

The Applicant stated prior fundraising success but did not provide a well-articulated sustainability plan for this Project.
- x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (0 Points)**

Not related to a prior award, not articulated.
- xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (15 Points)**

No errors found in the budget.
- xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (14 Points)**

Did not provide a response for approximately when activities will occur in the personnel justification section, as instructed in the RFA file 3.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Ginakes-Garlic)

PROJECT NAME: Creating a Maine garlic integrated pest management program

DATE: March 27, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	10
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations	5	5

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Ginakes-Garlic)

PROJECT NAME: Creating a Maine garlic integrated pest management program

DATE: March 27, 2024

	involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).		
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	5
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	15
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>90</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Ginakes-Garlic)

PROJECT NAME: Creating a Maine garlic integrated pest management program

DATE: March 27, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a project to research and share the findings of improving the sustainability of garlic production in Maine by integrating traditional scouting approaches and modern weather-based pest forecasting into a garlic-integrated pest management program. Regular newsletters will be sent out throughout the growing season to create awareness of potential pest concerns. Project findings will be disseminated at grower meetings and through the University of Maine Cooperative Extension and academic resources to benefit the broader specialty crop industry.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Ginakes-Garlic)

PROJECT NAME: Creating a Maine garlic integrated pest management program

DATE: March 27, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

- ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (10 Points)**

The Applicant refers to the proposed activities as a “Program” and not a “Project” throughout. However, the submitted materials describe an eligible and specific Project that meets USDA SCBGP requirements for Project funding. Applicants should be mindful of the RFA instructions regarding Project eligibility as opposed to program funding.

- iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

- iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific USDA Project Strategy as instructed in the RFA.

- v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (10 Points)**

The Applicant clearly defined in both File 2 and File 3 outcome(s) and indicator(s) and demonstrated how the project will be measured to achieve the selected outcome(s) and indicator(s).

- vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (10 Points)**

The Applicant articulated a comprehensive dissemination plan to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown garlic.

- vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Ginakes-Garlic)

PROJECT NAME: Creating a Maine garlic integrated pest management program

DATE: March 27, 2024

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

- viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (5 Points)**

The Applicant provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that multiple specialty crop stakeholders support the Project.

- ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (5 Points)**

The Applicant clearly explained how SCBGP funding would help initiate the project, but over time, it should become self-sustaining.

- x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (0 Points)**

No reference to a prior SCBGP Project or contract.

- xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors found.

- xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors or omissions found.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: North Spore LLC

PROJECT NAME: Development of multimedia educational modules for more farmers to access mushroom cultivation using sustainable practices

DATE: March 25, 2024

Instructions:

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	9
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	10
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations	5	5

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: North Spore LLC

PROJECT NAME: Development of multimedia educational modules for more farmers to access mushroom cultivation using sustainable practices

DATE: March 25, 2024

	involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).		
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	5
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	15
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>89</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: North Spore LLC

PROJECT NAME: Development of multimedia educational modules for more farmers to access mushroom cultivation using sustainable practices

DATE: March 25, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application describes a Project that will create comprehensive multimedia education modules and resources that will benefit Maine's mushroom cultivators. The Project outlines activities that will enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown mushrooms.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: North Spore LLC

PROJECT NAME: Development of multimedia educational modules for more farmers to access mushroom cultivation using sustainable practices

DATE: March 25, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (9 Points)

The Applicant's File 2 exceeded the word limit in sections: Project Summary (500 words or less), Expected Measurable Outcomes, Indicators, and Data Collection Methods (500 words or less), and USDA Strategies (250 words or less).

iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (10 Points)

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific USDA Project Strategy as instructed in the RFA.

v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (10 Points)

The Applicant clearly defined in both File 2 and File 3 outcome(s) and indicator(s) and demonstrated how the project will be measured to achieve the selected outcome(s) and indicator(s).

vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (10 Points)

The Applicant articulated a comprehensive dissemination plan includes creation of a library of training modules and videos to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: North Spore LLC

PROJECT NAME: Development of multimedia educational modules for more farmers to access mushroom cultivation using sustainable practices

DATE: March 25, 2024

- vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

- viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (5 Points)**

The Applicant provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that multiple specialty crop stakeholders support the Project.

- ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (5 Points)**

The Applicant clearly explained a sustainability plan.

- x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (0 Points)**

No reference to a prior SCBGP Project or contract.

- xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors found.

- xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors or omissions found.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning- Wild Blueberry)

PROJECT NAME: Connecting better wild blueberry nutrients for improved pollination, pollinator health, and pest management

DATE: March 27, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	8
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	10
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations	5	5

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning- Wild Blueberry)

PROJECT NAME: Connecting better wild blueberry nutrients for improved pollination, pollinator health, and pest management

DATE: March 27, 2024

	involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).		
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	3
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	5
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	14
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	14
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>89</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning- Wild Blueberry)

PROJECT NAME: Connecting better wild blueberry nutrients for improved pollination, pollinator health, and pest management

DATE: March 27, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlines a Project that demonstrates significant collaboration between the University of Maine and Maine's wild blueberry growers. The Project to research and share knowledge of optimizing the foliar application of key nutrients in wild blueberries to improve pollination, pollinator health, and pest management. Results and recommendations for growers will be presented at extension meetings, research days, and other meetings, in the yearly report to the Wild Blueberry Advisory Board, and in journal articles.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning- Wild Blueberry)

PROJECT NAME: Connecting better wild blueberry nutrients for improved pollination, pollinator health, and pest management

DATE: March 27, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (8 Points)

Did not follow instructions completely for Program Summary contents to be included in File 2 as the Applicant was directed to describe the sustainability plan in File 2, but did not. There was enough information on this topic addressed in file 3 to score the Project sustainability section but scoring the formatting error here. Also, Indicator 6.4 has a value in File 3 but was excluded from File 2.

iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (10 Points)

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific USDA Project Strategy as instructed in the RFA.

v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (10 Points)

The Applicant clearly defined in both File 2 and File 3 outcome(s) and indicator(s) and demonstrated how the project will be measured to achieve the selected outcome(s) and indicator(s).

vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (10 Points)

The Applicant articulated a comprehensive dissemination plan to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown wild blueberry crops.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Fanning- Wild Blueberry)

PROJECT NAME: Connecting better wild blueberry nutrients for improved pollination, pollinator health, and pest management

DATE: March 27, 2024

vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (5 Points)

The Applicant provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that multiple specialty crop stakeholders support the Project.

ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (3 Points)

The Applicant stated how this Project will support the sustainability of Maine's wild blueberry industry and a grad student's postdoc. fellowship application but not a well-articulated sustainability plan for this Project.

x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (5 Points)

The Applicant was granted a prior SCBGP award. The new proposed Project will be led by a new PI and will build upon the result and success of the prior awarded project. It was clearly articulated how lessons learned from prior years will be integrated into the newly proposed Project.

xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (14 Points)

Math error found in the Other section of the budget.

xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (14 Points)

Approximately when the activities will occur was omitted from personnel justification. In the personnel section table, the applicant requested 2 undergrad research assistants, but in the justification section, the applicant described 4 undergrad. research assistants.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin- Potato Production)

PROJECT NAME: Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms

DATE: March 27, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	10
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations	5	5

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin- Potato Production)

PROJECT NAME: Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms

DATE: March 27, 2024

	involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).		
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	5
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	14
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>89</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin- Potato Production)

PROJECT NAME: Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms

DATE: March 27, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlines a Project to research and share knowledge of healthy soil practices that promote potato growth. The Applicant described an urgent need for an ecofriendly and cost-effective processing design that identifies optimal conditions for producing organic amendments that effectively suppress soilborne diseases, promote soil health, enhance potato production, and remain cost-effective for Maine's potato growers. The results obtained from this research will be widely disseminated to stakeholders through various channels including Maine potato conferences, field days, extension meetings, and national conferences.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin- Potato Production)

PROJECT NAME: Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms

DATE: March 27, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

- ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (10 Points)**

The Applicant adhered to the format as instructed in the RFA. The Application may have been just as strong if focused on fewer reportable indicators, see RFA for guidance.

- iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

- iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific USDA Project Strategy as instructed in the RFA.

- v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (10 Points)**

The Applicant clearly defined in both File 2 and File 3 outcome(s) and indicator(s) and demonstrated how the project will be measured to achieve the selected outcome(s) and indicator(s).

- vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (10 Points)**

The Applicant articulated a comprehensive dissemination plan to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown potatoes.

- vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Jin- Potato Production)

PROJECT NAME: Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms

DATE: March 27, 2024

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

- viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (5 Points)**

The Applicant provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that multiple specialty crop stakeholders support the Project.

- ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (5 Points)**

The Applicant clearly outlined the high likelihood that the Project will be self-sustaining through a variety of avenues.

- x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (0 Points)**

No reference to a prior SCBGP Project or contract.

- xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors found.

- xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (14 Points)**

The justification of a number of hotel nights does not match in the travel section table and justification field.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett- Cut Flowers)

PROJECT NAME: Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

DATE: March 27, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	10
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations	5	5

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett- Cut Flowers)

PROJECT NAME: Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

DATE: March 27, 2024

	involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).		
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	4
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	14
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>88</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett- Cut Flowers)

PROJECT NAME: Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

DATE: March 27, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a project to develop and validate climate-adaptive guidelines for Maine's cut flower growers using successional planting to broaden the harvest window for annual cut flowers.. Results and recommendations will be disseminated to stakeholders at field day tours and a webinar shared state-wide.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett- Cut Flowers)

PROJECT NAME: Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

DATE: March 27, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

- ii. **The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (10 Points)**

The Applicant adhered to the format as instructed in the RFA.

- iii. **The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

- iv. **The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific USDA Project Strategy as instructed in the RFA.

- v. **The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (10 Points)**

The Applicant clearly defined in both File 2 and File 3 outcome(s) and indicator(s) and demonstrated how the project will be measured to achieve the selected outcome(s) and indicator(s).

- vi. **The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (10 Points)**

The Applicant articulated a comprehensive dissemination plan to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown cut flowers.

- vii. **The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: University of Maine System acting through the University of Maine (Burnett- Cut Flowers)

PROJECT NAME: Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

DATE: March 27, 2024

- viii. **The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (5 Points)**

The Applicant provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate that multiple specialty crop stakeholders support the Project.

- ix. **The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (4 Points)**

The Applicant began to describe how the Project may become self-sustaining, but more details would have provided a better understanding.

- x. **The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (0 Points)**

No reference to a prior SCBGP Project or contract.

- xi. **The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors found.

- xii. **The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (14 Points)**

The supplies section is not thoroughly detailed. Although estimated expenses are permissible, additional details would have increased understanding. Instead, flat rates are provided on all 7 line items in the supplies section.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Meeting House Herb Farm

PROJECT NAME: Increasing competitiveness and market share of Maine grown herbs through e-commerce farm to consumer sales

DATE: March 25, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	10
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	2
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	4

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Meeting House Herb Farm

PROJECT NAME: Increasing competitiveness and market share of Maine grown herbs through e-commerce farm to consumer sales

DATE: March 25, 2024

ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	5
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	5
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	15
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>86</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Meeting House Herb Farm

PROJECT NAME: Increasing competitiveness and market share of Maine grown herbs through e-commerce farm to consumer sales

DATE: March 25, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a project to market Maine grown herbs and reduce barriers to market entry for Maine farmers who wish to include herbs in crop diversification through business, technical, and marketing assistance and support and an established e-commerce site.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Meeting House Herb Farm

PROJECT NAME: Increasing competitiveness and market share of Maine grown herbs through e-commerce farm to consumer sales

DATE: March 25, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (10 Points)

The Applicant submitted File 3 as a .docx rather than a .pdf. The RFA indicated a preference for .pdf. There were spelling and grammatical errors and font size variances that reviewers noted but did not reduce the overall score in this category.

iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (10 Points)

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific USDA Project Strategy as instructed in the RFA.

v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (10 Points)

The USDA SCBGP outcomes and indicators are clearly defined, explained, and justified on files 2 and 3.

vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (2 Points)

Applicant referenced methods of monitoring and data collection but a dissemination plan to share Project results was not referenced or described.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Meeting House Herb Farm

PROJECT NAME: Increasing competitiveness and market share of Maine grown herbs through e-commerce farm to consumer sales

DATE: March 25, 2024

vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (4 Points)

The Applicant provided one letter of support is from a Project partner which was not considered in the scoring.

An email from a farmer was also provided to demonstrate stakeholder support of one farm.

Some details are provided in the external support section of file 3 to begin to outline stakeholders that support the project.

ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (5 Points)

The Applicant described a well-articulated fee-based sustainability plan.

x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (5 Points)

Well-articulated within file 3. Referenced and described how a prior SCBGP Project or contract will influence this Project.

xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (15 Points)

Full points, no errors found.

xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (15 Points)

Full points, no errors or omissions found.

STATE OF MAINE TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Department of Corrections

PROJECT NAME: Building a Permaculture, Agroforestry, and Alley Cropping Model by Implementing Strategies to Diversify Maine Farm Production, Create Climate Resilience, while Providing Economic Viability

DATE: March 22, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	10
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	8
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	10
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved	5	3

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Department of Corrections

PROJECT NAME: Building a Permaculture, Agroforestry, and Alley Cropping Model by Implementing Strategies to Diversify Maine Farm Production, Create Climate Resilience, while Providing Economic Viability

DATE: March 22, 2024

	in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).		
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	5
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	12
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	15
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>83</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Department of Corrections

PROJECT NAME: Building a Permaculture, Agroforestry, and Alley Cropping Model by Implementing Strategies to Diversify Maine Farm Production, Create Climate Resilience, while Providing Economic Viability

DATE: March 22, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a Project to provide film and print documentation of the training, workshops and implementation steps used to design and develop an on site farm model for organic alley cropping to provide an alternative to new and existing farms throughout Maine that have a desire to create or add a fruit and /or nut orchard to their farm.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Department of Corrections

PROJECT NAME: Building a Permaculture, Agroforestry, and Alley Cropping Model by Implementing Strategies to Diversify Maine Farm Production, Create Climate Resilience, while Providing Economic Viability

DATE: March 22, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

- ii. **The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (10 Points)**

No concerns noted

- iii. **The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

- iv. **The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific USDA Project Strategy as instructed in the RFA.

- v. **The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (8 Points)**

The USDA SCBGP outcomes and indicator numbers not specifically stated on file 2, not well articulated, and hard to align with file 3 for full review.

- vi. **The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (10 Points)**

Applicant referenced methods of monitoring and data collection and a well-articulated dissemination plan to share Project results.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Department of Corrections

PROJECT NAME: Building a Permaculture, Agroforestry, and Alley Cropping Model by Implementing Strategies to Diversify Maine Farm Production, Create Climate Resilience, while Providing Economic Viability

DATE: March 22, 2024

- vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

- viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (3 Points)**

The Applicant provided letters of support from Project partners involved in the Project. Some stakeholder support was referenced in other areas of the application.

- ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (5 Points)**

The Applicant described a well-articulated sustainability plan.

- x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (0 Points)**

No prior SCBGP contract or award was referenced.

- xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (12 Points)**

The budget included a lot of rounding rather than precise details. 234 fruit trees calculation incorrect by nearly \$2K and cover crop seed calculation incorrect

- xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors or omissions found.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Flower Collective

PROJECT NAME: Cultivate Season extension by the Maine Flower Collective: Pilot Sustainable, Statewide "Maine Flower Day"

DATE: March 25, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	9
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	10
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	7
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	9
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	2
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations	5	2

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Flower Collective

PROJECT NAME: Cultivate Season extension by the Maine Flower Collective: Pilot Sustainable, Statewide "Maine Flower Day"

DATE: March 25, 2024

	involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).		
ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	4
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	5
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	10
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	13
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>71</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Flower Collective

PROJECT NAME: Cultivate Season extension by the Maine Flower Collective: Pilot Sustainable, Statewide "Maine Flower Day"

DATE: March 25, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Applicant outlined a Project to market Maine specialty crops (cut flowers specifically) to diversified and expanded markets through season extension practices and promotion and the development of "Maine Flower Days" throughout the state to raise consumer awareness about locally-grown flowers being cultivated, sold, and designed in Maine—even outside of the summer months.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Flower Collective

PROJECT NAME: Cultivate Season extension by the Maine Flower Collective: Pilot Sustainable, Statewide "Maine Flower Day"

DATE: March 25, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

- ii. **The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (9 Points)**

The Applicant did not use the file name formatting required in the RFA.

- iii. **The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (10 Points)**

The Applicant identified and articulated Project alignment with a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA.

- iv. **The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (7 Points)**

The Applicant didn't clearly identify or fully explain how their project aligns with one or more USDA strategies.

- v. **The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (9 Points)**

In File 2, the Applicant described an additional data collection process plan on outcomes and indicators not included in the outcome and indicator table provided in File 3. However, all of the outcomes and indicators that were included in the File 3 table were thoroughly identified and described in File 2.

- vi. **The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (2 Points)**

Applicant referenced methods of monitoring and data collection, but a dissemination plan to share Project results was not referenced or described.

- vii. **The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

The Applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Flower Collective

PROJECT NAME: Cultivate Season extension by the Maine Flower Collective: Pilot Sustainable, Statewide "Maine Flower Day"

DATE: March 25, 2024

- viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (2 Points)**

The Applicant partially limited external support in the submitted application and did not submit any letters of support from Maine flower growers or other Project beneficiaries. Project support outside the organization is unclear.

- ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (4 Points)**

The Applicant began to describe how the Project may become self-sustaining, but more details would have provided a better understanding.

- x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (5 Points)**

Well-articulated within file 3. The Applicant referenced and described how a prior SCBGP Project or contract will influence this Project.

- xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (10 Points)**

Personnel delivery drivers' personnel calculation is incorrect; monthly facility rent calculation error or missed zero; personnel justification of FTE is unclear; overall budget errors do not match individual budget lines.

- xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (13 Points)**

Incomplete and unclear justification for personnel FTE.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Cap N' Stem, LLC

PROJECT NAME: Developing A Standardized Model For Medicinal Mushroom Dehydration, Extraction and Analysis.

DATE: March 22, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	5
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	6
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	9
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	8
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	7
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	4

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Cap N' Stem, LLC

PROJECT NAME: Developing A Standardized Model For Medicinal Mushroom Dehydration, Extraction and Analysis.

DATE: March 22, 2024

ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	0
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	15
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>69</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Cap N' Stem, LLC

PROJECT NAME: Developing A Standardized Model For Medicinal Mushroom Dehydration, Extraction and Analysis.

DATE: March 22, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a project to develop scalable dehydration, extraction, and identification of targeted substances model designed to benefit Maine mushroom cultivators. The Project is aimed to continue to diversify Maine mushrooms as a specialty crop to expand the market domestically and increase Maine mushroom production and consumption.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Cap N' Stem, LLC

PROJECT NAME: Developing A Standardized Model For Medicinal Mushroom Dehydration, Extraction and Analysis.

DATE: March 22, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (5 Points)

The Applicant did not submit the correct File 3 as provided in the RFA. Instead, the applicant used an older USDA Project Profile Template Form not correct for the 2024 SCBGP RFA and not provided in the RFA.

iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (6 Points)

The Applicant did not identify a specific Commissioner priority area as instructed in the RFA. Instead, the applicant attempted to address "all five" in the Project Summary without articulating which specific commissioner priority areas.

iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (9 Points)

Vague response. More information is needed to connect Project plan to USDA Project strategy. Applicant should have identified one USDA strategy and provided complete detail for understanding.

v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (8 Points)

The USDA SCBGP outcomes and indicators are not clearly defined. The outcome number in File 2 does not match File 3.

vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (7 Points)

Applicant references helping 30+ Maine based fungi companies access Project information in narrative, but list 650+ farms (national??) as beneficiaries in File 3. Discrepancies exist in the submitted files in this area. Applicant stated that they will disseminate results but only partially described how.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Cap N' Stem, LLC

PROJECT NAME: Developing A Standardized Model For Medicinal Mushroom Dehydration, Extraction and Analysis.

DATE: March 22, 2024

- vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

- viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (4 Points)**

The provided documents are somewhat unclear in describing that Maine mushroom cultivators/farmers support the Project. The LOS does provide an indicator that there is a farm that is in support of the Project, describing how the Project would be beneficial to other farmers, but there is not enough information to fully understand that Maine specialty crop stakeholders, other than those involved in the Project, support the Project as described.

- ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (0 Points)**

The Applicant did not address this in any submitted document and was instructed to address it in File 2 Project Summary.

- x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (0 Points)**

No reference to a prior SCBGP Project or contract.

- xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors found.

- xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (15 Points)**

Full points, no errors or omissions found.

STATE OF MAINE TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

PROJECT NAME: Increasing specialty crop knowledge, consumption, and soil health in Maine's communities through gardening and food

DATE: March 25, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	10
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	3
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	3
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	5
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	3
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	1

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

PROJECT NAME: Increasing specialty crop knowledge, consumption, and soil health in Maine's communities through gardening and food

DATE: March 25, 2024

ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	2
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	15
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	7
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>49</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

PROJECT NAME: Increasing specialty crop knowledge, consumption, and soil health in Maine's communities through gardening and food

DATE: March 25, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a project to support the knowledge and consumption of fruits and vegetables with the assistance of the Maine School Garden Network by distributing monthly newsletters, gardening booklets, education articles, and an array of educational events including Maine School Garden Day.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

PROJECT NAME: Increasing specialty crop knowledge, consumption, and soil health in Maine's communities through gardening and food

DATE: March 25, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (10 Points)

The Application is fully complete and complies to the RFA.

iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (3 Points)

Application identified to enhance soil and ecosystem health. However, the Project is intended to improve home gardening and growing that enhance soil/eco/ health and not focused on improving specialty crop farmer/producer soil/eco health outcomes.

iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (3 Points)

The Applicant had two priority areas identified, one justified, the other does not specify how Project will increase behavior change in food consumption and doesn't specifically address specialty crop in this section of narrative.

v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (5 Points)

Outcomes and Indicators are listed. However, the narrative is weak on addressing how activities will result in outcome and indicator achievement. Outcomes and indicators only loosely connect to the overarching USDA program goal of increasing competitiveness of specialty crops.

vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (3 Points)

This application does not articulate the project's role in enhancing the market competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. Unclear how results would be disseminated to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to teachers and home gardeners.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

PROJECT NAME: Increasing specialty crop knowledge, consumption, and soil health in Maine's communities through gardening and food

DATE: March 25, 2024

vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)

The Applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (1 Points)

Stakeholders are stated to be educators and individuals interested in gardening and food preservation, not specified specialty crops and not specialty crop industry stakeholders. The LOS is from a partner involved in the Project.

ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (2 Points)

The Applicant did not state a well-articulated sustainability plan for this Project. Provided minimal information related to this scoring section for review.

x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (0 Points)

The Applicant's Project does not continue the efforts of a previously funded SCBGP project.

xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (15 Points) Full points, no errors found.

xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (7 Points)

Cost justification sections do not thoroughly explain many of the expenses e.g. gardening booklet. Limited information to support how expenses contribute to the enhancement of the market competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

PROJECT NAME: Increasing specialty crop knowledge, consumption, and soil health in Maine's communities through gardening and food

DATE: March 25, 2024

Program income appears to be the full amount of ME School Garden Day registration. All program income must be entirely related to the Project and reinvested in the Project during the period of performance. Program income justification is unclear with regard to eligible Project activities.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Potato Board

PROJECT NAME: Improving fungicide design support systems with spore trapping in Maine

DATE: March 25, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	2
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	0
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	0
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	5
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	3
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	0

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Potato Board

PROJECT NAME: Improving fungicide design support systems with spore trapping in Maine

DATE: March 25, 2024

ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	0
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	14
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	14
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>38</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Potato Board

PROJECT NAME: Improving fungicide design support systems with spore trapping in Maine

DATE: March 25, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a project to research and test to improve the decision support systems for Maine potato producers to control early and late blight. A survey instrument will be created and distributed to potato growers and crop consultants to share the results.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Potato Board

PROJECT NAME: Improving fungicide design support systems with spore trapping in Maine

DATE: March 25, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (2 Points)

The Applicant did not submit File 2 and did not use the file name formatting required in the RFA.

iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (0 Points)

The Applicant did not submit File 2, did not provide a response to this RFA section in submitted files.

iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (0 Points)

The Applicant did not submit File 2, did not provide a response to this RFA section in submitted files.

v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (5 Points)

Outcomes and indicators are identified, but the application does not demonstrate how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes and indicators.

vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (3 Points)

Applicant referenced methods of monitoring and data collection but a dissemination plan to share Project results was not referenced or described.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Potato Board

PROJECT NAME: Improving fungicide design support systems with spore trapping in Maine

DATE: March 25, 2024

- vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

- viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (0 Points)**

No letters of support were provided. The Applicant did not provide a response to the external support section of file 3.

- ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (0 Points)**

The Applicant did not address this in any submitted document and was instructed to address it in File 2 Project Summary.

- x. The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (0 Points)**

The Applicant's Project does not continue the efforts of a previously funded SCBGP project.

- xi. The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (14 Points)**

Spornado trap budget calculation error in travel section.

- xii. The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (14 Points)**

Contractual justification to "include a justification for why contractual/consultant services are to be used to meet the anticipated outcomes and objectives" is missing.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Potato Board

PROJECT NAME: Promoting the Maine potato industry and agriculture at fair venues

DATE: March 25, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).	Pass	
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	2
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	0
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	0
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	5
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	3
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	0
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	1

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Potato Board

PROJECT NAME: Promoting the Maine potato industry and agriculture at fair venues

DATE: March 25, 2024

ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	0
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	0
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	14
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	10
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>35</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Potato Board

PROJECT NAME: Promoting the Maine potato industry and agriculture at fair venues

DATE: March 25, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Pass

The Application outlined a project to improve public knowledge of the Maine potato industry through the Eastern State Exposition and Maine State Fair venues.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Potato Board

PROJECT NAME: Promoting the Maine potato industry and agriculture at fair venues

DATE: March 25, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments:

- ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. (2 Points)**

The Applicant did not submit File 2 and did not use the file name formatting required in the RFA.

- iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. (0 Points)**

The Applicant did not submit File 2, did not provide a response to this RFA section in submitted files.

- iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. (0 Points)**

The Applicant did not submit File 2, did not provide a response to this RFA section in submitted files.

- v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). (5 Points)**

Outcomes and indicators are identified, but the application does not demonstrate how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes and indicators.

- vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. (3 Points)**

Applicant referenced methods of monitoring and data collection but a dissemination plan to share Project results was not clearly referenced or described.

- vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. (0 Points)**

The applicant did not provide a statement to indicate agreement to comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements stated in the RFA.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Potato Board

PROJECT NAME: Promoting the Maine potato industry and agriculture at fair venues

DATE: March 25, 2024

- viii. **The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). (1 Points)**

The Applicant's external support section of file 3 indicates that the industry supports the project but does not articulate details. No letters of support

- ix. **The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. (0 Points)**

The Applicant did not address this in any submitted document and was instructed to address it in File 2 Project Summary.

- x. **The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. (0 Points)**

The Applicant's Project does not continue the efforts of a previously funded SCBGP project.

- xi. **The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. (14 Points)**

Calculation error within the travel section.

- xii. **The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. (10 Points)**

The renovation budget was not completely described within the project narrative and did not describe how it aligned with SCBGP priorities, outcomes, or indicators. The project is limited in explaining how the activities and expenditures will achieve the SCBGP goal of enhancing the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Also SCBGP funds are unallowable for promotional items, swag, gifts, prizes, memorabilia, and souvenirs and these are referenced in the project description (no points were deducted in this section as promotional items were not included in the budget).

STATE OF MAINE TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Federation of Farmer's Markets

PROJECT NAME: Boosting Specialty Crop Sales and Consumption At Farmers' Markets Through the Bumper Crop Gift Certificate Program

DATE: March 22, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

Names of Evaluators: Gus Nelson, Joy Bonenfant, Jane Kirsling, Patrick Madden, George Fox, Brittany Peats

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).		Fail
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	<u>n/a</u>
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	<u>n/a</u>
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	<u>n/a</u>
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	<u>n/a</u>
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	<u>n/a</u>
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	<u>n/a</u>
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	<u>n/a</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Federation of Farmer's Markets

PROJECT NAME: Boosting Specialty Crop Sales and Consumption At Farmers' Markets Through the Bumper Crop Gift Certificate Program

DATE: March 22, 2024

ix.	The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	<u>n/a</u>
x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	<u>n/a</u>
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	<u>n/a</u>
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	<u>n/a</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>n/a</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Federation of Farmer's Markets

PROJECT NAME: Boosting Specialty Crop Sales and Consumption At Farmers' Markets Through the Bumper Crop Gift Certificate Program

DATE: March 22, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: Fail

The Application outlined a plan to promote the organization's existing program. The plan is based on recruiting employers to participate in the existing program and give certificates to consumers to spend at farmer's markets. However, no plan was outlined to ensure that the certificates may only be used to purchase specialty crops. No specific crops or food items were referenced.

The application did not reference "specialty crops" at all in the "Project Purpose" section (5,000 characters available to explain a Project designed to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops).

The proposed "objectives" were not specific to specialty crops and were aligned to the organization and program goals rather than a project goal.

The program description provided no indicator that data could be collected specifically related to specialty crop sales. The applicant described having access to data at only 5 markets, while the program is stated to be available in 50 markets.

Further, the application proposed a survey to identify consumer "behavior change of shopping more often at farmers' markets" rather than a consumer change in specialty crop awareness or spending.

The application proposed using funds to purchase marketing banners to promote the organization's program but not a specialty crop Project.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Maine Federation of Farmer's Markets

PROJECT NAME: Boosting Specialty Crop Sales and Consumption At Farmers' Markets
Through the Bumper Crop Gift Certificate Program

DATE: March 22, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments: n/a application not scored.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Danny A. Thibodeau Farm

PROJECT NAME: Packing Shed and Equipment Line Upgrade

DATE: March 21, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).		Fail
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	<u>n/a</u>
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	<u>n/a</u>
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	<u>n/a</u>
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	<u>n/a</u>
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	<u>n/a</u>
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	<u>n/a</u>
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	<u>n/a</u>
ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	<u>n/a</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Danny A. Thibodeau Farm

PROJECT NAME: Packing Shed and Equipment Line Upgrade

DATE: March 21, 2024

x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	<u>n/a</u>
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	<u>n/a</u>
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	<u>n/a</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>n/a</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Danny A. Thibodeau Farm

PROJECT NAME: Packing Shed and Equipment Line Upgrade

DATE: March 21, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGPP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: This application did not move forward to the RFA Evaluator Team as it was determined ineligible by Department staff.

The Application outlined a request for infrastructure improvement funds for the individual farm's middle of the supply chain packing and equipment needs. The application did not propose activities that were designed to benefit the broader specialty crop industry as a whole rather than a single business or entity.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Danny A. Thibodeau Farm

PROJECT NAME: Packing Shed and Equipment Line Upgrade

DATE: March 21, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments: n/a application not scored.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032
RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
BIDDER: Zak Parson and Parsons Farm LLC
PROJECT NAME: Zak Parsons Farm to Family
DATE: March 21, 2024

SUMMARY PAGE

Department Name: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Name of RFP Coordinator: Michelle Webb

<u>Pass/Fail Criteria</u>	<u>Pass</u>	<u>Fail</u>
Section I. Preliminary Information (Eligibility)		
i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).		Fail
<u>Scoring Sections</u>	<u>Points Available</u>	<u>Points Awarded</u>
ii. The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.	10	<u>n/a</u>
iii. The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.	10	<u>n/a</u>
iv. The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.	10	<u>n/a</u>
v. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).	10	<u>n/a</u>
vi. The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.	10	<u>n/a</u>
vii. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.	5	<u>n/a</u>
viii. The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).	5	<u>n/a</u>
ix. The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.	5	<u>n/a</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Zak Parson and Parsons Farm LLC

PROJECT NAME: Zak Parsons Farm to Family

DATE: March 21, 2024

x.	The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.	5	<u>n/a</u>
xi.	The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.	15	<u>n/a</u>
xii.	The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.	15	<u>n/a</u>
<u>TOTAL</u>		<u>100</u>	<u>n/a</u>

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032
RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
BIDDER: Zak Parson and Parsons Farm LLC
PROJECT NAME: Zak Parsons Farm to Family
DATE: March 21, 2024

**OVERVIEW OF SECTION I
Preliminary Information (Eligibility)**

i. The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Evaluation Team Comments: This application did not move forward to the RFA Evaluator Team as it was determined ineligible by Department staff.

The Application outlined a request for funding for the applicant to grow and showcase the products produced on the applicant's farm. The application did not demonstrate how the proposed activities would enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops and did not demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole rather than a single business or entity.

The application was submitted using incorrect files and did not follow the formatting required in the RFA. The proposed dates did not align with the Project performance period outlined in the RFA.

**STATE OF MAINE
TEAM CONSENSUS EVALUATION NOTES**

RFA#: 202402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

BIDDER: Zak Parson and Parsons Farm LLC

PROJECT NAME: Zak Parsons Farm to Family

DATE: March 21, 2024

**EVALUATION OF SECTION II
Scoring Sections**

Evaluation Team Comments: n/a application not scored.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine- Mitigating the effects of mummy berry on wild blueberry plant health

Date: 3/25/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The application states two Commissioner priorities: “improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity” and “enhance soil and ecosystem health”. Both are clearly articulated.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The application clearly describes how the project seeks to integrate 3 different USDA project strategies: 1) investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes; 2) Pest and disease control; and 3) Sustainability.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The outcomes and indicators are both clearly defined.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The application outlines the challenges wild blueberries growers face and the solutions that have been presented and need more research. There is a clear need for a solution to dealing with mummy berry.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The application meets the requirements. The application demonstrated that specialty crop stakeholders other than people involved in the project support the project.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The application explains that the project is not likely to become self-sustaining because it is a research project. Funds have been requested from the USDA.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Past projects have identified the weather in which fungus can thrive and fertilizers that might be able to help mitigate the various diseases wild blueberries contract. Lessons learned included understanding supply chain disruptions and scheduling of field trials.

The Application budget section does not meet full requirements.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The application meets the requirements.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Annis Mummy Berry

Date: 3-24-24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Positive

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Positive

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Positive

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

No number in 6.4 but it was checked and copied to the narrative section.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Obj. 1, 2 and 3. positive

Obj. 4. New Fungicides Trial. positive

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgment of Support requirements.

Yes! All publications and presentations will acknowledge USDA support for this project.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

4 Letters of Support positive

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

positive

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

This project will expand on knowledge gained from past projects - positive

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Travel to set up, treat and evaluate plant physiological measures and rate disease at Blueberry Hill farm site. Each trip from Orono, ME to Blueberry Hill research farm in Jonesboro, ME is 180 miles round trip. Two trips a week are planned from April through October 2025 for a total of 48 trips.

This math is not correct as stated above. $48 \text{ trips} \times 180 \text{ round trip miles} = 8640 \text{ miles}$ not the 4320 on proposal. Budget ask should be \$4320.00 they ask for \$2,160.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items all allowable.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Annis-Mummy Berry

Date: 3-25-2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Commissioner priorities 2 and 4 are identified. Priority number 4 is referenced because there is a belief that the mummy berry disease will increase in severity along with climate change. The goal of the project is to mitigate the effects of mummy berry disease by analyzing how fertilizer use is related to the disease. The project seems to align more with priority 4 than priority 2.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

USDA Project Strategies 3,5, and 8 are all touched upon in this project. (Strong) The project described seems to align with these three strategies.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcomes 4 and 6.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

There is a clear dissemination plan for the project. Results are going to be presented at extension meetings, research days, and in the yearly report to the Wild Blueberry Advisory Board, as well as other journal articles.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Included in File 3 under the likelihood for them to become self-sustaining section.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Multiple letters of support are included in the application including letters from Wyman's, The Wild Blueberry Commission, and the Passamaquoddy Wild Blueberry Company.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The application describes that it is unlikely that it will ever be able to be self-sustaining without the aid of grant funds. They describe the difficulty of becoming self-sustaining when the project provides research for Maine wild blueberry growers, rather than a service.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Previously funded through SCBGP.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Total Ask: \$99,390 The budget is complete, but the mileage section isn't mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is thoroughly provided for each expense line item. Thoroughly explained.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Annis Mummy Berry Disease

Date: 3/27/24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Positive.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. **Positive.**

improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity ... manage emerging pests and diseases". This project also aligns with the priority to "enhance soil and ecosystem health"

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. **Positive: USDA strategies of 1) investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes; 2) Pest and disease control; and 3) Sustainability. Developing effective fertility treatments that increase plant health but do not affect disease severity increases the sustainability of wild blueberries both in the health of the plants and in the costs to the growers. It also will decrease possible adverse effects on the environment within and around wild blueberry fields. The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). Positive. Survey.**

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. **Positive. Includes, 6.4 Total number of research outputs published to industry publications and/or academic journals, and for each published research output, the: 6.4a Number of views/reads of published research/data**

Analyzed data and helping to prepare year-end reports on presentation to blueberry growers and the public.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine supports and reflects research objectives.
LOS- Wyman's, etc.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Will request fed funding, multi-year project, unlikely to become self-supporting since this is research.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes "While there have been numerous studies on the effect of fertilizer on wild blueberries alone, there has been no studies on how currently used fertilizers affect this disease."

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.
Negative.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Question: Health insurance and grad school credits (13) for grad student?

Reviewer: Patrick Madden

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Annis-Mummy Berry

Date: 3-25-2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Commissioner priorities 2 and 4 are identified. Priority number 4 is referenced because there is a belief that the mummy berry disease will increase in severity along with climate change. The goal of the project is to mitigate the effects of mummy berry disease by analyzing how fertilizer use is related to the disease. The project seems to align more with priority 4 than priority 2.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

USDA Project Strategies 3,5, and 8 are all touched upon in this project. (Strong) The project described seems to align with these three strategies.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcomes 4 and 6.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

There is a clear dissemination plan for the project. Results are going to be presented at extension meetings, research days, and in the yearly report to the Wild Blueberry Advisory Board, as well as other journal articles.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Included in File 3 under the likelihood for them to become self-sustaining section.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Multiple letters of support are included in the application including letters from Wyman's, The Wild Blueberry Commission, and the Passamaquoddy Wild Blueberry Company.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The application describes that it is unlikely that it will ever be able to be self-sustaining without the aid of grant funds. They describe the difficulty of becoming self-sustaining when the project provides research for Maine wild blueberry growers, rather than a service.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Previously funded through SCBGP.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Total Ask: \$99,390 The budget is complete, but the mileage section isn't mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is thoroughly provided for each expense line item. Thoroughly explained.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Annis Mummy Berry

Date: March 26, 2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes – adaptation and soil health

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes – crop research, disease control, sustainability

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes – sharing knowledge gained through research

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Yes

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes – Wymans, Passamaquoddy and Blueberry Commission

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Explains that this is not possible

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes. Have received many grants and the wild blueberry research builds on previous work.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes, well explained.

Reviewer: George Fox

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Annis Mummy Berry

Date:

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes, complete and follows format. Well written proposal.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes, notes 2 Commissioner priorities.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes, notes and describes 2 USDA strategies.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes, clearly defines outcomes and measurement approach.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes, describes dissemination process – research conferences, extension meetings, etc.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Yes, it does.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes, thorough, multiple letters of support are included.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

No.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes, meets this requirement. 6.4?

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – New Tools for Increasing Apple Production Profitability

Date: 3/26/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The files are not correctly labeled.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The application states the Commissioner priority: Improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity, such as through projects that address specialty crop's ability to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change.

The anticipated outcomes are clearly articulated in how they will address the priority area.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The USDA strategy is outlined: Sustainability. It is also described on that will be integrated into the project.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The application meets this requirement.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Data monitoring is unclear. It is clear how data will be collected to measure the outcomes, but it is not clear how the data will be disseminated to a wider audience.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

There is support for this project from several orchards but it is unclear if it benefit those beyond those orchards.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The project outlines that the method is cheap to adapt and could be useful to growers in the future.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

The application meets this requirement.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The application meets the requirements.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Moran - Apples

Date: 3-26-24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

positive

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Commissioner Priority Areas: positive

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

USDA Project Strategies: positive

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Indicator 6.1: 2 research goals accomplished.

pit

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

urvey growers at the Highmoor Farm summer tour July 2025 and in August using an email survey to measure the number that would like to participate

Participating orchards will be visited for sample collection and will be contacted with test results.

email survey in winter 2025 to ask growers if they used the results to decide which apples to store and if it reduced losses to bitter pit.

One grower who participated in the project in 2022 and 2023 reported that "they have had nowhere near the amount of bitter pit they used to".

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgment of Support requirements.

Not found.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

0 Letters of Support

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The self-sustaining potential is high d

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes, New Tools for Increasing Apple Production Profitability

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Moran Apples

Date: 3/27/24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Files are not named correctly.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Positive. One priority area.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Positive. One priority area.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). **Positive.**

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Pre and post-email survey. And visits to orchards.

Growers meeting in July 2025 and newsletter in September 2025.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Well written in the application. No letters of support.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. **Positive.**

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Recruiting three new growers, also using the same orchards, compare sampling times, fruit calcium from sap not from dried peels.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. **Positive.**

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. **Positive.**

Reviewer: Patrick Madden

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Moran Apples

Date: 3-26-2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Commissioner priority #4 indicated. The project focuses on a physiological disorder that occurs in Honeycrisp apples known as “bitter pit”. The disorder is affecting Honeycrisp apples in Maine at an increasing rate as the climate warms. The project aims to give apple producers management tools to deal with the disorder, as well as help them identify when their apples are at risk, so they can sell the at risk apples sooner and get a better yield from their crop.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Two USDA project strategies are identified in the application. (#3 and #8) The project is a two-fold project with the goals being to reduce the occurrence of bitter pit in Honeycrisp apples in Maine and predict which orchards are most at risk of the disorder, so those apples can be sold first. The applicants claim that this research will greatly help the sustainability of the Honeycrisp apple industry in Maine.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcome 6 and Indicators 6.1 – 6.3 are referenced in the application.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The plan is to disseminate the results of the research at Maine potato conferences, field days, extension meetings, and national conferences.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not mentioned in the application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No Letters of Support are included. Support is mentioned from several apple orchards in Maine who grow Honeycrisps.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The applicants list the likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining as high. They site the relatively low cost of the sap analysis, as well as growers likelihood to adopt that analysis into their process.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Previously funded through SCBGP.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is provided for each expense line.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Moran Apples

Date: March 26, 2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes – climate related crop disturbances

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Sustainability

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Research goals, new practices, educating stakeholders

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Results will be summarized and shared with growers at upcoming meetings. Could use more details about this plan.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

NA

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Outlined which orchards are supportive but did not include letters of support.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Once this test is found to be reliable, it is quite inexpensive for farmers to use.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes, many improvements to the study design.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes

Reviewer: George Fox

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Moran Apples

Date:

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes, follows format. Thorough and well written.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes, identifies and describes thoroughly.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes, identifies and describes thoroughly.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes, outcome and indicators clearly identified.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No, does not.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Marginally shows support – notes 3 orchards support.

.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Yes, does explain this.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes, continued funding, and does meet this requirement.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – Maine Produce Safety Improvement and FSMA PSR Education Project

Date: 3/21/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The priority area stated is “Projects that enhance food safety education, primarily in relation to FDA rules regarding improved handling and processing of specialty crops.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

There are two listed project strategies: enhancing food safety and improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcome 3: Increase Food Safety Knowledge and Processes, they have chosen a number of indicators under this outcome.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The project will continue to survey participants at the end of each education workshop and have an end-of-program evaluation to determine the safety changes made and certifications acquired during the project period.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

They have several letters of support from stakeholders and organizations involved in the project.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

They have sought other avenues of funding but for now this is the only source of funding for this particular project.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

MOFGA has had 4 prior contracts of the same project. They have identified areas of growth and learning and how they plan to build upon those areas. Areas of growth include stakeholders at Maine DACF and other stakeholders to build strong relationships with farmers. They propose to streamline their invoicing process with DACF.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The application thoroughly meets the requirements.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – FSMA PSR

Date: 3-22-24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

positive

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Application is complete and adheres to the outline.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

positive

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

integrates the first two listed USDA strategies:

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

positive,

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

positive

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

very positive 8 Letters of Support provided

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

partial

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

positive- this project will build on, and make adjustments to, “Maine Produce Safety Improvement Program (MPSIG)”

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Accurate and mostly complete with the exception of when the activities will occur by the personnel named.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – FSMA PSR

Date: 3/25/24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. **Positive.**

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Positive, food safety education.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. **Positive, food safety education and capacity to distribute.**

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Positive.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

“We make it a condition of the grant award that farms report to us their current food safety certifications and inform us when new safety certifications are obtained. We follow up with all participants and record percentages of food safety improvement measures one year after the start of the project.”

Positive, applicant references 2022 ag census showing growth and professionalizing phase of business. And 2023 survey of 78 Maine farmers selling to processors is profitable.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

7 letters, including U of Me and U of VT.

DACF staff person involved in the project.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Applicant states will keep looking for private grant funds for support.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Positive, will change timelines, putting farmer SOPs online to create a library, work with Lindsay Wagner, improve invoice reimbursement process.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Positive.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Positive.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – FSMA-PSR

Date: 3-22-24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Priority #1 is identified (projects that enhance food safety education, primarily in relation to FDA rules regarding improved handling and processing of specialty crops). The project aims to increase the number of farms who make food safety improvements. They plan to achieve this through technical and financial assistance, educational trainings, and demonstrations etc.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The first two USDA project strategies were identified. Trainings are going to be targeted to farmers, packers, and processors. ** specifically mention complying with the Food Safety Modernization Act.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcome 1 Indicators 3.1 – 3.5. Surveys will be used as the primary data collection method for the project.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Surveys will be used for data collection. Also, they will ask that partner farms inform them as they obtain new food safety certifications.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not mentioned in the application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Multiple letters of support from farmers, as well as DACF, UMaine and University of Vermont professionals are included in the application.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

They are honest about the fact that they will likely rely on grant funding in the coming years, as it is difficult to make the project self-sustaining. They do have a line that they will seek ways to make the project more self-sustaining, but it is not apparent how that would entirely happen at this point.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Previously funded through SCBGP. This project builds on the Maine Produce Safety Improvement Program.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section is thoroughly complete, and the math is broken down in the table as well as the justification at the end.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification for each expense line is thorough and complete.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – FSMA PSR

Date: March 22, 2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this

requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes – food safety

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes – food safety

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The bulk of their project is around education dissemination. They will collect surveys to measure knowledge of participants

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

NA

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Have applied to other grants. Are advocating for state funding

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes. Earlier in the year, share resources, improve administrative processes, expanded funding amount, include FDA content, building relationships

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Will all the grants go to only specialty crop farmers?

Reviewer: George Fox

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – FSMA PSR

Date:

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Clearly defines outcomes and indicators.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Defines how data will be collected but not how it will be communicated with stakeholders.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes, many.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

No, it does not.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Creating a Maine Garlic Integrated Pest Management Program

Date: 3/26/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The application clearly articulates the Commissioner priority area: Projects that improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity, such as through projects that detect and manage emerging pests and diseases.

The application clearly describes how the outcomes will be achieved.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The application clearly describes how the project will integrate a USDA project strategy: Pest and disease control; Sustainability

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The application meets the requirements.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

There is no mention of how data will be monitored. There is no information on how the results of the survey will be disseminated.

Is this a program or a project? It seems heavy on the program side.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

A LOS from a stakeholder is included that includes a high volume of vegetable growers and producers.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

There is a mention of program versus project. The application addresses how the program could become sustainable after teaching producers about the technology and buying it themselves.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. The application meets the requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The application meets the requirements.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Ginakes Garlic

Date: 3-25-24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

positive

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined.- partially

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Commissioner Priority Areas: yes

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Two USDA project strategies are directly integrated into this proposal.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Positive

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

1 letter of support

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

This project is not a continuation of a previous project.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

First time application for this project.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budget items all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Ginakes Garlic

Date: 3/27/24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Positive.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. **Positive:**

Commissioner Priority Areas: Projects that improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity, such as through projects that detect and manage emerging pests and diseases.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. **Positive: USDA Project Strategies: Pest and disease control; Sustainability.** Two project strategies are directly integrated into this proposal. First, it involves the creation of an IPM program to mitigate insect pest and disease control in garlic. Second, it will enhance the environmental and financial sustainability of vegetable farm by providing high-quality data to inform management decisions like pesticide applications. This will reduce crop losses to pests, and potentially reduce pesticide use.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). **Positive.**

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. **At the end of each growing season, the final two**

newsletters will include a survey asking participants to evaluate the program. Specific questions will assess whether scouting, pest management, and NEWA forecasts were implemented (to collect data for Indicator 4.2), and whether the project enabled growers enhance or maintain their garlic pest management (to collect data for Indicator 4.5) such that garlic crop losses to pests were reduced (to collect data for Indicator 4.5a).

Disseminate pertinent IPM information to garlic producers via newsletters, at grower meetings, and through Extension resources. Under objectives.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. **Negative: only Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association.**

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). **Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association Sites 250 producers are subscribe to similar berry and sweet corn IPM programs.**

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. **Addressed but not pertinent according to applicant.**

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. **n/a**

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. **Positive.**

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. **NACAA AM/PIC conf expenses in Denver, CO.**

Reviewer: Patrick Madden

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Ginakes Garlic

Date: 3-26-2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Commissioner priority area # 4 identified on the application. The project seeks to provide garlic farmers with pest problem awareness and management guidance on how to deal with these pests. Certain pests are becoming more of a problem on garlic crops, as climate change allows pests to push farther north.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

USDA Project Strategies # 5 and 8 are identified. The project aims to mitigate pest and disease control in garlic by providing management recommendations to farmers who grow garlic.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcome 4 and indicators 4.2 and 4.5 are identified on the application.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Produce surveys will be given out where participants can state whether they used the information from the newsletters in their operations and if it aided in the mitigation of pests on their garlic crops. Their dissemination plan includes a newsletter to producers.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not mentioned anywhere in the application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The project states that they have support from the Maine Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Association. They mention a letter of support from the Association, but it doesn't seem to be included in the application? They also reference the consistent support from all vegetable growers in researching management strategies in dealing with climate change related pests.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The application does explain how the project is likely to become self-sustaining, however they do describe how the additional weather stations could potentially decrease the need for field scouting, therefore reducing costs to growers.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Not previously funded by SCBGP.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section is complete and is mathematically correct. Total ask is \$54,849.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is provided for each expense line item.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Ginakes Garlic

Date: March 26, 2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Over on word count

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes – climate resilience

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes, pest and sustainability

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes – producer adoption. Why not research findings?

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes – newsletters and surveys. Collection is less clear.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

NA

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Yes, likely not self sustaining but some producers may get involved in collecting some data.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

NA

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes. More thorough explanation of the benefits of the conference in Colorado would be helpful.

Reviewer: George Fox

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Ginakes Garlin

Date:

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes, follows format and is well written and thorough.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes, identifies a priority and describes how it will be addressed.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes, identifies a strategy and describes how it will be addressed.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes, both outcome and indicator is identified.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes, one LOS included.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Yes, somewhat.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

No, not a continuation.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling
Applicant: North Spore, LLC
Date: 3/25/2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The project priority is: Projects that improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity...”.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The project’s USDA strategy is Sustainability. The project clearly describes how this will be achieved.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The application clearly describes the indicators and outcomes in both File #2 and File #3.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The project modules will be offered free online and this is expected to help sustain the project after it is completed. Letters of support were offered but from partners. The letters of support offer more justification of how the results will be disseminated.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The modules will be available indefinitely as a resource to farmers.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. The application meets the requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The application meets the requirements.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant
Applicant: North Spore, LLC
Date: 3-24-24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

positive

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Application is complete.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

This project will incorporate the priority for: "Projects that improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity..."

This project will incorporate this priority by educating farmers on how to grow the specialty crop of mushrooms on their farms,

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes USDA Project
Strategy of Sustainability.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

yes. focus measurable outcome will be to improve the environment

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

yes

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

2 Letters of Support

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

No the Application reads N/A.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Entire budget is personnel and fringe, hourly rates range from \$24 to 29.81 per hour (all seem reasonable to me).

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson
Applicant: North Spore, LLC
Date: 3/25/24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Positive.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Positive.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Positive, sustainability.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

7.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Digital traffic, initial and follow-up surveys, pop-up surveys, paper for in-person event.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

U of ME and MOFGA letters attached and referenced in application File 2.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Best practices of sustainability. Videos stay online. Educate cultivators so farms are more sustainable.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

n/a

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Positive.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. Positive.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden
Applicant: North Spore, LLC
Date: 3-25-2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Commissioner priority #4 was selected. The project aims to encourage farms to grow more mushrooms, as they can be grown in underutilized areas and can increase soil health. North Spore argues that an increase in the growing of mushrooms on farms will make the farms more climate impact resistant.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The USDA Project Strategy of sustainability is identified in the project. North Spore makes the claim that mushrooms can diversify a farmer's crop. They also thrive in wet years and can increase soil health by breaking down organic matter, therefore benefitting every crop that is grown on the farm. Minimal water needs to be used to harvest the mushrooms, making them a more sustainable choice.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcome 7, Indicators 7.1-7.5 Measure digital traffic and surveys.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

North Spore plans to track digital traffic to their online education modules and conduct surveys of consumers of those modules, as well as participants of in-person events. Dissemination plan includes a training module available online.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not mentioned in the application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Letters of Support included from the UMaine Cooperative Extension and MOFGA.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

North Spore did not include how they plan for the project to become self-sustaining. That section of the application was left blank. They plan for the videos to stay online forever; therefore they won't need more funding in the future.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Not previously funded through SCBGP.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is provided thoroughly for each expense line.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats
Applicant: North Spore, LLC
Date: March 22, 2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Some seem to go above the word limit

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes. Farms can diversify by growing mushrooms

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Videos will live online

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

This is a one time project and doesn't need to be sustained

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

NA

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes. Surprising that the videographer will be employed for a full year.

Reviewer: George Fox
Applicant: North Spore, LLC
Date:
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes, complete and through, follows appropriate format.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes, thorough explanation.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes, very thorough explanation.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Clearly defined how outcome and indicators will be tracked.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Clearly defined how outcome and indicators will be tracked, did not explain how this info will be shared with stakeholders.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Did not.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Only included LOS from other project participants.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Did not.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Connecting Better Wild Blueberry Nutrients for Improved Pollination, Pollinator Health, and Pest Management

Date: 3/26/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

An additional case was added to the list of litigation in this RFA application.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Four priority areas are listed: “improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity...manage emerging pests and diseases”, “enhance soil health and ecosystem health” and supporting of long term farm business vitality and productivity.”

Listed priorities do not fully explain the outcomes and indicators.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Three strategies are listed: 1) investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes; 2) Pest and disease control; and 3) Sustainability.

The application clearly describes how the project seeks to integrate these strategies.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Dissemination is clearly outlined. Data monitoring is not mentioned.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Wild Blueberry industry support is indicated in the letters of support.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The project has no plans to become self-sustaining.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

2022 project partially finished. The project assesses different endpoints from the previous work. The previous work identified key methodology in the timing of when foliar calcium in the crop year should be applied. Noted that there were not significant results in 2022's trial. Lessons learned: In past studies of foliar fertilizers, a true untreated control was used, which did not control for water applied as a carrier solution for the foliar fertilizers.

How lessons will be applied: In the current experiments we have now incorporated this procedural control. Thus, any impacts of the increase in water applied to the leaves on increased plant growth will be accounted for. Instead of a 'no application' control, this study will include a water-only control.

Additionally, experiments in this proposal will have a 3 ft alleyway between plots that will be incorporated in order to reduce foot traffic inside research plots.

Finally, we will use plots that are 6' x 30' in order to include multiple plants in each treatment and conduct 6-8 replicates per treatments.

Due to the variable responses of plants to treatments, large plot sizes and multiple replicates are required per treatment.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.
The application meets the requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.
The application meets requirements.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Fanning - Blueberries

Date: 3-26-24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Positive

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

positive

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

postive

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

6.4 no number on 6.4 on file 2 but 3 publications on file 3

Outcome 4: Improve Pest and Disease Control Processes

4.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about science-based tools to combat pests and diseases _250__.

Outcome 6: Expand Specialty Crop Research and Development

6.3 Number of industry representatives and other stakeholders who engaged with research results __250__.

6.4 Total number of research outputs published to industry publications and/or academic journals

For each published research output, the:

6.4a Number of views/reads of published research/data _100__.

Obj. 1- At Blueberry Hill Research Farm, a replicated field trial with six replicates per treatment in a randomized complete block design with Ca and B treatments and controls are contained. Each plot is 6' x 30' to include multiple plants in each treatment. Product applications will be applied in the late summer/Fall. As fruit buds are developing, we will apply combinations of commercially available formulations of Ca and B at labeled rates and conduct an untreated control and water control. Then, stems will be collected during bloom, and pollen extracted for in vivo growth assays at multiple temperatures, including extreme temperatures. Field pollination assessments with 3 treatments (bagged, open, and hand-pollinated) will be conducted to assess the effects of treatment on pollination. Plants within each treatment will be caged, and *Osmia* bees introduced to collect pollen and rear offspring; an assessment will be made on the resulting bees' health and the pollen's nutrition. The effect of treatment on concentrations of Ca and B will be assessed in foliar samples.

Obj. 2- In the crop year, a replicated field trial will be conducted as described in Obj. 1, multiple treatments will be tested, and fruit firmness and fruit infestation by fruit flies will be assessed within each treatment replicate.

Obj. 3- Partial budgets analyze revenues relative to costs that pertain to just Ca and B treatments. This will be conducted on nine budget models to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of micro-nutrient fertilization within a whole-farm budget. With sufficient data, we will use @Risk from Palisades to quantify the agricultural risk of using micro-nutrient fertilization relative to a baseline.

Results and recommendations for growers will be presented at extension meetings, research days, and other meetings, in the yearly report to the Wild Blueberry Advisory Board, and in journal articles. The number of copies of publications requested and website visits be tracked.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Dissemination Plan and Data Collection Methods

The results of this project will be presented to wild blueberry growers at the annual Wild Blueberry Conference and the annual Summer Field Day held at the Maine Agricultural and

Forest Experiment field station Blueberry Hill Farm. A factsheet will be created, and an additional update will be posted on our website and available in print. New factsheets and study findings will also be disseminated to growers via the bi-monthly Blueberry Newsletter, which reaches 300 growers and 700 total. The number of events and publications will be tracked, and at events and for all publications and factsheets, we will track the number of attendees, requests for the annual report, and visits to the website and factsheets on the Wild Blueberry website.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

3 Letters of Support

Maine's 512 wild blueberry growers are the beneficiaries and external specialty crop stakeholders supporting this project. This work applies to wild blueberry growers at multiple scales here in Maine. Small farmers (through the commission's endorsement) and large companies in Maine support this project (see LOS from Wyman's and the Wild Blueberry Commission). This group and other growers were engaged in identifying the problems to be solved in this project and strongly supported the objectives described. These growers will also provide feedback on management recommendations generated by this project. The price and challenges outlined in this proposal have placed growers under great pressure to enhance resource use efficiency to lower production costs and reduce revenue loss. Thus, a key objective of this proposal will be to conduct a cost-benefit analysis with Dr. Aaron K. Hoshide (see LOC). The results of this project will enable Maine wild blueberry growers to manage costs better and stay competitive in this current market and under the changing climate. This research supports the following priorities adopted by the advisory board in 2024-2025: 1. Evaluate the cost-effectiveness of foliar applied liquid versus granular fertilizers and develop recommendations; 2. Develop improved and updated pollinator stocking recommendations that consider colony size and include the cost-effectiveness of pollination options. 3. Deliver clear, concise, and easily adaptable research results.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

This research will generate new management practices and tools to mitigate the negative effects of the quickly changing climate on pollination, plant health, and the impact of invasive species. Additionally, it will help the wild blueberry industry in Maine take steps toward sustainability. Our research is disseminated into growers' hands annually and in multiple forms for all learning types. While our research and education will always need funding, the knowledge gained is always given to growers to use. Additionally, the data of some parts of this research project will be used by Postdoctoral student Jeanna Walters in a future USDA NIFA Postdoctoral Fellowship application.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed

Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

The 2022 project titled: Exploring Fertilizers, Soil Amendments, and Pollination as Tools to Improve Wild Blueberry Resilience to Warming had a component looking at the effects Ca applied in the crop year on plant physiology and some measures on fruit quality and firmness. Additionally, we looked at pollination in the climate chambers that have been previously used to look at the impacts of warming on plant physiology. This project builds on our previous efforts to assess the effects of Calcium in the crop year, which identified key methodology in the timing of when foliar calcium in the crop year should be applied. This project assesses different endpoints than the previous work; here the focus for the trials on calcium applications in the crop year will focus on increased firmness of the cuticle and reducing infestation by spotted-wing drosophila. No other overlap occurs between the two projects.

Focused on the crop year applications of calcium which is relevant to this proposal; contradictory physiological and morphological performances were observed in the trial for the 2022 SCBG, where most treatments did not have significant effects compared to the control. However, these trials did show that two treatments of calcium at the F5 crop stage and Green Fruit stage had significantly firmer skin than the other two treatments applied singularly at the same intervals, suggesting that two applications at this crop stage may be needed to increase the berry firmness.

In past studies of foliar fertilizers, a true untreated control was used, which did not control for water applied as a carrier solution for the foliar fertilizers.

Due to the variable responses of plants to treatments, large plot sizes and multiple replicates are required per treatment.

In the current experiments we have now incorporated this procedural control. Thus, any impacts of the increase in water applied to the leaves on increased plant growth will be accounted for. Instead of a 'no application' control, this study will include a water only control.

Additionally, experiments in this proposal will have a 3 ft alleyway between plots that will be incorporated in order to reduce foot traffic inside research plots.

Finally, we will use plots that are 6' x 30' in order to include multiple plants in each treatment and conduct 6-8 replicates per treatments.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Interdepartmental Services, Blueberry Hill Research Farm Acreage	\$3,700.00	1.5	04/01/2025	\$5,500.00
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This adds up to \$5,550.00 not \$5,500.00.

Approx when activities will occur is not included in Personnel Justification.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budget items all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Fanning Wild Blueberry

Date: 3/27/24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Positive.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Positive.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Positive.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). **Positive. Issues with six, though.**

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. **Positive: Dissemination plan: “The results of this project will be presented to wild blueberry growers at the annual Wild Blueberry Conference and the annual Summer Field Day held at the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment field station Blueberry Hill Farm. A factsheet will be created, and an additional update will be posted on our website and available in print. New factsheets and study findings will also be disseminated to growers via the bi-monthly Blueberry Newsletter, which reaches 300 growers and 700 total. The number of events and publications will be tracked, and at events and for all publications and factsheets, we will track the number of attendees, requests for the annual report, and visits to the website and factsheets on the Wild Blueberry website.”**

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. **Positive.**

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). **Positive.**

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. **Positive, explained will always need support for industry.**

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. **Positive.**

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. **Positive. One small mistake.**

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. **Positive.**

Reviewer: Patrick Madden

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Fanning Wild Blueberry

Date: 3-26-2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Commissioner priority areas #2 and #4 are identified on the application. The project will investigate the role of plant nutrients for low bush blueberries in order to determine the best strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change on the crop.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Three USDA Project Strategies are identified in the application. (3, 5, and 8) The project seems to align most closely with priority #3, as the entire project is based on research of a specialty crop (blueberries) and how the changing climate is affecting that crop.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcomes 4 and 6 are identified in the application, with indicators 4.1, 6.3, and 6.4 referenced.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Clear dissemination plan. (Strong) The project is going to be presented to blueberry growers at the Wild Blueberry Conference and the Summer Field Day at the Maine Agricultural and Forest Experiment field station. A factsheet will also be posted to their website. Attendees to the events and website data will all be tracked.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Acknowledgement of Support not included in the application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Multiple letters of support are attached from Wyman's, as well as multiple UMaine professors who specialize in agricultural entomology and sustainable agriculture.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The application describes that the research efforts will always need grant funding, as there is no way for the project to become self-sustaining.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Previously funded by SCBGP in 2022.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section is thoroughly complete. The total ask for the project is \$99,457. One \$50 mathematical error.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

A thorough justification is provided for each expense section in the budget.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Fanning Wild Blueberries

Date: March 26, 2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Over on the word count

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes – crop research, pest control, sustainability

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes. Very clear dissemination plan. Less information about data collection. Will spray a new formula on blueberries and measure the impact on winter injury and pollination, germination, growth of pollen tubes, cuticle. Create recommendations for growers.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Explains that they will always need funding for research

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes. Have stated learning around water application and spacing of plants.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes

Reviewer: George Fox

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Fanning Wild Blueberry

Date:

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes, complete and well written.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes. Identifies and thoroughly describes how it will address.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes, identifies 3 USDA strategies.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes, identifies 2 outcomes with indicators.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No, does not.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes, multiple well written LOS's are included.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Yes, it does.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes, and meets these requirements.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Increasing potato production and soilborne disease suppression by organic soil amendment and biocontrol organisms

Date: 3/26/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area

Two Commissioner priorities are stated: 1) The project enhances soil and ecosystem health through several mechanisms and 2.)The project enhances the resilience of potato crops to climate-related stresses, thereby supporting the long-term vitality and productivity of farm businesses. Each are clearly articulated.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The application states two USDA project strategies and how they will be integrated: pest and disease control and sustainability.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The application meets these requirements.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

There is no plan on how to monitor the data.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The application adequately describes stakeholders who support the project. There is mention of federal funding agencies showing interest. Further elaboration is needed on this.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The application describes the potential for commercial success.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. The application meets requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. Some of the travel expenses need to be double checked. Descriptions of the needs of the costs were missing.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Jin Potato Prod

Date: 3-25-24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

This project tackles the persistent challenge of soilborne diseases in potato production, aiming to develop sustainable solutions that benefit the broader potato industry. Soilborne pathogens like *Verticillium dahliae* and *Rhizoctonia solani* pose significant threats to plant health and yield. Current management methods often rely on synthetic pesticides, which can have adverse impacts on soil and ecosystem health. To address these challenges, this project focuses on converting waste lobster shells into organic soil amendments through a sequential green subcritical water processing method. Additionally, the project integrates chitinolytic microorganism and test their synergistic effects on pathogen suppression, soil microorganism community health improvement, and potato production. These innovative approaches not only benefit individual farm businesses but also contribute to the broader potato industry by fostering sustainability and resilience. Ultimately, by promoting environmentally friendly practices and mitigating the impact of soilborne diseases, this project supports the long-term viability and productivity of the potato industry as a whole. The Maine potato industry, supported by key growers (please see supporting letters), strongly supports this project for its potential in disease management. Maine growers have been proactive in adopting soil amendments like compost and are now exploring the use of waste lobster shells. Rich in chitin and minerals, lobster shells, coupled with chitinolytic strains, offer promise in balancing soil microorganisms, promoting soil health, and enhancing ecosystem sustainability. Leveraging lobster waste aligns with Maine's agricultural and lobster industries, presenting an opportunity for resource repurposing and industry collaboration. The Maine Lobster Institute also supports the project (please see supporting letter), acknowledging its environmental and economic significance in lobster waste disposal. The project's likelihood of achieving self-sustainability is high due to several key factors. Firstly, the investigators possess proven expertise in sustainable waste processing, soil health, and microbial communities, laying a strong foundation for success. Secondly, established relationships with stakeholders, including the potato industry, federal funding agencies, and food and chemical companies demonstrate external recognition and support for the project. Thirdly, several potato growers have expressed interest in the project, highlighting its commercialization potential. Furthermore, the investigators have collaborated closely with Janet Yancey-Wrona, the Technology Business Development Manager at the University of Maine, to explore potential patents. Together, these factors position the project for long-term sustainability, supported by expertise, partnerships, commercialization opportunities, and continued funding prospects. Although this is the first time the principal investigator (PI) submits a proposal to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP), the co-PI's previous experience with SCBG funded projects is invaluable. The lessons learned from prior projects, particularly those focusing on plant disease management and bio-degradation of fumigants, serve as a foundation for the current study. By leveraging insights gained from past SCBGP

projects, the project team can optimize experimental design, streamline implementation, and maximize the impact of the current project on the broader specialty crop industry. This iterative approach ensures that the new project application builds upon the success of previous SCBGP-funded initiatives, ultimately amplifying the positive outcomes and benefits for potato producers in Maine and nationwide.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Our project aligns well with two commissioner priorities.

1) The project enhances soil and ecosystem health through several mechanisms. By repurposing waste lobster shells into organic soil amendments through a green subcritical water fractionation process, the project promotes sustainable waste management practices and reduces reliance on synthetic chemicals. These amendments, enriched with chitin and minerals, not only suppress soilborne diseases but also foster a conducive environment for beneficial soil microorganisms, thereby enhancing soil biodiversity and resilience. Furthermore, the incorporation of *Bacillus velezensis* BAC03 as a biocontrol agent contributes to soil and ecosystem health by selectively targeting soilborne pathogens, preserving beneficial microbial communities, while minimizing environmental impact. The integrated approach helps maintain a balanced soil microbiome, which is essential for sustaining healthy ecosystems and supporting long-term agricultural productivity.

2) The project enhances the resilience of potato crops to climate-related stresses, thereby supporting the long-term vitality and productivity of farm businesses. By improving soil health, mitigating pests and diseases, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices, this project plays an important role in enhancing the overall vitality and productivity of potato farm businesses. Furthermore, the utilization of organic amendments derived from waste lobster shells facilitates carbon sequestration in soil, effectively reducing atmospheric greenhouse gas emissions, and ensuring the sustainability and resilience of potato production in the face of climate change pressures. Overall, the project integrates multiple strategies to enhance soil and ecosystem health while addressing the challenges posed by climate change in agriculture.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The project will integrate **two** USDA project strategies including **pest and disease control** and **sustainability**. By developing organic soil amendments from waste lobster shells and incorporating a chitinolytic strain into the soil, the project aims to suppress soilborne diseases such as Verticillium wilt and black scurf in potato production. These organic amendments promote a balanced microbial ecosystem in the soil, reducing the prevalence of pathogens while enhancing the natural defense mechanisms of the crop. Additionally, the integration of *Bacillus velezensis* BAC03 as a biocontrol agent further contributes to disease management by selectively targeting harmful pathogens without disrupting beneficial microbial communities. Furthermore, the project promotes sustainability by repurposing waste materials from the lobster industry, thereby reducing environmental impact and resource inefficiency.

Lobster shells, rich in chitin and minerals, offer a valuable resource for enhancing soil health and fertility without relying on synthetic chemical inputs. By diverting lobster shell waste from landfills and incorporating it into agricultural practices, the project contributes to the circular economy and fosters a more sustainable approach to potato production. Moreover, the project's emphasis on eco-friendly processing techniques to obtain organic soil amendments and biological control microorganisms align with broader sustainability goals within the potato industry, promoting environmental stewardship and resource conservation on a larger scale. Overall, the project offers a holistic approach to pest and disease control that prioritizes sustainability, resilience, and long-term viability in potato production.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

- **Outcome 4, Indicator 1.** Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about science-based tools to combat pests and diseases 50.
 - **Justification:** At the annual in-person meetings, the PI and Co-PI will give presentations on the projects. Frequent communications have been established. Growers would call for additional information.
- **Outcome 4, Indicator 2.** Number of stakeholders that adopted pest and disease control best practices, technologies, or innovations 50.
 - **Justification:** Number of attendees, demographic composition of participants, and evaluation of the presentation will be collected through a paper-based survey.
- **Outcome 4, Indicator 5.** Total number of producers/processors that enhanced or maintained pest and disease control practices 3. Of those, the number that reported:
 - a Reduction in product lost to pest and diseases 3.
 - b Improved crop quality 3.
 - d Reduction in pesticide use 2.
 - **Justification:** Total number of producers/processors that enhanced or maintained pest and disease control practices will be collected through phone calls and personal interview helped by Bee Chim, a specialist at the University of Maine Cooperative Extension.
- **Outcome 6, Indicator 1.** Number of research goals accomplished 3.
 - **Justification:** Number of research goals accomplished will be reported by evaluating the results in the end of the term.
- **Outcome 6, Indicator 4.** Total number of research outputs published to industry publications and/or academic journals 5. For each published research output, the:
 - a Number of views/reads of published research/data 50.
 - b Number of citations counted 30.
 - **Justification:** Total number of research outputs published to industry publications and/or academic journals will be reported by tracking on the corresponding publishing platforms.
- **Outcome 7, Indicator 1.** Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies 100.
 - **Justification:** The data will be collected at the annual meeting in the social events.
- **Outcome 7, Indicator 2.** Number of stakeholders reported with an intent to adopt environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies 30.
 - **Justification:** The data will be collected at the annual meeting in the social events.

- **Outcome 7, Indicator 5.** Number of additional acres managed with sustainable practices, tools, or technologies that focused on:
 - b Soil health _500__.
 - c Biodiversity _300__.
 - **Justification:** This data will be collected through the Maine Potato Board.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Original data will be collected from the project and stored in electronic way at the University of Maine database. Partial results will be contributed to graduate student's thesis. The results will also be presented at field days, annual conferences for Maine potato growers and allied industry, and online extension articles. Research papers will be published in peer-reviewed journals. There are 2 winter meetings, including Maine Potato Production meeting and Potato Pest Management Conference each year. Around 100 people attend each meeting. We will deliver the research results to one of the meetings. In addition, PI and Co-PI will work with the Maine Potato Board meeting organizers and University of Maine Cooperative Extension scientists for data collection.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

3 Letters of Support

The Maine potato industry, represented by key growers, strongly supports this project due to its potential to address critical challenges in disease management for potato production (please see the supporting letters). Over the years, Maine potato growers and industries have been proactive in adopting soil amendments such as compost serving as fertilizer. Recently, there has been growing interest in utilizing waste lobster shells as soil amendment for soilborne disease suppression. Lobster shells is rich in chitin and minerals, and by incorporating chitinolytic strains, it holds a great potential to enhance soil microorganism balance, promote soil health, and bolster ecosystem sustainability. This newfound interest in leveraging waste lobster shells stems from Maine's unique position as a state with flourishing agricultural production alongside a prosperous lobster industry. The incorporation of lobster processing waste as a soil amendment not only presents an opportunity to repurpose valuable resources but also fosters collaboration between these two vital industries. Additionally, the Maine Lobster Institute lends its support to the project, recognizing the significant environmental and economic implications of lobster shell waste disposal (please see the supporting letter).

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The project's potential for self-sustainability is promising due to several key factors. Firstly, the investigators boast a proven track record and profound interest in sustainable waste processing, soil health, and microbial communities within potato production systems. Their extensive expertise provides a

robust foundation for success. Secondly, the project has garnered support from stakeholders, including the potato industry, federal funding agencies, and food companies, indicating external recognition and interest in the research topics. Thirdly, the prospect of additional grant funding suggests ongoing interest and investment, bolstering the project's credibility and relevance. Moreover, several potato growers have expressed keen interest in the project, highlighting its commercialization potential. Furthermore, the investigators have closely collaborated with Janet Yancey-Wrona, the Technology Business Development Manager for the Office of Strategic Partnerships, Innovation, Resources and Engagement (SPIRE) at the University of Maine, to explore potential patents. Collectively, these factors position the project favorably for long-term sustainability, supported by expertise, partnerships, commercialization opportunities, and continued funding prospects.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

First time application for this project.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Budget is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Jin Potato Production

Date: 3/27/24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. **Positive.**

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Two priorities listed.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Positive.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). **Positive.**

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops. **"The results will also be presented at field days, annual conferences for Maine potato growers and allied industry, and online extension articles. Research papers will be published in peer-reviewed journals. There are 2 winter meetings, including Maine Potato Production meeting and Potato Pest Management Conference each year. Around 100 people attend each meeting. We will deliver the research results to one of the meetings. In addition, PI and Co-PI will work with the Maine Potato Board meeting organizers and University of Maine Cooperative Extension scientists for data collection."**

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements. **Positive. Sustainability.**

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged). “Under sustainability section: Secondly, the project has garnered support from stakeholders, including the potato industry, federal funding agencies, and food companies, indicating external recognition and interest in the research topics.”
LOS from Lobster institute and two farmers.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds. Addressed in Project Summary – proven expertise, established relationships, several potato growers have expressed interest in the project highlighting its commercialization potential.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. n/a

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.
Positive.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. Positive.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Jin Potato Production

Date: 3-26-2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Two Commissioner Priorities are highlighted in the application. (#2 and #4) Priority #2 does seem to clearly align with the project mentioned in the application. The project will repurpose lobster shells and turn it into organic soil which will enhance the biodiversity and resilience of the soil. (Strong)

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Two USDA Project Strategies are highlighted. (#5 and #8) The project hopes to reduce soilborne diseases, such as Verticillium wilt and black scurf in potato production with the addition of the waste lobster shells to the soil. They address the sustainability strategy through the repurposing of lobster shells, which would otherwise go to the landfill. The lobster shells are also an organic soil amendment.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcomes 4, 6, and 7 are highlighted along with indicators 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 6.1, 6.4, 7.1, 7.2, and 7.5. Project data will be stored electronically in the UMaine database.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Results will be disseminated at field days, annual conferences for Maine potato growers, and through various articles. Research papers will also be published explaining the results of the project.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not mentioned in the application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Letters of Support are included. They claim that the project has widespread support not only from potato farmers, but also the Maine Lobster Institute.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The application states that the project potential for the project to become self-sustaining is promising. They state the support from stakeholders and the prospect of additional funding as the reasons the project could become self-sustaining in the future.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Not previously funded by SCBGP.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Each expense line is justified.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Jin Potato Production

Date: March 26, 2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes. Soil health, resilience

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes. Pest control and sustainability. Cool use of waste products in the food system

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Many outcomes – research, gaining knowledge, improved pest management

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes. Disseminate at conferences

Why do they think this will work? It contains certain beneficial ingredients.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

NA

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes. Both potato growers and the lobster industry

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Somewhat. Patents

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Co-PI has been involved and have learned from that experience.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

% FTE of PI and Co PI were confusing

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Reviewer: George Fox

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Jin Potato Production

Date:

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes, thorough and well written. Adheres to required format.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes, identifies two priorities.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes, identifies two strategies.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes, identified and thoroughly explained.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes. Multiple, well written LOS's

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Yes, thoroughly.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

No, not a continuation.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine- Succession Planting for Locally Grown Cut Flowers

Date: 3/26/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The project meets the stated requirements. Commissioner priority is stated and clearly explained: projects that improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

This project supports the USDA Project Strategies of 1) investing in specialty crop research and 2) improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems. The outcomes and indicators are defined in both files #2 and #3.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

It is not mentioned in the application how data will be monitored.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The application meets the requirements.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The application addresses that they will seek other income sources but does not have a clear plan for becoming self-sustaining.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The application meets the requirements.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Burnett Cut Flowers

Date: 3-24-24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Our warming climate and dramatic weather changes make it challenging to schedule planting for cut flowers. Successional planting is a grower practice to stagger early season planting times to extend the late-season harvest for a high-value crop with a narrow harvest window. In a survey, twenty-one Maine cut flower growers identified successional planting as a high priority. We will develop and validate successional planting approaches to annual cut flowers in order to inform the development of models that extend harvest windows. This project will generate crop-specific information on successional planting for day-neutral cultivars of sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*), stock (*Matthiola incana*), and snapdragons (*Antirrhinum majus*); growers identified these crops as high priorities. We will model how these plants flower in response to thermal accumulation using growing degree days. Thermal accumulation is used to model floral and fruit timing for fruit crops, but it is not well understood for cut flowers. By drawing from plant phenology tools, we aim to produce adaptive recommendations applicable to growers of these crops in diverse regions of Maine. Since these tools are based on phenological cues and degree days, rather than calendar date, they would be useful in warmer and cooler years. In year one, we will plant sunflowers, stock, and snapdragons at least three different times during the early season. We will determine peak harvest time for each crop and model how it corresponds to both phenological cues at planting and degree days at harvest. After developing successional planting guidelines, we will plant these three crops in Orono and at least one other site to test the model in areas with different USDA hardiness zones and climates in year two. Results will provide technical support to specialty crop growers seeking to implement climate-responsive production scheduling.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Application is complete and adheres to format outlined.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

This project supports the Commissioner Priority Area of **projects that improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity**. Cut flower growers in Maine produce a variety of crops with different production requirements and schedules, and they are at the mercy of high year-to-

year variation in weather. We aim to develop a climate-responsive method for cut flower growers using successional planting to broaden the harvest window for annual specialty crops. It is a challenge to identify appropriate planting times to meet seasonal yield goals. Successional planting can aid growers who seek to extend harvest and marketing seasons for high value annual crops. However, different crops have different schedules and growers in different parts of Maine produce crops under diverse seasonal weather that is subject to year-to-year variation. Through field research, we will make recommendations for successional timing of three cut flower crops under 2025 weather conditions in Orono, ME, and through phenological modeling we will develop climate-adaptive recommendations for successional planting with broad utility across Maine's landscape. We will construct successional guidelines using local phenological events or growing degree day models generated from field data. By validating dynamic crop models in Orono and at least one other site in a second year, we aim to demonstrate the predictive value of adaptive modeling to inform successional planting in field-grown specialty crops.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

This project supports the USDA Project Strategies of **1) investing in specialty crop research** and **2) improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems**. We plan to conduct specialty crop research to improve cut flower production efficiency in Maine. We will give cut flower growers data-driven recommendations that solve high-priority challenges for economically important taxa. Growers will be able to better plan the efficient use of field space to produce more marketable yield (i.e., the right volume at the right time) each season. By further making successional planting adaptive to the weather in different regions of Maine and to year-to-year variation in weather, we aim to help growers buffer against the effects of changing climate to sustain livelihoods. Future projects could incorporate and evaluate longer-range season forecasting to develop planning models that account for future conditions or integrate other environmental factors that impact flowering, such as daylength.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The expected measurable outcome is **USDA SCBGP Outcome #6: Expand Specialty Crop Research and Development**. We will measure the outcome using indicators 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3.

6.1: Three research goals accomplished

Goal 1: Determine how sunflowers, snapdragons, and stock respond to growing degree days after planting on at least three planting dates. In 2025, we will grow these species at the Lyle E. Littlefield Ornamentals Trial Garden in Orono. We will track weekly and season-long yield, timing of the first flower, and peak harvest time. We will also track environmental conditions, including daily minimum, maximum, and average temperature using an on-site weather station.

Goal 2: Evaluate the relationships among phenological cues at planting time, growing degree days, and timing of the first flower, harvest duration, peak harvest, and season-long yield. We will use this information to construct planting models that predict yield responses.

Goal 3: Validate planting models in Orono and at least one other site. In spring and early summer of 2026, we will once again succession plant sunflowers, snapdragons, and stock. We will track whether the model, when applied to the conditions of the current season at two different sites, successfully predicts harvest dates and yields.

6.2: Three research conclusions that 6.2a) support continued research, and 6.2c) allow for the implementation of a new practice.

Finding 1: Determine whether growing degree days is the primary force guiding floral timing for day-neutral annual cut flowers. Our study will allow for implementation of a new successional planting practice based on degree days.

Finding 2: Our successional planting models based on growing degree days and phenological cues from the landscape will guide growers in the selection of planting dates for optimal harvest in these three crops.

Finding 3: Validation of successional planting models is a finding that will support continued research. We will determine whether further research is needed to develop more thorough models or if thermal accumulation is the primary force guiding floral timing in these crops. Other physiological and environmental cues, such as photoperiod, can trigger flowering in annual cut flower species.

6.3: Twenty industry representatives and stakeholders engage with research results.

We have a list of approximately 20 growers who provided research topics for our work. We will work with them to share the results of our work in 2026 through a field day in Orono and a webinar shared state-wide.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

How? What information?

We will validate our model in 2026 at the Lyle E. Littlefield Garden and at least one other site. This information will illustrate the usefulness of phenological cues and thermal accumulation for predicting harvest timing. In 2026, we will survey growers about their interest in participating in a webinar and/or field day. We will ask growers who participate in our webinar or field day how they are likely to use the results from our work. We will also ask growers to provide information about how the model can be improved in the future.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

3 Letters of Support

Cut flower growers are a vibrant and diverse group in Maine. In a recent presentation to growers at the Northeast Greenhouse Conference about previous work on cut flower production in Maine, grower attendance and discussion were high in the standing-room only audience of nearly 50 growers. Participants ranked the knowledge gained from this talk as above average for the conference, indicating grower interest in research-based recommendations for cut flower production. Growers in Maine were also interested in a recent survey to identify research and crop priorities for cut flower production in the state, and identified successional planting research as a high priority and identified snapdragons, stock, and sunflowers among the crops for they were most interesting in seeing research. Some of our supporters on this project have provided letters of support, including Mary Turner, owner of Salt Farm Flowers, Melissa Cullina, Director of Plant Science & Collections at Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens, and Mary Lou Hoskins, President of the Maine Flower Collective. Several growers are interested in providing an additional planting site for this project, in addition to the grower we will be working with, Madison Jones, owner of Seal Point Farms. All of this speaks to the value that specialty crop growers in Maine's expanding cut flower industry place on this work to sustain livelihoods in a changing climate.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Left blank on application.

The University of Maine is a non-profit institution for research, education, and outreach. One of the missions of the University is to create research-based recommendations for stakeholders such as cut flower growers. The PIs (Stephanie Burnett and Bryan Peterson) plan to continue researching specialty crops. Their salaries are funded through UMaine. Other expenses for this work, such as supplies and labor, have been funded in the past through other granting agencies. We will continue to apply for funding through other sources to support the continuation of our work. If successful, this work could lead to different projects that enhance, in different ways, the production efficiencies for specialty crop growers in a changing climate.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

First time applicant for this project.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

It is mathematically correct. The supply section is not thoroughly detailed, flat rates were provided on all 7 line items.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Burnett Cut Flowers

Date: 3/27/24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. **Positive.**

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area. **Positive: “Priority Area of projects that improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity”**

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy. **Positive: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3**

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). **Positive.**

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Positive: “We will share the results of our work in 2026 through a field day tour in Orono and a webinar shared state-wide.”

Dissemination plan: grower meetings.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Positive: LOS Botanical Gardens, Salt Farm Flowers, text “several growers are interested in providing an additional planting site for this project.”

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Nothing under “Program Income”

The likelihood of Self-Sustaining section is blank.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. n/a

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Question: health insurance for grad students.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Burnett Cut Flowers

Date: 3-26-2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Commissioner priority #4 is identified. The project will do field research on three cut flower crops on when the ideal time to plant is. These recommendations will be passed on to flower farmers, so they can gain the most utility out of their cut flower crop.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

USDA project strategies # 3 and 7 are identified. The project seeks to improve efficiency in the cut flower industry by giving cut flower growers recommendations on the best timing to plant their crops. These recommendations will be based upon research on cut flower production efficiency.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcome #6 and indicators 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3 identified in the application. Three research goals and findings are identified.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Results of the research will be shared with 20 growers who provided research topics at a field day in Orono in 2026.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Acknowledgement of Support included in application on File 3.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No letters of support included. At the Northeast Greenhouse Conference growers showed interest in a research project to support crop timing and priorities in the cut flower industry. The application references letters of support, although they don't seem to be included in the application??

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Not mentioned in the application how the project could potentially become self-sustaining. They mention their interest in applying for other funding.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Not previously funded through SCBGP.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section is complete and mathematically correct. Total budget ask is for \$88,667.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is thoroughly provided for each expense section. Supply section is estimated, not broken down to actual cost.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Burnett Cut Flowers

Date: March 26, 2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes, very clear!

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes – crop research and reducing costs

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes. Research goals and distribution goals

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes, through their partners

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes. Good range of supporters

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Explains that they will continue to apply for funding and that the staff are salaried.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Not directly

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Good explanations.

Reviewer: George Fox

Applicant: University of Maine acting through University of Maine – Burnett Cut Flowers

Date:

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes, complete, and well written.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes, Complete, and thorough.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes, describes 1 USDA strategy.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes, 3 outcomes are identified and described.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes, meets this requirement.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No, does not.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes, multiple LOS's

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

No, does not address this.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

No, has not received prior SCBG funding.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: Meeting House Herb Farm: Increasing competitiveness and market share of Maine grown herbs through e-commerce farm to consumer sales

Date: 3/25/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The application meets the requirements. There are 3 priority areas described: 2. Projects to enhance soil and ecosystem health.

3. Projects that market Maine specialty crops to diversified and expanded markets.

4. Projects that improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The application clearly describes how they will address the USDA project strategy of Sustainability.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The application clearly marks the outcomes and indicators that will be used in the project.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The application does not have a dissemination method.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The application thoroughly describes the external project supports. The two letters of support are from project partners and partners involved in the project.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The application clearly acknowledges that the membership fee after a certain number of farms join will allow the project to become self-sustaining.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

The application meets this requirement. They will build on prior lessons. One thing to note is being careful of how the data will be monitored to make sure that each project has careful monitoring to make sure the project's specific outcomes are measured. The application talks about a hurdle of funds being slow to be released but does not address how this will change in the future project.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. The application meets the requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The application meets the requirements.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant
Applicant: Meeting House Herbs
Date: 3-22-2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Meeting House Herb Farm and Maine Organic Farmer's and Gardeners Association, MOFGA, will work together to educate and support business development and market promotion for over 40 women owned/operated Maine farms. This project will enhance competitiveness of Maine grown herbs sold directly from the farm to consumers via a national e-commerce site, meetinghouse.farm. This project will increase sustainability of Maine farms by adding herbs to farm crop plans. This will result in increased revenue, sustainability and biodiversity on these farms as well as increasing the market share of the herb market for US growers.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Agreed.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

- 2. Projects to enhance soil and ecosystem health.**
- 3. Projects that market Maine specialty crops to diversified and expanded markets.**
- 4. Projects that improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity.**

This proposal directly addresses priorities 2,3 & 4 of the commissioner:

This project seeks to market an increasing volume of Maine grown herbs to an expanded market across the US (3). These herbs will supply the rapidly increasing herb market in the US. The US herb market was \$24 billion in 2022. The estimated CAGR between 2022 and 2030 is 11.6% globally. This project seeks to market Maine grown herbs to small businesses and retail consumers in the US in 2024-2025, growing to larger markets as our herb production volume grows (3). Marketing Maine grown herbs to businesses across the US addresses the Commissioner's third priority of marketing Maine grown specialty crops to expanded markets. The majority of the herbs used in the US market are currently grown in China or Europe. Many of the herbs can be grown in Maine. We are addressing the Commissioner's second priority of

enhancing soil and ecosystem health by helping farmers add herbs to a farm's crop plan (2). Increasing the number of farms that grow herbs will enhance soil and ecosystem health for the farms that grow them, thereby improving soil health and the overall ecosystem in Maine (2). Finally, herbs not only add diversity to the soil but also to a small farm income stream. Diversifying a crop can help a farm to be more resilient to both economic swings and environmental changes (4). Diversifying a small farm's income stream directly addresses the Commissioner's fourth priority of increasing resilience.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

This project addresses the USDA project strategy of Sustainability. This project seeks to increase the sustainability of small, women owned/operated farms in Maine, through crop diversification with specialty crops which include herbs. This project will accomplish this by providing an e-commerce marketplace to sell herbs directly from the farm to consumers across the US. In addition we will be supporting farms with technical expertise and community knowledge to increase the success rate of new farms or farmers new to growing herbs. Herbs when added to a farms crop plan increase the financial and ecological sustainability of the farm. This project will, consult with farmers about sustainable herb choices and once the herbs are grown will provide a way to market for these herbs. Farms that add herbs diversify crop plans, improve soil health and farm biodiversity by including herbs in regular crop rotation. USDA identified specialty crops include: Artemesia annua, Astragulas, Mullein, Comfrey, Coneflower, Skullcap, St. Johns Wort, Wood Betony, Urtica, Yarrow, Horsetail, Marshmallow & Lavender and others. Dried herbs sell for an average of \$35 per pound. This can substantially increase a farms revenue. A farm growing and drying 250 lbs of herb per year can expect revenues of between \$8K-\$19K annually. 250lbs of dried herb can be grown on as little as ½ acre of land. This project seeks to increase the sustainability both financially and ecologically of Maine farms.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

1.4 Number of additional business transactions executed	2,000
1.5 Increased sales measured in:	
1.5a Dollars	\$78,000.00

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Outcome 1: Increasing Consumption and Consumer Purchasing of Specialty Crops

1.4 Number of additional business transactions executed: **2000**. *Counted via transaction number increase captured on ecommerce platform meetinghouse.farm (shopify analytics) as of start of program compared to end. 10/1/2024 – 09/29/2026. Please note that this is*

incremental to the transactions counted in the previous project.

1.5 Increased sales measured in:

1.5a Dollars: **\$78,000.** *Counted sales dollar increase captured on e-commerce platform meetinghouse.farm (shopify analytics) as of start of program through end. 09/30/2024 – 09/29/2026. Please note that this is incremental to the dollars counted in the previous project.*

Justification: These indicators have been selected to show increased volume in sales of specialty crops due to expanded marketing via e-commerce site. An increased volume in sales shows benefit to multiple farm revenue streams and puts more Maine grown herbs into the US market. As the market for Maine grown herbs grows – more farmers will add herbs to their crop plans – further diversifying soil and revenue streams of Maine farms. This project will have the desired outcomes if these measures are met.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

2 letters of support, (MOFGA is a project beneficiary)

Maine Co-Ops – Maine grown herbs to sell to co-op members. Examples of current co-op customers include: Blue Hill Co-Op in Blue Hill Maine, Portland Food Co-Op in Portland Maine, Belfast Co-Op in Belfast Maine.

Maine Herbal practitioners and small apothecaries – Herbal practitioners prefer to purchase locally and regeneratively grown herbs. These consumers are a large percentage of our market here in Maine. Some examples are Wild Carrot Herbs in Portland Maine, Arcana in Portland Maine, Kennebunk Tea Company in Kennebunk Maine, and Wild Folk Farm in Vassalboro, Maine.

Wholesale vendors throughout the US – Companies like Ned & CO (helloned.com) and Dona Chai LLC (drinkdona.com) purchase high volume currently from Meeting House Herb Farm and will increase with increased volume.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

High - We anticipate being fully self sufficient once we have 100 farms as a part of the program. We charge a monthly membership fee that is taken out of the proceeds of sales. There are no out of pocket expenses for farmers. This membership fee of \$55 per month supports our operating costs and once we

reach 100 farms will be self-sustaining and allow for additional development of the market and e-commerce site.

Estimated income \$78k from this project, reinvestments include enhancement of the website business development, social media and bookkeeping which are directly associated with this project and its related eligible herb crops within this project performance period.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

This project will build on the work started in late 2023 and early 2024 from the previous project "Increasing the sustainability of Maine farms with Herbs" by enhancing the e-commerce marketplace to strengthen farms ability to sell directly to consumers across the US directly from their farms. Work to be completed in 2024, focuses on outreach as well as starting to build a better e-commerce site that supports farmers so that they can easily sell and market dried herbs directly from their farms to consumers across the United States. As of March 2023, we have added 6 new farms to the Herbal Marketplace - the portion of the e-commerce site that allows farms to sell directly to consumers via a collaborative online website. At this time we have not implemented phase 1 of the improved site due to slow release of grant funds. Much of the facilitation of each sale is being done manually by the customer service consultant provided for by this grant in 2023. Even with the manual nature of the sales we are seeing farms successfully sell between \$300-\$500 monthly to consumers across the US.

We want to build on this momentum in 2024-2025. Work for this second project will focus on supporting farm community and expanding the e-commerce herbal marketplace. We will add functionality to the website to make it easy and quick for farmers to sell and market and differentiate their farm's herbs online. Specifically this will include automated packing slips and shipping labels, financial settlement in less than 30 days, ability to accept pre-orders from consumers, ability to work with other farms to fill large wholesale orders. The results of the work in 2023 and early 2024 show that the Farm to Consumer model using an online Farmer's Market is a model that resonates with consumers and allows additional revenue for farms.

The 2024-2025 work will also build community and knowledge sharing between members of the collaborative and continue outreach to help farmers know about this opportunity to diversify revenue and build soil health on their farms.

It should be noted that due to growing season we will close out the first grant by 9/30/2025 but the work will be complete by September of 2024. Much of the revenue from dried herbs comes in after the season closes making it important to record revenues associated with grant work through the following year.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Complete and mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson
Applicant: Meeting House Herbs
Date: 3/25/24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA. **Positive.**

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Positive, chooses three priority areas. Mentions many of the 20 farms are women-owned and mentions barriers to market entry.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Positive, chooses one – sustainability.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Positive, 1.4 and 1.5 and 1.5a

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Positive, shopify analytics,

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

One farm and MOFGA for added letters of support. Also, Maine Co-ops, herbal practitioners and small apothecaries, and wholesale vendors who already purchase from Meeting House Herb Farm.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

From purpose: By providing both marketing and technical assistance, this project will increase the sales of Maine-grown herbs in the US, providing additional revenue and sustainability for participating farms.

Monthly membership fee 55.00. Need 100 farms. Not-of-pocket expenses for herb farmers. Ecommerce. Diversification.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Positive.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Positive, five personnel.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. Positive.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden
Applicant: Meeting House Herbs
Date: 3-22-2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

3 commissioner priorities identified (#2, 3, and 4) Justification is provided for how they will address these priority areas.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

USDA Project Strategy: Sustainability. The project aims to provide an e-commerce marketplace for women owned farms to sell their herbs directly to consumers. The project also seeks to aid new herb farmers by giving them education on best practices.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcome #1 identified. Indicators 1.4 and 1.5 The goal of the project is to put more Maine grown herbs into the market.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

No dissemination plan is described anywhere in the application.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not included in the application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Two letters of support are included in the application. One is from Patch Farm and the other is from MOFGA.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

MHHF estimates that they will need 100 farms to be part of the program in order to become self-sustaining. They charge a membership fee of \$55 a month to farms. (Strong)

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Meeting House Herb Farm received SCBGP funding in 2023.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section is complete and mathematically correct. Total ask for the project is \$98,840.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is provided thoroughly for each expense line.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats
Applicant: Meeting House Herbs
Date: March 22, 2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes. Is this an older form?

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes. Very clear.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes. Helping farmers grow and sell more herbs to diversify their income.

Adding capability to their website, share knowledge among farmers.

How will they do this? More information on the technical assistance they are offering.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes. Increased number and value of herb sales

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Somewhat.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

NA

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes. Producers and consumers and wholesalers.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Yes. They charge membership fees.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes. Haven't done much but have a bit of data.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Maybe. The income information seemed high – i.e. equal to the amount sold. Some of that will go to farmers?

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Reviewer: George Fox
Applicant: Meeting House Herbs
Date:
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes, although File 3 is a Word document, not typical PDF.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes, very thoroughly.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes, very thoroughly.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes, defines expected increase in sales dollars.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Describes how data will be collected but not how it will be communicated to stakeholders.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

1 LOS provided from a farmer who would benefit from project. Other is from project partner.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Yes, thru proposed membership fee.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling
Applicant: Maine Department of Corrections
Date: 3/21/2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The proposed project describes enhancing soil and ecosystem health, and projects that improve adaptation and increase resilience to climate-related crop disturbances in support of long-term farm business vitality and productivity.

The project describes creating an 8-acre alley cropping model.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The application meets this requirement with “investing in specialty crop research to focus on conversation and environmental outcomes and sustainability.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The project has listed Outcomes 2 and indicators 1 and 2. Along with 2.9 a and b.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The application states that the research methods used before and after the alley cropping to collect data.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not stated in the application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Two letters of support have been supplied to this project.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The proposed project stated that the estimated income of \$100,000 from the sales of produce would help sustain the project. Further breakdown of this estimate would help build more confidence that this is possible.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section meets the stated requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The justifications could have been elaborated upon more. For example, “nutrients needed during the season”, how will these nutrients add to the project objectives?

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant
Applicant: Maine Department of Corrections
Date: 3-21-2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

MDOC will seek to design and develop an 8-acre Regenerative Organic Alley Cropping System at the Mountain View Correctional Facility Site in Charleston, Maine with the consultation and training we will receive from Mark Shephard and the staff of Restoration Agriculture Development (RAD). We wish to provide an alternative to new and existing farms throughout Maine that have a desire to create or add a fruit and /or nut orchard to their farm. Many farms faced with the costs of purchasing or leasing a piece of land or setting aside a portion of their existing farm to create a mono-cropping orchard setup find this nearly impossible. Maine farmers seeking to start out in a conventional fashion face an almost insurmountable obstacle. How do they outlay the finances needed to procure a lease, purchase a piece of property, or even set aside a piece of property from production, not to mention the costs associated with the preparation and planting of the trees, and then provide for their care for 7-10 years without any appreciable income expected from the fruit or nut trees during this time. With this conventional model, farmers are not only faced with financial hurdles but are left vulnerable to the effects of severe weather events like drought or the 25 inches of rain our region endured this past season, with 5 storms delivering 2 inches or more.

In 2014, USDA National Agroforestry Center (NAC)Produced an information sheet titled, "How Can Agroforestry Help Landowners Adapt to Increased Rain Intensity?". In this pamphlet, the northeast is listed as the area with the greatest increase in very heavy precipitation, with a 71% Increase, nearly twice the level of the next highest region in the country. This alley cropping model designed using the master line agriculture runoff system will provide new and existing farmers with an opportunity to create or add tree fruits and nuts, as well as fruiting shrubs, canes, and vines to their existing annual crop production while benefiting from the income derived from the ally cropping located between the permaculture Agroforestry strips, where the fruit and nut trees are located while diminishing the effects of severe weather events on your crops. This system

mitigates the effects of very heavy rainfall events and stores water in the system to minimize drought situations. According to the (NAC), Agroforestry is: "the intentional combining of agriculture and working trees to create sustainable farming systems".

The MDOC will create permanent raised beds in the alley cropping strips where we will raise a diversified offering of market farm crops for an annual income. The harvest realized from these strips will provide documentation of the potential yield and income possible in the early years of the system while the Permaculture Agroforestry Strips are maturing. the diversified offering will give interested farmers the opportunity to make wise economic decisions based on the results of each crop harvested.

We believe that the benefits fall into 2 General Categories: economic, and environmental. The benefits of this system, along with any disadvantages we encounter. We will track the economic benefits by assessing harvest yields and calculating the value produced in the alley cropping strips. We will track the environmental benefits from natural observation and soil testing to collect data on Soil Compaction, Temperature, PH, Conductivity ,Microbial Biomass, Organic Matter, and basic Mineralization. Our goal is to provide farmers with the data needed to make an informed decision about the efficacy of implementing this system at their site. The MDOC will partner with MOFGA to offer Filmed and Print Documentation of the Design and Development of the Project including Workshop training taught by Mark Shepard and his RAD Staff. This will provide the information and steps needed for new or existing farmers wishing to implement this system at their sites in Maine, and beyond.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Our project will enhance soil and ecosystem health and improve specialty crop resilience to the effects of climate change in Maine. Regenerative organic alley cropping is a promising new permaculture system that delivers highly beneficial environmental outcomes while providing short and long-term economic benefits to producers. As an example of one of the environmental benefits of this permaculture system, woody roots in alley cropping systems help reduce soil erosion, increase water infiltration, add organic carbon, and improve nutrient retention. This permaculture model will be implemented with various environmental tests to be integrated throughout the duration of the project. This model supports higher rates of carbon sequestration reduces greenhouse gas concentrations thanks diversifying perennial plants used in the land.

Perennial systems like agroforestry sequester more carbon than annual vegetation grow for more days of the year and store more carbon throughout the crop's life cycle. The regenerative alley cropping system promotes more efficient resource utilization while storing carbon in the soil at different depths. These and other benefits demonstrate why regenerative agriculture practices a great option for specialty crop producers to improve carbon sequestration while diversifying their crops.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The Department of Corrections will use two of the USDA's strategies to address current issues in specialty crop production industry. First, the project will include research to focus on **conservation and environmental outcomes**. Alley cropping methods in agroforestry offer a new permaculture model to improve biodiversity, soil health, water conservation, and other environmental benefits. These benefits derive from the creative use of alley cropping to promote beneficial effects. For example, alley cropping reduces soil erosion, increases soil temperature, promotes a diversity of pollinators, increased biological diversity, and other environmental benefits. One of the unique selling propositions of this permaculture model is the short-term return on investment for specialty crop producers. Traditional models of specialty fruit production generally require seven years before the trees begin producing. Alley cropping provides farmers with a short and long term economic returns, improving economic and environmental sustainability. This innovative approach will showcase both the positive environmental and economic advantages for specialty crop producers in Maine.

The USDA SCBG outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Indicators	Value
2.1 Number of stakeholders that gained technical knowledge about producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing specialty crops	300
2.2 Number of stakeholders that reported producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing more specialty crops	50
2.9 Total number of new individuals who went into specialty crop production as a result of marketing, and of those, the number who are:	10
2.9a Beginning farmers or ranchers	5
2.9b Socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers	1

7. IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SPECIALTY CROPS

Indicators	Value
7.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies	300
7.2 Number of stakeholders reported with an intent to adopt environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies	150
7.3 Number of producers that adopted environmental best practices or tools	50
7.4 Number of new tools/technologies developed or enhanced to improve sustainability/conservation or other environmental outcomes	
7.5 Number of additional acres managed with sustainable practices, tools, or technologies that focused on:	
7.5a Water quality/ conservation	200
7.5b Soil health	200
7.5c Biodiversity	150

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Training Attendance Sheets

All training events, including the on-site model training, will include a training sign-in sheet which will collect basic demographic information, including if they are a new or disadvantaged farmer.

Post-Training Surveys

The Department, in coordination with MOFGA, will provide surveys to training participants at the conclusion of the training. The training surveys will collect information pertaining to which information from the training they found helpful, if they intend to implement these practices and on how many acres. The surveys will also determine if they are currently engaged in any of the

practices (eg., alley cropping, water management, agroforestry strips, etc.) and if they are currently growing any specialty crops or intend to grow specialty crops.

A one-year post training survey will be issued using contact information provided by the attendees to determine if they implemented any practices that they learned from the training, and if so, over how many acres. If attendee was new to growing specialty crops, are they growing them now. Are they a new or disadvantaged farmer? Finally, the survey will ask how much acreage will benefit pollinators.

Video Presentation

The video showcasing this permaculture method will be shown at the Common Ground Fair. MOFGA will provide presentation attendee numbers to track how many people watched the video.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No letters of support.

The MDOC Mountain View Correctional Facility will continue to partner with Good Shepherd Food Bank to donate at least 20% of our harvest to their facilities, providing for disadvantaged individuals and families in our State. In some years, we have donated as much as 20,000 lbs. in a season to their facilities.

We believe that this project will benefit our incarcerated population with a more diverse and nutritious offering of food choices for our institutions and provide a great opportunity to expand on our newly created and Maine Department of Labor-approved - regenerative organic market farm and gardening apprenticeship program. many of our residents come from very disadvantaged backgrounds, and a project like this has great potential to change lives.

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife has provided a long term lease of an eight acre parcel located in Charleston, Maine where this project will be located. The Department supports the project's objectives and is interested in observing and showcasing the effects of this project on their wildlife preserve in the area.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Section not completed but...

+	Source/Nature of Program Income	Description of how you will reinvest the program income into the project to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops	Estimated Income
-	Sale of produce	Funds will be used to continue project operations, including paying for resident worker and apprentice labor and purchase of ongoing supply needs	\$100,000.00
Program Income Total			\$100,000.00

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

No. First Time applicant.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Many budget items rounded, total budget with the below correct figures is \$49,128.00

This adds up to \$11,583

#	Supplies Item Description	Cost per Unit	Number of Units	Acquisition Date	Funds Requested
1	Fruit Trees	\$49.50	234	10/07/2024	\$9,475.00

This adds up to \$1,890.00

14	Cover Crop Seed	\$67.50	28	05/10/2025	\$1,945.00
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The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items are allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson
Applicant: Maine Department of Corrections
Date: 3/22/24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Positive. Pass.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Positive.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Positive.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Positive, chose two areas, env. Sustainability and access to specialty crop production.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Positive, three outcomes listed, some numbering off.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Positive, videos at Common Ground Fair, use of social media and workshop with RAD.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

MOFGA and RAD letters of support, narrative mentions MDIFW, Dept of Labor apprentice program.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Positive, annual income generated. Could have used more.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

n/a

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Positive, some math errors.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Positive.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden
Applicant: Maine Department of Corrections
Date: 3-21-24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application is complete and adheres to the format in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The project highlights two commissioner priorities. These include enhancing soil and ecosystem health and improving specialty crop resilience to the effects of climate change in Maine. "The woody roots of alley cropping systems help to reduce soil erosion, increase water infiltration, add organic carbon, and improve nutrient retention." The alley crop system helps reduce greenhouse gas in the atmosphere.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

MDOC identifies two USDA Project Strategies. The project involves research that will focus of conservation and environmental outcomes through the use of alley cropping at the MVCC. The hope is that alley cropping will "improve biodiversity, soil health, water conservation" etc. MDOC also explains how alley cropping will aid in sustainability and provide farmers with short and long-term environmental and economic benefits.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Included numerous indicators. Don't line up with actual indicator numbers.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Data collection: 1 year post training attendee survey.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not mentioned.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Two letters of support are included. One is from the Executive Director of MOFGA. The other is from Mark Shepard, the founder of Restoration Agriculture Development LLC.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Not mentioned anywhere in the application.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Not previously granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section is complete and mathematically correct. The total budget is for \$100,000 with \$92,000 being direct costs and \$8,000 being indirect.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Thorough justification is provided for the expenses outlined in the RFP.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats
Applicant: Maine Department of Corrections
Date: 3/21/2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes. Some more proofreading would have been good.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Focus is on carbon storing

Agroforestry

Will implement it on site, do research on the successes and communicate it out to other Maine farmers.

Will hire a videographer

Will do a training event for 300 farmers – seems high. Would be good to have more details about these trainings.

50 farmers will adopt the strategy over a total of 200 acres – seems high

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes, impacts seem high

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

NA

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

It would have been good to have a letter from a farmer who is interested in this farming method.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

No

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

NA

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes. Why did they not include DOC personnel?

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes

Budget very detailed. No labor costs, just supplies, equipment, consulting and video creation and 8% indirect cost. Seems cost effective.

Reviewer: George Fox
Applicant: Maine Department of Corrections
Date:
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Pass

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Defines data collection techniques but does not define how this data will be communicated to stakeholders.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Does not.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Does not show outside support, only partner support.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Yes, thru the sale of produce grown.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

No.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.
Yes

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes

Other GF notes

Potential benefits appear to apply to a broad range of specialty products – fruits, nut, berries, etc.

Interesting range of benefits – better use of land, faster ramp up of income, improve storm water control.

No letters of support from non-project beneficiaries?

Does this address one of the Commissioner's priorities? Yes, Enhance soil and ecosystem health.

Address 2 USDA strategies.

Communication plans for project outcomes are clearly defined – video, trainings, post-training surveys.

Do annual earnings from crops constitute 'sustainable'?

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: Maine Flower Collective “Cultivate Season Extension by the Maine Flower Collective: Pilot Sustainable, Statewide “Maine Flower Days”

Date: 3/21/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application meets the requirements.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The Commissioner priority is stated: Projects that market Maine specialty crops to diversified and expanded markets, or that research potential market expansion efforts and strategies. Their project will test expanding the seasonal offerings earlier and later in the year and having promotional “Maine Flower Days” to raise consumer awareness. There is an additional Commissioner priority: projects that alleviate supply chain disruptions for specialty crop inputs, processing, or distribution. Maine Flower Collective will leverage their large network to help smaller-scale flower farms access crop inputs that require a high-volume access point.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The Strategy mentioned is researching growing specialty crops in shoulder seasons through forcing bulbs and diversifying crop offerings.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

There are two outcomes listed, outcome 1.4, number of additional business transactions executed, outcome 2.2, number of stakeholders producing ,m preparing procuring, or accessing more specialty crops, and 2.7e, expanded customer reach via new/improved

distribution systems. The application thoroughly explains how it will achieve the outcomes.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Interviewing and surveying growers, buyers, and prospective retail consumers and sales records will be kept.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

There were no letters of support. The project is well-researched and touches on the effect it will have on stakeholders.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The application meets this requirement. It is addressed in "Maine Flower Days" by how they will reuse the promotional materials and charge a modest fee that will be used to sustain future events. It is also addressed with the bulb distribution, any income made will fund more bulbs in subsequent years.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

The applicant is building upon prior projects that span from 2021-2024. They have used the lessons learned to build upon the newer project. They have achieved their goals and are looking to expand their market. All lessons from prior projects are being used in their operations and logistics programming.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. The application meets the stated requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The application thoroughly meets the requirements.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant
Applicant: Maine Flower Collective
Date: 3-22-24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

With extreme weather conditions detrimentally impacting an already limited growing season, many Maine flower farmers are looking to diversify their crops and extend their harvest windows to address growing demand for local cut flowers. ~~Experiencing with~~

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a commissioner priority area.

Projects that market Maine specialty crops to diversified and expanded markets, or that research potential market expansion efforts and strategies.

This project markets Maine specialty crops (cut flowers specifically) to diversified and expanded markets. The Maine Flower Collective is testing expanding seasonal offerings earlier in the spring than the traditional growing season and later into the fall. This project will also pilot several promotional “Maine Flower Days” throughout the state to raise consumer awareness about locally-grown flowers being cultivated, sold, and designed right here in Maine—even outside of the summer months.

Projects that alleviate supply chain disruptions for specialty crop inputs, processing, or distribution.

The Maine Flower Collective serves over 40 Maine flower farms and over 60 floral design businesses and florist shops. This project will leverage that network to help smaller scale flower farms access crop inputs—especially bulbs—that require a high volume access point, and will distribute them. The Collective will then distribute the stems that farmers grow as season extension to buyers all over the state, acting as an aggregation and delivery hub.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

This project aims to research growing specialty crops (cut flowers specifically) in shoulder seasons through forcing bulbs and diversifying crop offerings.

The MFC hub will also increase efficiency in the MFC’s distribution systems, by increasing the sales during times when not much product is moving through our hub, thus allowing our systems to be self-sufficient during more months of the year.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Indicators	Value
1.4 Number of additional business transactions executed	500

Outcome 1.4 Number of additional business transactions executed: 500

The MFC plans to keep track of transactions via a POS system and will compare those number of transactions in shoulder season to the same weeks in previous years. Surveys of host site participants of “Maine Flower Days” events will collect numbers of transactions at those events as well.

2.2 Number of stakeholders that reported producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing more specialty crops	50
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Outcome 2.2: Number of stakeholders that reported producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing more specialty crops: 50

The MFC will survey constituents about comparing their use of locally grown flowers in shoulder seasons during the duration of this pilot project compared to previous years, and collect responses. The collective currently serves over 60 floral businesses and expects most to buy or sell more specialty flowers in shoulder seasons .

2.7e Expanded customer reach	20
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2.7e Expanded customer reach via new/improved distribution systems: 20

The MFC estimates at least 20 sites to participate in “Maine Flower Days” which will be new ways to promote and sell local flowers to consumers. This number will be gathered by the number of businesses who participate in the MFC’s promotional package and listings. To measure progress toward its goals, the MFC will use a variety of data to determine the desired outcome and indicators captured in this grant proposal. The MFC will continue to interview and survey its growers, buyers, and prospective retail consumers about their experience purchasing season extension supplies and/or “Maine Flower Days” experience across the state, as well as keep detailed sales records for season extension products to determine purchase preferences. All surveying and data collection will be rolling and prompt, following each shoulder season and event; therefore, the reporting will be completed by the project end date.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

<p><i>Outcome and Indicator:</i> 1.1 Total number of consumers who gained knowledge about specialty crops</p> <p>Data Collection: The MFC will measure the number of participants of the season extension specialty crop offerings and via online and POS transactions. "Maine Flower Day" participation, during which participants will learn about shoulder season specialty crops, will be tracked via registration efforts.</p>
<p><i>Outcome and Indicator:</i> 1.3 Number of additional specialty crop customers</p> <p>Data Collection: The MFC will measure the number of additional specialty crop customers via online and in-person sales (e.g. MFC constituents, consumers, "Maine Flower Day" attendees.)</p>
<p><i>Outcome and Indicator:</i> 1.4 Number of additional business transactions execute</p> <p>Data Collection: Additional transactions executed will be tracked by point of sale (POS) systems.</p>
<p><i>Outcome and Indicator:</i> 1.5b Sales increase, percentage</p> <p>Data Collection: The MFC anticipates building to average 50% in monthly cut flower sales during April, May, October, and November. This will be measured by its POS.</p>
<p><i>Outcome and Indicator:</i> 2.1: Number of stakeholders that gained technical knowledge about producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing specialty crops</p> <p>Data Collection: The MFC will determine this number through constituent seasonal extension program registration.</p>
<p><i>Outcome and Indicator:</i> 2.2 Number of stakeholders that reported producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing more specialty crops.</p> <p>Data Collection: The MFC will measure this outcome through season extension offering participation, user surveys/interviews, and POS data.</p>
<p><i>Outcome and Indicator:</i> 2.7d Increased specialty crop grower participation</p> <p>Data Collection: This will be tracked via POS and registration data.</p>
<p><i>Outcome and Indicator:</i> 2.7e Expanded customer reach</p> <p>Data Collection: This will be tracked via POS and registration data.</p>

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

0 Letters of Support

We were not able to secure letters of support--beyond prospective growers and buyers participants--for this effort in time to meet this grant deadline. We would be happy to finalize documentation and send this along at a future date for further consideration.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The MFC estimates that after this 2-year pilot cycle, "Maine Flower Day" events could become self-sustaining and not dependant on grant funding by reusing promotional materials originated during this time, and potentially charging a modest fee to participate in the promotion.

The MFC will reinvest any income from distributing the bulbs among growers to fund more bulbs for subsequent years growing specialty cut flowers. The bulb sourcing component of this project can become self-sufficient by adjusting the discount on the bulbs sourced so that growers are paying for the bulbs in full. If this test study is successful, growers will have proven the viability of season extension on their farms.

Through this two-year pilot program, the Maine Flower Collective will leverage its member network and its logistics systems to make more diverse floriculture products available to MFC constituents earlier in the calendar year and promote the greater Maine flower trade through specialized state-wide programming throughout the year. Maine's traditional growing season runs from June through September, leading to a strong demand for lush, locally grown products on the shoulder seasons (e.g., April to May, then October to November). and increase weekly average sales of cut stems through the Collective. MFC growers are eager to meet the floral demand seen during these traditional "off months"; with supplies and training, these growers will be able to increase average stems sold through the Collective..

The MFC will source specialty bulbs and related educational materials at a competitive wholesale rate, in order to ensure that these tools are accessible to a range of MFC constituents at an affordable cost. Future material costs would be paid for by MFC users. Educational resources to support the cultivation and dissemination of these early crops can be documented and passed along as new constituents pursue these season extension flowers. To underwrite the staff time and logistical support for future "Maine Flower Days", a modest registration fee could be levied to these events and/or the MFC could request a portion of sales made by program participants.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

In its first-year of operations, the MFC's virtual marketplace positively contributed to increasing access to and sales of Maine-grown flowers for Maine florists and floral designers. In 2023, the MFC counted 27 growers and more than 50 wholesale buyers among its constituents. In a recent MFC survey, 77% of MFC growers reported an increase in wholesale transactions of 5-10%, thanks to the streamlined marketing and logistical services offered by the Collective; MFC buyers shared that their average weekly purchase from the Collective totaled more than \$5,200 in 2023. The collaborative nature of the Collective's structure has led to a significant increase in its 2024 constituent enrollment numbers (e.g, 52% percentage increase in growers participating in the MFC and 23% increase in buyers) as well as a more streamlined and environmentally sustainable product delivery system.

Surveys of its inaugural constituents showed that MFC buyers are eager to procure a greater volume of Maine-grown flowers whenever product is available. They value the quality standards held by the MFC, as well as the relationships developed with individual flower farms all over the state. While interest in locally grown products extends as early as spring bulbs and runs through evergreen wreath and dried flower seasons, most flower farmers do not have the resources (e.g., access to affordable bulbs or educational support) to cultivate these seasonal extension crops and bring them to market. As the MFC looks to launch a second year of its online marketplace, it is also preparing to launch the first year of the in-person wholesale market: the MFC hired a sales floor lead and key on-site logistics and transactional details are being determined by the MFC Operations Manager and Board of Directors. The MFC recently interviewed other flower collectives who hold in-person markets, which yielded invaluable details and recommendations for our market set up, pricing, traffic flow, and product care. Throughout the launch of the 2024 MFC online and in-person markets, the MFC will continue to seek logistical and marketing feedback from its leadership and constituents via user interviews and surveys. The MFC is similarly looking to user feedback and leveraging existing relationships with its constituents to further guide the new season extension offerings and “Maine Flower Days.”

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The personnel section does not add up on line 3 and is line 1 correct (ops mgr makes \$52k annually)?

#	Personnel Name/Title	Level of Effort (# of hours OR % FTE)	Funds Requested
1	Operations Manager	25% FTE for two years	\$26,000.00
2	In-Person Wholesale Market Lead	@20x 24 hours x 10 weeks in 2024; 20 weeks in 2025; and 10 weeks of 2026, 50% funding request	\$9,600.00
3	Delivery drivers for season extension program (two drivers)	2 drivers x \$20/hour x 20 hours per week 10 weeks of 2024, 20 weeks of 2025, and 10 weeks of 2026, 50% funding request	\$16,000.00
Personnel Subtotal			\$51,600.00

		# years	per year	* 4 qtrs		
#1	26000	2	13000	52000		
#2		# hrs/wk	# Wks	Total Hrs	Per hour	
	Drvr 1	24	10	240	\$20	\$4,800
	Drvr 2	24	10	240	\$20	\$4,800
						\$9,600
#3	2024	# hrs/wk	# Wks	Total Hrs	Per hour	
	Drvr 1	20	10	200	\$20	\$4,000
	Drvr 2	20	10	200	\$20	\$4,000
						\$8,000
	2025	# hrs/wk	# Wks	Total Hrs	Per hour	
	Drvr 1	20	20	400	\$20	\$8,000
	Drvr 2	20	20	400	\$20	\$8,000
						\$16,000
	2026	# hrs/wk	# Wks	Total Hrs	Per hour	
	Drvr 1	20	10	200	\$10	\$2,000
	Drvr 2	20	10	200	\$10	\$2,000
						\$4,000
					#3 Total	\$28,000

The supply lines do not add up.

#	Other Item Description	Cost per Unit	Number of Units	Acquisition Date	Funds Requested
1	Tulip workshop classes	\$1,200.00	3	Fall/winter 2024	\$3,600.00
2	Rooted Farmers Conference focused on Hub logistics	\$798.00	2	December 2024	\$1,596.00
3	Rent of MFC Hub, aggregation center	\$1,000.00	24	10/2024, and each	\$1,200.00
Other Subtotal					\$6,396.00

\$ per Unit	# units	Total	
\$1,200.00	3	\$ 3,600.00	
\$ 798.00	2	\$ 1,596.00	
\$1,000.00	24	\$24,000.00	
			\$29,196.00

Total budget with detailed figures provided = \$123,964, can project be completed when ask was \$24k less than calculated expenses?

Employees	\$ 63,600.00
Fringe	\$ 6,208.00
Van Rental	\$ 10,000.00
Supplies	\$ 14,960.00
Other	\$ 29,196.00
Total	<u>\$ 123,964.00</u>

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson
Applicant: Maine Flower Collective
Date: 3/22/24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Positive, pass.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Files were not named correctly.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Positive, two listed.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Positive, would like more description and expansion on how project aligns with strategies.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Positive, dissemination plan vague.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No letters of support, ran out of time. Some support references in other areas.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Positive, “could become self-sustaining and not dependent on grant funds”, mentions registration fees, portions of sales, and adjusting bulb discount.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Positive, would be for peak season shoulders.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Math is wrong on some line items and descriptions are vague, affects overall budget amount.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Positive, allowable but incomplete description.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden
Applicant: Maine Flower Collective
Date: 3-21-2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Commissioner Priority #3 is identified in the application. MFC plans to expand seasonal offerings of flowers earlier in the spring and later in the fall. They also plan to pilot "Maine Flower Days" throughout the state with the plan to increase awareness of locally-grown flowers in Maine.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

MFC plans to highlight project strategy #3 (investing in specialty crop research). N

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

MFC has identified outcome 1.4 and 2.2. They plan to track transactions of flower purchases during shoulder seasons and compare them to other years. They will also survey their constituents about the difference between their use of locally grown flowers in shoulder seasons in the pilot year compared to other years. MFC expects at least 20 sites to participate in "Maine Flower Days".

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The application mentions interviewing and surveying the growers and buyers who attend Maine Flower Days to determine purchase preferences.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not mentioned

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No letters of support were included in the application. There is limited mention of how other stakeholders support the project.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

In the future, MFC plans to create a registration fee for “Maine Flower Days” and/or request a portion of the sales made by participants in the program. They are seeking to become self-sustaining.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

The MFC was previously awarded two SCBGP grants in 2021 and 2023. Those two awards were used for the formation of the collective and the financial stability of it. This year the award would be used to fund a pilot project to “support season extension crops and design two floral agritourism events”.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The budget section is not mathematically correct. The total budget is for \$99,964. Rent of MFC HUB is incorrect.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is provided for each expense item thoroughly.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats
Applicant: Maine Flower Collective
Date: March 21, 2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Will purchase expensive bulbs in bulk

Provide technical assistance to growers

Outreach events for buyers – consumer and wholesale

Partner with 27 growers and 50 plus wholesale buyers

Social media tool kit

Will deliver bulbs and transport cut flowers

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes – research growing specialty crop and improving distribution systems.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes. Using surveys of constituents.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

NA

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Not through LOS but through surveys of their constituents.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Mostly, yes. Many of these resources will be reusable. Could charge in the future for these events.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes.

The first one helped to create the Collaborative. The second established a wholesale flower market, set to open in spring 2024.

Yes. Have solicited feedback from the members and demonstrated that their collective has increased sales.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes

Reviewer: George Fox
Applicant: Maine Flower Collective
Date:
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

No, file format is not correct.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

No, does not fully align to allowed USDA strategies. Lists two strategies, only one is an accepted USDA strategy.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Describes how data will be collected – POS system.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Lists data collection method, does not describe process for communicating data.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Partially, references membership paying for future materials.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Yes, describes expansion and lessons learned.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Other GF notes

Different file format.

Do the proposed flowers meet criteria for specialty crops?

How do you measure results? Maine Flower Days – is there a target attendance, sales, profit, media mentions?

Project beneficiaries (1500) seems high. How define?

No letters of support? Proposal is thorough but is the lack of external support a concern? How do we know this is a problem that needs to be solved?

Identifies 2 USDA strategies.

Identifies 1 Commissioner priority.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling
Applicant: Maine Cap N' Stem
Date: 3/21/2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

This RFA application touches on all 5 of the Commissioner's priorities. The project will enhance the safety of extracting and dehydration of Lions Mane. The cultivation of fungi enhances soil health. This project will reach the 650 farms that Cap n Stem works with in addition to introducing Lions Mane products to consumers in Maine. This project would improve adaption to the processing of mushrooms in a way that is preferred by consumers.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The application lists 4 strategies but two seem to be the ones that apply most to this project, "improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems" and "sustainability". The first two of investing in specialty crop research... and increasing child and adult nutrition...loosely fit and would need revisions.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes, they will be reporting Outcome 6: To Expand Specialty Crop Research and Development. Their project will research the methods of dehydration as a means of processing Lions Mane. The results will be disseminated and published.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Their research methods are clearly defined and they will publish and share results to improve the processing of Lions Mane. The methods they use for extraction and dehydration will be replicable. The research method is clearly listed such that even I could copy their process.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The application has sufficiently met this requirement.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The application has a letter of support that describes how the project will be beneficial to them and other farmers not only in the state but across the nation.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The applicant does not discuss the project beyond the scope of work described. This might be an area to build upon.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The application meets the requirements in this section.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The application meets the requirements for this section.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant
Applicant: Maine Cap N' Stem
Date: 3-20-2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The larger goal being to alleviate the costly distribution systems present and increase Maine mushroom production and consumption.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a commissioner priority area.

I'm not sure it covers all 5, supply chain is the one in question. Regardless it does address the other 4 so meets criteria.

Our project covers all five of the Commissioner Priority areas. Our goal is to develop a safe and scalable system by which medicinal mushrooms, specifically Lions Mane (LM) can be dehydrated and extracted for human consumption. Many medicinal varieties including LM, grow naturally in Maine, can be foraged for, and expanded out as mycelium in the laboratory for commercial cultivation of fruit-bodies on high-yielding Maine-based agriculture waste stream(s) (i.e. sawdust, grain waste, etc.). Once native Maine species of these fungi are mixed with organic agricultural waste streams, a harvest of fresh mushroom fruit-bodies is retained for processing and the mycelium colonized substrates return to the soil, enhancing the overall health of local ecosystems through natural myco-remediation and soil enrichment. The adaptogenic nature of mycelium rich lands are known worldwide for their ability to filter and produce healthy water supplies and ward off pests for disease-free earth. Interest in medicinal mushrooms has grown rapidly in the west. A proper study into the development and standardization of dehydration procedures, proper Soxhlet extraction methods and detailed analysis for determining the existence and concentration of the target substances: beta-glucans, triterpenes, lectins, erinacine and hericenones within LM is essential. This project's aim is in diversifying Maine mushrooms as a specialty crop, helping 30+ Maine based fungi companies access information and technology to expand the market and divert the current of imported products to ones domestically

grown, processed, and sold. This would alleviate the costly distribution systems and increase Maine mushroom production and consumption.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes by researching and standardizing the variables necessary for good manufacturing practices specific to the dehydration and extraction of LM (*Herichium Erinaceus*), which can eventually be applied to other medicinal mushrooms such as Reishi and Cordyceps. The goal is to preserve, extract and identify the concentration of pre-selected targeted substances known to be beneficial for human health. Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption on specialty crops by increasing the access of nutritional and wellness information specific to this medicinal mushroom. Drawing from the hundreds of published human clinical trials that have been performed over the last 50 years, we know the desired constituents but a standard for the identification, measurement, and concentration is necessary to inform the consumer. Improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems by improving the efficiency of domestic Maine based cultivation and processing of the LM mushroom and reducing the cost associated with the current importation model. There is extremely exciting potential in this research and development that would allow the number of Maine mushroom processors to grow and expand upon this specialty crop. Sustainability by developing and sharing a standardized model for specialty crop farmers to produce, test and sell effective, quality medicinal products, aiding in the overall sustainability of creating and selling domestically, a product that has historically been imported from overseas.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

A. Outcome 6: Expand Specialty Crop Research and Development

Indicator: 6.2 For research conclusions, the number that:

- a. Yielded findings that supported continued research
- b. Yielded findings that led to completion of study
- c. Yielded findings that allow for implementation of new practice, process or technology

To expand specialty crop research and development we will be utilizing two effective dehydration methods, direct heat and freeze drying, with specific variations in temperature to discover the shortest but most effective time it takes to achieve a fully dehydrated Lions Mane (LM) without compromising the integrity of the targeted substances in the extraction stage. A scalable model for dehydration will be selected

and tested specifically outlining the energy cost and labor associated with the dehydration of these species at a commercially viable scale. Four time and temperature variations from each of the two, dehydration systems, desiccating LM fruit-bodies will be extracted using a Soxhlet (laboratory-grade cycle concentration device used for the purpose of extractions) with specified cycle times and steady temperature controls to allow for the identification and concentration of each of the targeted substances. The testing of the extracts aims to identify and determine the concentration of the pre-selected targeted substances within each extract: beta-glucans, triterpenes, lectins, erinacine and hericenones, which will be sent off to our colleagues at Twin Arbor Labs, for this testing. Soxhlet systems are incredibly scalable and come in a variety of sizes to adapt to a particular company's planned scale. The energy and labor cost of running a set amount of cycles at specified temperatures will also be examined in detail and reported. The yielded findings from this project's completion will allow for continued research and comparative studies utilizing the discovered and outlined new processes. This ultimately will provide growth opportunities and products for specialty crop farmers to expand the domestic marketplace, which has historically relied heavily on importation for these kinds of specialty crop products.

Outcome 5: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems. Indicator 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. – 3

Misc Outcome: Specialty Crop Research and Development, Indicator: For research conclusions, the numbers that yielded findings that supported continued research; findings that led to completion of study; discoveries that allow for implementation of new practice, process, or technology

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Throughout the entire project, every planned process and procedure will be documented specific to time, temperature, weight and % to indicate specific outcomes of each dehydration, extraction and analysis test. For example, results might read like this:

Heridium Erinaceus Test 1: 454 grams of freshly cultivated and harvested h. erinaceus at a starting moisture content of 95% was successfully dehydrated down to a moisture content of 2% in 17 hours and 23 minutes through the application of 130F selective thermal transmittance. The desiccated h. erinaceus was processed through a 4mm hammer mill screen to achieve a consistent dehydrated granular powder. This 4mm h. erinaceus powder was divided and independently extracted with 95% ethanol as well as

filtered H2O in a Soxhlet system for 80 cycles each at set temperatures of 100F for a total run time of 10 hours. The H2O and Ethanol extracts were lab tested independently and analyzed for the existence and concentration of beta-glucan, triterpene and lectin content resulting in 2% betaglucons, 16% triterpenes, with no traces of lectins recovered from the Ethanol sample and 43% beta-glucans, 3% triterpenes and 10% lectins from the H2O sample. 3 compounded extracts consisting of 30% ethanol extract, 40% ethanol extract and 50% ethanol extract were retested after centrifugal force to show unchanged compound concentrations.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

One letter of support. The specialty crop stakeholders who support this project include but are not limited to all the commercial mushroom cultivators within the state of Maine and around the country as well as any existing supplement-based companies interested in vertical integration or standardized models for the production and processing of precursory dried mushroom products and their extracts. Pulling in a scalable processing procedure based on the expected outcomes of this project increases the viability in expanding the Maine based mushroom market.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Not addressed.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

No, first time applicant.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Budget is mathematically correct. I divert to my colleagues for their input on the pricing on the equipment and if that is reasonable.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items are all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson
Applicant: Maine Cap N' Stem
Date: 3/22/24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

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Positive, pass.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Positive.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Positive. Chose five priority areas when only need to choose one.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Positive.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Positive.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Negative, proposal is more like an R and D project or scientific paper. How will results benefit cultivators not selling dried or tinctures? Final report may need to be explained. Maybe a training provided?

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

One letter from a farm. Other support text in the narrative.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Self-contained project over two years. Self sustaining is not needed.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

n/a

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Positive, no program income, no indirect.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Positive.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden
Applicant: Maine Cap N' Stem
Date: 3-21-24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

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Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application is complete.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Maine Cap N' Stem states that all 5 commissioner priorities are met. However, priority #3 seems to be the most relevant, as they are trying to expand the mushroom market by providing information and technology to "30 plus" Maine fungi companies. They also mention their hope to divert imported mushrooms to more domestically grown and sold mushrooms, which touches on priority #5.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Maine Cap N' Stem highlight 4 USDA project strategies. (Investing in specialty crop research, increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption, improving efficiency, and reducing costs, and sustainability) They clearly explain how they plan to research different dehydration and extraction practices of LM mushrooms, which in turn will aid in nutrition knowledge, improving efficiency, and sustainability. Positive.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcome 6 and indicator 6.2 are identified. Two different dehydration methods will be researched on LM mushrooms, heat and freeze drying. The goal is to identify the best way to dehydrate Lion's Mane mushrooms without "compromising the integrity of the targeted substances". Findings will allow for implementation of new practices for all

fungi farmers who want to dehydrate LM mushrooms, and others without losing the targeted substances in the dehydrating process.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Findings will be reported to all Maine fungi growers in order to create a more sustainable and scalable processing procedure for the dehydration of LM mushrooms.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Yes

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

A letter of support from the Wild Fruitings Mushroom Co. was included with the submission.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The funding will be used for research into the best practices of dehydrating LM mushrooms. The goal is for these best practices to be identified and then utilized by a wide variety of mushroom growers in Maine, therefore not requiring continued support through grant funds.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Maine Cap N' Stem was not granted a contract in previous years by SCBGP.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Budget section is complete and mathematically correct. Total ask is \$100,000. 60,000 personnel, 20,000 equipment, 4,016 supplies, and 15,984 is contractual.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is completely included for each expense line on the application.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats
Applicant: Maine Cap N' Stem
Date: March 21, 2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

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The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Helps improve the soil

Creating dried mushroom product for consumption – dried blends, tinctures, extracts

Creating standards for dehydration and extraction

Works with 650 farms – how many are in Maine?

Will help small farms increase their income

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Very specific protocols. Are they qualified to do this? Could they partner with UMaine?

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No, not asked.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes. Do they need to benefit Maine farms?

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Were they asked this?

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

NA

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes

Reviewer: George Fox
Applicant: Maine Cap N' Stem
Date: 03/21/2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

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The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Yes

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Yes, very thorough.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Yes, 1 LOS

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

No.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

No.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes

Other GF notes:

Project Overview

Curious about the market opportunities for this. Application notes in Section 1 that "Interest in medicinal mushrooms has grown rapidly in the west". What does this mean in terms of market size? How much does Maine sell in this market currently? Is this a regulated market? Are the proposed techniques approved for this use?

The potential for scaling up the resulting processes seem very limited. Seems more like pure research that something that advances the Maine industry in the near term.

Are the Project Beneficiaries all Maine based? 650 seems too large to be only Maine.

External Project Support – applicant claims the project is supported by "all the commercial mushroom cultivators within the state of Maine and around the country". What is the proof of this claim? Seems very over reaching.

Data Collection to Report on Outcomes and Indicators – how are these outcomes going to be communicated in a meaningful way? Seems clear about what data will be collected. But how will this data be used?

Letters of support are limited to one producer. Seems like appropriate LOS but only 1 submitted.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – Increasing Specialty Crop Knowledge, Consumption, and soil health in Maine’s communities through gardening and education.

Date: 3/22/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

“Projects to enhance soil and ecosystem health” is the priority area. This does not address how the anticipated outcomes and indicators will address the Commissioner priority area, it goes on to state what the project is in the project summary. The increase of knowledge is talked about as an outcome, but it is not clear on how that will be measured.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The USDA strategy noted is to “increase child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops” and “increasing access to specialty crops.”

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

They will hold educational events and measure success by attendance and surveys distributed to understand the knowledge gained by these events.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

They do not address how the data they collect will be monitored. They talk about collecting data via attendance. The applicant estimates 2400 people increasing knowledge about how to grow and access specialty crops, but they do not share how the data will be collected or monitored. There is not clarity on how the results of the data will be disseminated.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Letter of support is from a partner and involved in the project. Other stakeholders are listed in the external project support section., educators and individuals who are interested in seeking knowledge about gardening and food preservation.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.
The application does not address sustainability.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.
The budget meets the stated requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Some of the costs are not thoroughly explained in how they further objectives of the project, there's some question on whether this all-benefits specialty crops.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – Garden-Food Education

Date: 3-22-2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The CDC reports that only one in ten people are consuming enough fruits and vegetables. This can lead to negative health outcomes and a higher risk of disease and this is true in Maine. This grant will support the increased knowledge and consumption of fruits and vegetables by providing educational events and written materials to the community. The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) and the Maine School Garden Network (MSGN) are both long standing organizations with broad and diverse audiences eager for education and learning as well as strong partnerships throughout the state and these organizations are well-suited to take on this work. The impact will have a broad community effect due to this far reach and the variety of events and materials that will be shared as part of this grant. These will include monthly newsletters, a gardening booklet, educational articles, and an array of educational events including Maine School Garden Day and introduction to gardening courses. Local farms will be highlighted as well, especially in educational materials focused on the preservation and cooking of local foods grown in gardens or by other local growers. Though some of these materials and events are able to cover some related costs through registration fees, our organizations work on making these events and materials accessible to meet the broader impact goals of this grant project means this funding is required for the project's success. Long term we continue to explore various funding opportunities to support this and similar work.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Self-Sustaining block left blank but information found in other area of application.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The educational materials shared as part of this grant project will focus on ways of gardening and growing that enhance soil and ecosystem health. Participants will learn about sustainable growing techniques which will include the importance of soil health, organic matter, composting, mulching, pollinators and beneficial insects, the use of sustainable materials and more. As stated in the article, "Contribution of Home Gardens to Sustainable Development: Perspectives from A Supported Opinion Essay" published by the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, "In fact,

home gardens might contribute to halt habitat degradation/destruction and biodiversity loss, mitigate locally ongoing climate change, and contribute to several human wellbeing and health benefits of experiencing nature.”

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The primary USDA strategies addressed by this grant are increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops, as well as increasing access to specialty crops. These goals will be addressed by MOFGA and through MSGN through our educational events and materials. The CDC reports that 9 out of 10 individuals are not getting enough fruits and vegetables and makes note that gardens can be a strategy to address this issue. Additionally, educational opportunities and materials focused on cooking and preserving local fruits and vegetables will further increase nutrition and consumption of these items. As referenced above under “Commissioner priorities,” sustainability will also be addressed in these educational offerings and opportunities.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

1: Increasing Consumption and Consumer Purchasing of Specialty Crops

1.1 Total number of consumers who gained knowledge about specialty crops.

1.1a Adults: 2400

2: Increasing Access to Specialty Crops and Expanding Specialty Crop Production and Distribution

2.1 Number of stakeholders that gained technical knowledge about producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing specialty crops: 2200

2.2 Number of stakeholders that reported producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing more specialty crops: 200

While our events, education opportunities, and data collection will be created for and accessed by adults, at Maine School Garden Day we expect 100 adult attendees (included in the numbers above) to gain knowledge in these areas and then share that knowledge and learning with the students in their classrooms.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

We have been and will continue to survey participants at the end of each education workshop for increased knowledge and anticipated changes in growing practices. We will also survey the broader community to receive feedback on specific educational

needs. We will also collect attendance numbers and the number of individuals receiving educational materials (for example, the number of people receiving the newsletter)

We expect 2400 people to increase knowledge about specialty crops or gain technical knowledge about the topic over the course of our year of educational events and distribution of our educational materials. We plan to count attendance at events, and will also note how many educational materials are shared. We will also survey participants to learn more about knowledge gained in these areas. The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

1 Letter of Support, Maine School & garden Network (beneficiary of project)

The specialty crop stakeholders who support this project are individuals throughout Maine interested in increasing their knowledge and abilities in gardening and food preservation. Stakeholders also include educators who are looking to increase their knowledge in these areas. There are many of these individuals who are interested in increasing their skills and knowledge to provide themselves, their families, their communities, and their students with improved nutrition and food access.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Not addressed on page 16 of 8 in File 3 but...

Though some of these materials and events are able to cover some related costs through registration fees, our organizations work on making these events and materials accessible to meet the broader impact goals of this grant project means this funding is required for the project's success. Long term we continue to explore various funding opportunities to support this and similar work.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

First time application for this project.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Budget section is thoroughly completed and mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – Gardening and Food Education

Date: 3/25/24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Positive.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Positive, one priority, enhance soil and ecosystem health.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Positive,

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s). **Positive.**

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

“We expect 2400 people to increase knowledge about specialty crops or gain technical knowledge about the topic over the course of our year of educational events and distribution of our educational materials. We plan to count attendance at events, and will also note how many educational materials are shared. We will also survey participants to learn more about knowledge gained in these areas.” Hands on workshops, webinars, intro to gardening classes, workshops at CGF and hosting Maine School Garden Day. Radio and booklets, too.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Maine School Garden Network letter

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

There is some program income. Mostly from registration fees.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. Positive.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Positive.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project. Positive.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – Gardening and Food Education

Date: 3-22-2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Enhancing soil and ecosystem health is identified as the commissioner priority area. The project aims to teach participants different growing techniques including soil health, composting, mulching, etc.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

USDA Project Strategy: Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops. Very briefly states how they will integrate this project strategy.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Outcomes 1 and 2. Indicators 1.1, 1.1a, 2.1, and 2.2. 100 adult attendees are expected for Maine School Garden Day, as well as many students.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Data collection will consist of surveys, attendance records, and records of the quantity of educational materials shared.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not mentioned in the application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

One letter of support from MSGN, who is a partner of the project. Does this diminish the weight of the letter of support? The estimated number of project beneficiaries is listed at 2,400.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Left completely blank

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGp subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGp award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGp project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Not previously funded through SCBGp.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Total ask is for \$99,900. The expenses are mathematically correct.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is provided for each expense line. Question about how well each justification relates to specialty crops.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – Gardening and Food Education

Date: March 22, 2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Trying to increase food security through improved understanding of backyard gardening? Does this support specialty crop producers? Perhaps by increasing the consumption of these crops?

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Soil health. Not super clear about the connection

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Child and adult nutrition education, again not super clear.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes. But it doesn't speak to increased purchasing as a result of this increased information change. Need to demonstrate that knowledge change equals behavior change.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No. Not clear on the need or partners.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

NA

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

NA

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

No, some items are not explained well, such as the gardening booklet

Reviewer: George Fox

Applicant: Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association – Gardening and Food Education

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Yes.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

No, it does not clearly do this. It references a Commissioner priority, but it is focused on home gardening, not producers.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Again, focuses on home gardening, not aligned with USDA strategies.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Not meaningfully defined. Focuses on consumers, not producers.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Not meaningfully defined. Focuses on consumers, not producers.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No, does not. LOS are from project partners, and again, focused on home gardening.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

No, does not.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: Maine Potato Board – Improving Fungicide Decision Support Systems with Spore Trapping in Maine.

Date: 3/22/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The applicant did not number the files as stated in the instructions of the RFA. The applicant did not fill out form 2 as stated in RFA instructions.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The application does not clearly articulate how the project or anticipated outcomes and indicators will address a Commissioner priority area.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The application does not clearly describe how the project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The applicant did not submit File #2. The Objectives are stated. The outcome measure is to “improve pest and disease control processes”. They also have 14 indicators chosen.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The applicant describes how the research will benefit the industry as a whole. The applicant does not explain how the data will be monitored.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

There were no letters of support or any explanation regarding the external project support or stakeholders that would benefit from the project.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The applicant did not meet requirements in this, there was no statement about how the project would become self-sustaining.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The application meets requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The application meets minimum requirements.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant
Applicant: Maine Potato Board – Fungicide
Date: 3-22-24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Maine Potato Board will improve the decision support systems for Maine potato producers to control Early and Late blight. Confirming the presence or absence of fungal pathogens of potato crops prior to infection has the potential to provide growers with significant cost savings related to fungicide product selection and application scheduling. Determining if the pathogen is present is a key piece of information in the disease triangle and for determining if, and what, fungicide applications are warranted.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

No, Other support from fed/state grants left blank. External project support blank, commissioner priority area left blank and USDA Project strategy also left blank. 2 files required, only 1 submitted.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a commissioner priority area.

Not addressed at all.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Not addressed at all.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

4. IMPROVE PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL PROCESSES

Indicators	Value
4.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about science-based tools to combat pests and diseases	250
4.2 Number of stakeholders that adopted pest and disease control best practices, technologies, or innovations	25
4.3 Number of stakeholders trained in early detection and rapid response practices to combat pests and diseases, and of those:	
4.3a the number of additional acres managed using integrated pest management	
4.4 Number of stakeholders that implemented new diagnostic systems, methods, or technologies for analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases	
4.5 Total number of producers/processors that enhanced or maintained pest and disease control practices, and of those, the number that reported:	125
4.5a Reduction in product lost to pest and diseases	125
4.5b Improved crop quality	125
4.5c Reduction in labor costs	
4.5d Reduction in pesticide use	125

7. IMPROVE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY OF SPECIALTY CROPS

Indicators	Value
7.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies	250
7.2 Number of stakeholders reported with an intent to adopt environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies	25
7.3 Number of producers that adopted environmental best practices or tools	20
7.4 Number of new tools/technologies developed or enhanced to improve sustainability/conservation or other environmental outcomes	1
7.5 Number of additional acres managed with sustainable practices, tools, or technologies that focused on:	
7.5a Water quality/ conservation	20,000
7.5b Soil health	20,000
7.5c Biodiversity	20,000
7.5d Reduction in energy use	
7.5e Other positive environmental outcomes (optional)	20,000

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Spornado systems out of Toronto, ON, will also be deployed, but will require the hiring of a technician to collect and ship samples for molecular testing. Again, results are returned and disseminated industry-wide for growers to share. Grower privacy is respected by reporting by geographic township basis.

A survey instrument will be created and distributed to growers and crop consultants as to the perceived value of the spore trapping network, and its benefit in augmenting our current decision support system. It will also quantify the number of fungicide application decrease/increase, as well as usage of fungicide type (broad spectrum vs. pathogen- targeted).

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

0 Letters of Support

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Section left blank.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

First time project.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

This = \$5616.00 not \$5564.00

+	#	Trip Destination	Type of Expense (e.g., airfare, car rental, hotel, etc.)	Unit of Measure (e.g., days, nights, miles)	Number of Units	Cost per Unit	Number of Travelers Claiming Expense	Funds Requested
-	1	Sporando Trap fields	mileage	13weeks x 800miles per week	10400	\$0.54	1	\$5,564.00
Travel Subtotal								\$5,564.00

Spornado justification for why contractual/consultant services are to be used to meet the anticipated outcomes and objectives is missing.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items are all allowable.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson
Applicant: Maine Potato Board – Fungicide
Date: 3/25/24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Positive.**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Application is incomplete.

Files not correctly named.

Did not check drop down “other support from federal or state grant programs”

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Negative, did not include file 2.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Negative, did not include file 2.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Negative, did not include file 2.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

One survey instrument. Need more on how to distribute results.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Negative, need more.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Negative, need more.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved. n/a

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Spornado Trap field milage justification confusing. How many technicians for the 800/week?

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden
Applicant: Maine Potato Board – FSMA
Date: 3-22-2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

No, the entire project overview is missing. (File 2)

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Missing***

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Missing***

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Missing*** Outcomes and indicators are selected in file 3, but no explanation is given with them.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Surveys will be given to growers and crop consultants. However, no dissemination plan is described.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not included in the application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Blank on the application, no letters of support are included.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Also left completely blank on the application.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Not previously funded through SCBGP.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

\$62,512 total ask. There is a small mathematical error in the spore trap fields.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justification is brief, but present for each expense line item.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats

Applicant: Maine Potato Board - Fungicide decision support systems

Date: March 22, 2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The long form portions are missing

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

No

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

No

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Defines them but does not explain them

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

No

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

NA

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

No

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

NA

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

This is mostly a contract with an out of country business. Need more information about why they were selected.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

No

Reviewer: George Fox
Applicant: Maine Potato Board – Fungicide
Date:
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes, meets this requirement.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

Does not follow prescribed format. Missing file 2, incorrect file names.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

No, does not meet this requirement. Missing File 2 possibly included this info but not included in application package.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Yes, meets this requirement.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

No, does not meet this requirement. No file 2 included in application package.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

No, does not meet this requirement. Describes data gathering methods but does not explain how this info will be communicated to stakeholders.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No, does not meet this requirement.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No, does not meet this requirement.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

No, does not meet this requirement.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

n/a

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes, meets this requirement.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes, meets this requirement.

Reviewer: Jane Kirsling

Applicant: Maine Potato Board –Promoting the Maine Potato Industry and Agriculture at Fair Venues

Date: 3/25/2024

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application is missing File #2 and the files were not numbered according the RFA instructions.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

The applicant addresses a Commissioner priority but does not clearly identify the priority. The priority that most closely aligns is: Projects that market Maine specialty crops to diversified and expanded markets, or that research potential market expansion efforts and strategies. Examples include but are not limited to increasing sales to institutions, and other target markets that are new or have potential for growth in sales of Maine agricultural products”.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

The application addresses a USDA priority but does not clearly describe how which strategy will be used. The USDA strategy that most closely aligns would be “ Increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops.” The applicant does not mention potatoes as a specialty crop.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The applicant did not submit File #2. In File #3 the applicant states Outcome 1 and 1.2 with several indicators.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

The applicant describes how they will collect data but they do not describe how the data will be reported or disseminated.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

N/A

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The applicant describes that their project is supported Maine's potato industry but there are no letters of support.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

The applicant does not explain how the project is likely to become self-sustaining.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct. The budget meets the requirements.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

The renovation of the Potato booth is a separate project and is not described previously in how it connects with either the Commissioner's priorities or with a USDA priority.

Reviewer: Joy Bonenfant
Applicant: Maine Potato Board – Potato
Date: 3-22-24
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Maine potato booth at the Big E serves approximately 60,000 - 70,000 patrons each year during the course of the 17 day fair. This grant is needed to renovate the booth space to allow for quicker serving as well as add elements for education while in line as well as pictures, interactive videos for patrons to watch to showcase the Maine potato industry, handouts for patrons to show the growing seasons of the potato.

The Maine potato industry has an economic impact of \$1.3 billion dollars on the State of Maine and this grant would allow for outreach to the largest fair in the Eastern States as well as adding some handouts and local representation at the State fairs.

There is a need to promote specialty crops across our state and beyond and with the large numbers of people that attend the Big E, that would be a great venue to renovate our booth space to add pictures of agriculture, possibly a video screen to allow interactive trivia, QR codes to take you to interesting facts and information, etc. Our line outside the booth is a great spot to have this interaction as they wait for their delicious Maine baked potato.

The Maine potato booth space needs to be renovated to make the serving stations more efficient as well as to add a larger door in the back to allow for easier loading of potatoes into the space.

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

No, commissioner priority area not addressed, USDA Project strategy not addressed, Project beneficiaries left blank, self-sustaining left blank, only one file of 2 required was submitted.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Not addressed

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Not addressed

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Only one file attached so not clearly defined on both.

1. INCREASING CONSUMPTION AND CONSUMER PURCHASING OF SPECIALTY CROPS	
Indicators	Value
1.1 Total number of consumers who gained knowledge about specialty crops:	
1.1a Adults	50,000
1.1b Children	10,000
1.2 Total number of consumers who consumed more specialty crops:	
1.2a Adults	50,000
1.2b Children	10,000

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

QR codes to website will track public access throughout the Big E and fairs. Also, interactive trivia displays to keep the public interested will allow for entries for prizes and promotional items which can be tracked through the apps and websites.

Also, the sales of baked potatoes at the Big E can be tracked to show improvement on efficiency with renovation of the booth space.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

Not found

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

0 letters of support

The Maine potato industry supports this project as education and marketing of Maine's specialty crops is crucial to diversify and open markets. This will help with that public knowledge and help promote that purchase of Maine potatoes and Maine agriculture.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Not addressed

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Not a continuation of a project.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

This does not add up: $3584 \times .54 = 1935.00$ not \$3584.54

+	#	Trip Destination	Type of Expense (e.g., airfare, car rental, hotel, etc.)	Unit of Measure (e.g., days, nights, miles)	Number of Units	Cost per Unit	Number of Travelers Claiming Expense	Funds Requested
-	1	Eastern State Exposition	mileage	4 trips	3584	\$0.54	1	\$3,584.54
Travel Subtotal								\$3,584.54

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Budgeted items all allowable except prizes.

Reviewer: Gus Nelson

Applicant: Maine Potato Board – Promotion at Fairs

Date: 3/25/24

RFA# 202402032

2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

The application is incomplete.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

Negative.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

Negative.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Negative, not much of a dissemination plan.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Negative, no letters of support. And used very few of 1500 allowed characters.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Negative, not addressed.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Negative, math on travel is inaccurate.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Negative, can't fund prizes.

Reviewer: Patrick Madden
Applicant: Maine Potato Board – Potato
Date: 3-22-2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

Yes

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

No, File 2 completely missing.

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

MISSING

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

MISSING

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

MISSING

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

MISSING

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

USDA Acknowledgement of Support missing in application.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

The external support section is extremely brief, not articulated well. No letters of support included.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Left completely blank!

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

Not previously funded through SCBGP.

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

The travel section of the application is slightly off mathematically.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Justifications are very brief, not very detailed.

Reviewer: Brittany Peats
Applicant: Maine Potato Board – Potato
Date: March 22, 2024
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement).

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

No

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

No

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

No

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Yes but need much more information. Is each person who eats a baked potato going to learn more about and buy more Maine potatoes?

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

No

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

NA

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

No

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

No, seems like a one time renovation

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

NA

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Need more detail on contractor

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

More detail would be good.

Reviewer: George Fox
Applicant: Maine Potato Board – Potato
Date:
RFA# 202402032
2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

The project proposed must enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Applications must clearly demonstrate benefit to the broader specialty crop industry as a whole, rather than to a single business or entity. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that benefit a single organization (applications will not move forward if they do not meet this requirement). **Pass**

The Application is complete and adheres to the format outlined in the RFA.

No, does not follow format (missing file 2, incorrect file names).

The Application clearly articulates how the Project, and the anticipated outcomes and indicators, will address a Commissioner priority area.

No, does not.

The Application clearly describes how the Project seeks to integrate a USDA Project Strategy.

No, does not.

The USDA SCBGP outcome(s) and indicator(s) are clearly defined in both the Project Overview (File #2) and the Proposed Services Project Profile Template (File #3), and the applicant fully demonstrates how the project will measure and achieve the selected outcomes(s) and indicator(s).

Poorly defined, no indication of how this data will be communicated to stakeholders.

The Application articulates methods of monitoring, data collection, and reporting indicating how project results and lessons learned will be disseminated to enhance the competitiveness of Maine-grown specialty crops.

Minimal description.

The Application demonstrates how the Applicant will comply with the USDA Acknowledgement of Support requirements.

No.

The Application demonstrates that specialty crop stakeholders, other than the sub-applicant, individuals, and organizations involved in the project, support the Project (Letters of Support are encouraged).

Does not.

The Application explains how the Project is likely to become self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent upon publicly and privately granted funds.

Does not.

The Applicant has been granted a SCBGP subrecipient contract in award years 2021, 2022, and/or 2023 and the Application articulates how this new proposed Project will amplify the success of past SCBGP award performance. If the proposed Project is unrelated to a prior award, the Application must articulate how lessons learned from prior SCBGP project(s) were used to inform the design of the new Project and ensure that outcomes will be achieved.

N/A

The Application budget section is thoroughly complete and mathematically correct.

Yes.

The Application demonstrates compliance with USDA Specific Allowable Costs. The budget section includes a complete description of and justification for each cost including how it furthers the objectives of the project.

Yes.



Janet T. Mills
Governor

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ~~(Enter Department)~~

DACF

AMANDA BEAL
(Enter Commissioner)
Commissioner

AGREEMENT AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
RFP #: 02402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

I, **Gus Nelson**, accept the offer to become a member of the Request for Proposals (RFP) Evaluation Team for the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. I do hereby accept the terms set forth in this agreement AND hereby disclose any affiliation or relationship I may have in connection with a bidder who has submitted a proposal to this RFP.

Neither I nor any member of my immediate family have a personal or financial interest, direct or indirect, in the bidders whose proposals I will be reviewing. "Interest" may include, but is not limited to: current or former ownership in the bidder's company; current or former Board membership; current or former employment with the bidder; current or former personal contractual relationship with the bidder (example: paid consultant); and/or current or former relationship to a bidder's official which could reasonably be construed to constitute a conflict of interest (personal relationships may be perceived by the public as a potential conflict of interest).

I have not advised, consulted with or assisted any bidder in the preparation of any proposal submitted in response to this RFP nor have I submitted a letter of support or similar endorsement.

I understand and agree that the evaluation process is to be conducted in an impartial manner without bias or prejudice. In this regard, I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, there are no circumstances that would reasonably support a good faith charge of bias. I further understand that in the event a good faith charge of bias is made, it will rest with me to decide whether I should be disqualified from participation in the evaluation process.

I agree to hold confidential all information related to the contents of Requests for Proposals presented during the review process until such time as the Department formally releases the award decision notices for public distribution.

Signature

3/20/2024

Date



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
CONSERVATION, AND FORESTRY

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Amanda E. Beal
Commissioner

AGREEMENT AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
RFP #: 02402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

I, **Patrick Madden** accept the offer to become a member of the Request for Proposals (RFP) Evaluation Team for the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. I do hereby accept the terms set forth in this agreement AND hereby disclose any affiliation or relationship I may have in connection with a bidder who has submitted a proposal to this RFP.

Neither I nor any member of my immediate family have a personal or financial interest, direct or indirect, in the bidders whose proposals I will be reviewing. "Interest" may include, but is not limited to: current or former ownership in the bidder's company; current or former Board membership; current or former employment with the bidder; current or former personal contractual relationship with the bidder (example: paid consultant); and/or current or former relationship to a bidder's official which could reasonably be construed to constitute a conflict of interest (personal relationships may be perceived by the public as a potential conflict of interest).

I have not advised, consulted with or assisted any bidder in the preparation of any proposal submitted in response to this RFP nor have I submitted a letter of support or similar endorsement.

I understand and agree that the evaluation process is to be conducted in an impartial manner without bias or prejudice. In this regard, I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, there are no circumstances that would reasonably support a good faith charge of bias. I further understand that in the event a good faith charge of bias is made, it will rest with me to decide whether I should be disqualified from participation in the evaluation process.

I agree to hold confidential all information related to the contents of Requests for Proposals presented during the review process until such time as the Department formally releases the award decision notices for public distribution.

Patrick Madden

Signature

3-20-24

Date



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture,
Conservation and Forestry

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Amanda E. Beal
Commissioner

AGREEMENT AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
RFP #: 02402032
RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

I, Jane Kirsling accept the offer to become a member of the Request for Proposals (RFP) Evaluation Team for the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. I do hereby accept the terms set forth in this agreement AND hereby disclose any affiliation or relationship I may have in connection with a bidder who has submitted a proposal to this RFP.

Neither I nor any member of my immediate family have a personal or financial interest, direct or indirect, in the bidders whose proposals I will be reviewing. "Interest" may include, but is not limited to: current or former ownership in the bidder's company; current or former Board membership; current or former employment with the bidder; current or former personal contractual relationship with the bidder (example: paid consultant); and/or current or former relationship to a bidder's official which could reasonably be construed to constitute a conflict of interest (personal relationships may be perceived by the public as a potential conflict of interest).

I have not advised, consulted with or assisted any bidder in the preparation of any proposal submitted in response to this RFP nor have I submitted a letter of support or similar endorsement.

I understand and agree that the evaluation process is to be conducted in an impartial manner without bias or prejudice. In this regard, I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, there are no circumstances that would reasonably support a good faith charge of bias. I further understand that in the event a good faith charge of bias is made, it will rest with me to decide whether I should be disqualified from participation in the evaluation process.

I agree to hold confidential all information related to the contents of Requests for Proposals presented during the review process until such time as the Department formally releases the award decision notices for public distribution.

DocuSigned by:

Jane Kirsling

31ADC157D1D54E8...

3/20/2024

Signature

Date



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Amanda E. Beal
Commissioner

AGREEMENT AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
RFP #: 02402032

RFP TITLE: 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

I, Joy Bonenfant accept the offer to become a member of the Request for Proposals (RFP) Evaluation Team for the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. I do hereby accept the terms set forth in this agreement AND hereby disclose any affiliation or relationship I may have in connection with a bidder who has submitted a proposal to this RFP.

Neither I nor any member of my immediate family have a personal or financial interest, direct or indirect, in the bidders whose proposals I will be reviewing. "Interest" may include, but is not limited to: current or former ownership in the bidder's company; current or former Board membership; current or former employment with the bidder; current or former personal contractual relationship with the bidder (example: paid consultant); and/or current or former relationship to a bidder's official which could reasonably be construed to constitute a conflict of interest (personal relationships may be perceived by the public as a potential conflict of interest).

I have not advised, consulted with or assisted any bidder in the preparation of any proposal submitted in response to this RFP nor have I submitted a letter of support or similar endorsement.

I understand and agree that the evaluation process is to be conducted in an impartial manner without bias or prejudice. In this regard, I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, there are no circumstances that would reasonably support a good faith charge of bias. I further understand that in the event a good faith charge of bias is made, it will rest with me to decide whether I should be disqualified from participation in the evaluation process.

I agree to hold confidential all information related to the contents of Requests for Proposals presented during the review process until such time as the Department formally releases the award decision notices for public distribution.

Signature

3-19-24

Date



Janet T. Mills
Governor

STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ~~(enter Department)~~ Agriculture,
(conservation &

Forestry
(Enter Commissioner)
Commissioner

AGREEMENT AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

RFP #: (Insert RFP #)

RFP TITLE: (Insert RFP title)

I, (print name at right) Brittany Peats accept the offer
to become a member of the Request for Proposals (RFP) Evaluation Team for the State of
Maine Department of ~~(enter Department)~~ Agriculture. I do hereby accept the terms set forth in this
agreement AND hereby disclose any affiliation or relationship I may have in connection with a
bidder who has submitted a proposal to this RFP.

Neither I nor any member of my immediate family have a personal or financial interest, direct or
indirect, in the bidders whose proposals I will be reviewing. "Interest" may include, but is not
limited to: current or former ownership in the bidder's company; current or former Board
membership; current or former employment with the bidder; current or former personal
contractual relationship with the bidder (example: paid consultant); and/or current or former
relationship to a bidder's official which could reasonably be construed to constitute a conflict of
interest (personal relationships may be perceived by the public as a potential conflict of interest).

I have not advised, consulted with or assisted any bidder in the preparation of any proposal
submitted in response to this RFP nor have I submitted a letter of support or similar
endorsement.

I understand and agree that the evaluation process is to be conducted in an impartial manner
without bias or prejudice. In this regard, I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, there
are no circumstances that would reasonably support a good faith charge of bias. I further
understand that in the event a good faith charge of bias is made, it will rest with me to decide
whether I should be disqualified from participation in the evaluation process.

**I agree to hold confidential all information related to the contents of Requests for
Proposals presented during the review process until such time as the Department
formally releases the award decision notices for public distribution.**

Signature

March 19, 2024
Date



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF ~~(enter Department)~~
AGRICULTURE

Janet T. Mills
Governor

(Enter Commissioner)
Commissioner

AGREEMENT AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
RFP #: (Insert RFP #)
RFP TITLE: (Insert RFP title)

I, George Fox accept the offer to become a member of the Request for Proposals (RFP) Evaluation Team for the State of Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. I do hereby accept the terms set forth in this agreement AND hereby disclose any affiliation or relationship I may have in connection with a bidder who has submitted a proposal to this RFP.

Neither I nor any member of my immediate family have a personal or financial interest, direct or indirect, in the bidders whose proposals I will be reviewing. "Interest" may include, but is not limited to: current or former ownership in the bidder's company; current or former Board membership; current or former employment with the bidder; current or former personal contractual relationship with the bidder (example: paid consultant); and/or current or former relationship to a bidder's official which could reasonably be construed to constitute a conflict of interest (personal relationships may be perceived by the public as a potential conflict of interest).

I have not advised, consulted with or assisted any bidder in the preparation of any proposal submitted in response to this RFP nor have I submitted a letter of support or similar endorsement.

I understand and agree that the evaluation process is to be conducted in an impartial manner without bias or prejudice. In this regard, I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, there are no circumstances that would reasonably support a good faith charge of bias. I further understand that in the event a good faith charge of bias is made, it will rest with me to decide whether I should be disqualified from participation in the evaluation process.

I agree to hold confidential all information related to the contents of Requests for Proposals presented during the review process until such time as the Department formally releases the award decision notices for public distribution.

Signature

March 29, 2024

Date