



Department of  
Agriculture

# Ohio Specialty Crop Promotion Program

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## 2021 Request for Proposals

Application Deadline:  
Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 5:00pm EST

Ohio Department of Agriculture  
Attn: Ashley McDonald  
8995 East Main Street  
Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068  
614-728-6206  
SCBG@agri.ohio.gov

## **Program Overview**

The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) will be receiving a federal allocation from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for specialty crop promotion in 2021. ODA is currently soliciting projects to solely enhance the competitiveness of Ohio specialty crops. It is the intent that all funding will be used to advance the long-term economic and viability of Ohio's specialty crop industry while increasing the marketability of specialty crops.

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will allocate funding to Ohio to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. The Ohio Department of Agriculture will award multiple grants to sub-recipients from these funds. **Grant awards will range from a minimum of \$25,000 up to a maximum of \$150,000.** Applicants are encouraged to coordinate efforts of similar projects; however, unique projects will be considered.

Because USDA is the funding authority, the agency will have final approval for projects submitted through this notice. ODA will utilize a review panel to make funding recommendations to ODA Director Dorothy Pelanda. The review panel and Director's decision will be forwarded to USDA to make the final determination concerning the awards. Projects cannot begin until the USDA has made their official award announcement and the contract between ODA and the sub-grantee has been signed by all parties. Projects are permitted to last two years in duration (October 2021– October 2023).

## **Purpose of Grant**

Specialty crops are identified as fruits, vegetables, dried fruit, honey, maple syrup, tree nuts and nursery crops (including floriculture). The full list from USDA can be found [here](#).

## **Applicant Eligibility Requirements**

The Ohio Department of Agriculture will only accept proposals for consideration for specialty crop block grant funds from food and agricultural non-profit organizations, cooperatives, associations or commodity groups, universities and research institutions (hereinafter referred to as "eligible applicants") that represent specific specialty crop sectors.

Individuals and partnerships (hereinafter referred to as "partnering entities") may participate in this grant program by developing and submitting proposals, through an eligible applicant. If an eligible applicant is partnering with a partnering entity, the eligible applicant will be the grantee with the Ohio Department of Agriculture for the block grant funds and be the party responsible for the completion of the grant and associated requirements. Eligible parties are encouraged to seek applications or proposals from their membership to be considered for submission for a specialty crop block grant.

Private individuals and companies are not eligible to apply. Employees of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, members of his or her immediate family, or business partners of the aforementioned are not eligible to receive a grant. Members of the review committee are not permitted to apply for the grant if they are the applicant or have a financial obligation to project.

Each applicant must obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number which is a nine-digit number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities. A DUNS number may be obtained from D&B by telephone (currently 866-705-5711) or by [clicking here](#). You are not required to have the DUNS number before submitting your application to the Ohio Department of Agriculture for the 2020 Specialty Crop Block Grant program, but you will be required to have the number before accepting funds as a recipient.

### Proposal Timeline

Application deadline	April 15, 2021 by 5pm EST
Review panel recommendations	May 3, 2021 (TENTATIVE)
Ohio plan Due to USDA	May 2021 (Date to be released by USDA)
Expected date of completed contract and grant awards	November 1, 2021

### Submission Criteria

To be considered, applications must be submitted electronically to Ashley McDonald at [SCBG@agri.ohio.gov](mailto:SCBG@agri.ohio.gov) or [Ashley.McDonald@agri.ohio.gov](mailto:Ashley.McDonald@agri.ohio.gov) no later than 5 PM on Thursday, April 15, 2021.

### Grant Eligibility Requirements

- A. Proposals shall be designed to address obstacles or opportunities that solely impact the competitive advantage of Ohio's specialty crop industry; develop a plan to address these obstacles or opportunities. *Proposals must clearly identify measures that can quantify the results or outcome of the proposed project. Proposals that are able to demonstrate clear profit and employment opportunities to the specialty crop industry will be given a higher rating during the review process.* Grant projects may focus on, but are not restricted to these areas:

- Water Quality
- Third party audit education for buyers (retailer industry) of Ohio's specialty crops
- Development of season extension and sales opportunities
- Provide improvements in the aggregation and distribution of specialty crops
- Develop value-added products using Ohio specialty crops (All projects seeking assistance to develop a value-added venture must submit complete financial statements and a completed feasibility study.)
- Support for efforts to reduce or mitigate risk for specialty crop producers, particularly in the areas of climate and weather extremes, crop disease, pest control and/or labor
- Diversification and expansion of production and processing
- Implement programs or projects that provide outreach and education on the importance of the industry with regards to Ohio's economy, food safety or the nutrition and health benefits of specialty crops
- Provide technical and direct support to beginning producers
- Assist specialty crop producers in cooperative marketing efforts

- Enhancing food safety and related areas
  - Initiatives to assist Ohio’s nursery industry
  - Developing new and improved specialty crops through seed varieties, cultivars, cuttings, etc.
  - Increasing child and/or adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops
  - Building infrastructure to support alternative direct markets to consumers that protect public health
  - Addressing COVID 19 impact on specialty crop industry
- B. All applicants must provide matching funds of a minimum of 25% of the requested grant amount. This match can be cash or in-kind contribution. Please note that funds can only be used for expenses related directly to the project.

### **Funding Restrictions**

The following projects do not qualify for funds under the SCBG.

Advertising and public relations costs used to solely promote the image of an organization, general logo, or general brand, rather than specialty crops is unallowable.

- A promotional campaign to increase sales of “XYZ Grown” Watermelon is acceptable while increasing brand awareness of “XYZ Grown” generically is not.
- Promoting tomatoes while including an organization’s logo in the promotion is acceptable, while generally promoting an organization’s logo is not.
- Promotional items could say “Buy XYZ Grown Apples” but not “XYZ Grown” which promotes XYZ generically.
- A promotional campaign to increase producer sales of “XYZ Grown fruits and vegetables” is acceptable while increasing membership in “XYZ Grown” generically is not.

Grant funds cannot be used for coupon/incentive redemptions or price discounts. Costs associated with printing distribution, or promotion of coupons/tokens or price discounts (i.e., a print advertisement that contains a clip-out coupon) are allowable only if they solely promote the specialty crop rather than promote or benefit a program or single organization.

Grant funds cannot be used for costs associated with the use of trade shows, meeting rooms, displays, demonstrations, exhibits and the rental space for activities that do not solely promote specialty crops.

Aquaponics is allowable if the crops that are being grown are eligible specialty crops and the focus of the project is on the specialty crop and not the fish.

- A project to determine whether carp, catfish or tilapia are best for growing lettuce is acceptable.
- A project to study whether lettuce or tomato produced the highest yield of tilapia is not acceptable.

- A project to farm fish using an aquaponics system and then sell the fish is not acceptable.
- A project to grow specialty crops where both the specialty crops and the fish are sold is not acceptable.

### **Application Instructions and Proposal Format**

An online application for 2021 is available at:

[www.agri.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/oda/divisions/markets/resources/SCBG](http://www.agri.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/oda/divisions/markets/resources/SCBG). Proposals will include the following elements described in detail in the online application and links to supporting documents. Reviewers will consider opportunities to link separate proposals with similar goals and objectives and may make suggestions for resubmission of a collaborative proposal.

1. Project Title
2. Duration of Project – Provide a beginning date and end date.
3. Project, Partner and Summary – Provide a project summary of 250 words or less suitable for dissemination to the public. This should include a very brief (1 sentence) description to include the name of the organization; concise outline; and description of the general tasks to be completed.
4. Project Purpose – What is the specific issue, problem, or need that the project will address? Provide a listing of objectives that the project hopes to achieve.
5. Project Beneficiaries – Estimate the number of beneficiaries; will the project benefit socially disadvantaged farmers or beginning farmers?
6. Statement of Solely Enhancing Specialty Crops – Include a statement that confirms the project will specifically enhance specialty crops.
7. Continuation Project Information – If this is a continuation of a previously funded project, please describe how it will differ from the build on the previous efforts; 3 to 5 sentences of the outcomes of the previous efforts and lessons learned on potential project improvements.
8. Other Support from Federal or State Grant Programs – This grant will not fund duplicative projects. Did you submit this project to a Federal or State grant program? Please identify the grant if applied.
9. External Project Support – Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support this project and why. (Must be other than the applicant and organizations involved.)
10. Expected Measurable Outcomes – Select at least one of the eight Outcome Measures provided on the application. Choose at least one Outcome Indicator from the attached

document that corresponds with the measurable outcome. **Marketing projects must use the outcomes and indicators provided.**

11. Miscellaneous Outcome Measure (Only non-marketing projects can create their own outcomes.) – In the unlikely event that the outcomes and indicators are not relevant to your project, you must develop a project-specific outcome(s) and indicator(s) which will be subject to approval by USDA/AMS.
12. Data Collection to Report on Outcomes and Indicators – Explain how you will collect the required data to report on the outcome and indicator.
13. Budget Narrative – All expenses described in the budget narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP. A 25% match is required by ODA. Please prepare a separate budget sheet showing your 25%. Please use the following as a guideline when preparing your budget narrative.
  - Personnel – List the organization’s employees whose time and effort can be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to project activities. Include the number of hours or %FTE for each person. Provide justification for each individual by describing the activities and when they will occur.
  - Fringe Benefits – Provide the fringe benefit rates for each of the project’s salaried employees described in the Personnel section that will be paid with SCBG funds.
  - Travel – Explain the purpose of each trip request to include destination; purpose of travel; type of travel (air, car); number of days/miles; cost per day/mile; hotel rate per day; number of travelers. You must follow the state travel rules. For travel rules visit: <http://ohiosharedservices.ohio.gov/TravelExpense/>. Justification must include when the trips will occur and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project.
  - Equipment – Purchases of equipment is not permitted. Equipment is an item that costs \$5,000 or more.
  - Supplies – List the materials and supplies that cost less than \$5,000 per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the project. Justification should include the purpose of the supply and how it is necessary for the completion of the project’s objectives and outcomes. ***Please be as detailed as possible when listing supplies, including unit/cost.***
  - Program Income – This is gross income generated by the grant and must be reinvested back into the project to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Please explain how you will reinvest the income into your project on your written quarterly reports. Your quarterly reimbursement form must include the funds collected that specific quarter.

- Contractual/Consultant – These costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be described separately. A copy of each completed contract must be submitted to ODA for the project file.
  - If the contractor is already chosen, please clarify that the policies and procedures were followed and conform to the federal laws and standards identified in 7 CFR Part 3019.40 through 48 or 3016.36, as applicable.
  - If the contractor has not been selected, provide acknowledgement that the procurement processes have not yet been conducted and an assurance that the proper guidelines and procedures will be followed as identified in 7 CFR Part 3019.40 through 48 or 3016.36, as applicable.
  - Provide an itemized budget (personnel, fringe, travel, equipment, supplies) with appropriate justification. If indirect costs are/will be included in the contract, include the indirect cost rate.
  - If contractor hourly rates exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employees in your area (for information visit <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>), provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses.
  - Other – Include any expense not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. This section may include meetings, conferences, advertisements, publication costs and data collection expenses. Justify the expense and why it is important to the success of the project.

### Support Letters

All proposals **must include three (not more than three)** letters of support for the project from industry members that confirm a need for this project. The letters must be received with the original grant application.

### Appendices

- Current résumés for each individual working on the project (**no more than 2 pages each**)
- Three industry support letters, and
- Copy of IRS 501 (c) 3 determination

ODA may ask a potential grantee for additional information on any of the application requirements prior to awarding the grant or entering into a grant agreement with the grantee. ODA reserves the right to fund the project in part, add or delete tasks and ask for clarification on the work plan, timeline, expected measurable outcomes or budget. No agreement will be entered into until ODA is satisfied with all of the project specifications.

## **Project Revisions**

After a proposal is accepted and a grant agreement is entered into between the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the grantee, no modifications or changes can be made to substantially change the project scope, objectives or budget, extend the project period, change key persons associated with the grant, or increase the budget amount without submitting a request in writing to the ODA. Adding a new contractor to the project after it has been approved must require approval from USDA. Any shift in the budget more than 20 percent must be approved by the USDA as well. Budget changes under 20 percent must be emailed to ODA for state approval.

## **General Compliance**

Grantee agrees to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws in the conduct of the work under the grant agreement.

Furthermore, the Grantee acknowledges the application and documents submitted to the Ohio Department of Agriculture are considered public records pursuant to R.C. 149.43(A)(1) unless the records are not releasable due to an exemption or are protected under another state or federal law. Specifically, the Grantee may claim that some of the documentation submitted is considered a trade secret, and must establish that the record qualifies as a trade secret by following the requirements set forth in 1333.61(D) of the Ohio Revised Code, including, but not limited to, indicating which documents are considered by the applicant as trade secrets, submitting a statement describing the measures the applicant has taken to safeguard the confidentiality of the information, and what value or injury would result in the release of the information. The applicant is responsible for taking the necessary steps to establish that a document is a trade secret under R.C. 1333.61 (D).

## **Eligible/ Ineligible Expenses**

Refer to the [Agricultural Marketing Service \(AMS\) Grants Division General Terms and Conditions](#) for allowable and ineligible expenses under the program. This information could potentially change with the release of the 2021 USDA SCBGP RFA document.

## **Additional Documents:**

Upon approval, successful applicants will be required to complete and submit the following documents to ODA, among others:

- Contract with ODA

- DUNNS number

- Form W-9 & Vendor Information Form: (If this is your first-time receiving payment from the State of Ohio.)

## **REPORTING AND REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS FOR APPROVED APPLICATIONS**

### **Quarterly, Annual and Final Reporting**

Grantees shall submit written reports detailing the progress of each project. Progress reports must be submitted to the ODA on a quarterly and annual basis. The annual report must be submitted to ODA by December 1, 2022. You will be notified by email with the proper formatting of the report prior to the due date. Refer to the [USDA quarterly and annual explanation](#).

A final performance report will also be required and due to ODA on December 1, 2023 and submitted in the format requested by the USDA. You will receive a reminder email along with formatting instructions. Refer to the [USDA final reporting instructions](#).

### **Reimbursements**

Please note payments for this grant are strictly provided as a reimbursement of expense incurred. Quarterly reimbursement requests are to be submitted once a quarter with the written quarterly report and can be found at [www.agri.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/oda/divisions/markets/resources/SCBG](http://www.agri.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/oda/divisions/markets/resources/SCBG).

In order to receive reimbursements, an invoice must be submitted to ODA after actual expenses are incurred by the grantee. Supporting documentation for both the reimbursement and match is required with the reimbursement request. All documentation of expenses shall be required as part of the budget closeout report.

- **EXAMPLE:** Request for personnel reimbursement must include hours worked, tasks performed and hourly rate. Matching for personnel should also show the same however when submitted with the reimbursement form, please keep the reimbursement documentation separate from the match.

For more information on Ohio's 2021 Specialty Crop Block Grant application process contact Ashley McDonald at 614-728-6202, [Ashley.McDonald@agri.ohio.gov](mailto:Ashley.McDonald@agri.ohio.gov) or [SCBG@agri.ohio.gov](mailto:SCBG@agri.ohio.gov).