

New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets

2013 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Deadline for Questions – April 25, 2013

Q1: Will the Department consider funding the continuation of a current successful specialty crop block grant that ends this year (with additional elements that improve and expand the project)? Or do they always want to fund new programs?

A: Projects funded under previous SCBG funding rounds that propose to continue to benefit the greatest number of beneficiaries in the priority areas of: Research and Grower Education, Food Safety and Marketing and Promotion are eligible to apply for funding under the current solicitation. It will be necessary to state how the proposed continuation will not duplicate work previously completed.

Q2. Is there a preference for proposals that involve multiple counties or would a project that is based in a single county still be just as favorable as a multi-county proposal?

A: There is not a preference for proposals that involve multiple counties. However, the Department's intent is to fund projects that produce the highest degree of public benefit and measurable outcomes to New York specialty crop producers in relation to each dollar spent.

Q3: If a non-profit organization applied for a project to grow test plots of hops on several "test farms" in the area, would this qualify for the specialty crop grant program?

A: Yes, this would be an eligible research project (please refer to page 4, section 2.2, Project Eligibility) and non-profit organizations are eligible to apply for funding (please refer to page 4, section 2.1, Applicant Eligibility, of the RFP). Hops is an eligible Specialty Crop (please refer to page 15, Culinary Herbs and Spices).

Q4: Can you tell me roughly how many applications your office received in the last round of funding, and of those, how many were awarded?

A: There were thirty-six (36) applications received for the 2012 USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Funding Program and twelve (12) projects that were awarded funding. For the list of funded projects, please visit <http://www.governor.ny.gov/press/121220121millionpromotenyspecialcropsandwinebeer> on the Department's website.

Q5: How might a farm interested in further growing specialty crops get involved with the 2013 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program?

A: Based on the information provided, per section 2.1 of the RFP, eligible applicants include: Not-For Profit organizations (NFP), Not-for Profit educational institutions, State, local and Indian Tribal governments. Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution or individual. Single organizations, institutions and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners. The Department strongly encourages collaborative efforts between NFPs, educational institutions, and government applicants and provide for profits in order to achieve the goals and objectives of this program. For profits are not eligible; however, for profits may partner with not-for-profits provided that the NFP is the lead applicant.

Q6: My non-profit organization is planning on applying for the USDA Specialty Crop Grant. My question is about the guidelines in the RFP regarding project duration. Specifically, my organization is in the process of starting a farmer cooperative to produce value added products for sale and donation. This seems a perfect fit under the Marketing and Promotion priority area, especially regarding "increasing customer sales of New York specialty crops at farmers' markets, CSA operations, produce auctions, roadside stands, and other community and direct marketing outlets", however, we obviously want this coop to be a permanent fixture in our community and not a two year thing. Is there a way that we could make our project eligible under the two year criteria, such as seeking funding for successful completion of a full years (or two years) growing season as a pilot project? Or would this aspect make our project ineligible?

A: As stated on page 7, section 2.3 Project Duration, of the RFP, projects must be completed within two years of the award date. However, one of the stated purposes of the New York State Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is to enhance the long-term viability of New York's specialty crop agricultural businesses and food systems. So, although a project must be completed within two years, it is expected that a project will have long-term and lasting effect on the specialty crop industry in New York State.

Q7: I see that there is USDA Specialty Crop Funding available for 2013. Does this mean that there might be funding to support regional programs again this year?

A: No decision on continuation of that particular program has been made at this time.

Q8: We started a hop yard last season. We have 500 plants currently and ten varieties. We are also growing the hops organically and testing certain varieties to see which ones will have the highest yields. When we attended Cornell cooperative extension seminar last spring & summer, we saw the need for more local hop production with the continuing growth of more craft breweries in the state of NY. We are in need of some production equipment for harvesting the crop i.e.:... hop bailer/harvester, pelletizer, vacuum sealer machine, and refrigeration storage. We are a for profit endeavor with that being said are we eligible for this grant program?

A: For profits are not eligible; however for profits may partner with not-for-profits provided that the NFP is the lead applicant. Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution or individual. Single organizations, institutions and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

Q9: Is a New York State government entity eligible to receive grant funds as a project partner to a not-for-profit applicant? For example, can they receive a portion of the grant funds for onsite coordination of a project to increase procurement of New York State fresh or minimally processed vegetables?

A: Yes, NFPs and governmental entities may partner on a project.

Q10: Is NFP status considered NYS Charities only? Is out of state charities registration acceptable?

A: NFP's must be registered with the NYS Attorney General's Charities Bureau.

Q11: Are individuals considered "Eligible Applicants" (without partnering)?

A: Individuals are not eligible applicants but may partner with an eligible applicant which would be the lead on a project.

Q12: In the "Budget Plan", can monies be applied to obtain NYS Charitable status (line item)?

A: Costs associated with preparing an application are not eligible. The below federal regulation language provides further detail regarding this issue.

"Pre-agreement costs. Pre-award costs are those incurred prior to the effective date of the award directly pursuant to the negotiation and in anticipation of the award where such costs are necessary to comply with the proposed delivery schedule or period of performance. Such costs are allowable only to the extent that they would have been allowable if incurred after the date of the award and only with the written approval of the awarding agency."

Q13: For the purposes of this grant, what type of costs are considered "indirect"?

A: Ineligible Indirect is those costs not directly related to the project for which funding is provided.

Q14: Edamame appears on the "Eligible Commodities List" while Soybeans are on the "Ineligible Commodities List". Please clarify.

A: Edamame qualifies as an Eligible Commodity because it is used as a vegetable.