2010 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Application Examples/Guidance Document

Disclaimer: Examples provided were directly taken (or slightly modified) from a USDA document and are not intended to imply in any way that they reflect the priorities or preferences of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets regarding this grant program.

Project Purpose

The project purpose section should **c**learly state the specific issue, problem, interest or need to be addressed and why the project is timely and important and the objectives of the project. If the project is receiving funding from other State or federal source(s), you must explain how Specialty Crop Block Grant funds will supplement the project.

Example 1

The recent introduction of X virus has threatened specialty crop production; the virus has already caused enormous crop losses in many States (PROBLEM). This research proposal will assess the likely spread of the virus from the initial introduction point and will identify plant reservoir hosts for the disease to form the basis for an integrated pest management strategy to prevent further crop losses (IMPORTANCE and OBJECTIVE). This project was submitted to grant program X to provide one-half salary for the Senior Research Specialist. This individual will coordinate most of the laboratory operations and perform a majority of the laboratory and greenhouse experiments. This project will not duplicate efforts, but rather enhances the program by providing additional dollars to elevate the part-time position to full time status.

Example 2

Many school children do not have access to healthy fruits and vegetables (ISSUE). The School Nutrition Association will subsidize installation of salad bars in forty schools to increase access to nutritious fruits, vegetables and nuts in school breakfasts and lunches (OBJECTIVE). Not only will this result in increased purchases from specialty crop growers, but the evaluation component also will provide a model for other schools in their efforts to market healthy meals to children (IMPORTANCE). This project has not been submitted or funded by another Federal or State grant program.

Example 3

This project would establish a crisis communication plan for the fruit and vegetable industry (OBJECTIVE) in case of emergency such as extreme drought (IMPORTANCE). The previous year's grant funds were used to complete Phase 1 which comprised of research and an audit of the fruit and vegetable industry and created recommendations for handling a crisis. Phase 2 continues the project by implementing and disseminating these recommendations throughout the State (SHOWS HOW PROJECT COMPLIMENTS PREVIOUS WORK). This project has not been submitted or funded by another Federal or State grant program.

Example 4

The State will partner with a production team to create a suite of six television and radio public service announcements to introduce and promote locally produced specialty crops (OBJECTIVE) thereby changing the purchasing behavior of consumers and retailers to "buy local" (NEED). This project is a State marketing program. The State will only promote eligible specialty crops (may include comprehensive list of eligible specialty crops) and will not use grant funds to generically cross-market other commodities which fall under state marketing programs but are outside the scope of the specialty crop definition (STATE MARKETING PROGRAM)

Potential Impact

The potential impact section should describe how the project will potentially impact the specialty crop industry. The following questions should be addressed:

- Who will benefit from the project?
- How will the beneficiaries be impacted?
- How many specialty crop producers will benefit?
- What is the estimated economic impact of the project?

Example 1

This project will impact the State's approximately 3,000 farms involved in growing the specialty crops (BENEFICIARIES IMPACTED AND #'s). These crops represent approximately $1 billion in farm income and are the largest crop in the State (ECONOMIC IMPACT). In order to continue the growth this industry has experienced in recent years, this project will develop and conduct marketing efforts to increase their market share (HOW BENEFICIARIES WILL BE IMPACTED).

Example 2

Existing and new specialty crop growers taking part in the grower education will receive an extensive education on many aspects of participating in specialty crop production and direct retail marketing (BENEFICIARIES). It is estimated that the number of specialty crop growers that will be participating in the educational workshops is 50 (# OF BENFICIARIES). Through grower education, farmers will be exposed to information on how to grow crops and successfully sell their produce at direct-to-consumer markets (HOW BENEFICIARIES WILL BE IMPACTED).

Example 3

In 2008, according to USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), the State's specialty crop industry occupied 3100 acres and had a value for utilized production of $20 million. This is evidence of the success and potential for this program. New specialty crop varieties being developed through this program will enable the State's 150 farmers (# OF BENEFICIARIES) to be competitive in growing and marketing these specialty crops (HOW BENEFICIARIES WILL BE IMPACTED). These new crops could provide $10 - $15 million in additional farm income (POTENTIAL ECONOMIC IMPACT).

Expected Measurable Outcomes

The expected measurable outcomes section should describe at least one distinct, quantifiable measurable outcome that directly and meaningfully supports the project's purpose and is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries and/or the public. Each measureable outcome, when possible, should include:

- Goal -- the overall objective the project will accomplish
- Benchmark – data or qualitative information regarding the current state or condition
- Target – specific result/outcome (numerical or qualitative)
- Performance measure – who, how and when the project's progress and outcome(s) will be measured

Examples of outcome measures may include, but are not limited to: per capita consumption, consumer awareness as a percent of target market reached, market penetration based on sales by geographic region, dollar value of exports, or web site hits. For research grants they may include generation of new knowledge, research quality, attainment of leadership in the field, or the development of human resources (e.g., providing opportunities for graduate students).

Steps to Developing Outcome Measures

Whenever possible, the outcomes should include a goal, performance measure, benchmark, and a target. The following four steps provide guidance on how to develop outcome measures.

1) ***Determine what the project will accomplish, i.e., the intended results of the project, generally expressed as a GOAL or OBJECTIVE.***

Goals or objectives should be: a) based on a needs analysis and be specific, realistic results you hope to achieve through the project activities; b) specific; and c) outcome-oriented. Outcome-oriented objectives identify the ultimate result, while the work plan activities identify how you intend to achieve the objectives. When developing outcome-oriented objectives, ask yourself "why" are you performing each grant activity; and specify not only what will be achieved, but also when those results will be achieved.

2) ***Figure out how to measure the results and select the PERFORMANCE MEASURE.***

For each objective identified in step 1, select the performance measure. Performance measures are measures/indicators used to observe progress and measure actual results compared to expected results. They are usually expressed in quantifiable terms and should be objective and measurable (numeric values, percentages, scores and indices); although in certain circumstances qualitative measures are appropriate.

3) ***Determine the BENCHMARK for each measure and set TARGET goals for future performance.***

For each measure identified in step 2, determine the benchmarks against which you will measure. Benchmarks are usually determined by researching past circumstances in the area you are trying to measure. As an alternative, you may use benchmarks established by third parties accepted as the standard-setters in your industry. If data does not exist, describe the lack of data. It may be appropriate in the first year to set vaguer targets, such as "improvement" where any increase represents outcome achievement, and set more concrete targets in subsequent years when benchmark data is available.

Use the benchmark data to set targets for the quantity of change expected. Targets may be framed in terms of:

a) Absolute level of achievement (ex: feed 150 homeless people);
b) Change in level of achievement (ex: feed 150 homeless people, 35 more than last year); or
c) Change in relation to the scale of the problem (ex: feed 150 homeless people, approximately 10% of the city's homeless population.)

If you are starting up a new project or trying new approaches remember that little or no measurable progress will be evident in the project start-up phase. This delay in seeing measurable results should be reflected in target-setting. When setting targets, you should take into account external factors that influence your success. You may have a grand ultimate goal, but you should view annual targets as small steps toward that ultimate goal.

You may also want to set stretch goals by using benchmarks as your targets. Benchmarks tell you how the rest of the industry is doing; when you gather data for benchmarks, you look at the results of other organizations serving your type(s) of customers, doing your type of work. In your State plan, you may want to stick to a modest level of planned achievement and reserve your stretch goals for internal use. Another alternative is to include minimum and maximum targets in your application. For example, "We plan, at a minimum, for a 5% increase. However, we will strive for a 10% increase, which our data shows is possible if all external factors work in our favor and our new methodology yields the same results in the demonstration phase."

4) ***Develop your performance monitoring plan or data collection plan.***
Define who your data sources are and how the data will be collected. If the project involves a survey, provide some information about the nature of the questions that will be asked, the methodology to be used and the population to be surveyed. If a draft questionnaire is available, you may want to include a copy with the application. Outline how data gathered will be used to correct deficiencies and improve performance, both as it gathered and analyzed and in subsequent project periods. This data collection plan should be integrated into your work plan and budget.

Examples of Outcome Measures

The following are examples of outcome measures. They do not include examples of a performance monitoring plan.

Example 1

The GOAL of this project is to promote specialty crop X in Canada in order to increase the volume. Volume Increase: BENCHMARK 2009: Actual volume (20# equiv. cases) of specialty crop exported to Canada: 53,969 TARGET 2011: 60,000; TARGET 2012: 70,000; TARGET 2010: 80,000 PERFORMANCE MEASURE: Derive from specialty crop commission assessment reports each year.

Example 2

Increase fruit and vegetable purchases (GOAL) from the current level of $2.50 (BENCHMARK) to at least $3 per enrolled student in awarded schools in one year (TARGET) measured by bi-annual school reports (PERFORMANCE MEASURE).

Example 3

Work directly with specialty crop industry X to develop a uniform tool to access the health of their specialty crops to give the industry early warning of potential problems in order to optimize their management practices (GOAL). No such tool currently exists (BENCHMARK). The success of the evaluation will be measured by interviewing 20 stakeholders at the end of three years to determine if they developed the tool (TARGET and PERFORMANCE MEASURE).

Example 4

Develop a predictive model for the spread of the specialty crop disease, an analysis of virus resistant varieties, and a foundation for an integrated pest management (IPM) strategy to combat the disease (GOAL). No such model currently exists (BENCHMARK). The information will be shared with more than 700 tomato growers, increasing awareness of the model, at the 2008 conference break-out session (TARGET) measured by attendance at the session (PERFORMANCE MEASURE).

Example 5

Increase visits to the Specialty Crop Website (GOAL) 25% over the course of one year (TARGET) from the current 9,000 annual hits (BENCHMARK) by measuring website visits each month over the next year (PERFORMANCE MEASURE).

Example 6

Increase consumer awareness of specialty crops by distributing 1000 pieces of informational materials containing locations where to purchase specialty crops (GOAL). Six months after distribution, survey 50 locations (PERFORMANCE MEASURE) to determine if sales increased by 25% (TARGET) from the level before distribution of marketing materials (BENCHMARK).

Work Plan
Example

Task/Project Activity	***Personnel Responsible (name, title, organization)***	***Timeframe***
Create a survey to assess growers' background, current pest control program, and perceptions of IPM	John Doe, Professor of Horticulture, State University X	Begin January 2011 0-4 months
Administer survey to about 200 vegetable growers at an annual local growers meeting	Jane Jones, Regional Specialist, Coop. Extension Region Z	4 - 5 months
Compile survey results for background info on general practices and attitudes	Jane Jones, Regional Specialist, Coop. Extension Region Z	5-6 months
Review surveys for likely cooperator candidates	Joe Claus, Research Assistant, State University X; John Doe, Professor of Horticulture, State University X	5 months
Interview and select candidates for one-on-one IPM and biocontrol training and a control group	Joe Claus, Research Assistant, State University X; John Doe, Professor of Horticulture, State University X	6 months
Meet weekly with selected growers at crop initiation (greenhouse)	John Doe, Professor of Horticulture, State University X	4-6 months
Conduct periodic scouting visits during crop growth	Jane Jones, Regional Specialist, Coop. Extension Region Z	Every 2 months
Meet weekly with selected growers at crop fruition (field)	John Doe, Professor of Horticulture, State University X	10-13 months
Survey growers completing year one in the IPM program as to attitudes and understanding of IPM techniques	Jane Jones, Regional Specialist, Coop. Extension Region Z	10 months
Incorporate most successful ideas/ techniques into IPM field guide with scouting procedures, pest life cycle calendars, and cultural controls, reduced-risk pesticides, and biocontrol options for different pests	John Doe, Professor of Horticulture, State University X	10-13 months
Collect data from both grower groups on pest densities, crop damage, crop yield and quality, pesticide usage, pest management costs and other pest mgmt. techniques used by growers.	John Doe, Professor of Horticulture, State University X	14-15 months
Develop/ deliver annual grower workshops to introduce/ improve field guide	Jane Jones, Regional Specialist, Coop. Extension Region Z	27-33 months

Project Oversight
Example

The Director of Marketing and Development, John Doe, will work directly with the individuals identified as representing each partnering entity. Mr. Doe will coordinate the execution of the work plan with each participating entity and monitor progress throughout the grant period, at least weekly. He will oversee a monthly conference call with all staff and project partners to ensure that any issues are satisfactorily addressed in a coordinated and timely manner. Mr. Doe has over 17 years experience managing successful marketing projects (resume attached).

Project Partners and Industry Support (BONUS)
Example

Applicant will be partnering with Organization X to write television scripts marketing New York organic specialty crops. Attached is a letter from Organization X describing the commitment of time and value of time to the project. Also attached are three letters of support from New York specialty crop commodity organizations noting the value this project will provide their membership and its impact on the industry.

Note – If the application contains multiple letters of support from industry organizations, it would be helpful to include a summary page identifying the letter and the organization from which it came.