



**New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets  
Request for Proposals**

**2012 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program RFP**

***\*\*\* Due to e-mail issues, the deadline to submit proposals has been extended.\*\*\****

***Proposals MUST BE RECEIVED by the Department's Division of Fiscal Management by 4:30 p.m. EDT on Thursday, May 24, 2012.***

**Questions & Answers**

- Q:** Unfortunately, both the word and pdf versions of the application forms are not modifiable. When I try to enter information into the word version, it indicates that the document is protected from unintentional editing. If I try to stop the protection, I get a request for a password. Can you help us with this problem?
- A:** The document was a password protected document which will be unprotected and reposted to enable applicants to enter text.
- Q:** Could you please give me some advice, we are interested in applying for funding for extension activities to further advance specialty crops. We are also interested in applying for support to further the promotion of specialty crops. I am inclined to submit two separate proposals since both activities complement each other, but are separate in function. Would it be more strategic to apply for funding with 2 proposals or with one?
- A:** Applicants may apply for and receive funding for more than one project, but must submit a separate application for each project for which funding is being requested.
- Q:** I am in the process of forming a fully functioning hop farm. I would like to conduct outreach seminars to local communities to talk about the past and the future of hops

**in my county, and New York, by using marketing focused on creating an understanding renewed perception of how it is possible to run a modern hop farm in New York. The seminars would focus on producing and manufacturing high quality hops for the local breweries.**

A: Based on the information provided, it appears that your project is not eligible for funding in accordance to Section 2.1 of the RFP. Eligible applicants include not-for-profit organizations (NFP), not-for profit educational institutions and state, local and Indian Tribal governments. NOTE: 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 private 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.** Applicants must include commitment letters from any project partners.

Q: **I'm interested in the specialty crop grant program. I have looked at the application and have a question. Are the grants available to individuals or are the grants only for government and non-profit?**

A: 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.

In addition, 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 partner projects. Projects should have general applicability and statewide significance to the specialty crop industry. The Department strongly encourages collaborative efforts between NFP's, educational institutions, and government applicants and private 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.

Q: **If I were to submit for the specialty crop grant and focused more on the Farm to Chef and Speed Dating projects, and getting the growers and producers better connected with the Chef consumer, can I apply for this grant?**

A: Based upon the information provided, it is unclear as to whether or not your project is eligible for funding. Eligible applicants must meet the criteria set forth in Section 2.2 of the RFP. Eligible projects must solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops and benefit the greatest number of beneficiaries in the priority areas of: Research and Grower Education, Food Safety and Marketing and Promotion. These priority areas

were identified by an Advisory Committee composed of specialty crop organizations, association and other industry stakeholders. The examples listed in that section are only examples of eligible projects, and eligible projects are not limited to only those listed there.

**Q: I recently had a discussion regarding where the training need is greatest around Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) issues. Cornell Cooperative Extension has been, and is doing, extensive training for farmers regarding Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) issues. It has been mentioned that school food service personnel need additional training, but this is happening too. Would you recommend targeting food service personnel as well as certain groups of farmers for the NYS Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices Certification Assistance Program? Have specialty crop funds ever been used for other GAP training?**

A: Specialty crop funds in past years have been used to support third party GAP audits for growers/handlers as well as for GAP education and training. The link for information regarding the Department's program is [http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AD/GAP/GAP\\_Certification.pdf](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AD/GAP/GAP_Certification.pdf). You can access the application at the Department's website under Current Funding Opportunities <http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/RFPS.html> (scroll down to Good Agricultural Practices Certification Assistance Program).

**Q: We are planning to submit a proposal to the 2012 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Looking through previous proposals that were funded two years ago we noticed that one of the proposals had series of Appendix's where preliminary data was presented and an example of one of the proposed outcomes. We would like to follow a similar format since we think that adding a graph with preliminary data as an appendix would help the reviewers get a better understanding of the potential impact of our work, but we just wanted to make sure that providing such an appendix would be acceptable (given that it is not mentioned in the RFP).**

A: The potential impact description is to be included in your project details (PART B) as stated on page 8, section 4.1 of the RFP and pages 3 and 7 of the application template. The project details section must not exceed four (4) pages. Any pages beyond page 4 of Part B will not be considered and will be removed from the proposal before it is sent to the evaluators. If you would like to include a graph it must be included within the four (4) pages.

**Q: I am wondering you would please help me with a question regarding submission of a proposal.**

**Project Partners and Industry Support**

***List any project partners who will be involved with this project and explain their role. Include a description of how the responsibilities for completing the project will be***

*divided and project partner commitments of time or other resources. Commitment letters from any project partners must be provided. Letters of support from industry organizations or leaders are strongly encouraged. Letters should indicate the degree to which the organization or leader is representative of the industry, their expertise in appropriate subject matter(s) and strength of support.*

**Does this refer to grower participants in the project? Are they considered project partners?**

A: Yes, bonus points will be awarded for including commitment letters from project partners – which includes grower participants. Per Section 5 (Funding Criteria), page 9 of the RFP:

BONUS: Project Partners and Industry Support (Maximum of 10 points) – Considers whether or not the applicant has collaborative project partners and/or support from the industry. Points will be given for providing partner commitment letters that specify how the partners will work toward the goals and outcome measures of the project. Points will be given for support letters from industry organizations or leaders that are representative of the industry, possess expertise in appropriate subject matter(s) and that indicate strength of their support. Applicants must include commitment letters from any project partners.

**Q: We printed a farmstand guide a few years back and at this point it is outdated. The farmstand guide promoted all roadside stands selling all local produce, mostly fruits, vegetables, pick your own, as well as local goat cheese. Would this be something that is covered under the grant?**

**We also have been wanting to do an "iphone" app for about a year now to promote the roadside stands listed above. Would this be something the grant would cover?**

A: Based upon the information provided, it appears these would be eligible projects. According to Section 2.2 of the RFP projects designed to further marketing promotion of NYS specialty Crops are eligible. Grant funds may only be used to benefit eligible specialty crops. Goat cheese as a dairy product is not an eligible specialty crop. In the event that a project also benefits other ineligible commodities, the applicant must describe how they will ensure that grant funding is being used to enhance the specialty crop portion of the project and how non-grant funds will cover the non-specialty crop portion. The description must be included in Part B of the Application Template (Project Details), and should include the estimated percentage of the project that specifically benefits specialty crops and non-specialty crops. Applicants will be required to maintain adequate documentation to support this requirement.

**Q: In the RFP there is a statement that "Projects must solely enhance the competitiveness of New York specialty crops and benefit the industry, rather than an individual product or entity". We are interested in submitting a proposal specifically**

**on apples, which are one of several specialty crops in NY State. I want to make sure that a proposal specifically on one specialty crop (apples) is acceptable within this program.**

A: Based upon the information you provided, your project would be eligible because it refers to apples generally and not a specific product or entity. The project must have potential industry wide benefit for a specific specialty crop.

**Q: Our project focuses on the importance of native bees (as opposed to managed honey bees) in apple pollination. In order to understand the relative contribution of honey bees to apple fruit production, we need to run an experiment in which we work with growers who would allow us to experimentally exclude honey bees from some orchards. One possible outcome of this experiment is a decrease in fruit set and thus reduced apple production. A number of growers are willing to allow us to run this experiment, but we would like to include crop insurance in our budget in order to offset the (potential) losses these growers might incur because of our experimental manipulations. Would we be allowed to include crop insurance for collaborating growers in the proposal? We are exploring the cost of this insurance with our collaborators, but it would be helpful to know if this kind of expense would be allowed under the guidelines of this program.**

A: Based on your question, if the growers are for-profit entities, you can include crop insurance in your budget, provided that the insurance is reasonable and covers only the amount of the crop that is part of the project (which, depending on how big the grower is and exactly how the project is set up, might not be the entire crop), and the insurance does not cover any potential profit.

Also, if any of the growers involved in the project have Federal crop insurance offered by the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation in the USDA, Risk Management Agency or other insurance and if their existing insurance would cover the losses, then using the grant funds for crop insurance would not be necessary, and thus not allowable.

**Q: On page 7 it says that personnel and fringe are eligible. Could this include time spent for example by a bookkeeper or director that is involved in either billing/reporting or oversight of the person carrying out the grant?**

A: Yes – USDA required the documentation be kept when salaries and wages are charged to the project. Employees working solely on Specialty Crop Block Grant Program projects should document their time spent on projects.

**Q: On calculating the fringe benefits, is there a specific formula of how to do that? We generally have a percentage based on federal or state funding etc., around 40% for the total or is it specific to things like unemployment insurance, etc.?**

A: There is no specific formula.

- Q: Is salary recovery an allowable cost for the Specialty Crops grant program?**
- A: Yes –documentation must be kept when salaries and wages are charged to the project.
- Q: Our project deals with the production of hard cider and apple spirits as value –added. Will there be a problem with the fact that our project focuses on the production of alcoholic beverages?**
- A: Based on the information provided, it appears that your project is eligible for funding in accordance to Section 2.2 (Research and Grower Education) of the RFP.
- Q: We are working on a project that deals with seed production for specialty crops. Our activities focus primarily on convening seed producers in conjunction with a leading seed company based in NY. Can we apply for multiple separate grants if they deal with different projects and constituencies?**
- A: Applicants may apply for and receive funding for more than one project, but must submit a separate application for each project for which funding is being requested.
- Q: Is the production of seed from specialty crops eligible for this grant?**
- A: Per Section 2.2 of the RFP (Research and Grower Education), projects include but are not limited to:  
*Developing new seed varieties and specialty crops with optimal performance under New York State conditions*
- Q: Must our proposed marketing and promotion strategy connect to existing state-wide or regional marketing efforts (i.e. like the Pride of New York)?**
- A: There is no requirement for your marketing and promotion strategy to connect to an existing state-wide or regional marketing effort.
- Q: Will the selection board look favorable or unfavorable upon proposals that involve launching a new regional marketing effort / strategy / brand / logo?**
- A: Department staff cannot advise individuals on specific aspects of proposals.
- Q: We are interested in applying for marketing and promotion funding to support specialty crops sold at farmers markets, CSAs, roadside stands in a particular region of New York State. Must our marketing and promotion strategy specifically address the “seasonality of the State’s production, [which] can at times be a competitive disadvantage as New York producers compete with other areas of the country or the world that can supply fresh produce year-round” to be competitive in the grant process OR may we propose a marketing strategy that best addresses competitive advantages and disadvantages of our region?**

A: Based on the information provided, it appears that your project to propose a marketing strategy that best addresses competitive advantages and disadvantages of your region will be eligible for funding.

**Q: May our marketing and promotion strategy connect local customers to a particular segment of the agricultural business (i.e. certified and not certified organic farms who sell specialty crops through CSA's, farm stands and farmers' markets) within a given region of NYS?**

A: Per Section 2.2, pages 6-7 of the RFP, an example of marketing and promotion focused projects include but are not limited to:

*Increasing customers and sales of New York specialty crops at Farmers' Markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) operations, produce auctions, roadside stands and other community and direct marketing outlets.*

**Q: Could you clarify the NOTE: at the top of page 5 that states "grant funds will not be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product"? Does that mean that a project that would benefit the NY wine industry would be unacceptable? Or is this referring to a particular winery's commercial product?**

A: The project must have a potential industry wide benefit for a specific specialty crop. It will not be eligible if it is intended to benefit a specific product or entity.