



Indiana State Department of Agriculture
Governor Eric Holcomb
Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch, Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development
Bruce Kettler, Director

Notice of Funding Opportunity

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

AWARD INFORMATION

Funding Opportunity Number: To be announced

CFDA: Not listed yet

Indiana Available Grant Allocation: Approximately \$500,000.00

PERFORMANCE PERIOD

Federal Performance Period:

September 30, 2021-September 29, 2024

Recipient Project Performance Period:

September 30, 2021-September 29, 2024

PROPOSAL/AWARD TMELINES

1. Accepting Proposals March 01, 2021
2. Proposals Due March 25, 2021
3. ISDA Awards Grants Fall 2021

I. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

A. History

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) was established as a separate state agency by the Legislature in 2005. The Director is appointed by the Governor and is a member of the Governor's Cabinet. Administratively, ISDA reports to Indiana's Lt. Governor, who also serves as Indiana's Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Authorization for this program was established under the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 and continues under authorization from the Agricultural Act of 2014 (commonly referred to as the "Farm Bill").

B. Purpose

Indiana State Department of Agriculture is seeking project proposals from the specialty crop industry in the state to present for funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The proposals must enhance specialty crops throughout the state of Indiana. This is an overview funding announcement; for a complete list of eligible and ineligible commodities and a comprehensive definition of specialty crops, terms and conditions and guidance, visit <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbfp>.

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture administrates the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) for Indiana. ISDA encourages applicants to develop projects to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry:

- enhancing food safety;
- assisting all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain in developing "Good Agricultural Practices", "Good Handling Practices", "Good Manufacturing Practices" and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers and processors;
- investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes;
- developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
- pest and disease control;
- development of organic and sustainable production practices;
- increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems;
- developing local and regional food systems; and
- improving food access in underserved communities.

II. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

A. Eligible Applicants

Non-profit and for-profit organizations, governments and public or private colleges and universities are eligible to apply. Individuals are not allowed.

If the lead applicant has previously received any SCBG funds through ISDA, the applicant **must not** have any overdue grant reports or closeout documents at the time of application or at any point during the competitive review process. If the lead applicant is found as noncompliant, its application may be considered ineligible for this opportunity.

All applicants **must** have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number when submitting a proposal, or it will be rejected. A DUNS number is a unique, nine-character, number regulated by Dun and Bradstreet used to identify an organization. The federal government utilizes the DUNS number to track the allocation of federal funds. A DUNS number can be obtained free of charge at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform>.

B. Eligible Projects

Please note that this is an application guideline and not a complete list of SCBGP requirements. Visit <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbfp/specialty-crop> for a list of eligible and ineligible commodities and a comprehensive definition of specialty crops. Project(s) **must** enhance specialty crops throughout the state of Indiana.

Each project **must** identify at least one expected measurable outcome that specifically demonstrates the project's impact on enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. Reference USDA-AMS Evaluation Plan (Performance Measures) here - <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/SCBGP%20FY15%20PerformanceFINAL%2010272015.pdf>. An example is also found in Appendix A. The proposal must describe how it affects and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution or individual.

Projects will not be funded if it is determined that the primary benefit is to a particular commercial project or provides a profit to a single organization, institution or individual. In addition, recipients cannot use grant funds to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services. Single organizations, institutions and individuals, are encouraged to participate as project partners. Projects where one organization specifically attempts to disparage the mission, goals and/or actions of another organization are unallowable.

C. ISDA Funding Priorities

ISDA funding priority will be focused on three main areas:

- Funding Area I: Market Enhancement
- Funding Area II: Access, Education and Training
- Funding Area III: Research

III. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding and Project Duration

The majority of funds will be awarded to programs through a competitive review process. The review process will include the use of an independent panel of experts and/or qualified individuals overseen by ISDA officials. The panel will review, score and recommend project proposals for selection. Grant awards are for a three (3) year period during which the approved project must be completed and all funds drawn. Proposals that build upon previously funded projects must clearly state how the project complements previous work.

B. Timeline

ISDA is requesting proposals for the calendar year 2021 grant cycle (federal fiscal year 2022).

The following is an anticipated timeline and subject to change:

- March 1, 2021 – SCBG proposals open in the Grants Management System
- March 25, 2021 – Full proposals due to ISDA
- March 26-April 4, 2021 – ISDA Threshold, Exclusions and Risk Assessments
- April 5, 2021 – Applicants receive proposal feedback and opportunity to revise
- April 9, 2021 – All proposal revisions due to ISDA
- April 10-13, 2021 – ISDA confirms revisions
- April 14-May 4, 2021 – Proposal scoring and review by Committee
- May 5-7, 2021 – ISDA final review and funding recommendation
- May 10, 2021 – Notification of successful projects and amounts
- May 13, 2021 – Deadline for applicants to accept or decline
- May 2021 – Indiana State Plan due to USDA-AMS
- August-September 2021 – USDA notifies ISDA of approval of funding
- September-October 2021 – Notice of Federal Award (NOA) from USDA-AMS
- October-December 2021 – Grant agreements are prepared and executed

C. Proposal Review

The Grant Proposal Application Scoring Committee will review, score and recommend project proposals for selection. The Committee must have a general knowledge of grant writing and/or SCBGP. Additionally, Committee members must objectively review and assess proposals to effectively evaluate project objectives, work plans, budgets and expected results in determining the potential for project success. Finally, each Committee member is required to be objective, impartial and free of organizational, racial or other biases. ISDA uses a three-tiered review process when generating funding strategies:

- 1) *Tier One:* ISDA will conduct an initial threshold screening and scoring of the proposals to check for completeness of the application and that costs are allowable. ISDA will also conduct Exclusion and Risk Assessments to ensure applicant standing, capacity and, where applicable, past performance is considered in competitive review.
- 2) *Tier Two:* Grant proposals will be reviewed and scored by the Scoring Committee using a predetermined set of criteria across additional section areas. The scoring criteria utilized in the review process can be found in Section D. These scores will be aggregated and combined with ISDA threshold scoring in Tier One. The Committee will then generate funding recommendations.
- 3) *Tier Three:* ISDA Executive Staff will assess the Committee's recommendations and formulate a finalized funding priority.

D. Scoring

Applicants must respond to all the grant proposal questions in the online ISDA Grants Management System (GMS). Failure to answer one or more questions, including a scored or non-scored question, may result in a disqualified proposal.

Below are the scoring criteria and point value given for all submissions. Points awarded for each section will be combined to establish a total overview score for the proposal. Total possible points = 100.

COMPLETED BY AGENCY IN TIER ONE (26 Points)

Risk Assessment: 10 points

- *Criteria: Applicant's capability to perform/complete the project. How well has the applicant performed on past projects with ISDA?*

Budget Eligibility: 10 points

- *Criteria: Based on the extent to which the budget is allowable, reasonable and appropriate with regards to USDA-AMS Terms and Conditions and State of Indiana policies. Each item must be calculated properly and justified.*

Completeness: 6 points

- *Criteria: Did the proposal meet the funding requirements set forth by ISDA? Is the application well written and easy to understand? Is all required information included?*

COMPLETED BY SCORING COMMITTEE IN TIER TWO (74 Points)

Section 1: Overview - 10 points

- a) Project Summary
- *Criteria: How clearly does the author describe the project, as well as identify the expected impact and an implementation strategy?*

Section 2: Purpose - 29 points

- a) Project Issue
 - *Criteria: How clearly does the author identify the specific issue, problem or need the project will address, as well as the frequency/prevalence to the specialty crop industry in Indiana?*
- b) Objectives
 - *Criteria: Do the objectives align with the purpose and goal of the project? How well does the project align to ISDA's encouraged focus issues listed in this notice? Does the project timeline make sense?*
- c) Sustainability
 - *Criteria: Does the project have external support? Is there an adequate sustainability plan?*

Section 3: Outcomes – 20 points

- a) Outcomes/Indicators
 - *Criteria: How relevant are the anticipated project outcomes and indicators? Are the proposed data collection methods and monitoring and reporting processes adequately explained?*

Section 4: Budget – 15 points

- a) Budget Narrative
 - *Criteria: How appropriate, practical, consistent and well-justified are the budget items? Are all budgetary items directly linked to materials/activities included in the proposal?*

E. Competitive Solicitation Process and Award Notification Process

Phase I: Solicitation Process

- Admin /Technical Review (Threshold), Exclusions and Risk Assessment
 - Applicants will have five (5) calendar days to revise proposal if needed

Phase II: Competitive Review

- Successful Proposals
 - Applicants will have five (3) calendar days to respond by accepting or declining, once notified of selection
- Unsuccessful Proposals
 - Applicants will be notified by GMS or email

Phase III: State Plan submitted to USDA-AMS

- USDA-AMS reviews for full accuracy
- Review by USDA June-August

Phase IV: Award Notifications

- USDA-AMS sends NOA to ISDA fall 2021
- ISDA sends NOA to applicants fall 2021
 - Grant agreements follow

IV. Proposal Submissions

A. ISDA Grants Management System (GMS)

All proposals must be submitted via the online ISDA Grants Management System (GMS). To apply, you must first have a system account, which can be requested at <https://arcg.is/0ra898>. An editable proposal template is located on the website to help applicants prepare their submission for the GMS.

Quick notes to log into GMS:

1. Request an account at <https://arcg.is/0ra898>;
2. You will then receive a welcome email from the portal asking you to create a password; then
3. Login to the GMS at <https://indianaegms.force.com/Grants> using your username (email address) and password.

Please contact Leah Harmon, Director of Information Systems, at lharmon2@isda.in.gov or 317-607-4127 for questions/concerns regarding the GMS.

B. Budget

Complete the budget form in GMS, showing the proposed uses for the grant funds. Provide sufficient information in narrative format about each budget category to demonstrate that grant funds are being expended on activities that meet the purpose of the program. Budget narrative and/or all expenses described in the budget narrative must be associated with expenses that will be covered by the SCBGP. **Please note, graduate tuition or fee remission will not be accepted as eligible budget items for this opportunity.** All SCBGP awards are subject to the most recent USDA Terms and Conditions of Award - <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/FY2020GDTermsandConditionsUpdates.pdf>. All costs must also be allowable in accordance with the federal cost principles outlined in 2 CFR part 200 Subpart E - <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=0e3a14f56bf3b9ba29a3beea5c420324&node=pt2.1.200&rgn=div5%23sp2.1.200.e>. Double check all math!

Pay Special Attention:

- Note specific GSA travel and per diem rates for Indiana - https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates/per-diem-rates-lookup/?action=perdiems_report&state=IN&fiscal_year=2021&zip=&city=
- Use the State mileage rate as it is more restrictive - https://www.in.gov/idoa/files/IDOA_MileageReimbursement_Memo_Feb242020.pdf.
- Use the State reimbursement rates for things like airport parking, etc.
- Justify how contractual costs were determined/will be procured. Is there a quote for the cost?

- Justify high fringe rates.
- For major supply purchases like computers, clarify: what happens to those items after the project is over?

The SCBGP does not have a Federal cost-sharing or matching requirement. Applicants are responsible for presenting direct and indirect costs appropriately and consistently and must not include costs associated with their organization's indirect cost rate agreement as direct costs. In addition, a cost may not be allocated as an indirect cost if also incurred as a direct cost for the same purpose and vice versa. For support, visit USDA-AMS Indirect Cost Decision Tree here - https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/SCBGP_IndirectCosts.pdf. **Applicants may only request a maximum of 3% indirect costs, regardless of the applicant's indirect cost rate agreement.**

****Note – If selected for this opportunity, all funding will be disbursed on a reimbursement basis, and claims will only be processed at quarterly (3 month) intervals in association with required quarterly grant reporting.*

C. Proposal Submission Due Date

Proposals must be submitted via email no later than March 25, 2021 by 11:59pm EDT. The proposal must be submitted via GMS or it will NOT be accepted. Use the templates and guidance provided at <https://www.isda.in.gov/grants-and-funding-opportunities/> to prepare the proposal for submission.

Please contact Leah Harmon, Director of Information Systems, at lharmon2@isda.in.gov or 317-607-4127 for technical assistance for submitting through the GMS. **GMS technical assistance will be available until 5:00pm EDT on March 25, 2021.** Incomplete proposals or information may be disqualified.

Appendix A: Example of Outcomes, Indicators and Data Reporting

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Outcome 1: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Indicator 1: Sales increased from \$40 million to \$60 million and by 50 percent as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities.
Description of data collection methods: Sales data will be collected using a series of surveys provided to all Sacramento county winegrape growers.	
Description of activities to monitor and report on outcomes: An initial survey to be distributed in November 2019 will establish the baseline price that growers received for their winegrapes. This survey will be repeated in 2020 and 2021 to monitor the increase in winegrape sales that has occurred during the grant duration. Survey questions will include: price of winegrapes per ton, volume of cases sold, and jobs created since promotional effort began, among other questions. Data collected will be used to monitor the project activities' success in increasing sales. Data and results will be reported to stakeholders, published on the applicant's website, and presented at three conferences.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Outcome 2: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Indicator 1: Of the Enter number children and youth reached, a. Enter number gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops. b. Enter number reported an intention to eat more specialty crops. c. Enter number reported eating more specialty crops.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Indicator 2: Of the Enter number adults reached, a. Enter number gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops. b. Enter number reported an intention to eat more specialty crops. c. Enter number reported eating more specialty crops.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Indicator 3: Enter number new and improved technologies and processes to enhance the nutritional value and consumer acceptance of specialty crops (excluding patents).
<input type="checkbox"/>	Indicator 4: Enter number new specialty crops and/or specialty crop products introduced to consumers.
Description of data collection methods: Click here to enter text. Describe the data collection methods that will be used to validate progress toward achieving the selected Indicator(s) and Subindicator(s).	
Description of activities to monitor and report on outcomes: Click here to enter text. Describe the activities that will be used to monitor and report on accomplishing Outcome Measure 2.	