



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: USDA-AMS-TM-SCBGP-G-22-0003
Assistance Listing Number: 10.170
Indiana Available Grant Allocation: \$486,095.35
Minimum: \$50,000.00
Maximum: No Maximum
Indiana Recommended Project Size: \$100,000 - \$150,000

PERFORMANCE PERIOD

Federal Performance Period: September 30, 2022- September 29, 2025
Project Performance Period (Estimated): September 30, 2022 - To September 29, 2024

PROPOSAL/AWARD TMELINES

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Accepting Proposals | February 15, 2022 |
| 2. Proposals Due | March 8, 2022 |
| 3. ISDA Awards Grants | Fall 2022 |

PURPOSE

Proposals **must** enhance specialty crops throughout the state of Indiana.

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 2018 (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). 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/scbgp>.

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture administers 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;
- improving food access in underserved communities;
- support and promotion of the hydroponic/aquaponic industry;
- education and outreach to farmers to provide best practices; and
- research and outreach on value-added products and the marketing of these products.

This announcement identifies the eligibility criteria for SCBGP projects and applicants, as well as the application forms and associated instructions needed to apply for an SCBGP award.

ISDA encourages non-traditional applicants such as for-profit entities as well as applications that benefit new and beginning farmers and ranchers, socially disadvantaged producers, veteran producers and/or underserved communities. For grants intending to serve these entities, applicants should engage and involve those beneficiaries when developing projects and applications.

The designated project lead for applications selected for funding will be required to complete a grant management course designated and paid for by ISDA. Each application **must** only have one project lead. Applicants will have ninety (90) days from receiving their fully executed grant agreement to complete this training and **must** submit proof of completion prior to drawing down any funds. Grantees will also be required to attend an ISDA grantee orientation prior to drawing down any funds.

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 Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) or a Unique Entity Identifier from SAM.gov when submitting a proposal, or it will be rejected. A DUNS number is a unique, nine-character, number regulated by Dun & 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>. A UEI can be obtained through registering with SAM.gov and **must** be initiated after receiving a DUNS number. Sam.gov registration can be obtained free of charge at <http://www.sam.gov/>.

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/scbgp/specialty-crop> for a list of eligible and ineligible commodities and a comprehensive definition of specialty crops. Projects **must** enhance specialty crops throughout the state of Indiana.

Projects **must** include and list at least one specific specialty crop as a focus.

Each project **must** identify at least one expected measurable outcome and indicator that specifically demonstrates the project's impact on enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. **Please note that, USDA has updated the eligible performance measures for Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.** Reference USDA-AMS Evaluation Plan (Performance Measures) here - <https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/SCBGPPerformanceMeasures.pdf>. A total of 1-3 outcomes/indicators is recommended. Proposing a significantly high number of outcomes and indicators should be thoroughly justified. 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.

ISDA will not fund projects 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. Projects where one organization specifically attempts to disparage the mission, goals and/or actions of another organization are unallowable.

Proposals should clearly identify the organizational structure of the lead applicant (for-profit, non-profit or government). The project lead organization as listed in the application **must** be a legal entity in good standing and capable of entering into a contractual grant agreement with the state of Indiana and have the capacity to appropriately meet all state and federal financial management requirements.

Single organizations, institutions and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners. If a project has partners listed as sharing funding or participating in core work activities (does not include contractors), the lead applicant **must** provide letters of commitment from all listed partners in the grant application. The organizational relationship between project partners should also be clearly explained.

Examples of Unacceptable Projects:

- A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate and grow a specialty crop for the purpose of making a profit, or to expand production of a single business.
- Individual specialty crop businesses or roadside stands requesting funds to promote their individual businesses or products.
- A sole proprietor requests grant funds to redesign her/his logo in order to make her/his specialty crop value-added product stand out at the local farmer's market.
- A company that develops specialty crop value-added products requests funds to train its employees on how to make value-added products.

Examples of Acceptable Projects:

- A university requests grant funds to conduct research on the feasibility of planting, cultivating, and growing a specialty crop in a particular area, the results of which can be shared with many growers throughout the State.
- A single grower requests funds to demonstrate the viability of organic small fruit production and partners with Cooperative Extension to publicize the working model of diversification to other regional growers.
- A single specialty crop organization requests funds to conduct an advertising campaign focused on a specific crop or crops that will benefit their specialty crop members and the awareness of that crop more broadly.

- A single farmer erects high tunnels on their property to extend the growing season of tomatoes and lettuce and conducts a field day and farm tour to teach other farmers best practices to adopt the same production methods.

A. ISDA Funding Priorities

ISDA funding priority will be focused on three main areas, listed below in order of importance to the department:

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

Please note that projects can span multiple funding areas, and if so, may be considered more strongly by ISDA Executive Staff during final proposal selection.

III. AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding and Project Duration

Indiana’s grant allocation for this funding opportunity is \$486,095.35. Most funds will be awarded to projects 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 up-to a two (2) year period, roughly September of 2022 - September of 2024, 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 2022 (federal fiscal year 2022).

The following is an anticipated timeline and subject to change:

- February 15, 2022 – SCBG proposals open in the Grants Management System
- March 8, 2022 – Full proposals due to ISDA
- March 9-March 15, 2022 – ISDA Threshold/Exclusions Assessment
- March 16, 2022 – Applicants receive proposal feedback and opportunity to revise
- March 22, 2022 – All proposal revisions due to ISDA
- March 22 – March 25, 2022 – ISDA confirms revisions
- March 28, 2022 – Proposal scoring and review by Committee
- March 31, 2022 – Applicants receive proposal questions from Committee
- April 5, 2022 – Deadline for Applicants to respond to Committee questions
- April 8, 2022 – Scoring finalized
- April 11-April 13, 2022 – ISDA final review and funding recommendation
- April 14, 2022– Notification of successful projects and amounts
- April 18, 2022 – Deadline for applicants to accept or decline

- April 20, 2022– Notification of unsuccessful projects
- May 2, 2022 – Indiana State Plan to USDA-AMS
- May-August 2022 – USDA-AMS approves state plan
- August-September 2022 – Grant agreements are prepared and executed

C. Proposal Review

The Grant Proposal Scoring Committee will review, score and recommend project proposals for selection. The Committee must have a general knowledge of grant writing and/or SCBGP, as well as an understanding of the specialty crop industry in Indiana. 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 and overall importance to Indiana. 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 of the proposals to check for completeness of the application and that costs are allowable. Scoring points will be administratively assessed based on lead applicant organizational structure. Feedback will be provided based on threshold screening. Applicants will be provided the opportunity to revise the application prior to the scoring of the Scoring Committee.
- 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 basic scoring focuses utilized in the review process can be found in Section D of this document. Prior to finalizing scoring, the Scoring Committee will have the opportunity to ask applicants any clarifying questions and discuss responses as a committee. 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 recommendation to USDA.

B. 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 = 125.

COMPLETED BY AGENCY IN TIER ONE (25 Points)

Entity Type: 5 points

- *Criteria: Is this entity a non-profit (what type), public (what type) or for-profit organization? Priority will be given to encourage non-traditional applicants such as non-profit, local units of government and for-profit organizations.*

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: 10 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 (100 Points)

Section 1: Overview – 10 points

- a) Project Summary
 - *Criteria: How clearly does the author describe the project and need, as well as identify the expected impact and an implementation strategy?*
- b) Organizational Structure
 - *Criteria: Does the author clearly explain the organizational structure of the applicant (e.g. non-profit, for-profit, university, etc.)? If applicable, is the relationship between the applicant and partners clearly explained?*

Section 2: Purpose - 45 points

- a) Project Issue
 - *Criteria: Does the specific issue, problem or need the project will address merit focus based on 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?*
- c) Timeline
 - *Criteria: Did the applicant include a timeline of activities by year? Is it reasonable to accomplish the project's objectives in the established timeframe? Is the timeline within the project performance period?*
- d) Sustainability
 - *Criteria: Does the author adequately explain whether the project will terminate after the grant period or if it is expected to continue? If expected to continue, is there an adequate sustainability plan? If not expected to continue, how will the results be utilized?*
- e) Socially Disadvantaged Farmers
 - *Criteria: How clearly does the author explain the benefits to socially disadvantaged farmers or underserved communities? To what degree does the proposal benefit socially disadvantaged farmers or underserved communities?*

- f) Beginning Farmers
 - *Criteria: How clearly does the proposal explain the benefits to beginning farmers? To what degree does the proposal benefit beginning farmers?*
- g) Veteran Farmers
 - *Criteria: How clearly does the proposal explain the benefits to veterans of the U.S. armed forces? To what degree does the proposal benefit veterans?*
- h) Underserved Communities
 - *Criteria: How clearly does the proposal explain the benefits to underserved communities? To what degree does the proposal benefit underserved communities?*
- i) Enhancement of Specialty Crops
 - *Criteria: How clearly does the proposal explain the benefits to specific specialty crop(s)? Did the applicant list at least one specialty crop that the project will benefit?*

Section 3: Outcomes – 20 points

- a) Outcomes/Indicators
 - *Criteria: How meaningful are the anticipated project outcomes and indicators to the specialty crop industry in Indiana? Are the proposed data collection methods and monitoring and reporting processes adequately explained and feasible? Does the number of listed outcome/indicators seem reasonable and achievable?*

Section 4: Budget – 15 points

- a) Budget Narrative
 - *Criteria: Does the budget seem like a reasonable investment based on expected impact? How appropriate, practical, consistent and well-justified are the budget items? Are all budgetary items directly linked to materials/activities included in the proposal? If applicable is there a clear and practical plan to re-invest program income into the project during the project term?*

E. Competitive Solicitation Process and Award Notification Process

Phase I: Solicitation Process

- Admin /Technical Review (Threshold)
 - Applicants will have six (6) calendar days to revise proposal if needed

Phase II: Competitive Review

- Scoring Questions
 - Applicants will have four (4) calendar days to provide responses to Scoring Committee questions
- Successful Proposals
 - Applicants will have four (4) 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/approval

Phase IV: Award Notifications

- ISDA sends notice of award to applicants Fall 2022
- Grant agreements follow

IV. PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

Though not required and will be considered **solely** at the discretion of individual scorers:

- For any section of the online application, applicants may add a notation to “see additional attachments” in your submission and attach documents that provide greater detail.
- Applicants may also include letters of external support for the project from non-partner entities as additional justification.
- Applicants are encouraged to submit projects that can be easily segmented for partial funding if the project cannot be fully funded.

You may add multiple attachments to your application in the online GMS.

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/Ora898>. 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/Ora898>;
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. Project Partner and Summary

Proposals **must** include a 250-word or less project summary that is suitable for dissemination to the public. The project summary should be a very brief description of the project and include:

1. The name of the applicant organization that if awarded a grant will establish an agreement or contractual relationship with the Indiana State Department of Agriculture to lead and execute the project,
2. A concise outline the project need and outcome(s) and

3. A description of the general tasks and timeline to be completed during the project period to fulfill this goal.

Applications should also include a description of the lead applicant's organizational structure (e.g. non-profit, public, etc.) If a project has multiple partners listed as sharing funding or participating in core work activities (does not include contractors), the organizational relationship between project partners should also be clearly explained. The lead applicant **must** provide letters of commitment from all listed partners in the grant application.

C. Project Purpose

Proposals **must** clearly describe the needs this grant will address. Activities should be listed by year in a timeline. If the project will impact socially disadvantaged, beginning farmers or veteran farmers, the proposal should provide enough detail to assess the degree of benefit to these groups.

Projects **must** specifically list at least one eligible specialty crop as a focus of the project.

D. Budget

Applicants **must** fully complete the budget form in GMS, showing the proposed uses for all grant funds. Applicants **must** also 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/FY2021_GD_TermsandConditions.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!

If applicable, applicants **must** clearly describe the reinvestment strategy for any program income generated. Any program income generated during the grant period **must** be used to further the objectives of the project and be expended within the grant period. Recipients are not accountable for program income earned after the grant period. Program income includes, but is not limited to:

- Income from fees for services performed;
- The sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or part with grant funds); and
- Registration fees for conferences, workshops, etc.

Royalties or equivalent income earned from patents, inventions, trademarks and copyrighted works are not subject to this section.

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 **must not** be allocated as an indirect cost if also incurred as a direct cost for the same purpose and vice versa. **Applicants may only request a maximum of 3% indirect costs, regardless of the applicant's indirect cost rate agreement.**

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/TravelServices_MileageReimbursementMemo_08022021.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?

Please 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 and upon acceptance of required quarterly grant reporting.

E. Proposal Submission Due Date

Proposals must be submitted via the online GMS no later than March 8, 2022 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.in.gov/isda/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 8, 2022.** Incomplete proposals or information may be disqualified.