Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Grant Proposal Manual

Federal Fiscal Year 2015 Funding Cycle

Grant Proposal Due Date:

April 8, 2015, 2:00 p.m.

Contact:

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STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The Montana Department of Agriculture seeks your comments about this Grant Proposal Manual. We will consider the comments when we develop the next Manual for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Submit written stakeholder comments via e-mail to: jauer@mt.gov. In your comments, please state that you are responding to the Federal fiscal year (FY) 2015 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Grant Proposal Manual.

February 17, 2015

Dear Grant Applicant:

The Montana Department of Agriculture is pleased to present the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBG) Grant Manual. The purpose of this program is solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in Montana. For purposes of the program, specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, peas, lentils, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture).

This manual is designed to instruct Applicants in preparing successful Grant Proposal packets for funding assistance from the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) for Specialty Crop Block Grant revenues**. Please take the time to read this grant manual carefully and follow all given instructions. Grant Proposals not following the guidelines shall be deemed ineligible.** You are strongly encouraged to communicate with industry representatives or stakeholders that may be affected by your Grant Proposal so that they are aware of your efforts.

The Montana Department of Agriculture anticipates that grant monies will be available to successful Applicants by late 2015. This manual contains general program information, criteria rating system, and Grant Proposal packet requirements. Completed Grant Proposals are due no later than **2 p.m. on Wednesday, April 8, 2015.**

Thank you for your interest in this important program and we look forward to receiving your Grant Proposal packet.

Sincerely,

Ron de Yong

Ron de Yong
Director

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Funding Opportunity Description

Mission Statement

The mission of the Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA) is to protect producers and consumers, and to enhance and develop agriculture and allied industries.

Legislative Authority

The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) is authorized under section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 (7 U.S.C. 1621 note) and amended under section 10010 of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Public Law 113-79 (the Farm Bill). SCBGP is currently implemented under 7 CFR part 1291 (published March 27, 2009; 74 FR 13313). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) administrates the SCBGP, subawarding portions of the funds to State departments of agriculture in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, the United States Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Purpose

Montana's SCBG Program assists entities in solely enhancing the competitiveness of Montana specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, peas, lentils, horticulture, and nursery crops (see Eligible & Ineligible Specialty Crops for more information).

Available Funds

No announcement has been made regarding the federal funding available for this competition. However, MDA anticipates receiving funding at an amount similar to last year's allocation of $986,229.53. MDA plans to make available for grants all the funds appropriated to it under the SCBG this year less MDA's share for program administration. MDA may withhold up to eight percent for program administration. 7 C.F.R. §1290.6(b)(4).

MDA plans to award multiple grants from these funds for this grant cycle. USDA-AMS, however, has the final approval over grant projects. Thus, while MDA's Director makes the preliminary decisions based on MDA staff review and recommendations from a review, **USDA will make the final decision concerning grant awards**.

SCBG Contact Information

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Critical Dates

Date	Time*	Event	Venue
February, 17	5:00 PM	Post Notice of Funding	MDA Website
February, 23	1:00 PM	SCBG Overview Presentation	Go To Meeting**
March, 10	1:00 PM	SCBG Compliance Overview Presentation	Go To Meeting**
April , 1	10:00 AM	Applying in Web Grants Overview Presentation	Go To Meeting**
April, 8	2:00 PM	Applications Due to MDA	Webgrants

*All times are in the Mountain Time zone

**Call in information will be posted on the MDA website

General Compliance

All awarded grant projects must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and the terms of the grant award. The Grantee shall comply, **as applicable**, with the Specialty Crop Competitiveness Act of 2004 of Public Law 108-465 as amended (7 U.S.C. § 1621 note); specialty crop block grant program regulations at 7 CFR Parts 1290 and 1291; federal cost principles at 2 CFR Part 200, and 48 CFR Subpart 31.2; and excluded and disqualified participant requirements at 2 CFR Part 180, subpart C.

Federal Regulations Governing Grant Funds

Organization Type	Applicable Uniform Administrative Requirements	Applicable Cost Principles
State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments	2 CFR 200	2 CFR 200
Non-profit Organizations	2 CFR 200	2 CFR 200
Educational Institutions	2 CFR 200	2 CFR 200
For-profit organizations other than a hospital, and any organizations named in OMB Circular A-122 as not subject to that circular	2 CFR 200	Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 31.2, Contracts with Commercial Organizations, codified at 48 CFR Subpart 31.2.

Eligibility

Eligible & Ineligible Specialty Crops

Commonly recognized specialty crops are fruits, vegetables, peas, lentils, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). View the List of crops commonly considered for a more comprehensive listing of eligible and ineligible crops.

Eligible plants must be intensively cultivated and used by people for food, medicinal purposes, and/or aesthetic gratification to be considered specialty crops. Processed products shall constitute greater than 50% of the specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water.

Eligibility Requirements

The following are the eligibility requirements:

Eligible Applicants

State and/or local organizations, government entities, producer associations, academia, community based organizations, and other specialty crop stakeholders are eligible to apply either as single entities or in combined efforts. Regional or multi-state projects may be considered by MDA. While single entities are eligible, a requirement of the program is that projects must also benefit more than one commercial product, organization, or individual. The number of eligible entities impacted by the Proposal is an important factor in getting funded; therefore, the more entities impacted the better chance a Proposal has of getting funded.

Solely Enhance Specialty Crops

To be eligible for a grant, the project(s) **must solely enhance the competitiveness** of Montana specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets.

Examples of enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops include, but are not limited to: research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, trade enhancement, food safety, food security, plant health programs, education, ''buy local'' programs, increased consumption, increased innovation, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems, environmental concerns and conservation, product development, and developing cooperatives.

Multiple Beneficiaries

MDA will not award grant funds for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. In addition, recipients and subrecipients 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.

Duration

SCBG grant funds will be awarded for projects starting no earlier than October 1, 2015 and ending no later than June 30, 2018.

Minimum & Maximum Amount

Funding amount requested must be a minimum of $30,000; there is no maximum.

DUNS Number

In order to receive an award and enter into a Grant Award Agreement with the MDA, all Applicants that are entities (as defined in 2 CFR Part 25, subpart C) must provide a Data Universal Numbering System

(DUNS) number to the MDA. A DUNS number is a nine-digit number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities.

Entity, as it is used in this section, means all of the following, as defined at 2 CFR Part 25, subpart C:

- A governmental organization, which is a State, local government, or Indian Tribe;
- A foreign public entity;
- A domestic or foreign nonprofit organization;
- A domestic or foreign for-profit organization; and
- A federal agency receiving an award under MDA.

To get a DUNS number:

- by telephone (currently 866-705-5711); or
- via the web (currently at http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform)

Debarment & Suspension

Organizations or individuals that are suspended, debarred, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from eligibility for covered transactions by any Federal department or agency cannot, during the period of suspension, debarment, or exclusion, receive MDA and/or USDA grants or be paid from MDA and/or USDA grant funds, whether under an award, subaward, or contract. Charges made to the SCBG for such individuals (e.g., salary) are unallowable. Regulations published in 2 CFR part 180, as adopted and supplemented by USDA at 2 CFR part 417; describe the government-wide debarment and suspension requirements.

You are required to disclose if any of the following conditions apply to Subrecipient or principals, including all key grant management personnel:

- Within the 3-year period preceding the application, the Applicant or its principals have been convicted of, or had a civil judgment rendered against them, for:
    - fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a public (Federal, State, or local) transaction or contract under a public transaction;
    - violation of a Federal or State antitrust statute;
    - embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification, or destruction of records; or
    - false statements or receipt of stolen property.
- The Applicant or its principals are presently indicted or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State, or local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated above.
- Within a 3-year period preceding the application, the Applicant or its principals had any public transaction (Federal, State, or local) terminated for cause or default.

A variety of “lower-tier” covered transactions are also subject to these requirements. Contracts (including individual consultants) under grants (where the contract requires the provision of goods or services that will equal or exceed $25,000) and all subawards also are subject to these suspension and debarment rules. Subrecipient is required to comply with the requirements of Subpart C of 2 CFR part 180 that provides Subrecipient’s responsibilities when entering into a lower-tier transaction as described above.

Delinquency on Federal Debt

Any organization or individual that is indebted to the United States, and has a judgment lien filed against it for a debt to the United States, is ineligible to receive a Federal grant. Applicants are required to inform MDA if they are delinquent on any Federal debt. If Applicant discloses a delinquency, MDA may not award the grant until the debt is satisfied or satisfactory arrangements are made with the agency to which the debt is owed.

Anyone who has been judged to be in default on a Federal debt and who has had a judgment lien filed against him or her should not be listed as a participant in an application for a SCBG grant until the judgment is paid in full or is otherwise satisfied. No funds may be rebudgeted following an award to pay such an individual. MDA will disallow costs charged to awards that provide funds to individuals in violation of this requirement.

Past Performance

An applicant may be removed from competition in the screening stage if they previously received funding from MDA and, in the judgment of MDA staff, failed to adequately deliver on the conditions of that funding. Failure to perform may include, but is not limited to:

- Demonstrated inability to responsibly manage funds
- Demonstrated inability to adhere to reporting requirements
- Failure to provide agreed upon deliverables

Eligible Projects

MDA encourages entities to develop projects solely 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; and 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.

Projects that support the increase of fruits and vegetables in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) by providing incentives at the point of purchase and/or include technologies for benefit redemption systems should consider submitting those projects to the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grants Program.

Projects that support domestic farmers' markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, other direct producer-to consumer market opportunities, local and regional food business enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, or store locally or regionally produced food products should consider submitting those projects to the Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program at http://www.ams.usda.gov/fmpp.

Projects that support biobased products and bioenergy and energy programs, including biofuels and other alternative uses for agricultural and forestry commodities (development of biobased products) should see the USDA energy website at http://www.usda.gov/energy/matrix/home for information on how to submit those projects for consideration to the energy programs supported by USDA.

Examples of Unacceptable Projects

- A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop to make a profit, or to expand production of a single business or organization.
- An entity requests grant funds to make grants to individual specialty crop businesses or roadside stands to promote their individual business.
- A non-profit organization uses grant funds to purchase produce and then sells that produce to other entities at cost or a higher price than the purchase price while competing with other private companies who sell produce in the area.
- 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 farmers' market.
- A single specialty crop organization requests grant funds to market its organization so that it can increase membership in the organization.

Examples of Acceptable Projects

- A university requests funds to conduct research on the feasibility of planting, cultivating, and growing a specialty crop in a particular area, the results of which will be shared with many growers throughout the State during the project.
- 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 company requests funds to provide a viable pollination alternative to specialty crop stakeholders in a region that currently does not have one.
- A single non-profit organization requests funds to conduct an advertising campaign that will benefit their specialty crop members.
- A single farmer erects high tunnels on his/her property to extend the growing season of tomatoes and lettuce and conducts a field day and farm tour to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the production methods.

Priorities

The following priorities have been adopted by MDA with regard to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. These priorities will be used as guidance by the MDA director in making decisions pertaining to funding recommendations.

Providing Farmer Education on Specialty Crop:

- Farm to institution practices
- Value-added production
- Disease and pest management
- Farm and food safety
- Commercial seed production
- Organic and non-organic food production

Supporting Research in the areas of Specialty Crop:

- Disease and pest management
- Variety testing and selection
- Organic and non-organic food production

Adding Infrastructure that creates or supports Specialty Crop:

- Storage
- Processing
- Farm to institute
- Pest management assistance for farmers

Increasing Consumer Awareness of the Value of Specialty Crops through Education

Representing a Geographic Diversity of Projects Across the State

Multiple Grant Proposals

An entity may submit more than one Grant Proposal packet, but only if the Grant Proposal packets are for completely different projects.

Multi-State Partnerships

Multi-state projects are encouraged to provide solutions to problems that cross state boundaries. Examples of multi-state projects may be: addressing good agricultural practices, research on crop productivity or quality, enhancing access to federal nutrition programs, pest and disease management, or commodity-specific projects addressing common issues in multi-state regions.

A project is multi-state when an organization receives SCBG funding from more than one state to execute the same or multiple components of the same project. The project must be identified as a multi-state project on the Grant Proposal cover sheet.

Applicants should specifically address how the funds requested benefit Montana and are only expended on the portion of the project that benefits Montana.

A high-quality multi-state project Proposal demonstrates the following information and procedures:

1. The objectives are clearly focused.

2. Each participant listed has direct involvement in the accomplishment of the stated objectives.
3. The project is multi-state.
4. The project Proposal has been peer-reviewed.
5. The proposed project is oriented toward accomplishment of specific outcomes and impacts and based on the priorities developed from stakeholder input.
6. The Proposal describes how the States are going to collaborate effectively within the project.
7. Each State participating in the project submits the project in their State Plan indicating which State is taking the coordinating role and the percent of the budget covered by each State.

How to apply

Applications for this grant will only be accepted through the fundingmt.org website. Detailed instructions on how to use the fundingmt.org are available on the proposal page of the MDA specialty crop block grant webpage. At:

http://agr.mt.gov/agr/Programs/Development/GrantsLoans/SCBG/Grant_Proposal.html

While applications must be submitted via fundingmt.org, it is strongly encouraged that applicants draft their application in a word processing program, them copy and paste into the online application form.

Important Dates

Final Grant Proposal Due Date

Remember, the MDA must receive completed Grant Proposal packets no later than **2 p.m. on Wednesday, April 8, via fundingmt.org**. **Late applications will not be accepted.**

Project Operating Dates

Project may not begin earlier than October 1, 2015. Projects must be completed by no later than June 30, 2018.

Submission

Requirements for submitting the grant are as follows:

Grant Proposal Packet Requirements

All Applicants **must** adhere to the instructions in this grant manual, including all definitions and abbreviations, to be considered eligible for grants. Grant Proposal packets must be submitted in their entirety. Applications should not contain any materials not requested in this packet. Any additional materials submitted, including letters of support, and not requested in this packet will not be reviewed.

Method

Applications must be submitted via fundingmt.org. If, due to technical difficulties submitting via the fundingmt.org website, the applicant should contact the SCBG Program Manager as soon as possible. Detailed instructions on how to use the fundingmt.org are available on the proposal page of the MDA specialty crop block grant webpage.

Instructions for the Proposal template

The following are instructions correspond with the SCBG application materials posted on the fundingmt.org website and should be read prior to beginning your application. Additionally, applicants are strongly encouraged to draft their application in a word processing program before entering text into the online application. Detailed instructions on how to use the fundingmt.org are available on the proposal page of the MDA specialty crop block grant webpage. Proposals following the instructions below are less likely to be rejected during the screening and evaluation processes.

Cover Sheet

Company/Organization Name

Provide the officially registered name of the Applicant company/organization, matching the name registered for the provided DUNS number.

DBA

If applicable, fill in the officially registered "doing business as" name.

Business/Organization Type

Check only one.

Tax ID

Provide your organization's Federally-assigned tax ID number – required for issuing payment, if awarded funds.

DUNS

The USDA-AMS 2 CFR part 25, System for Award Management and Universal Identifier Requirements requires MDA to only award funds to entities with a DUNS number. If you do not have a DUNS number, indicate the date on which you applied to receive one.

Grant Project Contact

The Grant Project Contact is the individual responsible for the implementation and day to day management of the grant. If the Grant Project Contact is not an employee of the Subrecipient, the Subrecipient must have a formal written agreement with the Grant Project Contact that specifies an official relationship between the parties even if the relationship does not involve a salary or other form of remuneration.

Grant Management Contact

The Grant Management Contact is representative of the Subrecipient with authority to act on the organization's behalf in matters related to the award and administration of grants. This individual agrees that the organization will assume the obligations imposed by applicable Federal and State statutes and regulations and other terms and conditions of the award, including any assurances. These responsibilities include accountability both for the appropriate use of awarded funds and the performance of the grant-supported project or activities as specified in the approved application.

Although MDA requires you to designate such an individual, MDA does not specify the organizational location or full set of responsibilities for this individual.

Project Title

Provide a title that accurately and succinctly describes the project, limited to fifteen words.

Project Start Date

The project start date shall be no earlier than October 1, 2015. This must match the Work Plan. Projects do not have to be initiated on the grant effective date, but should be initiated as soon thereafter as practical so that project goals may be achieved within the funded project period.

Project End Date

Project end date shall be no later than June 30, 2018. This must match the Work Plan.

Specific Specialty Crop deriving benefit from grant

Indicate the specific specialty crop (e.g. "iceberg lettuce" instead of "vegetables" or "lettuce"). This provides the information we need to ensure crop eligibility. A list of eligible crops is available at List of crops commonly considered.

Area of Focus

Indicate the proposed project's area of focus by checking all boxes that apply.

Special Project Features

Will this project have a substantial focus on benefiting:

- ***Beginning farmers or ranchers*** - individuals or entities who have not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.
- **Socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers -** means a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group. A "Socially Disadvantaged Group" is a group whose members have been subject to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program
- **Multi-state** - Indicate if this project has cooperators and budget from multiple states, and list the partnering state(s). USDA-AMS encourages priority for multi-state projects.

Narrative

Abstract

Include a project summary of 250 words or less, suitable for dissemination to the public. It should include the need for the project, a brief description of the goals and outcomes, and your plan for evaluating and measuring the success of the project or program.

Project Purpose:

Fill in the boxes provided to answer the questions below.

1. **What is the specific issue, problem or need to be addressed by the project**? Explain your basis for getting funds to conduct this project. What is it that you are trying to solve or fix? Additionally, demonstrate that this is an issue of importance to specialty crop stakeholders and/or that they have sought or encouraged your involvement in finding a solution. MDA prioritizes applications that address problems brought forth by specialty crop stakeholders.

   Example: "The Montana Specialty Crop Association, during their annual meeting, indicated that GAP training was of great importance to continued expansion of their markets. The president indicated to me that GAP training is expensive and difficult to coordinate, that they do not have the staff to do so, and that they would like us to do this for them."

2. **Why is the project important and timely**? Why, and why now?

   Example: "GAP certification is quickly becoming an industry standard demand for retailers and wholesalers purchasing agricultural products. The Montana Specialty Crop Association indicated that 90% of their buyers require GAP certification of all growers before they will accept them as a vendor."

3. **What are the objectives of the project**? Provide general objectives, what you want to accomplish with this project. You will get a chance to be more specific in the Expected Measurable Outcomes section.

   Example: "We want to provide GAP training for the Montana Specialty Crop Association, obtaining GAP certification for their members, and increasing their regional retail market share."

Eligibility

The items required for this section provide the screener and evaluators the information necessary to determine that there is a problem, it is an important issue, and that your Proposal provides a solution for the stated problem.

1. **Does the project have the potential to enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops?** Examples of how a project could have this potential are as follows:
   - A project promoting farmers markets – there are more than just specialty crops sold at farmers markets.
   - A project promoting "buy local" – there are more products to "buy local" than just specialty crops.
   - A project for developing distribution infrastructure – there are more than just specialty crops that are distributed as part of a local food system.

   If YES, describe the methods or processes you will implement to verify all grant funds are expended on activities and costs that only enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. Examples of methods or processes are:

- **Cost-share**: Determine the percentage of the project that will enhance only specialty crops, and ask for SCBG funds for only that portion of the project's total cost. Be sure to provide:
    1. the specific activities and costs;
    2. the method by which you will determine the percentage;
    3. how you will verify and track it; and
    4. the source of funding or contributions.
- **Matching funds**: Provide matching funds from a non-Federal source to cover activities that benefit non-specialty crops. Be sure to provide:
    1. the specific activities and costs;
    2. how you will verify and track it; and
    3. the source of funding or contributions.

2. **Does the project build on a previously funded SCBG project**?
    - If YES, list the title of the previously funded SCBG project. Then, describe how the project differs from and builds on the previous project's efforts. Also describe the likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds. Specifically, provide a summary (3 to 5 sentences per project) of the accomplishments of the previous project that have led you to seek continued funding.

3. **Has the project been submitted to or funded by another Federal or State grant program**?
    - If YES, identify which Federal and/or State grant program, the status of the application (e.g. in process, awarded, etc.) and describe how the project differs from and supplements efforts of the SCBG and the other Federal or State grant program rather than duplicating funding efforts. **MDA will not fund duplicative projects**.

Potential Impact

This section should show how the project potentially impacts the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. The following questions should be answered.

1. **Who are the beneficiaries of the project?** Be as specific as possible here. This information is important to determine the eligibility of the beneficiaries, as well as if the project serves beneficiaries MDA designated as priority.

2. **How many beneficiaries will be impacted?** The answer to this must be a number.

3. **How will the beneficiaries be impacted by the project?** Be specific and explicit. Examples of impact could be increased sales, increased awareness, increased yield, etc.

4. **What is the potential economic impact of the project?** Be specific and provide a number whenever possible. Examples of economic impact could be the estimated dollar amount of increased sales or decreased cost, the percent increase in yield, etc.

5. **Describe how you will share the results of the project with specialty crop growers and other interested specialty crop stakeholders.** MDA encourages Applicants to consider this a key aspect of their Proposal – SCBG projects are not meant to be performed in a vacuum with the outcomes benefiting the industry only for the duration of the project. MDA also encourages active, rather than passive, communication with stakeholders.

   Examples of stakeholder communications are:
   - Form an Advisory Committee of stakeholders, communicating each key project development and seeking continual feedback on progress;
   - Quarterly meet with stakeholder groups to inform of progress and share results;
   - Present findings at annual specialty crop stakeholder meeting;
   - Send quarterly progress/update emails to stakeholders; and
   - Publish news articles and distribute to statewide media.

6. **If the project is a multi-state project**:
   - Which other States are participating?
   - How will all States collaborate effectively?
   - Has each State participating in the project submitted the project in its State Plan?
   - Which State is taking the coordinating role (State will be responsible for performance reporting)
   - What percent of the budget is covered by each State?

Expected Measurable Outcomes

Provide at least one distinct, quantifiable, measurable project outcome that solely supports enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. If the outcome measures are long-term and occur after the project's completion, then identify an intermediate outcome that occurs before the end of the grant period and that is expected to help lead to the fulfillment of long-term outcomes. For further information on expected measurable outcomes, please see the Outcomes Model or this Educational Bulletin. This section must address the following:

- Provide a GOAL - A goal is what you hope to achieve as a result of conducting the activities and producing the outputs (tangible results that can be seen, touched, handled, or moved about) of the project. Examples of outcome-oriented goals could include a change in knowledge, change in behavior, change in conditions that make a difference for the beneficiaries of the project.
- Provide a PERFORMANCE MEASURE - Identify a performance measure for each goal that you will use to measure the actual project results compared to the expected results. These 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).
- Provide a BENCHMARK - For each performance measure provided, include benchmark. The benchmark is the baseline data against which you will measure your success. Examples of a

benchmark could include current or initial level of knowledge, current behavior, or current conditions.

- Provide a TARGET - For each benchmark provided, indicate the TARGET. The TARGET is the level of change that you anticipate by the completion of the project. This is NOT the target audience or target population.
- Provide your PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN - How will you monitor your progress toward achieving each GOAL?
    - What are your data sources for monitoring performance? For example, will you conduct surveys or use questionnaires?
    - How will you collect the required data? Be sure to include the frequency of your data collection.

Project Support

Work Plan

The following questions shall be answered in this section; use the provided table.

1. **Project Activity**: What activities are necessary to accomplish the project's objectives? MDA encourages Applicants to provide a reasonable amount of detail here, in order to demonstrate Applicant's ability to perform the project tasks and accomplish the objectives. Be sure that activities match the budgeted items (i.e. if you budget and request funds for travel, include the travel in the work plan).

2. **Who:** Who will do the work of each activity? Indicate the project participants who will do the work of each activity, including contractors. If you request grant funds for personnel and contractors, you must include them in the work plan to demonstrate the requested funding is warranted.

3. **Timeline:** When will each activity be accomplished? Include timelines for accomplishing each activity. Make sure to include the month and year the activity is scheduled to begin and end.

Stakeholders

Using the provided table, describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support this project and how. Be sure to include the specialty crop stakeholder's organization, contact person (name), and location (city, state). MDA encourages Applicants to include specialty crop stakeholders as committed partners in project. Additionally, MDA recommends that Applicants contact the indicated specialty crop industry stakeholders prior to inclusion in the Grant Proposal. (Note: letters of support are not allowed in the Grant Proposal. However, MDA reserves the right to contact indicated stakeholders for confirmation of roles and/or support outlined in the Proposal.)

Budget

All costs must solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. At a minimum, the costs of activities that solely benefit specialty crops must be readily distinguishable from other financial

activities. If Applicant does not do this or it is impractical to segregate these costs, then the costs are not allowable.

If Applicants have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing the associated Federal cost principles, contact SCBG Program Manager.

It is highly recommended that applicants use the budget development worksheet posted on the SCBG webpage prior to entering information into webgrants. A thorough and detailed budget must be submitted with the Grant Proposal packet. (See Allowable & Unallowable Costs for guidance). MDA reserves the right to reject Proposals in which the budget calculations or figures cannot easily be discerned.

Please round totals to the next whole dollar.

Funding amount requested must be a minimum of $30,000; there is no maximum.

As a reminder, matching contributions, though not required, are highly encouraged and detailed descriptions should be included with the budget estimations under the matching funds category.

Personnel

Persons employed by the grantee organization with SCBG funds should be listed in this. Those employed elsewhere would be listed as subcontractors or consultants in the "Contractual" category. In order for secretarial and clerical salaries to be allowable, they must be listed as direct charges in the budget narrative, and a justification of how the person will be directly involved in the project must be included in thework plan. Costs for general administrative or accounting or indirect costs are not allowable. The duties must be directly related to the project plan, and the employee must be listed in the Work Plan. **See Allowable & Unallowable Costs for additional guidance.**

Complete the following:

For each employee whose will be working on the SCBG project complete the following:

- **Name/Title**: Provide the name and title of employee with a direct charge to the award.
- **Rate of Pay**: Provide the annual salary of the employee, hourly wage or stipend amount as is appropriate.
- **Level of Effort**: Provide the amount of FTE or percent of time the employee will dedicate to this project.
- **Funds Requested**: Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting to support this budget line.
- **Match Funds Provided**: Provide the amount of match (cash or in-kind) you are contributing to support this budget line.

Fringe Benefits

Fringe benefits are compensation in addition to direct wages or salaries, such medical insurance. Fringe benefits are allowable provided they are for personnel listed above and follow the **Allowable & Unallowable Costs** guidance. The duties must be directly related to the project plan, and the employee

must be listed in the Work Plan. Fringe benefit expenses are not required even if personnel expenses will be charged to the grant.

Provide the following:

- **Name/ Title**: Provide the name and title of employee with a direct charge to the award.
- **Fringe Benefit Calculation**: Show how the funds requested are calculated based on the fringe benefit rate.
- **Funds Requested**: Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting to support this budget line.
- **Match Funds Provided**: Provide the amount of match (cash or in-kind) you are contributing to support this budget line.

Travel

Travel expenses charged to the grant must be directly related to the project plan, and the travelers, destination, and purpose for each trip must be listed in the Work Plan. **See Allowable & Unallowable Costs for additional guidance.**

Complete the following:

- **Trip Destination**
- **Purpose of Travel:** State the reason for the travel.
- **Type of Expense:** airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.
- **Number of Units:** e.g. 3 days, 700 miles, 2 nights.
- **Cost per Unit**
- **Funds Requested**: Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting to support this budget line.
- **Match Funds Provided**: Provide the amount of match (cash or in-kind) you are contributing to support this budget line.

Travel Guidance

MDA reserves the right to cap any amount deemed unreasonable given the circumstances at the maximum amount allowed by the latest version of the Montana State Travel Policy as outlined by the Montana Department of Administration.

Montana In-State Travel

Reimbursement is for actual costs up to the maximum allowance for meals, incidentals, and lodging expenses for each complete 24 hours of travel. The maximum travel rates allowable are:

Meals

The maximum allowable per diem rates are:

Breakfast	$5.00
Lunch	$6.00
Dinner	$12.00

Lodging

Reimbursements for lodging and applicable taxes are for actual costs, and must be substantiated with a receipt. Maximum lodging rates follow Federal guidelines: FY 2014 Per Diem Rates for Montana.

Mileage and Parking

- Mileage reimbursement for using a privately owned vehicle will be at the standard mileage rate established by the United States (U.S.) Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and in effect at the time of travel.
- Reimbursement for parking is up to the actual costs, and must be substantiated with a receipt.

Out-Of-State Travel

Reimbursement is available for actual costs of transportation, lodging, subsistence, meals and incidental expenses when traveling out of the State of Montana. Subrecipients that do not have formal travel policies and for-profit subrecipients' allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. If Subrecipient organization has no formal travel policy, those regulations will be used to determine the amount that may be charged for travel costs.

International Travel

Note: International travel requires prior approval from SCBG Program Manager and/or USDA. Reimbursement is available for actual costs up to the maximum allowance for meal, incidental, and lodging expenses when traveling out of the country.

The maximum international travel rates allowable are established in a supplement to section 925, U.S. Department of State Standardized Regulations. These per diem rates are available on the U.S. Department of State website.

Rates are subject to change daily to account for currency and economic changes.

- Reimbursement for meals and lodging plus incidental travel expenses will be paid up to the rates identified on the U.S. Department of State's website.
- The lodging allowance is intended to substantially cover the cost of lodging at adequate, suitable and moderately priced facilities.
- Travelers are advised to request information on hotel discounts for Subrecipients traveling on U.S. Government business.

Air Travel

- Economy-based rates are to be used by all travelers.
- International travel must comply with the Fly America Act, U.S.C. Title 49 § 40118. This Act requires consultants, contractors, Subrecipients, and others performing U.S.

Government financed foreign air travel to travel by U.S. flag air carriers with some exceptions.

- Reimbursement is available up to actual airfare expenses incurred.
- Subrecipients are strongly encouraged to take advantage of discount fares for airline travel through advance purchase of tickets if travel schedules can be planned in advance.
- Subrecipients should consider the use of alternative technologies such as teleconferencing or videoconferencing if they are available, appropriate for the project, and less costly.

Unallowable for travel costs for conferences, venues, tradeshows, events, meetings, programs, conventions, symposia, workshops seminars, etc. that include non-specialty crop activities such as farmers' market annual conferences and general marketing tradeshows where these costs cannot be specifically identified and easily and accurately traced to activities that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Example: Travel costs for personnel to travel to a farmer's market conference are unallowable, while travel to a vegetable food safety educational session is allowable.

Equipment

This category includes tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds $5,000 per unit. All tangible personal property that does not qualify as "Equipment" must be included under "Supplies", including those items that cost less than $5,000. The equipment must be directly related to the project plan and must be listed in the Work Plan.

- **Equipment**: Provide the official name of the equipment, including brand, to be purchased.
- **Justification of Equipment**: Describe the purpose, intended use, for which you plan to purchase the equipment, tied directly to an objective, goal, activity, or outcome listed in the Proposal.
- **Purchase or Rental**
- **Funds Requested**: Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting to support this budget line.
- **Match Funds Provided**: Provide the amount of match (cash or in-kind) you are contributing to support this budget line.

Capital expenditures for general purpose equipment, buildings, and land are unallowable as direct charges to the grant.

Capital Expenditures means expenditures for the acquisition cost of the capital assets (equipment, buildings, land), or expenditures to make improvements to capital assets that materially increase their value or useful life. Acquisition cost means the cost of the asset including the cost to put it in place. Acquisition cost for equipment, for example, means that the net invoice price of the equipment, including the cost of any modifications, attachments,

accessories, or auxiliary apparatus necessary to make it usable for the purpose for which it is acquired. Ancillary charges, such as tax, duty, protective in transit insurance, freight, and installation may be included in, or excluded from the acquisition cost in accordance with the governmental unit's regular accounting practices.

General Purpose Equipment (unallowable) means equipment, which is not limited to research, scientific or other technical activities. Examples include office equipment and furnishings, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.

Equipment means an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost which equals or exceeds $5,000.

Capital expenditures for special purpose equipment are allowable as direct costs, provided that items with a unit cost of $5,000 or more have the prior approval of MDA.

(Note: Prior approval from MDA occurs when the grantee has identified the purchase of special purpose equipment in the Grant Proposal, and MDA has approved the Grant Proposal. If special purpose equipment was not originally included in the approved Grant Proposal, then the grantee must request and receive approval MDA to purchase the equipment before utilizing grant funds for that purpose.)

Special Purpose Equipment means equipment which is used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities. Examples of special purpose equipment include microscopes, spectrometers, and equipment which are used for a single purpose to solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops and benefit the specialty crop industry and not a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.

The use, management and disposition of equipment by the Grantee shall be in accordance with 2 CFR 200. See the SCBG Grant Management Manual for additional information.

Supplies

This category includes all tangible personal property that does not qualify as "Equipment", which may include anything from office supplies to educational or lab supplies. Items such as long distance charges, postage, fax and express mail or more appropriately listed under the "Other" category. The supplies must be directly related to the project plan and listed in the Work Plan, when feasible.

Complete the following:

- **Item**: What it is you will purchase with grant funds.
- **Justification for Supplies:** How many units will you purchase at the cost per unit? What is the purpose of the supplies?
- **Per Unit Cost**
- **Number of Units/Pieces Purchased**

- **Funds Requested**: Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting to support this budget line.
- **Match Funds Provided**: Provide the amount of match (cash or in-kind) you are contributing to support this budget line.

Contractual

Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the Applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one contractor or consultant, each must be described separately. (Repeat this section for each contract/consultant.) The contractor/consultant must be directly related to the project plan must be listed in the Work Plan.

If contractor employee and consultant hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-14 step 10 Federal employee in your area (for more information please go to http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/, provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, or other expenses.

Complete the following:

- **Contractor Name OR "not yet selected":** Indicate the name of the selected contractor, or if the contractor is not selected yet, indicate "not yet selected."
- **Contracted Activity:** What it is you will hire the contractor to do, tied directly to an objective, goal, activity, or outcome listed in the Proposal, and included in the Work Plan.
- **Funds Requested**: Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting to support this budget line.
- **Match Funds Provided**: Provide the amount of match (cash or in-kind) you are contributing to support this budget line.
- **If the contractor/consultant has already been selected**, verify that you followed procurement procedures which reflect applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the Federal laws and standards identified in 2 CFR Part 200
- **If the contractor/consultant has <u>not</u> already been selected**, verify that you will follow all applicable State and local laws and regulations and conform to the Federal law and standards identified in 2 CFR Part 200.

Other

Direct costs are all other direct costs not covered in any of the previous budget categories. The other expenses must be directly related to the project plan must be listed in the Work Plan, when feasible.

- **Conference/Meeting** – Costs of holding a conference or meeting are included in this category. Some examples are the rental of facilities or equipment for the meeting. Details of costs for each conference or meeting should be broken out and provided in the budget. Meals provided during the conference or meeting are **not** allowable costs.
- **Communications** – Mailings, postage, express mail, faxes, and telephone long distance charges. Provide the estimated cost for this category.
- **Speaker/Trainer Fees** – Provide the amount of the speaker's fees and a description of the services they are providing.

- **Publication Costs** – Provide the estimated cost of printing the brochures and other program materials or scientific or technical journals as well as an estimate of the number of pieces to be printed/published.
- **Data Collection** – Provide the estimated cost of collecting performance data to measure the project outcome measures.

To complete this section:

- **Item Description:** Describe what is being purchased. What will this item/service be used for.
- **Justification of Expense**
- **Per Unit Cost**
- **Number of units Provided**
- **Funds Requested**: Provide the amount of federal funds you are requesting to support this budget line.
- **Match Funds Provided**: Provide the amount of match (cash or in-kind) you are contributing to support this budget line.

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are not an allowable expense for this grant.

Program Income

Program income is gross income—earned by a recipient under a grant—directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned only because of the grant agreement during the grant period of performance. 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 partially with grant funds); registration fees for conferences, etc.

To complete this section:

- **Source of Income:** Describe how program income will be generated by this project.
- **Estimated Income:** How much income do you anticipate earning from the described source?

Program income may only be expended on allowable costs that solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Project Funding

Provide the following information in this section:

- **Would this project be possible without SCBG grant funds?** Check one of the provided boxes.
    - If NO, you are indicating that there are no other funding sources, public or private, through which this project could be funded. No further explanation is necessary.
    - If YES, you are indicating that there are other funding sources, public or private, through which this project could be funded. For this, please provide an explanation regarding

the source of funding that would be used for this project if SCBG funds were not granted.

- **Could the expected measurable outcomes of this project be accomplished with a reduced budget?** There are situations in which MDA must reduce budgets of projects in order to fund all or portions of the project. MDA encourages Applicants to provide guidance on which areas of the budget could be cut in order to fund as much of the project as feasible.

  Indicating areas for potential cuts does not guarantee any cuts to your budget or project.

  If NO, you are indicating that the project could not be accomplished with a reduced budget (i.e. the funding decision must be "all or nothing").

  If YES, be very specific in indicating which aspects of the project could be cut and the corresponding change dollar amount reduction to the overall budget. Also, indicate whether the Expected Measureable Outcomes or work plan in your proposal would need to be adjusted.

Next Steps

After you submit the Grant Proposal Packet (see "Submission"), the SCBG Program Manager will notify you of receipt. MDA encourages all Applicants to officially submit Proposals at least one week prior to the due date, in order to ensure on-time receipt. If you do not receive a notification of receipt within 24 hours of intended delivery, contact SCBG Program Manager.

MDA may ask an Applicant for more information on any of the Grant Proposal Packet Requirements throughout this process.

Confidential Information

After grant awards have been made, all Grant Proposal packets and the associated evaluations will be made available to the public. PRIOR TO SUBMITTING to the Department any confidential information (including trade secrets, as defined by Mont. Code Ann. 30-14-402) you must send a written description of the information you believe is subject to confidentiality to the Department. Department legal staff will review the description to determine if the information is such that there is an individual privacy interest worthy of constitutional protection. If the privacy interest clearly exceeds the merits of public disclosure, the Department will furnish the applicant with a confidentially agreement to be signed and submitted with the constitutionally protected information. Information received pursuant to an approved confidentiality agreement will be available for review only by the SCGB Manager, the evaluation committee members, and Department legal counsel. Applicants shall pay all legal costs associated with defending a claim for confidentiality should another person or entity submit a "right to know" (open records) request.

Screening

Screening Team

The first step in the Funding process is screening. MDA's Screening Team reviews proposals according to the items in the Screening Criteria section below.

Screening Criteria

Pass Fail Criteria

- Are all required materials included in the application?
- Are all sections of the proposal complete?
- Is the applicant's organization eligible to apply?
- Is the applicant suspended or debarred from receiving funds?
- Is the application in compliance with applicable federal and state regulations and in alignment with this notice?
- If a current SCBG grantee, are all invoicing and reporting current? Answer yes, if the applicant is not currently an SCBG grantee.
- If a previous grantee, has the organization successfully completed past projects?

If the screening team answers no to any of the above questions the application will be removed from competition.

Rated Criteria

Question	Points Possible
To what extent will the proposed project enhance the competitiveness of the specialty crop(s) benefiting from this project?	3
To what extent does the Proposal clearly define a challenge that is facing today's specialty crop industry and indicate a project which will assist in finding a solution?	3
Does the applicant have the background and ability to successfully manage and complete the proposed project?	4

An applicant must pass all pass/fail criteria and score a minimum of five (5) points in the scored section to continue in the application process. The screening team will use a consensus scoring approach meaning that: pass/fail assessment or one score will be given to each category. The final scoring will represent the consensus of reviewers in each assessment area.

Screening Results

Grant Proposals passing Screening will proceed to the next step, Evaluation. Grant Proposals that do not pass the screening process will not receive further consideration for an award. Neither the Screening Team, nor MDA is required to recommend funding a project that does not sufficiently satisfy these criteria even if there are enough remaining grant funds to do so.

SCBG Program Manager will notify all Applicants of the results of the screening process within 60 days of the due date. Applicants with rejected Proposals may protest the Screening decision (see Request for reconsideration for additional information).

Evaluation

The second step in the funding process is Evaluation.

Evaluation Team

MDA will send applications that pass screening to the Evaluation Team, made up of at least 10 members, including MDA staff, crop and research experts, specialty crop industry representatives, economic development agencies, and grower organizations. MDA selects the Evaluation Team members based on geographic area and their qualifications, in order to ensure the review panel consists of technical experts from various fields who were qualified and able to perform high quality and fair reviews.

Conflict of Interest

Individuals selected for the review committee are responsible for notifying MDA staff of any potential conflict of interest with any applicant for funding. MDA Legal staff will review all disclosed conflicts of interest to determine whether a conflict of interest exists under state law. If a conflict exists, the committee member will be recused from participating in the decision process on the conflicting application. All committee members will certify that they are free from any conflict of interest on the applications they are allowed to consider.

Evaluation Criteria

The Evaluation Team will use the Evaluation Criteria below to rate the Grant Proposal packets and make recommendations for funding to MDA's Director.

Category	Points possible	Assessment areas
Project purpose	20	• How well does the applicant define the need for and purpose of the project? • Are the project objectives clear and appropriate? • Is the project important and timely?
Potential Impact	30	• Does the applicant identify a specific group of specialty crop industry beneficiaries? • Does the applicant demonstrate that the project will be effective at creating

		positive impact for the beneficiaries? • Does the applicant demonstrate that the project will have a significant economic impact for the specialty crop industry?
Expected Measure able Outcome	10	• Does the project include measurable outcomes that directly support the project's purpose? • Are the outcomes of direct importance to beneficiaries? • Is there a plan for monitoring performance toward meeting each outcome?
Outreach	10	Does the applicant present a plan to share information from this project with specialty crop growers and stakeholders?
Work Plan	10	• Is the work plan complete? • Is the work plan feasible? • Is the timeline reasonable? • Do the tasks relate to the project objectives and expected measurable outcomes?
Project Support	10	• Is industry support for the project demonstrated? • Are stakeholders actively involved in the project? • Do stakeholders have an active role in any activities outlined in the project work plan?
Budget	10	• Is the amount requested reasonable? • Are line items reasonable and appropriate? • Does the budget narrative adequately explain the line items?

The average of the Evaluation Team's scores will be used to rank all applications passing screening. These rankings will be presented to the Director of the MDA who will make the final determination regarding which applications will be recommended to USDA-AMS for funding.

Director's Recommendation

The third step in the funding process is inclusion review and recommendation of the MDA director.

The MDA Director will utilize the Evaluation Team's rankings of applications, as well as the priorities identified in this packet to determine which projects will be included in Montana's State Recommendation for funding to USDA-AMS. All projects in the State Recommendation must comply with eligibility requirements and, in total, not exceed Montana's SCBG allocation. MDA reserves the right to fund projects in part, add and delete tasks, and ask for clarification on the work plan, timeline, and budget. No agreement will be entered into until MDA is satisfied with all the specifications of the project.

SCBG Program Manager then submits MDA Director's Montana State Recommendation to USDA-AMS for their final approval. Funding is not guaranteed if the project is included in the State Recommendation. Funding is dependent upon the availability of federal funds and the final approval from the USDA.

SCBG Program Manager will notify all Applicants of the results of the Evaluation process and inclusion in the Director's Montana State Recommendation within 90 days of the due date. Applicants with rejected Proposals may protest the Evaluation decision (see Request for reconsideration for additional information).

USDA-AMS Approval

The fourth step in the funding process is approval from USDA-AMS.

Upon receipt, USDA-AMS reviews the State Recommendation in order to ensure that it meets the statutory purpose of the program, all application criteria are fulfilled in accordance with the appropriate regulations, and that costs are allowable. USDA-AMS may require additional information from Applicants at this time; failure to provide requested information in a timely manner may result in a project not receiving funding.

Once all administrative and programmatic issues have been resolved, USDA-AMS will formally notify MDA, and then SCBG Program Manager will soon after notify Applicants of the results. MDA anticipates that grant awards and notifications will be made in late 2015.

Grant Agreement

The last step in the funding process is a formal grant agreement (i.e. contract) between MDA and the Applicant, now called "Subrecipient."

Award Acceptance

At this time, Subrecipient must decide whether or not to accept the award, including modifications to the Proposal's activities, outcomes, budget, etc.:

1. **If Subrecipient cannot accept the award**, including the legal obligation to perform in accordance with award terms and conditions, the recipient should notify the SCBG Program Manager immediately upon receipt of the Grant Agreement.
2. **If Subrecipient chooses to accept the award**, signing the grant agreement constitutes acceptance of an award, including any modifications to the Proposal's activities, outcomes, budget, etc., and the agreement's associated terms and conditions, as listed in the grant agreement and Grant Management Manual.

Requests for Reconsideration

If a grant application is denied, the grant applicant may request reconsideration based on substantive issues of fact concerning bias, discrimination, conflicts of interest, and/or non-compliance with procedures described in the Funding Notice document

. The applicant must request reconsideration in writing to the Department of Agriculture, SCGB Manager, within 14 business days of notification of the denial.

The request must:

(1) Describe the substantive fact(s) concerning bias, discrimination, conflict of interest, or noncompliance that cause the applicant to conclude the proposal should have been approved.

(2) Outline the specific area(s) in the proposal the applicant believes significantly addresses the Notice requirements.

(3) Identify specific information in the proposal the applicant believes were misapprehended by the MDA.

MDA Legal Counsel and/or other designated staff will review the request for reconsideration within five (5) business days of its receipt to ensure it is in compliance with this policy and merits further review by MDA.

If MDA Legal Counsel and/or other designee determine the request for reconsideration substantiates material issues concerning bias, discrimination, conflict of interest, or non-compliance with procedures set forth in the Notice, the Agriculture Development and Marketing Bureau Chief will review the proposal to determine if the claims laid out in the appeal letter are of substantial consequence to warrant reconsideration of funding decisions.

The Department will notify the applicant of the result of the reconsideration within 10 days of its receipt of the request for reconsideration.