

GDA 2021 USDA/AMS SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM (SCBGP) REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

FUNDING ANNOUNCEMENT

Notice of Federal Grant Funds Availability – FY 2021
Administered By: Georgia Department of Agriculture
19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

The Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) is pleased to announce the competitive solicitation process to award the 2021 USDA/AMS (Agricultural Marketing Service) Specialty Crop Block Program grant (SCBGP).

Individual project award funding requests require a minimum request of \$20,000 up to a maximum of \$100,000. Awarded projects will have up to three years to complete the requirements of the grant. There are no extensions.

NOTE THAT THE AWARDING OF THIS GRANT IS CONTINGENT UPON FUNDING FROM USDA

The application process through GDA consists of TWO STEPS:

1. Submittal of a **Request for Concept Proposal Application** form to GDA. This will be scored against all other concept proposals submitted and only the TOP 30 highest scoring projects will go on to step #2. It is imperative that you read the directions on the Concept Proposal carefully and not skip any fields, as you will not be able to make corrections once submitted. THIS IS DUE TO GDA BY 2/26/21 at NOON to GrantsDivision@agr.georgia.gov
2. Invitation (by 3/12/21) from GDA to submit a full project proposal application package.

Please refer to the link available on the GDA grants webpage located at www.agr.georgia.gov/grants.aspx for the grant Concept Proposal pre-application form.

ELIGIBILITY

Proposals will be accepted ONLY from GEORGIA'S: IRS-designated 501(c)(3) current non-profit organizations, commodity commissions, grower associations, state and local government entities, and colleges and universities. **Individuals and for-profit organizations are not eligible to apply.**

Non-profit organizations that are applying for the first time *must* partner with a Principal Investigator (PI) from a Georgia college or university, preferably from either of Georgia's Land Grant institutions (UGA or FVSU). Because this is a very complicated grant to administer, previous experience with federal grants will factor *greatly* in Concept Proposal scoring, as will perceived administrative capacity.

University researchers may submit *no more than one* Concept Proposal for consideration for which they must be listed as the Principal Investigator (PI) or co-PI. Researchers should keep in mind that it is unusual for the same researcher to be funded over multiple years and should adjust expectations accordingly. Researchers should include in their proposals a plan to present the findings of their SCBG project at the annual SERFVG Conference, held each January.

If you have submitted the same project to GDA twice in the past and it has *not* been funded, it cannot be submitted again. You are welcome to submit a new project for consideration.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the SCBGP is to provide funding for projects that *enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in Georgia*. The project proposal must focus on research, education, or marketing and benefit the specialty crop industry. **Projects will be chosen for funding based on potential *increased impact* to the specialty crop industry in Georgia.**

Specialty crops are defined as: fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, Christmas trees, turfgrass/sod, nursery and greenhouse crops, including floriculture. Eligible plants must be cultivated or managed and used by people for food, medicinal purposes, and/or aesthetic gratification (i.e. crops used for animal feed are not eligible). Processed products shall consist of greater than 50% of the specialty crop by weight, exclusive of added water. Please see the specific listing of eligible crops on the USDA/AMS website located at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop>

FUNDING PRIORITIES/FOCUS AREAS

*The following have been identified as **funding priorities** for the SCBGP for Georgia:*

- Increasing consumption of specialty crops in Georgia's schools by expanding child knowledge of and improving access to the nutritional benefits of specialty crops;
- Enhancing specialty crop food safety, particularly in regard to helping farmers/growers/producers prepare for and comply with the provisions of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA);
- Assisting all entities in the specialty crop production/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;
- Research projects, including those which focus on helping specialty crop growers reduce the financial costs and/or environmental impact of their operations, including improved pest and disease management techniques, efficient water management, integrated pest management, and/or sustainable production;
- Developing and researching new and improved specialty crop varieties that are better adapted to Georgia's soils and climate and/or result in longer shelf-life;
- Increasing sales and marketability and driving demand for commercially grown specialty crops.

Note that the public is always welcome to suggest additional funding priorities to be considered by GDA for future SCBGP solicitations. These should be sent to Grants@agr.georgia.gov

GDA's intent is to fund projects that can produce the highest degree of measurable benefits to Georgia's specialty crop producers, in relation to each dollar spent. Concept Proposals will be scored based on the IMPACT the projects will likely have on Georgia's Specialty Crop industry.

Additionally, PARTNERSHIPS are strongly encouraged for this grant and proposals/applications that show input/buy-in from all interested parties in Georgia will score higher than ones that don't. **Letters of Support are *not* required for Concept Proposals but ARE required for full applications.** Research project (full) applications must show evidence of Georgia industry support.

Note that *no* indirect/administrative/F&A costs can be charged for this grant. This is because USDA caps it at 8% for SCBG and GDA retains that entire amount to cover its overhead costs.

Please also note that this is a **very** competitive grant. Only a fraction of the Concept Proposals received will be invited to submit a full application. From there, only 1/3 to 1/2 are likely to receive funding, which is often reduced from the requested amount.

PROJECTED TIMELINE (as proposed and subject to change)

No later than February 1, 2021 – Monday

Announcement of 2021 SCBGP grant opportunity; Request for Concept Proposals (pre-screening) published.

FEBRUARY 26, 2021 - Friday

Deadline for submission of Concept Proposals; must be received by **NOON (NO EXCEPTIONS, NO EXTENSIONS)** to GrantsDivision@agr.georgia.gov. You will receive an acknowledgement of submission within 24 hours. If you do not, your application was NOT received.

No later than MARCH 5, 2021 – Friday

GDA will send out Requests for Full Applications to organizations for the ~30 projects with the most impactful/highest scoring Concept Proposals. Those *not* invited to apply this year will also receive notice by the end of that week.

APRIL 9, 2021 - Friday

Full Project Proposal/Application submission deadline to GDA by **NOON** (no exceptions) in **Word format only** to GrantsDivision@agr.georgia.gov

MID to LATE APRIL 2021

GDA staff review of full applications: revisions and clarifications requested from applicants.

LATE APRIL TO EARLY MAY 2021

GDA/Specialty Crop Review Committee evaluation of applications.

MID-MAY 2021

Notice to applicants of acceptance/denial of their project proposals by the Review Committee.

Revisions made to projects before submission to USDA/AMS-SCBGP; Most applications will require scope/budget revisions to projects based on Review Committee recommendations.

JUNE-JULY 2021

Georgia's full State Grant Application Request will be sent to USDA/AMS-SCBG.

LATE SEPTEMBER 2021

Award letters and contract agreements will go out to awardees/sub-grantees through the Principal Investigator. Announcement of grant awards through press release/GDA website.

OCTOBER 2021

3-year grant period begins (once all contracts are fully executed).

NOVEMBER 1, 2022

First Annual Report Due. Template will be emailed to Principal Investigators by 10/1/22.

MARCH 31, 2023

Grantees should have requested reimbursement for at least 50% of their grant funds by this date. Unspent funds are subject to recapture and reallocation.

NOVEMBER 1, 2023

Second Annual Report Due. The template will be emailed to Principal Investigators by 10/1/23.

SEPTEMBER 29, 2024

3-year Grant period ends. NO EXTENSIONS. Projects must be completed by this date and absolutely no 2021 grant funds can be spent after this date.

NOVEMBER 1, 2024

Final Reports Due. The template will be emailed to Principal Investigators by 10/1/24.

For questions or additional information please e-mail: SCBGP Coordinator at GrantsDivision@agr.georgia.gov