The North Dakota Department of Agriculture is soliciting Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Request for Grant Proposals

Grant Application Guidance

Application Due Date:
January 12, 2026, at 4:00 P.M. CST
No late submissions accepted.

Doug Goehring, Agriculture Commissioner
North Dakota Department of Agriculture

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1. FUNDING OPPORTUNITY DESCRIPTION

a) LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Funding for the 2026 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) is contingent upon the United States Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA-AMS) announcing a 2026 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program under the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number: 10.170. Under the Farm Bill, The North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) anticipates receiving grant funding from USDA-AMS to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

b) PURPOSE

The North Dakota Department of Agriculture (NDDA) is pleased to announce a competitive solicitation process to award 2026-2028 SCBGP grant funds from the USDA-AMS for projects enhancing the competitiveness of North Dakota's specialty crops.

Specialty crops are defined as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). For a comprehensive list of eligible and ineligible commodities, please visit: https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop.

SCBGP applicants must focus on developing projects solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops pertaining to the following issues affecting the specialty crop industry:

- enhancing food safety;
- improving the capacity of all entities in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act, for example, by 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;
- increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops;
- improving efficiency and reducing costs of distribution systems; and
- sustainability.

NDDA has identified the following top four priorities:

- pest and disease control;
- developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops;
- investing in specialty crop research, including research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes; and
- increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops.

2. AWARD INFORMATION

a) AVAILABLE FUNDING

The NDDA anticipates receiving grant funding to be awarded to projects enhancing the competitiveness of North Dakota specialty crops during the time frame of 2026-2028.

b) Continuation Projects

If the project is a continuation of a project that the SCBGP funded previously, the applicant must describe how the project **differs from** and **builds** on the previous project's efforts. The applicant must also describe the likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds.

c) AWARD AMOUNT

Grant award amounts do not have a floor or a cap. NDDA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.

d) MATCHING FUNDS REQUIREMENT

Applicants are **not** allowed to have matching funds for grant proposal.

e) PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The Period of Performance begins October 1, 2026 and ends September 30, 2028. Performance can be less than the time allocated but cannot extend past the grant period end date without a formal extension.

3. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

a) ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants must meet the following requirements to be considered eligible to apply for the SCBGP.

Non-profit and for-profit organizations; local, state, and federal government entities, including tribal governments; and public or private colleges and universities are eligible to apply. There is no limit on the number of proposals applicants may submit; however, each proposal should be for a wholly unique project. Applicants should not submit multiple proposals for a single project.

Projects must enhance the competitiveness of North Dakota specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Each project must identify at least one expected measurable outcome that specifically demonstrates the project's impact in enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. Visit the USDA-AMS link for a comprehensive list of eligible and ineligible commodities.

Applications for grant funds should describe how the project potentially affects and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual.

NDDA 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 cannot use grant funds to compete unfairly with private companies that provide equivalent products or services. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

Projects disparaging the mission, goals, and/or actions of another organization are unallowable.

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.
- 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 farmer's 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 funding 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 an extension service 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.

Projects, unlike operations, have a definitive beginning and end. A project has an overarching goal, accomplished by a series of individual activities or tasks over a short duration.

Examples of projects could include:

- Researching new cultivars
- Marketing apples through a targeted promotional campaign

Activities or tasks that could be a part of such projects might include:

- Hiring personnel

- Holding an educational workshop
- Planting specialty crops
- Distributing product promotional materials

4. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

a) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Grant applications must be submitted via email to scbg@nd.gov by the due date. Grant applications must include the cover letter, application, and any letters of recommendation. Application documents are posted on the NDDA website at https://www.ndda.nd.gov/scbgp. If you cannot access the site or have trouble with the application, please contact Waldemar Garcia at scbg@nd.gov or 701-328-2191.

All applicants must adhere to the following instructions, in addition to other requirements as stated in this grant Request for Grant Proposals (RFGP) to be considered eligible for grant funds. The following information is addressed on the SCBGP Project Profile Template application. Applications missing any of the subsequent information may be deemed ineligible.

- Each application must include the following documents: cover letter and application. Documents must list the name of the company or individual submitting the proposal, street address, mailing address, telephone number, email address, and the person(s) who will be responsible for the project. These items can be found on the NDDA website.
- Application must describe in detail how the grant funds will be used for.
- Applicants may include letters of support to enhance the quality of their proposal.
- Applications are not limited to a specific minimum or maximum project amount. NDDA reserves the right to offer an award amount less than the amount requested.
- Proposals must be submitted on USDA SCBGP Project Profile Template. The cover sheet and letters of support need to be submitted as their own attachments. Letters of support are encouraged.
- NDDA must receive an electronic copy of the full application that includes the cover sheet, Project Profile Template, and any letters of support by the stated deadline - 4:00 p.m. CST on January 12, 2026.
- Do not modify the format of the cover sheet or application or make your own form.

b) APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

NDDA will review grant applications to ensure the application meets the statutory purpose of the program, all application criteria are fulfilled, and that costs are allowable.

Once applications are reviewed by NDDA, the SCBGP committee will complete an evaluation for each project. The SCBGP committee consists of reviewers that have excellent knowledge of the specialty crops in North Dakota. All panelists have firsthand experience with specialty crops and are in different areas of the state to ensure fair and high-quality reviews. Below are the evaluation criteria:

	Max Points	Points Received
Project Purpose	**25**	
How well does the applicant define the specific issue, problem or need of the project? Are the project objectives clear and appropriate? Is the project important, timely, and feasible? If a continuation project, has the applicant defined how the project will differ from and build upon prior projects?	Comments:	
External Project Support	**15**	
Do specialty crop stakeholders, other than the applicant and those involved in the project, support this project and clearly state why?	Comments:	
Measurable Outcomes	**30**	
Does the project include at least one OMB approved outcome measure that directly supports the project's purpose? Does the outcome measure include at least one indicator and related quantifiable result? Does the applicant appropriately describe how the project will collect the required data to report on the outcome and indicator?	Comments:	
Budget Narrative	**20**	
Is the amount requested reasonable? Are line items reasonable and appropriate? Is each category justification completed and reasonable?	Comments:	
Overall	**10**	
Is the proposal complete, well thought out and written, and has demonstrated an appropriate amount of preliminary work to justify further research and development work on the project?	Comments:	
TOTAL	**100**	

c) REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

All applications will be reviewed by NDDA and the SCBGP committee after the grant application deadline. Applications are evaluated on the merits of the proposals based on the scoring criteria listed above. Applicants will be notified during the review process if monetary adjustments to grant requests, project proposal scope of work and/or project budgets are necessary.

d) ANTICIPATED AWARD ANNOUNCEMENT

Successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing regarding the status. NDDA anticipates that notifications will be approximately in May 2026 and grant awards in October 2026.

5. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

a) AWARD NOTICE

Successful applicants will be sent a Notice of Grant Award (NOGA). Prior to beginning work on the proposed project or receiving funding, successful applicants will be required to sign a NOGA indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks, report results, and authorizing NDDA to monitor the progress of the proposed project.

NOGA's must be signed and returned to NDDA within 30 days of receipt. Failure to submit an executed copy of the NOGA within 30 days of receipt may result in the loss of awarded grant funds unless the delay was caused by circumstances outside the control of the applicant. Grant funds are not effective, and expenditures related to this grant should not be incurred until fully executed NOGA by both parties.

Awards issued under this announcement are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards of 2 CFR part 200 as implemented by the USDA-AMS under 2 CFR part 400 and the most recent SCBGP General Award Terms and Conditions. An application funded with the release of federal funds through a grant award does not constitute or imply compliance with federal regulations. Grant recipients and subrecipients are responsible for ensuring that their activities comply with all applicable federal regulations.

All applicants must have a Unique Entity ID (UEI) number. The Unique Entity Identifier, or the UEI, is the official name of the "new, non-proprietary identifier" that will replace the D-U-N-S® number, according to the General Services Administration (GSA). The UEI will be requested in, and assigned by, the System for Award Management (SAM.gov).

To receive an award, all applicants are required to register with the System for Award Management (SAM), and in doing so, to designate an e-Business Point of Contact. SAM registration must be updated annually and be active and maintained with current information at all times during an active award. Organizations that need to register in SAM for the first time or need to update their SAM registration can visit https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration. All applicants must be in an eligible status on SAM before receiving funding.

To comply with the Federal Funding and Transparency Act of 2006 (FFATA) and 2 CFR part 170, Reporting Subaward and Executive Compensation Information, recipients must complete a Transparency Act Form to allow NDDA to report the required data on recipients.

b) POLICY REQUIREMENTS

General Compliance

All awarded grants must comply with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations and the terms of the grant award as specified in the NOGA Requirements.

Monitoring

NDDA reserves the ability to perform site monitoring visits to any and all applicants to ensure that work is progressing within the required timeframe and that fiscal procedures are

followed accurately and appropriately. Monitoring includes both financial and program information, as well as site visits.

Ineligible Costs
NDDA will not reimburse for any costs incurred by any applicant for work performed in the preparation and production of this RFGP, nor for any work performed prior to the formal Execution of the NOGA.

NDDA will not reimburse indirect or overhead costs (NDDA Policy #220 Indirect Costs – It is the policy of NDDA that payment of indirect or overhead costs on grants, contracts, and other agreements is prohibited. NDDA defines indirect or overhead costs according to the Office of Management and Budget 2 CFR Part 225

Open Records
Applications submitted for funding, all related grant awards, and reports shall be subject to disclosure under the North Dakota open records law, N.D.C.C. CH. 44-04.

Under the North Dakota public records law and subject to the Confidentiality clause, certain records may be open to the public upon request. Public records may include: (a) records NDDA receives from applicant under the NOGA, (b) records obtained by either party under the NOGA, and (c) records generated by either party under NOGA.

Applicant agrees to contact NDDA immediately upon receiving a request for information under the public records law and to comply with NDDA's Instructions on how to respond to such request.

Other Considerations
All proposals submitted in response to this RFGP become the property of NDDA. NDDA reserves a royalty-free, nonexclusive, and irrevocable license to reproduce, publish, otherwise use, and to authorize others to use materials produced under this grant agreement.

NDDA also reserves the right to:

- Post funded RFGP or final reports to the NDDA website
- Reject any or all RFGP received
- Waive or modify minor irregularities in RFGP received after prior notification and agreement of applicant
- Use any or all ideas submitted unless those ideas are covered by legal patent or proprietary rights
- Clarify the scope of this program, within the RFGP requirement and with appropriate notice to potential applicants, to best serve the interests of the State of North Dakota
- Amend program specifications after their release, with appropriate written notice to potential applicants
- Require a good faith effort on part of the applicant work with NDDA subsequent to project completion to develop or implement project results

- Withhold any payments when grant award conditions are not met

Exclusions
Grant funds may not be used to fund political activities in accordance with provisions of the Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. 1501-1508 and 7324-7326).

c) Reporting
The applicant will be responsible for setting up and maintaining a project file that contains all records of correspondence with NDDA, receipts, invoices and copies of all reports and documents associated with the project. All records, regardless of physical form, and the accounting practices and procedures of applicant relevant to RFGP are subject to examination by the North Dakota State Auditor, the Auditor's designee, or Federal auditors, if required. Applicant shall maintain all of these records for at least three (3) years following completion of NOGA and be able to provide them upon reasonable notice.

NDDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the course of the project. Information submitted in any report to NDDA will be a public record. Annual and final reports must be submitted using the required format.

Biannual Reports
Biannual reports are required for projects and will summarize project activities and progress made. The biannual report is formatted the same as the annual report to make the annual report easier to compile. The biannual report will include the following information:

- Project Title
- Federal Project Expenditures to Date
- Activities Performed

Annual Reports
Annual reports are required for projects that span of one year and will summarize project activities and progress made. These reports will go to the USDA-AMS. The annual report will include the following information:

- Project Title
- Federal Project Expenditures to Date
- Activities Performed

Final Reports
A final performance report will be required by the applicant at the end of the performance period. The final report may be posted on the NDDA website and is important for sharing project findings with state agencies and the public. The final report may include the following:

- Project Title
- Project Impact and Findings
- Beneficiaries
- Activities Performed

- Outcome(s) and Indicator(s)/Sub-Indicator(s)
- Contact Person
- Federal Project Expenditures to Date
- Additional Information

In addition to the final project report NDDA reserves the right to conduct a follow-up survey of funded projects in order to determine long-term impacts of the project.

Reporting Compliance
Applicants who do not submit the final report or who submit unacceptable presentations may be required to return previously distributed funds to NDDA.

d) Payment
Requests for reimbursements will be accepted on a quarterly basis. Each reimbursement request must include an itemized invoice and documentation of the work or expenses for which payment is requested. Itemization shall include the purpose, amount, and date incurred. Applicants must provide assurance that the work has been completed (i.e., include receipts, invoices, proof of payment, and proof of delivery) and clearly outline expenditures.
Applicant agrees to the withholding of the final ten percent of the total compensation until an acceptable final report, including all financial documentation is received.

e) Budget adjustments
Applicants agree that any changes in scope of service or budget during the project period, needs prior written approval to NDDA.

f) Contact
For questions or assistance, please contact:
North Dakota Department of Agriculture
Attn: Waldemar Garcia
600 E. Boulevard Avenue Dept. 602
Bismarck, ND 58505-0020
Phone: 701.328.2191
Email: scbg@nd.gov