Maryland
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program-Farm Bill

Fiscal Year 2017 Funding Cycle

Grant Manual

Updated 3/1/2017

Packet includes
General program information
Application instructions
Evaluation criteria
Application/proposal template

Application Due Date: 4:00 p.m., April 20, 2017

Maryland Department of Agriculture - Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
FY 2017 Grant Manual

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FY17 Maryland Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

Grant Manual

I. General Information

CDFA (CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE) 10.170

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) is pleased to announce a competitive grant process to award Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds for projects that solely enhance the competitiveness of U.S. grown specialty crops. Funding is provided to state departments of agriculture from the 2014 Farm Bill through the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service. The SCBGP allocation formula is the average of the most recent available value of specialty crop cash receipts in the State and the acreage of specialty crop production in the State.

A. Available Funds and Project Duration

MDA will administer approximately $354,000 in SCBGP funds. Selected applications will be included into the Maryland State plan and submitted to the USDA for final approval.

Competitive grants will be awarded for projects with a minimum of **$15,000**. The Maryland SCBGP grants have ranged from $15,000 - $140,000. SCBGP grant funds will be awarded for projects up to **2 years** in duration and must conclude by **November 30, 2019**.

More than one project application per applicant may be submitted. Projects may be submitted by a single organization or combined entities. Multi-state projects to address a growing need for solutions to problems that cross state boundaries are also eligible. Contact the SCBGP Program Manager for additional application instructions.

B. Application & Funding Timing

Grant funds will be disbursed, on a reimbursement basis, when program applications have been submitted and approved by MDA and the USDA. Selected grant projects will not be able to begin project activity and incur eligible project expenses until approval has been received and contracts have been signed between MDA and the grantee. Anticipated project timelines include a start date no earlier than **November 1, 2017** and completion no later than **November 30, 2019**.

Timeline

RFP is released	March 2017
Applications due to MDA	April 20, 2017
Applications scored and selected by review committee	May 2017
Selected applications notified by MDA	June 2016
State application submitted to USDA	June 2016
Anticipated USDA Approval	October 15, 2017
Approval Letters Issued by MDA	October\November 2017
Project start date	November 2017
All projects conclude no later than	November 30, 2019

C. Funding Priority Areas

To be eligible for a grant, the project(s) must solely enhance the competitiveness of Maryland grown specialty crops. Priority will be given to projects that have the potential to provide solutions that lead to measurable benefits to the specialty crop industry in Maryland. **Grant funds will not be awarded for projects that provide profit to or directly benefit a specific commercial product or a single organization, institution, or individual.**

Funding Priorities

Grant applications that focus on one of the areas below will be given priority.

Food Safety Compliance

- Proposed projects should improve the capacity of all producers in the specialty crop distribution chain to comply with the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act – Produce Safety Rule and\or Preventative Controls Rule.

Market Enhancement

- Proposed projects should increase sales and marketability and drive demand for commercially grown specialty crops for retail, wholesale or institution buying, i.e. schools, restaurants, grocery stores, nurseries and other businesses.

Plant Health and Pest Management

- Proposed projects should prevent and manage pests and diseases to protect markets and minimize economic harm to specialty crop growers, including integrated pest management activities.

D. Eligible Specialty Crops

Specialty crops are defined in law as "fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops, including floriculture." The USDA maintains a more comprehensive list of eligible specialty crops on its website.

E. Ineligible Commodities

The USDA maintains a list of ineligible crops on its website.

F. Eligible Applicants

Applicants must have the support of a specific specialty crop organization or group with at least three specialty crop producers. Proposals submitted by individual producers must demonstrate that the potential impact of the project will be for a broader group of similar producers or industry segment. Projects must also be identified as a priority of the industry.

Proposals will be accepted from non-profit organizations, producer organizations, government agencies, universities, and other organizations involved in Maryland agriculture. Applicants must reside in Maryland or their business or educational affiliation must be in Maryland. Those applicants that are non-profit or for-profit, if awarded a grant, will be required to provide verification of their status. Applicants may cooperate with any public or private organization.

All applicants must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number, a nine-digit number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. to uniquely identify business entities. To obtain a DUNS number, call 866-705-5711 or apply online at: http://www.dnb.com/get-a-duns-number.html. The DUNS number needs to be "active" on SAM.gov. Applicants must be in "Active" on SAM.gov. It is sufficient to provide a screen shot and attach it with your application to show that the DUNS number is active.

G. Eligible Expenses - Allowable Costs

Grant funds will be paid to recipients for approved expenditures on a ***reimbursement basis***. Grant recipients must have the financial capability to pay project expenses up-front and may request reimbursement quarterly.

All costs must be associated with project activities that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. See 2 CFR Part 225 for further guidance on cost principles.

Eligible project expenses include, but are not limited to:

- ***Personnel Services***
  - Salaries, wages and fringe benefits
- ***Consultant Services or Subcontractors***
  - Costs of professional and consultant services rendered by persons who are members of a particular profession or possess a special skill.
- ***Materials and Supplies***
  - Costs incurred for materials, supplies, and fabricated parts necessary to carry out the grant project. Purchased materials and supplies shall be charged at their actual prices, net of applicable credits.
- ***Travel Expenses***
  - Mileage reimbursement following federal requirements for reimbursement rates, hotel, vehicle rental, or air fare.
- ***Miscellaneous Costs***
  - For example: telephone, meetings, publications, etc.

H. Ineligible Expenses

- ***Capital Expenditures for Equipment, Buildings, and Land***
  - Equipment is any single item which costs $5,000 or more and has a depreciation of more than one year.
- ***Bad Debts***
- ***Lobbying, Political and Other Governmental Activities***
- ***Advertising and Public Relations costs***
  - Costs designed solely to promote the image of an organization, general logo, or general brand rather than eligible specialty crops are not allowed.
  - A promotional campaign to increase sales of "XYZ Grown" Watermelon is acceptable while increasing brand awareness of "XYZ Grown" generically is not.
  - Promoting tomatoes while including an organization's logo in the promotion is acceptable, while generally promoting an organization's logo is not.
  - Promotional items, swag, gifts, prizes, memorabilia and souvenirs, i.e. bags with "XYZ Grown Watermelon" are not eligible.
  - Costs associated with sponsorships are not eligible. A sponsorship is a form of advertising in which an organization uses grant funds to have its name and/or logo associated with certain events and where the organization does not necessarily know how the funds will be used.

- Grant funds cannot be used for costs associated with the use of trade shows, meeting rooms, displays, demonstrations, exhibits, and the rental of space for activities that do not solely promote specialty crops.
- Grant funds cannot be used for coupon/incentive redemptions or price discounts. Costs associated with printing, distribution, or promotion of coupons/tokens or price discounts (i.e., a print advertisement that contains a clip-out coupon) are allowable only if they solely promote the specialty crop rather than promote or benefit a program or single organization.
- Indirect (administrative support) costs and tuition

I. Matching Funds

Matching funds are not required; however, the levels and sources of matching funds are a key criterion for evaluating proposals. Proposals that demonstrate applicant commitment to the project that maximizes the leveraging of funds will be considered.

If matching funds are proposed, the recipient must keep complete records that identify and document the specific costs or contributions proposed to meet the match or cost-share, the source of funding or contributions, and document how the valuation was determined.

J. Federal Cost Principles

Federal cost principles are used to determine allowable costs and ensure consistent treatment of costs. Applicants are responsible for identifying the federal cost principles appropriate to their organization and for ensuring consistent application of cost principles to the SCBGP grant funds. Applicants are responsible for ensuring contractors or consultants comply with applicable federal cost principle requirements.

Projects awarded a 2017 SCBGP grant will begin after the implementation of the Office of Management and Budget's Uniform Guidance ("Supercircular"). State, local or tribal governments, non-profit organizations, colleges and universities will be subject to 2 CFR 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. For-profit organizations will be subject to 48 CFR Subpart 31.2. All organization types are subject to 7 CFR 3015 and 7 CFR 3052.

K. Record Requirements

The grantee will be responsible for setting up and maintaining a project file that contains all records of correspondence with MDA, receipts, invoices and copies of all reports and documents associated with the project. The grantee shall retain all data and other records relating to the acquisition and performance of the grant award agreement for three years after the completion of the agreement. All records shall be subject to inspection and audit by state personnel at reasonable times. Upon request, the grantee shall produce a legible copy of any or all such records.

L. Monitoring

MDA reserves the right to perform site monitoring visits to all grantees to ensure that work is progressing within the required time frame and that fiscal procedures are followed accurately and appropriately. Monitoring includes both financial and program information, as well as site visits.

M. Liability

MDA will not be held liable for any costs incurred by any firm for work performed in the preparation and production of a proposal, nor for any work performed prior to the formal execution of the contract.

II. Application Instructions & Requirements

A. Required Application Format

Applications must be completed using the application template which is posted on the Maryland Department of Agriculture website. If you cannot access the site or have trouble filling out the application, contact SCBGP Manager , Karen.fedor@maryland.gov or 410-841-5773.

Proposals will only be accepted using the MDA application saved as a word document. **No PDF documents**

- Proposals should not exceed 15 pages. (Does not include attachments or letters of support.)
- MDA must receive an electronic copy of the proposal by **4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 20, 2017**.

Application includes:

1. **Cover Page** – Each application must include the completed Application Cover Page, including contact information for the applicant administering the project under contract with MDA, a title that describes the project, DUNS number, and check appropriate boxes. Include a screenshot of the SAM.gov website with your DUNS number. Use the form provided. Do not modify its format and do not make your own form.

2. **Project Description** – Provide a **one-sentence** description of the project as well as a project summary of no more than 250 words for dissemination to the public. A Project Summary includes:
   1. *The name of the applicant organization that will establish an agreement or contractual relationship with the Maryland Department of Agriculture to lead and execute the project,*
   2. *A concise outline the project's outcome(s), and*
   3. *A description of the general tasks to be completed during the project period to fulfill this goal.*

FOR EXAMPLE:
The ABC University will mitigate the spread of citrus greening (Huanglongbing) by developing scientifically-based, practical measures that can be implemented in a quarantine area with results disseminated to stakeholders through grower meetings and field days.

3. **Project Purpose** –
   - Provide the specific issue, problem or need that the project will address
   - List the objectives this project intends to achieve

4. **Project Beneficiaries** –
   - Describe who and how many people or companies will benefit from the project – provide an estimated number?
   - **Describe whether the project directly benefits socially disadvantaged farmers.** USDA defines a socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher as a farmer or rancher who is a member of a socially disadvantaged group, which 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.

- **Describe whether this project directly benefits beginning farmers.** USDA defines a beginning farmer or rancher as an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

5. **Project Continuation Information** - If the project is continuing the efforts of a previously funded SCBGP project, address the following:
   - Describe how this project will build upon and differ from the previous project;
   - Summarize the outcomes (or potential outcomes) of the previous efforts (3-5 sentences);
   - Provide lessons learned on potential project improvements:
     - What was learned from implementing this project, including potential improvements?
     - How are the lessons learned and improvements being incorporated into the ongoing project to make it more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes?
   - Describe the likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not depending on grant funding indefinitely.

6. **Other Support from Federal or State Grant Funding** - The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects. If you submitted this project to a Federal or State funding source other than the SCBGP for funding, identify the funding and describe how your project differs from or supplements the other funded project.

7. **External Project Support** - Describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support this project and why (other than the applicant and organizations directly involved in the project implementation). You can reference your support letters in this section.

8. **Expected Measurable Outcomes** – each project submitted must include at least **one** of the outcomes listed below, and at least **one** of the indicators listed underneath the selected outcome(s). If there are multiple sub-indicators under the selected indicator, select at least one. If you do not use one of the eight outcomes and the listed indicators, the application will be ineligible. The outcomes and indicators were approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to evaluate the performance of the SCBGP on a national level. The progress of each indicator must be reported in the annual report and the results in the final report.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Outcome 2, Indicator 1.a.
Of the 150 total number of children and youth reached, 132 will gain knowledge about eating more specialty crops.

Outcome 1: To enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased sales

Indicator: Sales increased from $_____to $_____and by_____percent, as result of marketing and/or promotion activities

Outcome 1 and its Indicator are mandatory for all marketing and promotion projects.

Marketing and promotion projects focus efforts to sell, advertise, promote, market, and generate publicity, attract new customers, or raise customer awareness for specialty crops or a specialty crop venue. These include, but are not limited to:

- Uses of social media to market and promote;
- Specialty crop local, regional and national campaigns;
- Specialty crop only tradeshows;
- Website promotion and development;
- Use/development of billboards, radio, television, magazine and email ads, marketing materials such as direct mail, brochures;
- Agritourism;
- Export market development;
- Retail promotions including point-of-purchase items, labels, packaging etc.;
- Farmers market promotions; and marketing and promotion campaigns with an education component directed to consumers

The specific measure must be expressed as a dollar value and percentage increase in sales of one or more specialty crops in one or more States or foreign markets as a result of marketing and/or promotion activities. For example, an expected outcome of growth in sales from 5% to 10% is not acceptable by itself, but in combination with an increase in sales of $1 million to $2 million it is acceptable.

This requirement means that an established baseline of sales in dollars should already exist at the time of application. For projects that do not already have a baseline of sales in dollars, one of the objectives of the project must be to determine such a baseline in order to meet the requirement to document the value of sales increases by the end of the project.

Outcome 2: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased consumption
Indicators:

1. Of the_____total number of children and youth reached,
   a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops:
   b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops:
   c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops:
2. Of the____total number of adults reached,
   a. The number that gained knowledge about eating more specialty crops:
   b. The number that reported an intention to eat more specialty crops:
   c. The number that reported eating more specialty crops:
3. Number of new and improved technologies and processes to enhance the nutritional value and consumer acceptance of specialty crops (excluding patents):
4. Number of new specialty crops and/or specialty crop products introduced to consumers:

Outcome 3: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased access and awareness
Indicators:

1. Of the_____total number of consumers or wholesale buyers reached,
   a. The number that gained knowledge on how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops:

   b. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops:
   c. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/preserved/obtained/prepared:
2. Of the_____total number of individuals (culinary professionals, institutional kitchens, specialty crop entrepreneurs such as kitchen incubators/shared-use kitchens, etc.) reached,
   a. The number that gained knowledge on how to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops:
   b. The number that reported an intention to access/produce/prepare/preserve specialty crops:
   c. The number that reported supplementing their diets with specialty crops that they produced/prepared/preserved/obtained:
3. Number of existing delivery systems/access points of those reached that expanded and/or improved offerings of specialty crops
   a. _____farmers markets
   b. _____produce at corner stores
   c. _____school food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.)
   d. _____grocery stores
   e. _____wholesale markets
   f. _____food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops
   g. _____home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers
   h. _____lawn and garden centers
   i. _____other systems/access points, not noted
   j. _____total (if not reported above)

4. Number of new delivery systems/access points offering specialty crops
   a. _____farmers markets
   b. _____produce at corner stores
   c. _____school food programs and other food options (vending machines, school events, etc.)
   d. _____grocery stores
   e. _____wholesale markets
   f. _____ food hubs that process, aggregate, distribute, or store specialty crops
   g. _____home improvement centers with lawn and garden centers
   h. _____lawn and garden centers
   i. _____other systems/access points, not noted
   j. _____total (if not reported above)

Outcome 4: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops though greater capacity of sustainable practices of specialty crop production resulting in increased yield, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and/or conservation of resources.

Indicators:

1. Numbers of plant/seed releases (i.e., cultivars, drought-tolerant plants, organic, enhanced nutritional composition, etc.) _____
2. Adoption of best practices and technologies resulting in increased yields, reduced inputs, increased efficiency, increased economic return, and conservation of resources (select at least one below).
    a. Number of growers/producers indicating adoption of recommended practices:
    b. Number of growers/producers reporting reduction in pesticides, fertilizer, water used/acre:
    c. Number of producers reporting increased dollar returns per acre or reduced costs per acre:
    d. Number of acres in conservation tillage or acres in other best management practices:

3. Number of habitat acres established and maintained for the mutual benefit of pollinators and specialty crops:

Outcome 5: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through more sustainable, diverse, and resilient specialty crop systems

Indicators:

1. Number of new or improved innovation models (biological, economic, business, management, etc.), technologies, networks, products, processes, etc. developed for specialty crop entities including producers, processors, distributors, etc.:
2. Number of innovations adopted:
3. Number of specialty crop growers/producers (and other members of the specialty crop supply chain) that have increased revenue expressed in dollars:
4. Number of new diagnostic systems analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases:
   [Diagnostic systems refer to, among other things: labs, networks, procedures, access points.]
5. Number of new diagnostic technologies available for detecting plant pests and diseases:
   [The intent here is not to count individual pieces of equipment or devices, but to enumerate technologies that add to the diagnostic capacity.]
6. Number of first responders trained in early detection and rapid response to combat plant pests and diseases:
7. Number of viable technologies/processes developed or modified that will increase specialty crop distribution and/or production:
8. Number of growers/producers that gained knowledge about science-based tools through outreach and education programs:

Outcome 6: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increasing the number of viable technologies to improve food safety

Indicators:

1. Number of viable technologies developed or modified for the detection and characterization of specialty crop supply contamination from foodborne threats:
2. Number of viable prevention, control and intervention strategies for all specialty crop production scales for foodborne threats along the production continuum:
3. Number of individuals who learn about prevention, detection, control, and intervention food safety practices and number of those individuals who increase their food safety skills and knowledge:
4. Number of improved prevention, detection, control, and intervention technologies:
5. Number of reported changes in prevention, detection, control, and intervention strategies:

Outcome 7: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through increased understanding of threats to food safety from microbial and chemical sources
Indicators:

Number of projects focused on:

1. Increased understanding of fecal indicators and pathogens:
2. Increased safety of all inputs into the specialty crop chain:
3. Increased understanding of the roles of humans, plants and animals as vectors:
4. Increased understanding of preharvest and postharvest process impacts on microbial and chemical threats:
5. Number of growers or producers obtaining on-farm food safety certifications (such as Good Agricultural Practices or Good Handling Practices):

Outcome 8: Enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through enhancing or improving the economy as a result of specialty crop development.

Indicators:

1. Number of new rural careers created:
2. Number of new urban careers created:
3. Number of jobs maintained/created:
4. Number of small businesses maintained/created:
5. Increased revenue/increased savings/one-time capital purchases (in dollars):
6. Number of new beginning farmers who went into specialty crop production:
7. Number of socially disadvantaged famers who went into specialty crop production:

Data Collection to Report on Outcomes and Indicators

Once you have chosen the outcome and defined the indicator, explain how you will collect the required data to report on the outcome and indicator, i.e. (Grower, participant or beneficiary web survey, written evaluation after educational presentation, identification through one on one personal meetings, etc.

9. **<u>Work Plan</u>** – The work plan section may be in any format as long as it contains the following information: Identify the activities necessary to accomplish the project objectives.

- Indicate who will do each activity and how they are qualified to do this work. If collaborative arrangements or subcontracts are used, specify their role and responsibilities in performing project activities.
- Include timelines for accomplishing each activity. Include the months/year(s) each activity will occur.
- Include plan for disseminating project results as detailed in E*xpected Measurable Outcomes* (Section 5 above).

10. <u>Budget Summary & Narrative</u> -The budget should contain a table summary and a narrative for each project cost item below:

- ***Personnel*** – Persons employed by the grantee organization to work on the project should be listed in this category. The duties must be directly related to the project application. For each paid project participant, indicate title, percent of full time equivalents to be spent on the project (FTE) or number of hours to be spent on grant, and corresponding salary for the FTE. Include an explanation of each individual's duties/responsibilities for the project. Individuals not employed by your organization should be included under *Contractual*.
- ***Fringe Benefits*** - Provide the rate of fringe benefits for each project participant's salary described in the personnel section.
- ***Equipment*** – Equipment is defined as items of property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per item. If the cost is under $5,000, then include these items under Supplies. Only equipment rental or depreciation can be charged to the grant.
- ***Supplies*** – List all items with acquisition cost under $5,000. This includes anything from office supplies and software to educational or field supplies. **Be specific**, list all items to be purchased. For non-typical materials and supply items, include a brief narrative of how the items fit with the project.
  - For example, *Office supplies such as pens, paper, toner, etc - $500*
    Gardening supplies such as soil and fertilizer - $500
- ***Travel Expenses –*** Follow federal requirements for reimbursement rates for mileage, hotel, vehicle rental, or air fare.
  - Travel costs for individuals not employed by the applicant organization must be listed under Contractual.
  - Travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA.
  - Provide the following information for each trip, if applicable:
    - Trip destination;
    - Purpose of trip;
    - Type of expense (airfare, car rental, mileage, etc.);
    - Number of days traveling;
    - Estimated number of miles and mileage rate ;
    - Estimated ground transportation costs;
    - Number of travelers claiming expense; and
    - Total funds requested for each expense;
- ***Contractual*** – Provide a short description of the services each contract covers and include the flat rate fee OR the total hourly rate fee for each contract.
  - Contractual hourly rates cannot exceed GS-15, step 10 for your area. To access the GS-15 step 10 rate, visit the website below and click on 2017 General Schedule and Locality Pay

Tables. http://www.federaljobs.net/salarybase.htm. If contractor employee and consultant hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in your area, provide a justification for the expenses.

  - You must indicate that all contractual work on the grant will follow your organization's procurement practices.
- ***Other*** – Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories:
  - Conferences/Meeting - Costs of holding a conference or meeting are included in 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 of brochures and other program and outreach materials.
  - Data Collection - Provide the estimated cost of collecting performance data to measure the project outcomes.
- **Project 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 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 in part with grant funds); registration fees for conferences, etc.
- **Matching Funds** –If any matching funds will be used, the expenses to be covered with matching funds must be described separately.

11. Letters of Support –Letters should demonstrate that there is external support for the project.

12. **Tax-Exempt Organizations** will be required to submit Form 990 with application.

B. Application Due Date

MDA must receive completed applications no later than **4:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 20, 2017**. Applications received after the deadline will not be accepted. Changes to your application or additional submissions will not be allowed unless specifically requested by the review committee. It is highly recommended you request and receive confirmation your application was received on time.

C. Contact Information

Applications must be emailed to: Karen.fedor@maryland.gov. You're strongly encouraged to discuss your application with Karen via email or at 410-841-5773.

D. Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Checklist

Each submission must use the application format provided in **MS Word** which includes:

- ❑ Cover Page
  - Check your DUNS number on SAM.gov and include a screenshot in your application
- ❑ Project Description
- ❑ Project Purpose
- ❑ Project Beneficiaries
- ❑ Project Continuation Information
- ❑ Other Project Funding
- ❑ External Project Support
- ❑ Expected Measurable Outcomes
- ❑ Work Plan
- ❑ Budget Summary and Narrative
- ❑ Letters of Support
- ❑ 990 Form (if applicable)

III. Grant Awards and Reporting

A. Application Evaluation Process

All applications will be reviewed by a team of MDA and external reviewers after the grant application submittal deadline. The external review committee is made up of representatives from the specialty crop industry, lending institutions, economic development and producers. Applications are evaluated on the merits of the proposals based on the evaluation criteria listed in Attachment A. Final decisions may include other factors such as beneficiaries and past recipient performance on previous Specialty Crop Block Grants.

Applicants will be notified during the review process if adjustments to the application's scope of work and/or project budgets are necessary. Applicants will be notified by MDA after the review process whether or not the proposal was selected to be included in the Maryland State Plan which will be submitted to USDA in July.

B. Notification of Award

Upon USDA approves the Maryland State Plan, applicants will be notified in writing whether or not they will receive a grant award. MDA anticipates that grant awards and notification will be made in November 2016.

C. Grant Award Agreement and Payment

Prior to beginning work on the proposed project or spending any funds, each successful applicant will be required to sign a Grant Award Agreement with the MDA indicating their intention to complete the proposed tasks and authorizing MDA to monitor the progress of the proposed project.

Grant Award Agreements must be signed and returned to MDA within 90 days of receipt. Failure to submit an executed copy of the Grant Award Agreement within 90 days of receipt may result in the loss of awarded grant funds, unless the delay is approved by MDA.

Requests for reimbursements will be accepted quarterly. Each reimbursement request must include an itemized invoice, documentation of the work, and proof of paid expenses. Itemization shall include the purpose, amount and date incurred.

To receive reimbursement, grantees must provide assurance that the work has been completed (i.e. include receipts, paid invoices) and clearly outline expenditures on the Request for Reimbursement Form. Twenty percent of the grant funds will be retained until receipt and USDA approval of final program report.

D. Reporting Requirements

MDA reserves the right to modify reporting requirements during the course of the project. All interim and final reports must be submitted using the required format.

Annual Reports – Each grantee is required to submit an annual report during the grant period, usually at the beginning of November. These reports shall summarize project activities and progress made since the last report submitted, timeliness of project (ahead or behind proposed timeline), externalities that effected progress/delays, expectations for the next period and a summary of costs and reimbursement requested.

Final Reports - A **final performance report** will be required within 60 days following the end date of the grant agreement. The final report will be posted on the USDA-AMS web sites and is important for sharing project findings with Federal and State agencies and the public. In addition to the final project report, MDA reserves the right to conduct a follow-up survey of funded projects to determine long-term impacts of the project.

Budget Adjustments - If a material change (20% or greater) in the budget is needed during the project period, a written request must be made to MDA to reallocate budget funds between budget categories.

IV. Attachments

Attachment A
Maryland Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Evaluation Criteria

The following chart is used by grant reviewers when evaluating grant applications.
It is printed here for your information and reference.

Evaluation Criteria	YES	NO
1.Grant Application		
• Is the project well organized, thought out, and explained in a way that makes sense and sounds like it can be carried out successfully?		
2. Project Purpose		
• 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?		
3. Potential Impact and Industry Support		
• Does the project have a positive impact on the targeted specialty crop industry? Will it be effective at enhancing the competitiveness of that industry? • Does the number benefiting justify the investment? • Is it apparent that the project is important to and supported by the impacted specialty crop industry? • Will industry be actively involved in the project?		
4. Expected Measurable Outcomes		
• Is the outcome realistic and achievable? Does the applicant have the ability to measure the outcome? • Does the project directly benefit producers or processors of Maryland specialty crops? • Will the project benefit them within the next five years? • Is there a plan for monitoring performance toward meeting each outcome?		
5. Work Plan		
• Do the tasks seem appropriate to complete the project objectives • Do the activities relate to the expected measurable outcomes? • Is the timeline reasonable?		
6. Budget and Narrative		
• Is the amount requested reasonable? Are line items reasonable and appropriate? • Does the budget narrative adequately explain the line items? • Are matching funds or in-kind donations provided? How well does applicant leverage funds?		
8. Funding Priority		
• Does the project clearly address one of the 2017 funding priorities? Is the funding priority discussed anywhere in the narrative?		
TOTAL		

Attachment B

Maryland Department of Agriculture's General Terms and Conditions

1. Changes: This Agreement may be amended only with the written consent of both parties.

2. Non–discrimination : Grantee may not discriminate on the basis of:
   a. Political or religious opinion or affiliation, marital status, race, color, creed, or national origin;
   b. Sex or age, except when age or sex constitutes a *bona fide* occupational qualification; or
   c. The physical or mental disability of a qualified individual.

3. Drug- and Alcohol-Free Work Place: Grantee agrees to comply with Maryland's policy concerning a drug and alcohol-free work place, as set forth in *COMAR 01.01.1989.18*, and shall remain in compliance throughout the term of this Agreement.

4. Termination for Non–Appropriation (Multi–Year Agreements): If funds are not appropriated or otherwise made available to support continuation in any fiscal year succeeding the first fiscal year, this Agreement shall be terminated automatically as of the beginning of the fiscal year for which funds are not available.

5. Termination for Convenience: MDA may terminate this Agreement, in whole or in part, without showing cause upon prior written notice to the Grantee specifying the extent and effective date of the termination. MDA shall pay all reasonable costs associated with this Agreement that the Grantee has incurred up to the date of termination, and all reasonable costs associated with termination of the Agreement.

6. Termination for Default: If the Grantee violates any provision of this Agreement, MDA may terminate the Agreement by giving the Grantee written notice of the termination.

7. Maryland Law Prevails: The law of Maryland shall govern the interpretation and enforcement of this Agreement.

8. Record-keeping/Audit: The Grantee shall retain and maintain all records and documents relating to this Agreement for three years after final payment by MDA hereunder or any applicable statute of limitations, whichever is longer, and shall make them available for inspection and audit by authorized representatives of MDA at all reasonable times.

9. Severability: It is understood and agreed by the parties hereto that if any of these provisions shall contravene, or be invalid under the laws of the particular state, county, or jurisdiction where used, such contravention or invalidity shall not invalidate the whole agreement, but the Agreement shall be construed as if not containing the particular provision or provisions held to be invalid in the said particular state, county, or jurisdiction, and the rights and obligations of the parties shall be construed and enforced accordingly.

10. Use/Return of Funds. The Grantee shall use all funds provided by MDA strictly in accordance with the Agreement and return all funds not used should MDA decide that Grantee may not carry them over for use the following year. If the Agreement is terminated, the Grantee shall return all funds not used.

11. Sample of Agreement available upon request. (REVIEWED 5/5/14)