



Maryland Specialty Crop Block Grant Program- Farm Bill

State Fiscal Year 2023 Funding Cycle

Grant Manual

Updated 3/08/2022

Packet includes

- General program information
- Application instructions
- Evaluation criteria
- Application/proposal template

Application Due Date: 11:59 p.m., April 6, 2022

**Maryland Department of Agriculture - Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
FY 2023 Grant Manual**

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FY2023 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 enhance the competitiveness of U.S. grown specialty crops. Funding is provided to state departments of agriculture from the 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 receive \$416,000 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, 2024**.

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, 2022** and completion no later than **November 30, 2024**.

Timeline

RFP is released	March 2022
Applications due to MDA	April 6, 2022
Applications scored and selected by review committee	April 2022
State application submitted to USDA	May 3, 2022
Announce and Award Funding	Fall 2022
Project start date	November 2022
All projects conclude no later than	November 30, 2024

C. Funding Priority Areas

To be eligible for a grant, the project(s) must 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 based on the 2021 Maryland Specialty Crop Block Grant survey.

Food Safety Compliance

- Proposed projects should meet specialty crop buyer requirements for mitigating food safety risks.

Market Enhancement

- Proposed projects should increase sales product and market share of Maryland specialty crops by leveraging the Maryland's Best brand through cooperative promotion and partnerships for restaurants, grocery stores, institutions, and other businesses.

Research

- Proposed projects should improve the competitiveness of Maryland specialty crops through research projects such as pest control and disease, soil quality, water efficiency, cleaning\sanitation, water quality for crops or pre\post-harvest handling, manure or composting as it relates to Food Safety Modernization Act.

Research applicants are encouraged to seek at least 5% of the total budget from Maryland specialty crop producers or industry. Research applicants must demonstrate an outreach component to the specified industry impacted by the project.

Eligible applicants may wish to consider submitting grants as it relates to the funding priorities that increase the competitiveness of specialty crop producers which may include beginning farmer, socially disadvantaged farmer or veteran farmer.

A Beginning Farmer or Rancher is defined as an individual or entity that has not operated a farm or ranch for more than 10 years and substantially participates in the operation.

A Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher is defined as 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.

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.

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.

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 in Word by **11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, April 6, 2022**.

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, and check appropriate boxes. include a screenshot of your organization or business in “Good Standing” on SDAT. Use the form provided. Do not modify its format and do not make your own form.

NOTE: On April 4, 2022, the federal government is moving away from the DUNS Number as its official entity identifier and toward the new Unique Entity ID (SAM), which will be generated in SAM.gov. All potential sub-grantees should get their Unique Entity ID (SAM). You will need this ID in order to receive an federal funds. If you do not have the ID by the application deadline, you will need to have it by September 01, 2022.

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 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. Keep in mind, the more outcomes and indicators you list, the more information you'll need to report. 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.

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Outcomes and Indicators

The grant program outcomes and performance measures outlined below reflect direct stakeholder feedback and provide a framework that allows grant recipients to evaluate project activities more accurately in relation to each program's statutory purpose.

For recipients, the measures are:

- More feasible to accomplish and measure within a grant's period of performance;
- Better aligned with grant program purpose and recipient activities; and
- More reflective of work performed during the project.

Outcome 1: Increasing Consumption and Consumer Purchasing of Specialty Crops

1.1 Total number of consumers who gained knowledge about specialty crops ____.

1.1a Adults ____.

1.1b Children ____.

1.2 Total number of consumers who consumed more specialty crops ____.

1.2a Adults ____.

1.2b Children ____.

1.3 Number of additional specialty crop customers counted ____.

1.4 Number of additional business transactions executed ____.

1.5 Increased sales measured in:

1.5a Dollars ____.

1.5b Percent change ____.

1.5c Combination of volume and average price as a result of enhanced marketing activities ____.

Outcome 2: Increasing Access to Specialty Crops and Expanding Specialty Crop Production and Distribution

2.1 Number of stakeholders that gained technical knowledge about producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing specialty crops ____.

2.2 Number of stakeholders that reported producing, preparing, procuring, and/or accessing more specialty crops ____.

2.3 Total number of market access points for specialty crops developed or expanded _____. Of those:

2.3a Number of new online portals created to sell specialty crops _____.

2.3b Number with expanded seasonal availability _____.

2.3c Number of existing market access points that expanded specialty crop offerings _____.

2.3d Number of new market access points that established specialty crop offerings _____.

2.4 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about more efficient and effective distribution systems _____.

2.5 Number of stakeholders that adopted best practices or new technologies to improve distribution systems _____.

2.6 Total number of partnerships established between producers, distributors, and/or other relevant intermediaries related to distribution systems _____. Of those established:

2.6a Number formalized with written agreements (i.e. MOU's, signed contracts, etc.) _____.

2.6b Number of partnerships with underserved organizations _____.

2.7 Total number of new/improved distribution systems developed _____. Of those, the number that:

2.7a Stemmed from new partnerships _____.

2.7b Increased efficiency _____.

2.7c reduced costs _____.

2.7d Increased specialty crop grower participation _____.

2.7e Expanded customer reach _____.

2.7f Increased online presence _____.

2.8 Number of specialty crop-related jobs:

2.8a Created _____.

2.8b Maintained _____.

2.9 Total number of new individuals who went into specialty crop production as a result of marketing _____. Of those, the number who are:

2.9a Beginning farmers or ranchers _____.

2.9b Socially disadvantaged farmers or ranchers _____.

2.10 Number of market access points that reported increased:

2.10a Revenue _____.

2.10b Sales _____.

2.10c Cost-savings _____.

Outcome 3: Increase Food Safety Knowledge and Processes

3.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about prevention, detection, control, and/or intervention food safety practices, including relevant regulations (to improve their ability to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and/or meet the standards for aligned third party food safety audits such as Harmonized GAP/GHP) ____.

3.2 Number of stakeholders that:

3.2a Established a food safety plan ____.

3.2b Revised or updated their food safety plan ____.

3.3 Number of specialty crop stakeholders who implemented new/improved prevention, detection, control, and intervention practices, tools, or technologies to mitigate food safety risks (to improve their ability to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) and/or meet the standards for aligned third party food safety audits such as Harmonized GAP/GHP) ____.

3.4 Number of prevention, detection, control, or intervention practices developed or enhanced to mitigate food safety risks ____.

3.5 Number of stakeholders that used grant funds to:

3.5a Purchase ____.

3.5b Upgrade food safety equipment ____.

Outcome 4: Improve Pest and Disease Control Processes

4.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about science-based tools to combat pests and diseases ____.

4.2 Number of stakeholders that adopted pest and disease control best practices, technologies, or innovations ____.

4.3 Number of stakeholders trained in early detection and rapid response practices to combat pests and diseases _____. Of those:

4.3a the number of additional acres managed using integrated pest management ____.

4.4 Number of stakeholders that implemented new diagnostic systems, methods, or technologies for analyzing specialty crop pests and diseases ____.

4.5 Total number of producers/processors that enhanced or maintained pest and disease control practices _____. Of those, the number that reported:

4.5a Reduction in product lost to pest and diseases ____.

- 4.5b Improved crop quality ____.
- 4.5c Reduction in labor costs ____.
- 4.5d Reduction in pesticide use ____.

4.6 Number of producers/processors improving the efficiency of pest and disease control diagnostics and response testing, as reported by:

- 4.6a Improving speed ____.
- 4.6b Improving reliability ____.
- 4.6c Expanding capability ____.
- 4.6d Increasing testing (i.e. survey work for pests) ____.

Outcome 5: Develop New Seed Varieties and Specialty Crops

- 5.1 Number of cultivar and/or variety trials conducted ____ . Of those:
 - 5.1a The number that advanced to further stages of development ____.
- 5.2 Number of cultivars and/or seed varieties developed ____.
- 5.3 Number of cultivars and/or seed varieties released ____.
- 5.4 Number of growers adopting new cultivars and/or varieties ____.
- 5.5 Number of acres planted with new cultivars and/or varieties ____.

Outcome 6: Expand Specialty Crop Research and Development

- 6.1 Number of research goals accomplished ____.
- 6.2 For research conclusions, the number that:
 - 6.2a Yielded findings that supported continued research ____.
 - 6.2b Yielded findings that led to completion of study ____.
 - 6.2c Yielded findings that allow for implementation of new practice, process or technology ____.
- 6.3 Number of industry representatives and other stakeholders who engaged with research results ____.
- 6.4 Total number of research outputs published to industry publications and/or academic journals ____ . For each published research output, the:
 - 6.4a Number of views/reads of published research/data ____.
 - 6.4b Number of citations counted ____.

Outcome 7: Improve Environmental Sustainability of Specialty Crops

- 7.1 Number of stakeholders that gained knowledge about environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies ____.
- 7.2 Number of stakeholders reported with an intent to adopt environmental sustainability best practices, tools, or technologies ____.

7.3 Number of producers that adopted environmental best practices or tools ____.

7.4 Number of new tools/technologies developed or enhanced to improve sustainability/ conservation or other environmental outcomes ____.

7.5 Number of additional acres managed with sustainable practices, tools, or technologies that focused on:

7.5a Water quality/ conservation ____.

7.5b Soil health ____.

7.5c Biodiversity ____.

7.5d Reduction in energy use ____.

7.5e Other positive environmental outcomes (optional) ____.

7.6 Number of additional acres established and maintained for the mutual benefit of pollinators/specialty crops ____.

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.

8. **Budget Summary & Narrative** -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.

9. Letters of Support –Letters should demonstrate that there is external support for the project. Support letters should also be signed and on the organization’s letterhead.

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

B. Application Due Date

MDA must receive completed applications no later than **11:59 p.m. on Wednesday, April 6, 2022**. 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 to make sure your business is in good standing with the State of Maryland on SDAT. Include screenshots in your application
- Project Description
- Project Purpose
- Project Beneficiaries
- Project Continuation Information
- Other Project Funding
- External Project Support
- Expected Measurable Outcomes
- Budget Summary and Narrative
- Grant Program Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionnaire
- 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 approval of 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 Fall 2022.

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.

Attachment A

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)