

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill

Request for Proposals

Fiscal Year 2012 Funding Cycle

**Application Deadline:
May 2, 2012**



**Commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith
Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
P.O. Box 1609
Jackson, MS 39215**

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill

Request for Proposals

I. Program Description	2
II. Eligible Grant Applicants	2
III. Eligible Grant Projects	2
IV. Allowable Costs	4
V. Restrictions and Limitations on Grant Funds	5
VI. Application Guidelines	5
VII. Application Evaluation and Selection Process	12
VII. Reporting Requirements	14
IX. Requests for Payment	16
X. Program Contacts	17
Attachment I. Eligible Specialty Crops	18
Attachment II. Acknowledgement	19
Attachment III. Steps to Developing Outcome Measures	20
Attachment IV. Sample Proposal	22
Attachment V. Application Checklist	28

I. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 authorizes the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to make grants available to provide assistance for specialty crops. The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill) amended the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 and authorized the USDA to provide grants to States for each of the fiscal years 2008 through 2012 to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. These grants are to be utilized by state departments of agriculture solely to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Each state submitting an application that is approved by USDA will receive a base grant of \$100,000 plus an additional amount based on the value of specialty crop production in the state in relation to the national value of specialty crop production. The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce (MDAC) anticipates receiving approximately \$281,843.82 in funding from USDA.

It is the intent of MDAC to develop a state plan requesting funds to implement projects that will significantly and positively impact the specialty crop industry in Mississippi. This invitation for proposals has been developed to provide all interested parties an opportunity to apply for these funds.

II. ELIGIBLE GRANT APPLICANTS

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce is the authorized agency to assume the lead role in the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP). According to USDA guidelines, grant funds cannot be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual because these projects do not enhance the specialty crop industry's competitiveness. Proposals are encouraged from state and local organizations, academia, producer associations, industry or community-based groups, and other specialty crop organizations. Applicants may submit more than one proposal. If more than one proposal is submitted, please prioritize the submissions.

III. ELIGIBLE GRANT PROJECTS

To be eligible for a grant, projects must **solely** enhance the competitiveness of Mississippi grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Specialty crops are defined in law as "fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops, including floriculture." Specialty crops are plants that are intensively cultivated. There are many plants that are specialty crops when cultivated but are also collected from wild populations. Wild plants are not considered specialty crops even though they may be used for the same purpose as cultivated plants. For a list of common specialty crops, see Attachment I.

Examples of "enhancing the competitiveness" of specialty crops include, but are not limited to: increasing child and adult nutrition knowledge and consumption of specialty crops; improving efficiency and reducing cost of distribution systems; assisting all entities in the specialty crop

distribution chain in developing “Good Agricultural Practices,” “Good Handling Practices,” “Good Manufacturing Practices,” and in cost-share arrangements for funding audits of such systems for small farmers, packers, and processors; investing in specialty crop research, including organic research to focus on conservation and environmental outcomes; enhancing food safety; developing new and improved seed varieties and specialty crops; pest and disease control; and sustainability.

Applicants may consider submitting grants that increase the competitiveness of specialty crop farmers, including Native American and disadvantaged farmers. Increasing competitiveness may include developing local and rural agricultural economies and improving food access in underserved communities.

Grant funds cannot be awarded for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual because these projects do not enhance the specialty crop industry’s competitiveness. Single organizations, institutions, and individuals are encouraged to participate as project partners.

The following are some examples of acceptable and unacceptable projects:

Examples of Unacceptable Projects

A company requests grant funds to purchase starter plants or equipment used to plant, cultivate, and grow a specialty crop for the purpose of making a profit, or to expand production of a single business.

An organization requests grant funds to make grants to individual specialty crop businesses or roadside stands to promote their individual business.

A sole proprietor requests grant funds to redesign her/his logo in order to make her/his specialty crop value-added product stand out at the local farmers market.

A company that develops specialty crop value-added products requests funds to train its employees how to make its value-added products.

A specialty crop producer requests funds to promote their blueberries at a roadside stand.

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 can be shared with many growers throughout the State.

A single grower requests funds to demonstrate the viability of organic small fruit production and partners with Cooperative Extension to publicize the working model of diversification to other regional growers.

A single company requests funds to provide a viable pollination alternative to specialty crop stakeholders in the region which currently does not have one.

A single specialty crop organization requests funds to conduct an advertising campaign that will benefit their specialty crop members.

A single farmer erects high tunnels on their property to extend the growing season of tomatoes and lettuce and conducts a field day and farm tour to encourage other small family farmers to adopt the production methods.

Project proposals and goals must focus on the following priority areas:

- Research (All research projects must contain an outreach component.)
- Promotion/Marketing
- Education/Training/Technical Assistance
- Food Safety/Product Handling

Project Duration

Specialty crop block grant funds will be made available around October 1, 2012. Funded projects must be completed by July 31, 2015.

IV. ALLOWABLE COSTS

All grants are subject to those cost principles applicable to the particular organization concerned. For example, if a university is awarded funding, the cost principles applicable to a university will apply. Please refer to the applicable cost principles when developing your project activities and budget. You may reference “A List of Selected Items of Cost Contained in the federal OMB Cost Principles Regulations” at the following website to locate the principles applied in determining if specific items of cost are allowable or unallowable: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5075580>.

- State and Local Governments and Indian Tribal Governments – 2 CFR 225 (OMB Circular A-87).
- Colleges and Universities – 2 CFR 220 (OMB Circular A-21)
- Non-Profits – 2 CFR 230 (OMB Circular A-122)
- For Profits – 48 CFR Part 31.2

All costs must be associated with project activities that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. In situations where project benefits include non-eligible specialty crops (i.e. produce market selling crafts and meats), project budgets must be pro-rated to only include specialty crops.

V. RESTRICTIONS AND LIMITATIONS ON GRANT FUNDS

Specialty Crop Block Grant Funds shall not be used to cover the following expenses:

- Administrative costs (overhead expenses and indirect costs)
- Paying off existing debt
- Substituting existing efforts or research already funded
- Purchase of general purpose equipment, land, or buildings
- Business entertainment including meals or business gifts
- Lobbying or political efforts including costs of membership in organizations substantially engaged in lobbying
- Salary and Wages (for full-time or part-time employees and student workers)
- Donations and contributions
- Starting a specialty crop farm, grove, garden, or business for the purposes of profiting one individual

Travel expenses will be limited to cover the expenses of a maximum of two travelers per trip.

Although General Purpose Equipment is not an allowed expenditure, Special Purpose Equipment is allowable with prior approval from USDA. Special Purpose Equipment means equipment used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities.

Grant funds shall supplement the expenditure of State funds in support of specialty crops grown in Mississippi, rather than replace State funds.

VI. APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Completed applications must include a signed Acknowledgement form (see Attachment II) and a narrative explaining how grant funds will be utilized to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Topics that are to be addressed in each section of the narrative are listed. Please address all topics listed. Incomplete narratives will not be accepted. The acceptable font size for the narrative is 12 pitch and all margins at one inch. **The number of pages of the narrative is limited to 6 pages. For a sample proposal, refer to Attachment IV starting on page 22.** The following format is to be followed:

- **Acknowledgement.** See Attachment II. The Acknowledgement must be signed by the authorized representative(s) of the proposing organization.
- **Applicant Information.**
 - Name of Applicant (or lead agency in the case of multi-agency projects) administering the project
 - Name of Project Coordinator
 - Mailing Address
 - Telephone
 - Fax
 - Email Address

Organizational Data Universal Number System (DUNS) Number. If your organization does not know its DUNS number or needs to register for one, visit Dun and Bradstreet at <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform> or call 1-866-705-5711. A DUNS number is required before funds can be awarded to any organization.

Project Starting Date and Ending Date

- **Project Title, Priority Area, and Project Abstract.** The following information should be included in this section:

Project Title: The title should adequately describe the project.

Priority Area: Identify which priority area is the main focus of this proposed project.

Abstract: Include project abstract of 200 or fewer words. The project abstract must contain a summary of the proposed project suitable for dissemination to the public. It should be a self-contained description of the project and should contain a statement of objectives and methods to be employed.

- **Project Purpose.**

The following shall be addressed in this section:

- Clearly state the purpose of each project. The purpose should include the specific issue, problem, interest, or need to be addressed and why the project is important and timely.
- Define the objectives of the project.
- Indicate if the project has the potential to enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops (Example: farmers market, general buy local, etc.)? If so, describe how it will be ensured that all grant funding is being used to solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. (Example: Using the registration process for a conference to ensure that only specialty crop farmers attend; matching 50% of the funds to cover a portion of the project that does not benefit specialty crops.)
- If the project is a state marketing program, describe how the State will ensure that funding is being used to solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops.
- If the project builds on projects previously funded through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, indicate clearly how the new project differs from previous work. Provide a summary (3 to 5 sentences) of the results of the completed work on this project, the long-term quantifiable effects of these results (especially as they impact the specialty crop industry), and how this year's funding will supplement or build on previous funding from the SCBGP.
- Indicate if the project will be or has been submitted to or funded by another Federal or State grant program and if the project duplicates efforts of the SCBGP-FB and other Federal or State grant program. If it does not, how does it supplement?

- **Potential Impact.**

This section shall show how the project potentially impacts the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual. The following shall be addressed in this section:

- Describe who the beneficiaries of the project are.
- Discuss the number of people or operations that will be impacted.
- Describe how the beneficiaries will be impacted by the project.
- Provide information on the potential economic impact if such data are available and relevant to the project.

- **Expected Measurable Outcomes.**

The following shall be addressed in this section:

- Describe at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that directly and meaningfully supports the project's purpose and is of importance to the intended beneficiaries. The outcome-oriented objective must define an event or condition that is external to the project and that is of direct importance to the intended beneficiaries and/or the public. The measurable outcome should include the following:
 - GOAL
 - PERFORMANCE MEASURE
 - BENCHMARK
 - TARGET

Refer to Attachment III for additional guidance for developing measurable outcomes.

- Describe how the performance toward meeting the outcome(s) will be achieved. Describe the data sources that will be used to monitor performance. Explain the process of collecting and analyzing data to meet the outcome-oriented objectives. For example, will you be using a survey questionnaire?
- Provide a timeframe of when outcome measures will be achieved. Outcome oriented objectives may be long-term that exceed the grant period. When expected measurable outcomes are monitored outside the grant period, include the performance monitoring plan in the work plan and indicate how monitoring will occur after the grant period ends without SCBGP funding.

Examples of outcome measures may include, but are not limited to: per capita consumption, consumer awareness as a percent of target market reached, market penetration based on sales by geographic region, dollar value of exports, or web site hits.

For research grants, they may include generation of new knowledge, research quality, attainment of leadership in the field, or the development of human resources (e.g., providing opportunities for graduate students).

- **Work Plan.**

This section will address the activities that are necessary to accomplish the project objectives, who will do the work, and when the activities will be accomplished. The following shall be addressed in this section:

- Explain briefly the activities that will be performed to accomplish the objectives of the project. Make sure to include your performance monitoring/data collection plan activity described in the expected measurable outcome section in the work plan. If outcomes will be measured outside of the grant period, indicate how the monitoring will occur after the grant period ends.
- Provide a timeline for accomplishing each activity. Make sure to include the month and year the project is scheduled to begin and end.
- Indicate who will do the work of each activity. If collaborative agreements or subcontracts are used, make sure to specify their role and responsibilities in performing project activities.

Example timeline:

Timeline	Who's Responsible	Project Activity
November 2010	Ag Marketing Council, industry representatives	Assemble specialty crop steering committee to provide direction throughout the project.

- **Budget Narrative.**

Provide an itemized budget and a budget narrative (in paragraph form) with sufficient detail about the budget categories listed below. All requested budget items/activities should correlate to the purpose/goals of the project and demonstrate that they are reasonable and adequate for the proposed work. The budget narrative should clearly show the SCBGP funds that support the project. If matching funds are budgeted, please do not commingle non-grant funds with grant funds in the budget section. If matching funds (not a requirement) are included in the proposal, please show these funds separately.

Example Budget

Budget Item	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Travel			
Provide Itemized List	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	
Total Travel			\$\$\$
Equipment			
Provide Itemized List	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	
Total Equipment			\$\$\$
Supplies			
Provide Itemized List	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	
Total Supplies			\$\$\$
Contractual			
Provide Itemized List	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	
Total Contractual			\$\$\$
Other Costs			
Provide Itemized List	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	
Total Other			\$\$\$
Funds Requested	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$

- **Travel.** Indicate the destination, purpose of trip, number of people traveling, number of days traveling, estimated airfare costs if applicable, estimated ground transportation costs if applicable, estimated lodging and meals costs if applicable, and estimated mileage costs for the travel if applicable. Show the total for all SCBGP funded travel.

Note: All travel expenses shall follow the applicant’s written travel policies or U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) rates.

- **Equipment.** This category includes items of property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000. If under \$5,000, include in supplies. Provide an itemized list of special purpose equipment purchase or equipment rentals along with a brief narrative on the intended use of each item and the cost of all purchases or rentals.

Although General Purpose Equipment is not an allowed expenditure, Special Purpose Equipment is allowable with prior approval from USDA. Special Purpose Equipment means equipment used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities. Examples of special purpose equipment include microscopes, spectrometers, and

equipment which are used for a single purpose to solely enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops and benefit the specialty crop industry and not a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.

- **Supplies.** Provide an itemized list of projected supply expenditures, their intended use, and the dollar amount for each item. Show the total for all SCBGP funded supplies.
- **Contractual.** Provide a short description of the services each contract covers. Indicate if the cost is a flat fee or hourly rate to be applied. Indicate the flat rate fee or the total hourly rate to be applied. List general items of items the contract covers such as professional services, travel, lodging, etc. Show the total for all SCBGP funded contractual expenses.

If hourly rates exceed the salary of a GS-14 step 10 Federal employee, provide a brief justification. (For more information please go to www.opm.gov). In preparing your justification, please select from the following situations and include in your detailed justification.

- 1) A description of the steps you took to hire a contractor, which includes obtaining a cost/price analysis from at least three contractors who can perform the service. The purpose of the cost analysis is to review and evaluate each element of cost to determine reasonableness. (Please provide company name and contract amount for each analysis.)

OR

- 2) Due to the complexity or uniqueness of the project, the pool of available and qualified contractors is limited. Therefore, the selected contractor's specialized qualifications necessitate hiring at a rate beyond a GS-14 step 10. (Please outline the unique qualifications of the contractor.)

Compensation for individual consultant services should be reasonable and consistent with that paid for similar services in the marketplace. NOTE: Consultant service fees may not exceed \$130,000 or \$500 per eight-hour day, excluding travel and subsistence costs.

If the contract is for service or maintenance, costs should be in direct correlation to the use of the equipment for the project (i.e., if a particular copy machine is used 50 percent of the time for the project, the project should only be charged 50 percent of the service contract paid from Federal funds.)

- **Other.** Provide detailed descriptions of other costs such as conferences or meetings, communications, speaker/trainer fees, publication costs, and data collection, and other budgeted costs associated with each project. Show the total for all SCBGP funded other expenses.
 - a) Conferences/Meetings - Costs of holding a conference or meeting are included in this category. Some examples are the rental of facilities or equipment for the

meeting. Details of costs for each conference or meeting should be broken out and provided in the budget.

- When paying for the travel of a person to attend a conference, meals and lodging may be included in the cost without additional justification.
- Meals may not be charged as project costs when individuals decide to go to lunch or dinner together when no need exists for continuity of a meeting. Such activity is considered to be an entertainment cost. In contrast, meals may be charged to the project if such activity maintains the continuity of the meeting and to do otherwise will impose arduous conditions on the meeting participants. Include a justification for meals costs. Some examples of acceptable reasons are that the conference facility is located in a remote area where public facilities are not accessible; there will be a speaker and business discussions during the meal; there is insufficient time available to allow participants to go out on their own. If one or more of these justifications cannot be met, or if there are no other acceptable and compelling reasons, then the meals should not be charged to the award. The attendees should be responsible for providing their own meals.
- Breakfasts for conference attendees are usually considered unallowable as it is expected these individuals will have sufficient time to obtain this meal on their own before the conference begins in the morning. This does not pertain to persons in a travel status. When paying for the travel of a person to attend a conference, meals and lodging may be included in the cost without additional justification.
- b) Communications - Mailings, postage, express mail, faxes, and telephone long distance charges. Provide the estimated cost for this category.
- c) Speaker/Trainer Fees - Provide the amount of the speakers' fees and a description of the services being provided.
- d) Publication Costs - Provide the estimated cost of printing of brochures and other program materials or scientific or technical journals.
- e) Data collection - Provide the estimated cost of collecting performance data to measure the project outcome measures.
- **Program Income.** If program income will be earned on any project, indicate the nature and source of program income, the estimated amount, and how the income will be used to further enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. For example, if registration fees are being collected at a conference as part of the project, indicate the estimated amount of registration fees that will be collected. If program income is earned, it may be used for 1) expanding the project or program; 2) continuing the project or program after the sub grant support ends; and 3) supporting other projects or programs that further the broad objectives of the grant program.

- **Project Oversight.** Describe the oversight practices that provide sufficient knowledge of grant activities to ensure proper and efficient administration. Indicate who will oversee the project activities. Indicate how the oversights will be performed. For example, will weekly or monthly meetings be held to discuss performance toward the completion of the project? Include timelines.
- **Project Commitment.** Describe who the grant partners are and how the grant partners commit to and work toward the goals and outcome measures of the proposed project. Explain which specialty crop stakeholders outside the lead organization support this project and how.
- **Multi-state Projects.** (If applicable) Tell which other states are participating. Describe how the States are going to collaborate effectively with related projects. Indicate if each state participating in the project submitted the project in their State plan. Indicate which state will be taking the coordinating role. Tell what percent of the budget is covered by each state.

Completed application packets must be **received by 5:00 p.m. on May 2, 2012. No late applications will be accepted.** An electronic version of the application, in Microsoft Word format, as well as a hard copy is required.

Mail completed applications to:

Paige Manning, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
 Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
 P.O. Box 1609
 Jackson, MS 39215
 Email: paige@mdac.ms.gov
 Phone: (601) 359-1163

VII. APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Grant applications will be reviewed by an Advisory Committee. Applications will be evaluated based on the merit of the submitted proposal narrative and the criteria listed below. See Application Guidelines in the previous section for requirements. Recommendations may be made to suggest adjustments to the monetary grant requests, proposed scope of work, and/or project budgets.

Criteria	Maximum Points	Points Received
Project Purpose		
How well does the applicant define the issue, problem, interest, or need? Does this project address a significant problem or important need for Mississippi's specialty crop industry? Is the approach rational and sound?	20	
Potential Impact		
Does the project provide a direct benefit to Mississippi's specialty crop producers? What is the economic value of the crop(s) benefiting from this project in proportion to the total value of Mississippi's specialty crop industry? What is the number of intended beneficiaries of the project? To what extent will the project enhance the competitiveness of Mississippi's specialty crop industry?	25	
Expected Measurable Outcomes		
Does the project have at least one distinct, quantifiable, and measurable outcome that directly supports the project purpose? Does the measurable outcome include a specific goal, target, benchmark, and performance measure? Does the applicant describe how the outcomes will be monitored? Are the goals realistic and obtainable?	15	
Work Plan		
How do the tasks and activities relate to the project objectives? Is the project feasible? Is the timeline reasonable? Does the project have a high likelihood of success?	15	
Budget		
Is the budget realistic and will the project yield a positive return on investment? Do requested budget items/activities correlate to the purpose/goals of the project? Does the budget narrative clearly identify the necessity of each expected expense? Has the proposed project been accompanied with matching funds?	15	
Project Oversight/Project Commitment		
Does the project have adequate oversight to endure proper administration? Is industry support for the project demonstrated?	10	
Total	100	

VIII. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Grant recipients will be responsible for submitting progress reports to MDAC as required.

Quarterly Reports: Quarterly reports detailing progress being made towards the project along with a breakdown of expenses shall be submitted quarterly to MDAC.

Annual Performance Reports: Grantees shall submit an annual performance report to MDAC. Annual performance reports shall include the following:

- **Activities Performed.**
 - Briefly summarize activities performed, targets, and/or performance goals achieved during the reporting period. Whenever possible, describe the work accomplished in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Include the significant results, accomplishments, conclusions, and recommendations. Include favorable or unusual developments.
 - Provide a comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals established for the reporting period.
 - Present the significant contributions and role of project partners in the project.
 - Clearly convey progress toward achieving outcomes by illustrating baseline data that has been gathered to date and showing the progress toward achieving set targets.
 - If a target of a project has already been achieved, the grantee is encouraged to amend the outcome measure. This permits the project staff to “stretch” the goals in order to go beyond what they are already doing.

- **Problems and Delays.**
 - Note unexpected delays, impediments, and challenges that have been confronted in order to complete the goals for each project. Explain why these changes took place.
 - Mention the actions that were taken in order to address these delays, impediments, and challenges.
 - Review measurable outcomes to determine if targets are realistic and attainable. An objective that is too stringent should be scaled back and identified in the performance report. Keep in mind that targets may slip due to all kinds of factors, such as employee turn-over and bad weather.
 - In the event that the work plan timeline, expected measurable outcomes, budget, and/or methodology needs to be adjusted, provide an outline of those changes.

- **Future Project Plans.**
 - Briefly summarize activities performed, targets, and/or performance goals to be achieved during the next reporting period for each project. Whenever possible, describe the work accomplished in both quantitative and qualitative terms.
 - Describe any changes that are anticipated in the project.
- **Funding Expended To Date.**
 - Provide information regarding the level of grant funds expended to date.
 - In the event that a project gained income as a result of planned activities, provide the amount of this supplemental funding and how it will be reinvested into the project.

Final Report: Final reports will be submitted to MDAC. Final reports will include the following:

- **Project Title.**
- **Project Summary.**
 - Provide a background for the initial purpose of the project, which includes the specific issue, problem, or need that was addressed by this project.
 - Establish the motivation for this project by presenting the importance and timeliness of the project.
 - If the project is built on a previously funded project through the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, describe how this project complimented and enhanced previously completed work.
- **Project Approach.**
 - Briefly summarize activities performed and tasks performed during the grant period. Whenever possible, describe the work accomplished in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Include the significant results, accomplishments, conclusions and recommendations. Include favorable or unusual developments.
 - Present the significant contributions and role of project partners in the project.
- **Goals and Outcomes Achieved.**
 - Supply the activities that were completed in order to achieve the performance goals and measurable outcomes for the project.
 - If outcome measures were long-term, summarize the progress that has been made towards achievement.
 - Provide a comparison of actual accomplishments with the goals established for the reporting period.

- Clearly convey completion of achieving outcomes by illustrating baseline data that has been gathered to date and showing the progress toward achieving set targets.
- **Beneficiaries.**
 - Provide a description of the groups and other operations that benefited from the completion of this project's accomplishments.
 - Clearly state the quantitative data that concerns the beneficiaries affected by the project's accomplishments and/or the potential economic impact of the project.
- **Lessoned Learned.**
 - Offer insights into the lessons learned by the project staff as a result of completing this project. This section is meant to illustrate the positive and negative results and conclusions for the project.
 - Provide unexpected outcomes or results that were an effect of implementing this project.
 - If goals or outcome measures were not achieved, identify and share the lessons learned to help others expedite problem-solving.
- **Contact Person.**
 - Name the Contact Person for the Project.
 - Telephone Number.
 - Email Address.
- **Additional Information.**
 - Provide additional information available (i.e. publications, websites, photographs) that is not applicable to any of the prior sections.

IX. REQUESTS FOR PAYMENT

Payment of funds to the grantee will be made on a monthly or quarterly reimbursement basis or as requested by the applicant. To receive reimbursement, grantees must provide assurance that the work has been completed (receipts, invoices, etc.), a budget report, and a budget narrative explaining expenses.

Requests for fund advances will be considered on a case by case basis. If a funding advance is requested, the need for the advance must be clearly stated in the project proposal. When funding advances are made, any unobligated (unencumbered) balance of cash at the end of the grant period must immediately be refunded back to MDAC.

The obligation of funds may be terminated without further cause unless the grantee commences the timely drawdown of funds. The initial drawdown of funds must be made within the first year of the grant period.

X. PROGRAM CONTACTS

Paige Manning
(601) 359-1163
paige@mdac.ms.gov

For more information about the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, please view the program outline at www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce reserves the right to deny any or all proposals received; request additional information on project proposals; recommend partial funding for proposals that may be less than the amount requested in the grant application; and link the release of project funds to completion of necessary, timely progress reports. All grant funding is subject to the availability and receipt of federal funds.

The Mississippi Department of Agriculture & Commerce maintains a policy which prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, creed, sex, age, national origin, physical handicap, disability or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws.

ATTACHMENT I

Eligible Specialty Crops

Commonly recognized fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops
(including floriculture)

Algae	Hops
Chickpeas	Kava
Christmas trees	Lavender
Cocoa	Lentils
Coffee	Maple syrup
Cut flowers	Mushrooms
Dry edible beans	Organic fruits and vegetables
Dry peas	Peppermint
Foliage	Potatoes
Fruit grapes for wine	Seaweed
Garlic	Spearmint
Ginger root	Sweet Corn
Ginseng	Sweet Sorghum for human consumption
Herbs	Vanilla
Honey	Vegetable seeds

Ineligible Commodities

Cotton and cottonseed
Feed crops such as barley, corn, hay, oats, sorghum grain, millet, alfalfa
Flaxseed
Food grains such as rice, rye, wheat
Livestock and dairy products, including eggs
Marine or fresh water aquaculture
Oil crops such as peanut, soybean, sunflower, safflower, rapeseed, canola, mustard seed, evening primrose, borage
Peanuts
Range grasses
Sugar beets
Sod
Sugarcane
Tobacco
Tofu

Please visit the USDA-AMS Specialty Crop Block Grant Program-Farm Bill website (www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp) for a more comprehensive listing of eligible and ineligible commodities listed under “Definition of Specialty Crops.”

ATTACHMENT II

Acknowledgement

I/we the undersigned applicants, _____ of
(Name/names)

_____, Mississippi, hereby apply for Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
(City/cities)

Funds under the terms and conditions of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce and
the United States Department of Agriculture, in the amount of \$_____.
(Amount requested)

The undersigned hereby warrants to the State of Mississippi that to the best of my/our knowledge, all information presented in this grant application is factual and true; that I/we understand that if this proposal is funded, I/we will be required to sign a grant agreement and other necessary documentation containing terms and conditions upon which funds will be released; and that I/we understand that I/we will be required to submit progress reports (quarterly and annually) and a final report at the completion of the project as a condition to participating in this grant program. All grant funding is subject to the availability and receipt of federal funds by MDAC.

The undersigned understands that the selection will be determined by MDAC based on criteria designed to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in Mississippi. The undersigned understands, due to the availability of a limited supply of funds, that every qualifying project may not be approved or receive funding and that approved projects may be funded in whole or part.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print: _____ Title: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print: _____ Title: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print: _____ Title: _____

ATTACHMENT III

Examples of outcome measures may include, but are not limited to: per capita consumption, consumer awareness as a percent of target market reached, market penetration based on sales by geographic region, dollar value of exports, or web site hits. For research grants, they may include generation of new knowledge, research quality, attainment of leadership in the field, or the development of human resources (e.g., providing opportunities for graduate students).

STEPS TO DEVELOPING OUTCOME MEASURES

Whenever possible, the outcomes should include a goal, performance measure, benchmark, and a target. The following four steps provide guidance on how to develop outcome measures.

STEP 1:

DETERMINE WHAT THE PROJECT WILL ACCOMPLISH, I.E., THE INTENDED RESULTS OF THE PROJECT, GENERALLY EXPRESSED AS A GOAL OR OBJECTIVE

Goals or objectives should be: a) based on a needs analysis and be specific, realistic results you hope to achieve through the project activities; b) specific; and c) outcome-oriented. Outcome-oriented objectives identify the ultimate result, while the work plan activities identify how you intend to achieve the objectives. When developing outcome-oriented objectives, ask yourself “why” you are performing each grant activity; and specify not only what will be achieved, but also when those results will be achieved.

STEP 2:

FIGURE OUT HOW TO MEASURE THE RESULTS AND SELECT THE PERFORMANCE MEASURE

For each objective identified in Step 1, select the performance measure. Performance measures are measures/indicators used to observe progress and measure actual results compared to expected results. They are usually expressed in quantifiable terms and should be objective and measurable (numeric values, percentages, scores and indices); although in certain circumstances qualitative measures are appropriate.

STEP 3:

DETERMINE THE BENCHMARK FOR EACH MEASURE AND SET TARGET GOALS FOR FUTURE PERFORMANCE

For each measure identified in Step 2, determine the benchmarks against which you will measure. Benchmarks are usually determined by researching past circumstances in the area you are trying to measure. As an alternative, you may use benchmarks established by third parties accepted as the standard-setters in your industry. If data does not exist, describe the lack of data. It may be appropriate in the first year to set vaguer targets, such as “improvement” where any increase represents outcome achievement, and set more concrete targets in subsequent years when benchmark data is available.

Use the benchmark data to set targets for the quantity of change expected. Targets may be framed in terms of:

- a) Absolute level of achievement (ex: feed 150 homeless people);
- b) Change in level of achievement (ex: feed 150 homeless people, 35 more than last year);
or
- c) Change in relation to the scale of the problem (ex: feed 150 homeless people, approximately 10% of the city's homeless population.)

If you are starting up a new project or trying new approaches remember that little or no measurable progress will be evident in the project start-up phase. This delay in seeing measurable results should be reflected in target-setting. When setting targets, you should take into account external factors that influence your success. You may have a grand ultimate goal, but you should view annual targets as small steps toward that ultimate goal.

You may also want to set stretch goals by using benchmarks as your targets. Benchmarks tell you how the rest of the industry is doing; when you gather data for benchmarks, you look at the results of other organizations serving your type(s) of customers, doing your type of work. In your State plan, you may want to stick to a modest level of planned achievement and reserve your stretch goals for internal use. Another alternative is to include minimum and maximum targets in your application. For example, "We plan, at a minimum, for a 5% increase. However, we will strive for a 10% increase, which our data shows is possible if all external factors work in our favor and our new methodology yields the same results in the demonstration phase."

STEP 4:

DEVELOP YOUR PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN OR DATA COLLECTION PLAN

Define who your data sources are and how the data will be collected. If the project involves a survey, provide some information about the nature of the questions that will be asked, the methodology to be used and the population to be surveyed. If a draft questionnaire is available, you may want to include a copy with the application. Outline how data gathered will be used to correct deficiencies and improve performance, both as it gathered and analyzed and in subsequent project periods. This data collection plan should be integrated into your work plan and budget. When expected measurable outcomes are monitored outside the grant period, include the performance monitoring plan in the work plan and indicate how monitoring will occur after the grant period ends without Specialty Crop Block Grant Program funding.

**ATTACHMENT IV
Sample Proposal**

Applicant:

ABC Private University

Dr. Joe Smith

123 University Drive

University, MS 34567

Phone: (601) 123-4567

Fax: (601) 123-4568

Email: joesmith@ABC.com

Organizational DUNS Number: 123456789

Project Starting Date and Ending Date: April 2010 to November 2011

Measuring Irrigation Water Quality on Fruit and Vegetable Farms

Priority Area: Research

Abstract:

Partner with State B, C, D, E, F, and G to objectively measure the quality of irrigation water used on fruit and vegetable farms in several states to help shape future irrigation water standards, improve on-farm risk assessment, provide strategies for implementing a water testing program, aid in interpreting water testing results, and provide assistance for understanding when mitigation strategies should be adopted.

Project Purpose:

This project is focused on the collection of scientific data on irrigation water quality in the seven states to contribute to the National Irrigation Database organized by the National GAPs Program at Cornell University for fresh fruit and vegetable production in the National Food Safety Program. Consequently, this activity may help shape future national irrigation water standards. Moreover, educational workshops on irrigation water quality management will be provided to Extension professionals and producers. This effort will improve on-farm risk assessment, provide strategies for implementing a water testing program, aid in interpreting water testing results, and provide assistance for understanding when mitigation strategies should be adopted.

Fruit and vegetable crops tend to be irrigated with surface water sources, such as ponds and streams. While there is concern with all sources of water for pre-harvest use, surface water has a higher probability of being exposed to more fecal contamination than ground water. This is expected to pose greater human health risk than irrigation water from deep aquifers with

properly constructed and protected wells. In most cases, the sanitary quality of surface water used for irrigation is not known because it is not regularly tested.

This project has not been submitted to or funded by another Federal or State grant program.

Potential Impact:

Contamination of fresh fruits and vegetables with pathogens can occur anywhere in the supply chain, and once it occurs, it is difficult, if not impossible, to remove. The FDA Produce Safety Action Plan states that the most likely points of contamination of high risk commodities by key pathogens occur during pre-harvest production. Among these points, one of the most likely potential mechanisms of *E. coli* O157:H7 and *Salmonella* contamination is water (irrigation or flooding/runoff from adjacent land).

The fruit and vegetable industry accounts for nearly \$75,000,000 in annual sales and is comprised of over 5,000 farms over the seven involved states. This project will impact the local and regional fruit and vegetable industry by providing an objective assessment of the quality of water currently used for irrigation, evaluating the ability of currently-used criteria to discern contamination by key pathogens, and providing information to Extension professionals and producers to improve on-farm irrigation water management. Furthermore, by maintaining buyer and consumer confidence in and demand for fruit and vegetable production in the State will potentially enhance farm viability and profits.

Expected Measurable Outcomes:

The **GOAL** of this project is to participate in the development of a National Irrigation Database. The database will provide new scientific data to support comprehensive efforts by the produce industry and public health regulators to create meaningful and realistic water quality standards that minimizes microbial food safety hazards to fresh and fresh-cut vegetables posed by surface irrigation (**TARGET**). There has not previously been an effort to measure current irrigation water quality (**BENCHMARK**). Irrigation water samples will be taken four times during the production season. Results will be compiled and analyzed by crop, region, source and time of sampling. These results will be added to the National Irrigation Database (**PERFORMANCE MEASURE**).

Work Plan:

Baseline water quality data will be collected four times during the production season on water samples on ten farms in each of three geographically diverse regions of the State, with varied irrigation sources (rivers, ponds, lakes, streams, wells, springs, etc.). A total of thirty farms will be chosen for each year of the project, providing data from 60 farms over the two year life of the project. This data will be added to the National Irrigation Database developed by the National GAPs Program at Cornell University.

Quality analyses will include quantified generic *E. coli*, specific conductance, turbidity and pH and will be performed by certified private laboratories capable of these analyses. Since one of the objectives of this project is to educate growers and farm managers about the importance of on-farm irrigation water management practices for microbiological criteria, this is a perfect opportunity to conduct one-on-one training for water sampling with individual growers. Repeated site visits will provide training reinforcement and quality control. A minimal component site survey and adjacent land-use analysis for potential water quality impacts will be conducted at each sampling site. The site evaluation template will be adopted from the USDA GAP audit checklist.

Timeline: April 2010 to November 2011

Timeline	Who's Responsible	Project Activity
(April 2010 – September 2010)	ABC Private University	Collect irrigation water samples from 10 farms in each of 3 geographic regions, four times over the production season (10 farms x 3 regions x 4 sampling times= 120 samples)
(August 2010 – November 2010)	ABC Private University	Develop workshop materials and factsheets for water sampling, testing and mitigation strategies to reduce microbial load
(April 2011 – September 2011)	ABC Private University	Collect irrigation water samples from 10 farms in each of 3 geographic regions, four times over the production season (10 farms x 3 regions x 4 sampling times= 120 samples)
(August 2011 – November 2011)	ABC Private University	Provide workshops on irrigation water quality and management for Extension professionals and growers in 3 regions

Budget Narrative (\$30,000.00):

Budget Item	2010	2011	Total
Supplies			
Research Supplies	\$1,750.00	\$0.00	

Total Supplies			\$1,750.00
Travel			
Travel	\$3,750.00	\$5,250.00	
Total Travel			\$9,000.00
Contractual			
XYZ Laboratories (water testing)	\$8,600.00	\$7,600.00	
Total Contractual			\$16,200.00
Other Costs			
Shipping Costs	\$550.00	\$0.00	
Publication Costs	\$0.00	\$1,000.00	
Workshops, Materials, and Media	\$0.00	\$1,500.00	
Total Other			\$3,050.00
Funds Requested	\$14,650.00	\$15,350.00	
			\$30,000.00

***Supplies (\$1,750)**

Dr. Joe Smith and his research assistant will need research supplies such as sample tubes, boxes and trays for transportation, and water samplers. These items will total **\$1,750.00**.

***Travel Narrative (\$9,000)**

ABC Private University's established automobile mileage rate is \$0.40/mile. To complete the objectives of this project, the project staff will need to travel an average of 170 miles in the eastern region of the State, 360 miles in the central region of the State, and 620 miles in the western region of the State. This is a total of 1,150 miles for one trip or \$460 (1,150 miles x \$0.40). There will be a minimum of 4 trips per year for a total of **\$1,840** along with an additional average 200 miles per region to collect samples from each farm for a total of **\$960** (4 trips x 3 regions x 200 miles x \$0.40). There will be 4 trips to the central and western regions that requires 2 nights at hotels. These charges will total **\$560** (\$70/night x 8 nights). ABC Private University's Per Diem rate for meals (\$39/day), while traveling for 10 days, will total to **\$390** (\$39/day x 10 days). Each of the items included in the Travel, Training, and Workshop section totals to the amount of **(\$3,750.00)** for the 2010 budget.

The sampling travel costs will be the same for the 2011 budget; however, additional costs for travel to two workshops in each region (one for Extension agents and one for growers). The eastern region will not require travel costs; therefore, the total amount needed for travel to 2 regions for 2 workshops is \$375 per event for a total of **\$1,500.00**. Consequently, the 2011 budget is **\$5,250.00** (\$3,750 + \$1,500). Total travel requested is **\$9,000**.

***Contractual Narrative (\$16,200)**

We will contract with XYZ Laboratories in order to perform the water analysis of all the samples gathered by the project investigators. This quality analysis will be performed for a flat rate of **\$7,600.00** per year of the project for a total of **\$15,200** (\$7,600 x 2).

Each lab that enters data will need a secure password and some training for data input. This will have an initial cost (approximately **\$1,000.00**). Currently quality control procedures are performed for all data entered into the database with the lab data form. This too requires time, but is not necessary once the lab understands the data entry portal and how it works. Total contractual funds requested is **\$16,200**.

***Other Costs Narrative (\$3,050)**

There are certain areas in the State that are considered to be inadequate for transferring water samples by vehicle. The cost associated with shipping these samples is **\$550.00**. In year two, workshops will be offered for Extension professionals through train-the-trainer sessions and growers in each of the three regions of the state, covering proper irrigation water sampling, choosing the proper sanitary water tests, interpreting the test results and selecting mitigation strategies (**\$1,500.00**). Training materials will be developed both for hard-copy and web dissemination. Presentations will also be developed for the workshops and available to the Extension professionals for use in their home counties (**\$1,000.00**). Total Other Costs are **\$3,050**.

Project Oversight:

Dr. Doug Smith will oversee the advancement of this project, which will include data collection, analysis, and outreach activities. The labs doing the analysis will have access to the database so the data can go directly into the database. Dr. Doug Smith also will work directly with growers and Extension professionals across the state to sample water from fruit and vegetable farms using various irrigation sources. Outreach programs will be offered to growers for implementing water testing programs, interpreting water test results, and understanding when mitigation strategies should be adopted.

Project Commitment:

Project partners are committed to the implementation of all aspects of this water quality project. In fact, there has been a Memorandum of Understanding signed between all States involved in this project to ensure the quality of the cooperation between these entities. The ABC Private University will lead implementation of the overall multi-state endeavor. Specifically, it will be responsible for the research, information, and outreach.

Multi-State Project:

Total Grant Request: \$204,576.00

The State: \$54,576

State B: \$25,000 **State C:** \$25,000 **State D:** \$25,000

State E: \$25,000 **State F:** \$25,000 **State G:** \$25,000

The project proposed here is intended to help fill the nationwide irrigation water quality knowledge gap by compiling and analyzing water samples for generic *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) densities, pH, specific density and turbidity that will be incorporated into the National Irrigation Database. Collaborators in six other states are interested in participating in this nationwide effort. The states involved agreed to pursue funds to complete water quality work and enter data for the National Food Safety Program.

Specifically, the State has partnered with ABC Private University to act as the coordinating organization of this network of seven different states. ABC Private University will work with a board of water quality specialists that represent each state. The board has members and associates serving on committees including research, analysis, and outreach activities for the National Irrigation Database. This project has the full support of each participating States' Departments of Agriculture. The State will take the coordinating role in monitoring the progress of this project.

Application Checklist

All applications must contain the applicable elements outlined in the guidelines. The following checklist has been prepared to assist in ensuring that the application is complete prior to submission.

Required Documents

- Signed Acknowledgement (See Attachment II)
- Proposal Narrative

Proposal Narrative

- Applicant Information with DUNS Number
- Project Title, Priority Area, and Abstract
- Project Purpose
- Potential Impact
- Expected Measurable Outcomes
- Work Plan with Timeline
- Budget Narrative (Itemized Budget and Narrative)
- Project Oversight
- Project Commitment
- Multi-state Projects (if applicable)

Completed application packets must be received by 5:00 p.m. on May 2, 2012. No late applications will be accepted. An electronic version of the application, in Microsoft Word format, as well as a hard copy is required.

**Mail completed applications to:
Paige Manning, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
P.O. Box 1609
Jackson, MS 39215
Email: paige@mdac.ms.gov
Phone: (601) 359-1163**