



Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

*Washington State Department of Agriculture
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
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Specialty Crop Block Grant Program FY2027 Request for Proposals (RFP) Phase I Concept Proposal and Phase II Full Proposal

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is pleased to announce a competitive solicitation process to conditionally award USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds for projects that enhance the competitiveness and increase demand for Washington's specialty crops.

Authorization for this program was established under the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004. The 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill Act contains provisions for the continuation of this program beginning with the 2026 Request for Applications and each fiscal year thereafter.

Grant Program Federal Requirements Fall Under 2 CFR 200
Assistance Listing Number (ALN) 10.170

Phase I

Publication Date: October 2, 2026

Concept Proposals Due: **November 2, 2026**
By 12:00 p.m. PST

Phase II (if invited)

Release Date: November 2026

Full Proposals Due: **February 5, 2027**
By 12:00 p.m. PST

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Purpose

The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) will administer a competitive solicitation process to conditionally award 2027 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funds for proposals that enhance the competitiveness and increase demand of Washington specialty crops.

Specialty crops are defined by USDA as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture, and nursery crops (including floriculture). Please visit the [USDA website](#) to view a comprehensive list of eligible and ineligible specialty crops under the SCBGP.

Timeline (subject to change)

Phase I Concept Proposal	Request for Concept Proposals Released by WSDA	October 2, 2026
	Complaint period for RFP ends	October 15, 2026, 12:00 pm PST
	Phase I Concept Proposals Due	November 2, 2026, 12:00 pm PST
	Notifications to Applicants	November, 2026
Phase II Full Proposal	Request for Grant Proposals Released (by invitation only)	November, 2026
	Phase II Full Proposals Due	February 5, 2027, 12:00 p.m. PST
	Notification to Applicants	March, 2027
	WSDA Application Due to USDA for Approval	May, 2027
Grant Award	USDA to Announce Awards	September, 2027

USDA Guidance

Authorization for this program was established under the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004. The 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill Act contains provisions for the continuation of this program beginning with the 2026 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) and each fiscal year thereafter.

In the 2026 NOFO, USDA announced that it would, beginning in FY2027, require a cost share for all SCBGP subawards, and stated that each project will be required to provide a cost share from non-federal sources in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions equal to 25 percent of the amount of SCBGP federal funds being requested.

On May 29, 2026, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), in coordination with USDA and many other federal agencies, announced sweeping changes to the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) that would substantially impact the administration of federal grants and cooperative agreements. WSDA continues to monitor developments about these changes.

As of the date of this publication, USDA has not provided WSDA or any other state department of agriculture with the 2027 NOFO or Terms and Conditions for the FY2027 SCBGP. If necessary, WSDA will prepare, and make available, a supplement to this document to advise applicants of any changes to the program upon receipt of USDA's NOFO. WSDA and all applicants provided an award will be subject to the terms of USDA's FY2027 SCBGP NOFO and applicable Terms and Conditions, including any match requirements or incorporated changes to the CFR.

Funding and Duration

WSDA anticipates receiving approximately \$4.7 million to award to grantees for projects that enhance the competitiveness of Washington's specialty crops. Grantees selected via this solicitation that receive a conditional award are considered "subrecipients" of federal funding. Grant requests can range from \$25,000 to \$250,000. The maximum grant period for each award is three (3) years. The projects will start no earlier than September 30, 2027, and end no later than September 29, 2030. Funding is contingent and available upon approval from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural

***Note: Extensions beyond September 29, 2030, will NOT be available. (This includes no-cost extensions)**

Projects More Relevant for Other Federal Grant Programs

Entities that engage in projects that support domestic farmers/markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agritourism activities, other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities, and local and regional food business enterprises that process, distribute, aggregate, or store locally or regionally produced food products should consider submitting those projects to the [Farmers Market Promotion Program](#) and [Local Food Promotion Program](#). You can also check out [USDA's website](#) and [WSDA's website](#) for more grant opportunities.

Eligibility Requirements

Non-profit and for-profit organizations; local, state, federal government entities, including tribal governments; public or private colleges and universities are eligible to apply. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

The project must clearly and directly impact Washington state specialty crop producers or processors. The SCBGP will not award grant funds for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual. This program **will not provide funds to start or expand a farm or other business venture.**

- Projects must enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.
- Definition of a Project - A **project** is a temporary, organized undertaking designed to create a unique product, service, or result. Unlike daily business operations, which are ongoing, projects have a defined beginning and end, and they are executed to achieve a specific, one-time goal.
- Funding requests must fall between \$25,000 and \$250,000 per project. If awarded WSDA has the right to increase or decrease the amount of the award.

General Requirements

Cost Share

As of this RFP release date, all awarded projects will be required to have a cost share from non-Federal sources in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions equal to 25% of the amount of Federal funds being requested. WSDA will continue to monitor. If this requirement remains, evidence of eligible match will be required in Phase II Full Proposal.

Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) (Previously DUNS #)

To obtain a UEI, please visit SAM.gov. If awarded SCBGP funds, recipients will need to obtain a UEI before a grant agreement can be executed.

Taxpayer Identification Number

Enter the applicants 9-digit taxpayer identification number in the following format: #-#####.

System for Award Management

To receive an award under the SCBGP, applicants (grant recipients) and contractors of awardees, are **required** to register with the System for Award Management, in doing so, need to designate an e-Business Point of Contact (e-Business POC). **SAM registration must be updated annually and be active and always maintained with current information during which there is an active award or an application under consideration.**

Organizations that need to register in SAM for the first time or need to update their SAM registration will visit <https://www.sam.gov/>. **New applicants for SAM are encouraged to apply early, as the application process can take weeks.**

The e-Business POC authorizes individuals to submit grant and cooperative agreement applications on behalf of the organization and creates a special password called a Marketing Partner ID Number (M-PIN) to verify individuals authorized to submit grant applications for the organization.

Delinquency of Federal Debt

Any organization or individual that is indebted to the United States and has a judgment lien filed against it for a debt to the United States, is ineligible to receive a federal grant. If the applicant discloses a delinquency, the SCBGP may not award the grant until the debt is satisfied, or satisfactory arrangements are made with the agency to which the debt is owed.

Anyone who has been judged to be in default on a federal debt and who has had a judgment lien filed against him or her should not be listed as a participant in an application for a SCBGP grant until the judgment is paid in full or otherwise satisfied. No funds may be budgeted following an award to pay such an individual. The Federal Agency will disallow costs charged to awards that provide funds to individuals in violation of this requirement.

Debarment and Suspension

Regulations published in [2 CFR part 180](#) and [2 CFR part 417](#) describe the government-wide debarment and suspension requirements for non-procurement programs and activities. “Non-procurement” transactions include, among other things, grant agreements. SCBGP implements these regulations as a term and condition of award. State department of agriculture recipients must check the System for Award Management located at <https://www.sam.gov/> prior to entering into a “lower-tier” transaction. “Lower tier” transactions include contracts (including individual consultants) under grants (where the contract requires the provision of goods or services that will equal or exceed \$25,000) and all sub awards.

Ongoing Projects/Sustainable Funding

If the project is a continuation of a previously funded project and is of an ongoing nature, a plan for sustainable funding is **required**. Part of the application process will be to explain your plan for sustainability. SCBGP funds are not intended to support projects indefinitely. A **project** is a temporary, organized undertaking designed to create a unique product, service, or result. Unlike daily business operations, which are ongoing, projects have a defined beginning and end, and they are executed to achieve a specific, one-time goal.

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs, including administrative overhead, are **not allowed** as part of your grant request.

Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”) are costs incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be identified specifically with a particular project, program, or organizational activity. Below are typical indirect costs for specific types of organizations. The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should normally be treated as indirect costs. Direct charging of these costs may be appropriate where all the following conditions are met:

- Administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity.
- Individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity.
- Such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the federal awarding agency; and
- The costs are also not recovered as indirect costs.

The following are considered indirect and should not be included in the Budget as direct costs:

- Information technology services.
- Rent.
- Utilities and internet service.
- Telephone service (mobile and landline).
- General office supplies.
- Insurance.
- Maintenance.

Bibliography and References Cited (For Research Projects Only)

The applicant should provide a bibliography of any references cited in their research proposal. The Bibliography and References Cited should be uploaded to the application site, [OpenWater](#). Each reference should include names, article and journal title, book title, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication.

Grant Management

Applicants selected for a conditional award will sign a Grant Agreement with WSDA and must follow all applicable federal and state rules and regulations, including those for insurance coverage, procurement practices, and accounting procedures. WSDA's grantees are considered subrecipients of federal funding. Subrecipients must submit detailed performance reports quarterly, annually, and at project completion. The subrecipient must keep thorough records; and closely monitor the project against expected outcomes. ***Failure to properly manage a grant award or direction from the federal funding agencies may result in the obligation to repay grant funds and/or exclusion from future grant opportunities.***

Timely drawdown and use of grant funds

WSDA may reduce grant agreement funds without further cause if the recipient does not draw down funds within the first year of the grant period and at reasonable intervals thereafter. The recipient will be required to submit a full accounting of unspent funds for the remainder of the project period, if so requested. This request may occur if grant funds are less than 30% spent within the first year or less than 60% within the second year of the project.

Property Management

The title for equipment and supplies acquired by the subrecipient under the award will vest, upon acquisition, with the subrecipient. Sub-recipients must provide the equivalent insurance coverage for equipment acquired with Federal funds.

Sub-recipients are expected to maintain property records that include a description of the property, a serial number or other identification number, the source of funding for the property, who holds title, the acquisition date, and cost of the property, percentage of Federal participation in the project costs for the Federal award under which the property was acquired, the location, use and condition of the property, and any ultimate disposition data including the date of disposal and sale price of the property. This is in addition to the other requirements of use, management, and disposal of equipment and supplies acquired under a grant in accordance with [2 CFR §§ 200.313](#) and [200.314](#).

Disposition of Equipment and Supplies

When original or replacement ***equipment*** acquired under a Federal award is no longer needed for the original project or program or for other activities currently or previously supported by a Federal awarding agency, the recipient must request disposition instructions from AMS and may be made as follows:

1. Items of ***equipment*** with a current per unit fair market value of \$10,000 or less may be retained, sold, or otherwise disposed of with no further responsibility to AMS.
2. Items of ***equipment*** with a current per unit fair market value above \$10,000 may be retained by the recipient or sold and AMS compensated for its share.

If there is a residual inventory of unused ***supplies*** exceeding \$10,000 in total aggregate value upon termination or completion of the project or program and the supplies are not needed for any other Federal award, the non-Federal entity must retain the supplies for use on other activities or sell them, but must, in either case, compensate the Federal Government for its share.

In any of these cases, the recipient acting on its own behalf or as the pass-through entity must complete a:

- Tangible Personal Property Report Disposition Request/Report ([SF-428-C](#)) during the period of performance or
- Tangible Personal Property Final Report ([SF-428-B](#)) at the grant agreement's closeout.

WSDA will provide the report(s) to USDA AMS and they will review the request and provide disposition instructions for the equipment and/or supplies. If the equipment and/or supplies are sold, the recipient is permitted to deduct and retain from the Federal share \$500 or 10 percent of the proceeds, whichever is less, for its sale and handling expenses.

Performance Reports

WSDA requires submission of quarterly, annual, and final reports to demonstrate the progress made toward the completion of project goals, objectives, and outcomes as well as the project's overall financial status. Performance reports must be formatted and submitted using the approved templates or guidance. All performance reports must be submitted to specialtycrop@agr.wa.gov.

Disparaging Language and Protected Personal Identifiable Information (PII)

Recipients are prohibited from using AMS grant funds to conduct any activity that is false, misleading, or disparaging towards agricultural commodities or products or to disparage the mission, goals, and/or actions of another organization or individual.

Reports submitted to AMS must avoid use of Protected PII, including use of an individual's first name or first initial and last name in combination with any one or more types of information, including, but not limited to, social security number, passport number, credit card numbers, clearances, bank numbers, biometrics, date and place of birth, mother's maiden name, criminal, medical and financial records, educational transcripts, etc. Personal contact information included in performance reports should be limited to the recipient project coordinator's name, and e-mail address, as well as organization name, physical address, and telephone number.

Financial Management

Grantees are required to meet the standards and requirements for financial management systems set forth or referenced in [2 CFR § 200.302](#).

The adequacy of a subrecipient's financial management system is integral to their ability to account for grant expenditures. The subrecipient must use Federal funds in a responsible manner and apply adequate internal controls and cash management practices consistent with the requirements outlined in [2 CFR § 200.303](#).

A sub-recipient's financial management system must include:

- 1) Identification, in its accounts, of all Federal awards received and expended and the Federal programs under which they were received. This identification must include, as applicable:
 - a. The Assistance Listing Numbers (ALN) title and number, formerly known as Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA).
 - b. The Grant Agreement Number/FAIN and Federal fiscal year awarded.
 - c. The name of the Federal Agency and;
 - d. The name of the pass-through entity.
- 2) Accurate, current, and complete disclosure of the financial accounting of each Federal award or program.
- 3) Records that adequately identify the source and application of funds for Federally funded activities. These records must contain information pertaining to Federal awards, authorizations, obligations, unobligated balances, assets, expenditures, income, and interest. Accounting records must be supported by source documentation such as canceled checks, paid bills, payrolls, time and attendance records, contracts, and subaward documents.
- 4) Effective control over, and accountability for, all funds, property, and other assets. Recipients must adequately safeguard all assets and assure that they are used solely for authorized purposes.
- 5) Comparison of expenditures with budget amounts for each Federal award.
- 6) Written procedures to implement the requirements of [2 CFR § 200.305 Payment](#), which minimize the time elapsing between the transfer of Federal funds to any non-Federal entity and the disbursement of the funds for direct program costs and the proportionate share of any allowable indirect or facilities and administrative costs.
- 7) Written procedures for determining the allowability of costs in accordance with 2 CFR § 200 Subpart E—Cost Principles and the terms and conditions of this award.

A subrecipient must notify the WSDA Agreement Manager immediately when they discover financial management problems. Deficiencies in the recipient's financial management system, whether reported by the grantee or identified by WSDA, may result in WSDA imposing special award conditions, such as a high-risk designation or other requirements for increased monitoring.

Procurements

Subrecipients may acquire commercially available goods and services in connection with a project. In doing so, the subrecipient must use its own documented procurement procedures which may reflect applicable State, local, and tribal laws and regulations, provided that the procurements conform to applicable Federal law and the standards found at [2 CFR § 200.317](#) through [2 CFR § 200.326](#).

- **State subrecipients** must follow the same policies and procedures the State uses for procurements for non-Federal funds. The State will comply with [2 CFR § 200.322](#) and ensure that every purchase order or other contract includes applicable provisions described in [Appendix II of 2 CFR § 200](#).
- **All other non-Federal recipients** must follow [2 CFR § 200.317](#) through [§ 200.326](#).
- The requirements of the Federal award also apply to any subcontract. The subrecipient is responsible for ensuring that all of its contracts made in connection with the USDA AMS project contain the applicable provisions described in [Appendix II of 2 CFR § 200](#).

Reimbursement of Grant Funds

Grant funds will be paid to subrecipients for approved expenditures on a **reimbursement basis**. Subrecipients must have the financial capability to pay project costs up-front and may not request reimbursement more frequently than monthly. WSDA will only reimburse for expenditures that have been approved in the budget and only after items received and services rendered.

Application Process Overview

Phase I: Concept Proposal

In Phase I, applicants must complete the required application online using WSDA's online application submittal site, [OpenWater](#).

Note: If invited to Phase II, the applicant must be the original applicant from Phase I. Transfer of the proposal to another applicant is not permitted.

Phase II: Full Proposal (by invite only)

Select applicants from Phase I will be invited to submit additional project information through completion of a Phase II Full Proposal. The Phase II full proposal must also be completed and submitted online through WSDA's online application submittal site, [OpenWater](#). The **required** template for the Phase II Full Proposal is provided in OpenWater. Submitting a Phase II Full Proposal that does not conform with the application template may result in disqualification.

A complete application package including all requested templates, documents, resumes, forms, etc. is required and due before the application deadline.

An applicant may not request less than the minimum allowed dollar amount of \$25,000 or more than the maximum allowed dollar amount of \$250,000.

Grant Proposal Selection Process

WSDA will conduct at least two levels of review during both phases of the evaluation process:

- An administrative review by WSDA staff to determine whether the Phase I Concept Proposal or Phase II Full Proposal is responsive to the requirements of this RFP.
- A technical review and evaluation of the merits of each proposal will be carried out using the criteria set forth in the section below – **Grant Proposal Scoring Criteria**.
 - WSDA will form review groups based on the categories described in the section **Review Categories**. For review of Phase I Concept Proposals, review groups consisting of WSDA staff will perform the technical review; For Phase II Full Proposals, WSDA will form review groups to include members of the agricultural industry to perform the technical review. WSDA may seek review from outside the review group if an assigned reviewer has a conflict of interest.
 - In each phase, reviewers in each review group will conduct independent evaluations of the proposals assigned to that review group. Scores from independent evaluations will be averaged resulting in the proposal's final average point score. Projects will be ranked in each review group based on final average point scores.
- After each technical review phase, WSDA will select the proposals with the highest average point scores in each

review group for advancement in the process based on the availability of funds. WSDA will notify applicants of the results and applicants in Phase I Concept Proposal, will receive feedback about their Grant Proposal. In Phase II Full Proposal, applicants will have the opportunity to request feedback.

Grant Proposal Scoring Criteria

Phase I Concept Proposal

The following are the guidelines and criteria that will be used when scoring all applications in Phase I. The scoring guide utilized by the reviewers can be found on the [SCBGP website](#) in Resources.

Funding Priority (up to 5 points)

- Does the proposal address one or more of the funding priorities identified in the RFP?
- How well do they demonstrate a link to that funding priority?
- How well do they address the issue?

Project Purpose/Objectives (5000 Character Limit) (up to 20 points)

- Does this project explain the specific issue, problem or need that the project will address?
- Do they describe the approach to addressing the issue?
- Do they describe the importance to the specialty crop industry?
- Are the objectives appropriate for the project?

Project Beneficiaries and External Project Support – letters due phase II (up to 40 points)

- Does the project directly benefit Washington's specialty crop industry?
- Do they provide a good justification for the stated number of industry members benefiting from the outcomes of this project?
- Do they describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support the project and why, other than the applicants and organizations involved in the project.
- Is it clear that the project is important to the impacted specialty crop industry?
- Will industry stakeholders be actively involved?

Phase II Full Proposal – (If invited) you will be scored on the following:

The following are the guidelines and criteria that will be used when scoring all applications in Phase II. The scoring guide utilized by the reviewers can be found on the [SCBGP website](#) in Resources.

Project Purpose (5000 Character limit) (up to 25 points)

- Does this project explain the specific issue, problem or need that the project will address?
- Do they describe the approach to addressing the issue?
- Do they describe the importance to the specialty crop industry?
- Are the objectives appropriate for the project?

External Project Support (1500 Character Limit) (up to 30 points)

- Is it clear that the project is important to the impacted specialty crop industry?
- Will industry stakeholders be actively involved?
- Do they describe the specialty crop stakeholders who support the project and why, other than the applicant and organizations involved?
- Two (2) letters of support from Industry **are required**. The letters should be from the specialty crop industry members that are benefiting from these project funds. (*i.e. specialty crop producers/processors*).

Expected Measurable Outcomes (up to 20 points)

- Are the outcomes achievable?
- Is there an appropriate plan to measure achievement and share project results with industry members?
- Are the outcomes appropriate for measuring the project's overall impact on the specialty crop industry?

Budget (up to 25 points)

- Is the amount of the grant request reasonable and appropriate?
- Does the Budget Narrative/justification for each budget category adequately explain the costs and why they are necessary to reach the outcomes and objectives of this project?

Online Grant Application Instructions – Phase I Concept Proposal

After you have logged into [OpenWater](#) then proceed with answering the following questions.

Applicant Organization and Contact Information: List the name of the organization that is applying.

Address: List organization's address.

Contact 1: The person from the organization that is applying.

Contact 1: Email address

Contact 1: Phone number

Contact 2: List a co-applicant or partner here. (If applicable)

Contact 2: Email address

Contact 2: Phone number

Unique Entity ID (UEI) (this replaces the DUNS): Please provide UEI.

On April 4, 2022, the federal government stopped using the DUNS Number to uniquely identify entities. Now, entities doing business with the federal government use the Unique Entity ID created in SAM.gov. They no longer have to go to a third-party website to obtain their identifier. This transition allows the government to streamline the entity identification and validation process, making it easier and less burdensome for entities to do business with the federal government.

Federal Tax ID: Please provide your federal tax ID# or EIN (employee identification number)

Multi-State Project: Answer yes or no. If yes, state the names of the partnering states and describe the multi-state nature of the project and the project role of the other state(s).

Project Period: Start Date: Provide the date the project will start. The project can start no earlier than September 30, 2027. **End Date:** Provide the date the project will end. The project must end no later than September 29, 2030.

Note: Cost/No-cost extensions will not be allowed.

Does your project support R&D? Provide a yes or no as to whether your project's *focus* is research and development.

Review Category: Proposals will be assigned to technical review groups structured around each Review Category, so it is important to choose the category that best fits your project. Subject matter expert(s) for each category will be included in each review group. Choose your Review Category from the drop-down box. A description of the Review Category you choose will appear once you've selected it.

Funding Priority: Review the drop-down list of available funding priorities. If your project falls under one of these, please choose the priority and using the [scoring criteria for Phase I](#), answer the question.

Project Title: Provide a project title that best describes your project in **15 words or less**.

Project Summary: Provide **2-3 sentences** suitable for dissemination to the public. Please include:

- The name of the applicant organization that, if awarded a grant, will establish an agreement or contractual relationship with the State Department of Agriculture to lead and execute the project.
- The county in which the applicant is located
- A concise outline of the project's outcome(s) and objectives.

Project Purpose: (5000 character limit)

- Provide the specific issue, problem or need that the project will address.
- Describe the approach to addressing the issue.
- Describe the relevance and importance to the specialty crop industry.

Objectives: *Project proposal objectives are specific goals that outline what a project aims to achieve, guiding the project from start to finish. They serve as a roadmap, ensuring that everyone involved understands the desired outcomes and can align their efforts accordingly.*

- Describe how the project objectives align with the project.
- Provide at least one but no more than three objectives that this project hopes to achieve.

Project Beneficiaries and External Project Support

- Provide an estimate of how many specialty crop industry members will be benefiting from this project and provide a justification for your number.
- Explain who the specialty crop beneficiaries of the project are and how they will benefit directly from the outcomes of this project.
- Describe the specialty crop stakeholders, who support this project and why. (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project).
- If you feel the project is important to the impacted specialty crop industry, explain how.
- Explain how the industry stakeholders are involved.

Is your project continuing the efforts of a previously funded SCBGP project?

If yes, answer all questions.

This concludes the application process.

Online Grant Application Instructions – Phase II Full Proposal

After you have logged into [OpenWater](#) then proceed with answering the following questions.

Project Title: Auto populated from Phase I

Amount of Grant Request: Provide the \$ amount you are applying for.

Applicant Organization: Enter the name of the Applicant Organization here. The applicant must be the original applicant from Phase I. Transfer of the proposal to another applicant is not permitted.

Address: Enter the address of the Applicant Organization.

Contact 1: The person from the organization that is applying.

Contact 2: List a co-applicant here. (If applicable)

UEI #: Please provide UEI#. Reference page 4 for more information on getting a UEI#.

Federal Tax ID#: Provide your federal tax ID# here.

Review Category: This will pre-populate from Phase I

Multi-State Project: Answer yes or no to your project being a multi-state project, if yes, provide answers to the rest of the questions.

Does your project support R&D? Answer Yes or No

Application Template: Download the **required** application template, complete all fields and upload when finished. Uploading the incorrect template may result in disqualification.

Instructions for filling out the Project Profile Template:

Project Title: Provide the title of your project as listed previously in OpenWater

Duration of Project: The project start date can begin as early as September 30 and end no later than September 29 of your final project year. Projects have a maximum duration of three years.

Project Partner and Summary: (This can be copied from Phase I if you choose) (250 words or less) (This is not a scored field)

Include a project summary of 2-3 sentences suitable for dissemination to the public. A Project Summary includes:

- The name of the applicant organization that if awarded a grant will establish an agreement or contractual relationship with the State Department of Agriculture to lead and execute the project,
- And a concise outline of the project's outcome(s) and objectives.

Project Purpose: (This can be copied from Phase I if you choose) (5000 Character Limit)

- Provide the specific issue, problem or need that the project will address.
- Describe the approach to addressing the issue.
- Describe the relevance and importance to the specialty crop industry.

Objectives: (This can be copied from Phase I if you choose)

- Provide at least one but no more than three objectives that this project hopes to achieve.

Project Beneficiaries

- Estimate the number of project beneficiaries only.

Statement of Enhancing Specialty Crops:

The applicant will need to certify that this project enhances the competitiveness of specialty crops in accordance with and defined by the Farm Bill.

Continuation of Project Information: (if applicable)

Does this project continue the efforts of a previously funded SCBGP project? Yes or No

If your answer is no, move on to the section "Other support from federal or state grant programs".

If you have selected "yes", please address the following:

- Provide the award #(s) and project titles previously funded. (1000 Character Limit)
- Describe how this project will differ from and build on the previous efforts. (2500 Character Limit)
- Provide a summary (3-5 sentences) of the outcomes of the previous efforts. (1500 Character Limit)
- Provide lessons learned for potential project improvements. (1500 Character Limit for each question).
 - What was previously learned from implementing this project, including potential improvements?
 - How are the lessons learned and improvements being incorporated into the project to make the ongoing project more effective and successful at meeting goals and outcomes?
 - Describe the likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds.

Other Support from Federal or State Grant Programs: (if applicable)

The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects. Did you submit this project to a federal or state grant program other than the SCBGP for funding and/or is a federal or state grant program other than SCBGP currently funding the project? Yes or No.

If your project is receiving or will potentially receive funds from another federal or state grant program (1500 Character limit for each question)

- Identify the Federal or State Grant Program(s).
- Describe how the SCBGP project differs from or supplements the other grant program(s) efforts.

External Project Support: (1500 Character Limit)

- Describe the specialty crop stakeholders, who support this project and why. (other than the applicant and organizations involved in the project). At least two (2) letters of support from industry are **required**.
- If you feel the project is important to the impacted specialty crop industry, explain how.
- Explain how the industry stakeholders are involved.

Expected Measurable Outcomes: Choose an outcome that best fits your project. It is encouraged to choose either two outcomes with 1 indicator per outcome or one outcome with two chosen indicators.

Please refer to [Performance Outcome Measures](#) when filling out this section.

Data collection to report on outcomes and indicators: (2000 Character Limit) Explain how you will collect the required data to report on the outcome and indicator.

Budget Narrative: Below are the categories allowable under this grant program. (2000 Character Limit for each category justification)

- **Personnel:** Salaries/wages for individuals employed by your organization. Provide the hours or % of FTE for each budgeted personnel. Individuals not employed by your organization should be included under “Contractual.” *Note: if project funded, sub-recipients will be required to submit time sheets for any personnel paid by the grant. NOTE: ONLY personnel or PI’s paid with grant funds will need to provide a resume, no more than two pages in length. They can be uploaded to OpenWater.*
- **Benefits:** Fringe benefits for each project participant in the Personnel category and the fringe benefit rate. A justification will need to be provided if you are applying from an Institute of Higher Education.
- **Travel:** Ground transportation, lodging and meals, mileage, and air transportation. Travel rates may not exceed the reimbursement rates allowed by Washington State and the Federal government. Provide all detail requested in the application table. For travel rates, please view [Travel and Reimbursement Rates](#). Travel costs for contractors should be included under “Contractual.”
 - **International Travel:** It is recommended that applicants search the FAS (Foreign Agriculture Service) database of Global Agricultural Information Network [GAIN reports](#) to ensure that proposals will not duplicate information that already exists. Any proposal involving foreign travel must be well justified.
 - International travel must comply with the [Fly America Act, 49 U.S.C. 40118](#) (<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2011-title49/pdf/USCODE-2011-title49-subtitleVII-partA-subpartI-chap401-sec40118.pdf>) and [Foreign Travel Per Diem Allowance](#) (https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp).
- **Special Purpose Equipment:** (2500 Character Limit) Is equipment used only for research, scientific, or technical activities and has a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$10,000 or more. If under \$10,000, the item is considered a “supply” and should be included under “Supplies.”
- **Supplies:** (3000 Character Limit) Items with an acquisition cost under \$10,000. Includes items such as office supplies specifically for the project and field supplies. You will need to provide the Item description, the Per-unit cost, # of units/pieces purchased, when you will acquire them, and the amount of funds requested. Supply costs for contractors should be included under “Contractual.”
- **Contractual:** (2000 Character Limit) Services to be provided under a contract. Hourly rates should not exceed the salary of a Federal employee (GS-15 step 10) in your area. For current rates, please view [Salaries and Wages](#).
- **Other:** (2000 Character Limit) Includes all other costs. “Other” costs for contractors should be included under “Contractual.”

Indirect Costs: Indirect costs, including administrative overhead, are ***not allowed*** as part of your grant request.

Indirect costs (also known as “facilities and administrative costs”) are costs incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be identified specifically with a particular project, program, or organizational activity. Below are typical indirect costs for specific types of organizations. The salaries of administrative and clerical staff should normally be treated as indirect costs. Direct charging of these costs may be appropriate where all the following conditions are met:

- Administrative or clerical services are integral to a project or activity.
- Individuals involved can be specifically identified with the project or activity.
- Such costs are explicitly included in the budget or have the prior written approval of the federal awarding agency; and
- The costs are also not recovered as indirect costs.

The following are considered indirect and should not be included in the Budget as direct costs:

- Information technology services.
- Rent.
- Utilities and internet service.
- Telephone service (mobile and landline).
- General office supplies.
- Insurance; and
- Maintenance.

Program Income: Estimate the amount of income (if any) that may be generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the award. In the description column, explain how the program income will be generated and how it will be used to further support the project objectives. Program income must be spent on activities that support the goals and objectives of the project and must comply with restrictions on allowable costs and activities.

This concludes the application process.

You will now upload the project profile template, resumes for any personnel paid by the grant, workplan, and any other required documents.

Upload Supporting Materials

Workplan Template: Click link in OpenWater to **download** the Project Workplan. When complete, click on “Choose File” to upload it to OpenWater.

Letter of Support 1: Click “Choose File” and upload your 1st required letter of support.

Letter of Support 2: Click “Choose File” and upload your 2nd required letter of support.

Letter of Support 3-10: These letters are optional but if you’d like to add more, upload them here.

Bibliography and References: Upload file here, if applicable.

Resumes for Personnel Being Paid from the Grant (for Research Projects it is only necessary to include resumes for PI’s and Co PI’s, Non-Research projects, please include the resume of the Gant Manager).: Upload file here, if applicable.

Letter of Verification for Cost Share: Click link in OpenWater to **download** the Letter of Verification for Cost Share. When complete, click on “Choose File” to upload to OpenWater.

Signature Field: Using the cursor sign your name to the application.

You may either choose SAVE to edit your information prior to submitting it or choose SAVE and SUBMIT, in which you will no longer be able to edit your information.

Multi-State Projects

A Multi-State project is a project proposed to at least two states requesting that the states fund separate budget items using SCBGP funds. Multi-State project applicants must clearly describe the multi-state nature of their project in the Concept Proposal and must identify the other states from which funds will be requested. If invited to submit a Full Proposal, additional information will be required. Please note that a multi-State proposal submitted to states other than Washington must meet the other states' application requirements. If interested in proposing a multi-State proposal, please contact the applicable states prior to submittal for specific instructions.

Funding Priorities and Review Categories

Funding Priorities

Listed below are the 2027 funding priorities.

2027 Funding Priorities (in no ranking order)

- Control Pests and Diseases
- Develop and Enhance Domestic and International Markets
- Improve Production Practices through Innovative Technologies
- Increase the Nutritional Knowledge and Consumption of Specialty Crops
- Develop and Enhance Local & Regional Markets
- Environmental Stewardship, Conservation, and Climate Smart Agriculture

Projects that address one or more of the above funding priorities will be able to receive up to 5 points for their selected funding priority. Projects that do not address the above priorities will not receive any points for this category, however, they are still eligible for funding, if they meet all the other program requirements.

Review Categories

Proposals will be assigned to reviewers based on the categories listed below, so it is important to choose the category that best fits your project. Subject matter expert(s) for each category will be included in each review group.

Please select the Review Category that best fits your project.

Pest Management

In this Review Category, WSDA will consider projects that address pests that affect the production of Washington's specialty crops. Projects submitted to the Pest Management category should include applied research related to the probability and impact of invasive pests, and threats to specialty crops, and research to develop tools to detect, eradicate, and control pests. Project examples include:

- Develop novel diagnostic tools and improve understanding of the pathogenicity of the plant-parasitic nematode for potatoes.
- Assess the value of removing hawthorn trees near apple orchards to reduce the incidence of apple maggot around orchards.
- Assessing the potential damage of the root lesion nematode *Pratylenchus penetrans* on raspberry varieties.

Plant Health

In this Review Category, WSDA will consider projects that address plant diseases that affect the production of Washington's specialty crops. Projects submitted to the Plant Health category should include applied research related to the probability and impact of invasive disease, and weed threats to specialty crops, and research to develop tools to detect, and control plant diseases. Project examples include:

- Develop disease resistant sources of Nordmann and Turkish fir Christmas trees to sustain future markets.
- Develop and implement practical disease management approaches that will optimize economic, horticultural and environmental aspects related to the management of hop powdery mildew.
- Evaluating new asparagus varieties for disease resistance.
- Develop a management strategy for Little Cherry Disease.
- Quantify economic impacts and financial implications of grapevine leaf roll disease on grape yield and fruit

quality and determine financial benefits yielded from disease prevention and control strategies.

Innovative Technologies

In this Review Category, WSDA will consider projects that address any innovative technology that will increase the competitiveness of specialty crops. Project examples include:

- Develop mechanization technologies for reducing labor requirements for red raspberry production.
- Integrate high spatial and detailed weather predictions into the Ag Weather Net system to provide enhanced models and decision aids for planning by specialty crop growers.
- Evaluate photo selective anti-hail nets as an alternative to irrigated overhead cooling to reduce sunburn in tree fruit orchards and reduce orchard water use.
- Investigate season extension production technology, implement research trials for extended season production of leafy greens and improve processing techniques to ensure year-round availability.
- Create a mobile phone “app” to assist consumers in identifying Washington apple varieties, characteristics of the specific variety, usage and recipes by simply scanning the barcode or entering the PLU number of the apple at both the retail level and at home.

Training and Education

In this Review Category, WSDA will consider projects that address training and/or education that will increase the competitiveness for Washington’s specialty crop industry. Projects might include food safety education and outreach projects to help compliance with the new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Project examples include:

- Food safety training and education for small producers and value-added food processors.
- Bridging the GAP between voluntary and required food safety standards.
- Acreage survey for tree fruits and grapes.
- Expand farmworker education in pesticide safety training.

Domestic Marketing

In this Review Category, WSDA will consider projects that address domestic marketing for Washington’s specialty crops. Projects submitted can pertain to any type of domestic marketing project. Project examples include:

- Promoting healthy USA Pears to children in partnership with an entertainment company.
- Improve market access and development programs for pulses as mainstream ingredients through the training and education of food industry professionals.
- Market development and production research for the cider/perry industry.
- Developing and enhancing local and regional markets of Washington specialty nursery crop producers.

International Marketing

In this Review Category, WSDA will consider projects that will enhance or increase the opportunity for the exports of Washington’s specialty crops to foreign markets, increasing the competitiveness of specialty crops. Project examples include:

- Market research to support blueberry exports to Asia.
- Consumer promotions of Washington cherries in Mexico.
- Increase market awareness and distribution for Washington wines in emerging markets in India and Mexico.
- Build consumer awareness and promote Washington fruit in cooking recipes and demonstrations through a NW Fruit Promotion Road Show in major cities of Indonesia.
- Conduct a trade development mission to Vietnam, the Philippines and Myanmar to extend market penetration and introduce fresh potato products.

Small Farm/Regional Marketing

In this Review Category, WSDA will consider projects that enhance and develop small farm/regional markets for Washington’s specialty crop industry. Project examples include:

- Increasing access to wholesale markets for small and mid-sized farms in Washington.
- Farmer-buyer trade meetings to connect Washington’s specialty crop producers with food buyers to increase market opportunities and sales.
- Develop a model for incubating beginning specialty crop growers, accessing new regional markets and teaching

sustainable farming practices.

- Improving access to institutional markets by reducing regulatory barriers.
- Reducing market barriers for floricultural products to Puget Sound area mass merchandisers.

Food Safety Research

In this Review Category, WSDA will consider projects that address food safety for specialty crops. Such projects might include applied research projects that address "real world" food safety issues related to food and agricultural practices in the specialty crop industry, the impact of agricultural practices on subsequent specialty crop food processing; science-based practical and transferrable research projects that focus on food safety issues related to food-borne pathogen detection. Project examples include:

- Evaluate sanitation practices for reducing overall microbial levels and food safety risks in tree fruit storage bins (wood and plastic).
- Study the feasibility of sanitizing soft fruits with ultraviolet (UV-C) light to improve microbial safety.
- Validate non-pathogenic surrogates for *Listeria monocytogenes* antimicrobial intervention in fresh apple.
- Develop baseline of comparative data for indicator *E. coli* and *Salmonella* in surface water sources used for irrigation management, foliar contact and other pre-harvest applications.

Questions & Assistance

WSDA staff are available to provide applicants with an understanding of the grant selection process and requirements; however, to ensure that all applicants receive equal treatment, WSDA staff cannot provide assistance with individual proposals. Should you have any questions about the process or requirements, please email specialtycrop@agr.wa.gov.

Complaint, Debrief Conferences, and Protest Processes

The following establishes the Complaint and Protest processes for this solicitation. This administrative process is a prerequisite that must be exhausted prior to the filing of any action in court regarding this solicitation or the selection and award of a grant agreement.

Complaints

The Complaint period is an opportunity for applicants to voice objections or raise concerns with this RFP. The Complaint period is open until October 15, 2026 at noon.

Criteria for Complaint: A Complaint may only be based on one or more of the following grounds:

- The RFP unnecessarily restricts competition;
- The RFP evaluation or scoring process is unfair or flawed;
- The RFP requirements are inadequate or insufficient to prepare a response; or
- The RFP violates an agency policy or law.

Note: Complaints based on other criteria will not be considered by the Agency.

Complaints must comply with the following requirements:

- *Basis:* A Complaint should clearly state the basis of the Complaint, include all supporting evidence, and include a proposed remedy.
- *Initiation of a Complaint:*
 - A complaint must be submitted to the SCBG Program Manager via email at specialtycrop@agr.wa.gov;
 - Conspicuously state "Complaint" in the subject line of the email

The Complaint will be processed in the following manner:

- *Response:* When a Complaint is received, the SCBG Program Manager (or designee) will consider all the facts available and respond in writing prior to the proposal deadline, unless more time is needed and the submission deadline is extended.
- *Response is Final:* The SCBG Program Manager's response to the Complaint is final and not subject to administrative appeal.
- *Other:*
 - Issues raised in a Complaint may not be raised again during the Protest period.

- Any issue not brought to the attention of the SCBG Program Manager prior to the end of the Complaint period may be deemed waived for Protest purposes.
- If a Complaint results in changes to the solicitation, written amendments will be issued and posted on agency website.

Phase I Concept Proposal Protest (ONLY)

Following the evaluation of concept proposals, the SCBG Team will send the successful and unsuccessful applicants notification via email. All Applicants will also receive a summary of reviewer feedback to assist with future applications. The applicant may protest the determination based on the criteria below.

- **Criteria for Concept Proposal Protest:** A Concept Proposal Protest may be based only on one of the following:
 - Bias, discrimination, or conflict of interest;
 - Error in computing scores;
 - Non-compliance with any procedures described in the RFP; or
 - A violation of law that could not have been raised in the complaint period.

The Protest must:

- **State the grounds for the Protest.**
 - Include evidence of all the facts forming the basis of the Protest – mere conjecture or speculation will not be sufficient;
 - Include all documents, as electronic attachments, that support the facts stated in the Protest letter-the burden of proving the factual statements is on the applicant.

The Phase I Concept Proposal Protest must be emailed to the Department of Agriculture at specialtycrop@agr.wa.gov, within five business days after the unsuccessful email notification was sent.

A WSDA Assistant Director will review the Concept Proposal Protest to ensure compliance with this policy and determine if the claims laid out in the letter warrant invitation to Phase II, Request for Full Proposals. The applicant will be notified within fourteen business days of its receipt.

Debrief Conference - Phase II Full Proposal (ONLY)

A Debrief Conference is an opportunity for an applicant and the Agency to meet and discuss the Applicant's Proposal. A request for a debrief conference provides a required prerequisite for an applicant to file a Protest. The following process applies to Debrief Conferences:

- *Announcement:* Following the evaluation of the proposals, the SCBGP Team will send the successful and unsuccessful applicants notification via email.
- *Debrief Request:* An applicant's request for a Debrief Conference must be received via email at specialtycrop@agr.wa.gov no later than five business days after the notification was sent.
- *To Request a Debrief Conference:* Send an email message to the SCBGP Team at specialtycrop@agr.wa.gov. The email message must include "Debrief" in the subject line of the email message.
- *Debrief Conference:* When the Debrief Conference request is received, the SCBGP Team will offer the requesting applicant one meeting opportunity and notify the applicant of the Debrief Conference place, date, and time.
- *No Delay:* The Agency will not allow the debrief process to delay the award. Therefore, applicants should plan for contingencies and alternate representatives. Applicants who do not attend the Debrief Conference will lose the opportunity to file a Protest.

Phase II Full Proposal Protest (ONLY)

This Protest procedure is available to Applicants who submitted a full proposal through the solicitation process and have participated in a Debrief Conference. Applicants protesting this RFP shall follow the procedures described below. Protests that do not follow these procedures shall not be considered. This Protest process constitutes the sole administrative remedy available to applicants under this RFP.

Upon completing the Debrief Conference, the applicant is allowed **five business days** to file a Protest.

- *Criteria for a Protest:* A Protest may be based only on one or more of the following:
 - Bias, Discrimination, or conflict of interest;
 - Error in computing scores;
 - Non-compliance with any procedures described in the RFP; or
 - A violation of law that could not have been raised in the Complaint Period.
- *Criteria not met:* Protests not based on the above four issues will not be considered. Protests will be rejected as without merit if they address issues such as:
 - an evaluator's professional judgment on the quality of a proposal
- *Initiating a Protest:* Any applicant that has participated in a Debrief Conference may Protest the selection. A Protest must:
 - Be sent via an email message to the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program email box at the following email address: specialtycrop@agr.wa.gov. The message must include "Protest" in the subject line of the email message;
 - Include evidence of all the facts forming the basis of the Protest—mere conjecture or speculation will not be sufficient;
 - Include all documents, as electronic attachments, that support the facts stated in the Protest letter—the burden of proving the factual statements is on the protesting applicant;
 - Include a description of the relief or corrective action requested;
 - Be received by the SCBGP on or before 5:00 pm on the fifth (5th) business day after the applicant's Debrief Conference (not including the conference day).
- *Protest Response:* Upon receipt of a Protest, the Director will designate a Protest Officer who was not involved in the solicitation. The Protest Officer will open an Administrative Protest file and will maintain a copy of all communications and documents received throughout the process in the file. The Protest Officer will then send a letter:
 - notifying the protesting applicant and the RFP Coordinator of the designation;
 - attaching a copy of the Protest; and
 - setting a schedule for the following:
 - the receipt of a response from the RFP Coordinator;
 - a subsequent reply from the protesting applicant; and
 - a Protest decision.
- *Protest Determination:* The Protest Officer will consider the records and facts presented in the parties' materials. If additional time is required, the parties will be notified of the delay. In the event a Protest may affect the interest of another applicant that submitted a proposal that applicant will be given an opportunity to submit its views and any relevant information on the Protest, to the Protest Officer and the parties.
- *Decision is Final:* The Protest decision is final and not subject to administrative appeal. The final determination of the Protest shall:
 - Find the Protest lacking in evidence or merit and uphold the Agency's action;
 - Find only technical or harmless errors in the Agency's RFP and determine the Agency to be in substantial compliance and reject the Protest.
 - Find merit in the Protest and provide options to the Agency, including correcting errors and reevaluating all proposals; reissuing the solicitation document; or making other findings and determining other courses of action as appropriate.
- *Contracting:* If the Agency determines that the Protest is without merit, the Agency will enter into a grant agreement with the successful applicants. If the Protest is determined to have merit, one of the alternatives noted in the preceding paragraph will be taken.
- *Jurisdiction and Venue:* The jurisdiction and venue for any further relief will be in Thurston County Superior Court.

How to Apply

Access the SCBGP application submittal site at [OpenWater](#).

- Save this link in your Favorites or create a shortcut to your desktop.

If you need to create a new account:

- Fill out the information required under Create New Account.
- Once your account is completed, you will be at the Home page. The Home page will contain program specific information.
- The left-hand menu will get you to the Home page, My Profile, and Change Password. Once an application has been started or submitted, this will be reflected in the menu.

To start your application, click Apply at the top of the webpage.

Read the Eligibility Certification.

- If your project falls within the requirements, provide your signature using the cursor. Click Save and Next.

You are now in the application.

- If you'd like to add collaborators to your application, click the Manage Collaborators button to the right. Click on Add Collaborator to enter their name and email address.
- Answer the questions in the application. The application will automatically save periodically but a Save button is located at the end of the application.
- Once you have completed the application, click Save and Submit.
 - A pop-up message will state you are submitting your application, and no further changes can be made. Click OK.
 - You will be taken to a screen thanking you for your submission. There will be a link to view your application. This will allow you to print, view, or copy it.

An application does not have to be completed in one session. You can log in and out of the system as needed until the application is complete or until the application's due date.

Allowable and Unallowable Costs

To be eligible for grant funding, costs must be *allowable* as defined by the federal government. Requirements vary depending on the type of organization. For details about allowable and unallowable costs, see [USDA's General Terms and Conditions](#).

If applicants have questions concerning the allowability of costs after reviewing this section, they should contact the SCBGP team at specialtycrop@agr.wa.gov.

Appendix A: Tips for Submitting Your Proposal

To help ensure that a project is accurately submitted and well received by the technical review committee please consider the following advice when composing the concept proposal.

- Do not wait until the last minute to prepare or submit your proposal. Allow ample time for composition, research, review, and submittal. Also give plenty of time to register in the [SAM](#).
- Compose answers to questions in a word processing document so they can be checked for grammar, spelling, syntax, and overall clarity before entering them into the application submittal site **OpenWater**.
- Double-check the project budget against the Allowable and Unallowable Costs and Activities. Too many unallowable costs listed in the budget may result in disqualification.
- Check your math. Review the budget to ensure the added costs from each budget category equal the total requested funds.
- Double-check to ensure the most appropriate Review Category has been selected for the project. Identifying the most appropriate category ensures proposals are evaluated by reviewers with the most relevant expertise.
- Before submitting the full proposal, view all attached documents to ensure that the correct documents have been attached.
- When filling out Phase II's Project Profile Template, be sure to **follow** the instructions for this in the Request for Proposals, **not on the template itself**.