



Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

SPECIALTY CROP MULTI-STATE PROGRAM

Instructions for Participating States

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1.0 LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

Legislative authority for the Specialty Crop Multi-State Program (SCMP) is provided under section 101 of the Specialty Crops Competitiveness Act of 2004 ([7 U.S.C. 1621 note](#)), as amended under section 10107 of the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018, [Public L. No. 115—343](#) (the Farm Bill).

SCMP competitively awards funds to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops through collaborative, multi-state projects that address regional or national level specialty crop issues of:

- Food safety
- Plant pests and disease
- Research
- Crop-specific projects addressing common issues
- Marketing and promotion

2.0 DEFINITIONS

2.1 PARTICIPATING STATE

State departments of agriculture that elect to submit applications to the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) on behalf of interested entities as well as oversee the administration of awarded agreements.

Note: AMS recognizes that some States may not have the resources for SCMP administration or have additional restrictions or requirements related to project costs, administration, or activities.

Participating States may use Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) administrative funds to offset costs related to SCMP pre- and post-award activities.

2.2 NONPARTICIPATING STATE

State departments of agriculture that do not elect to submit applications to AMS on behalf of interested entities and will not oversee the administration of awarded agreements.

3.0 COMMITMENT TO PARTICIPATE

The commitment to elect to be designated a Participating State is made on a year-by-year basis. Current participating States may participate again or elect not to participate. Participating States awarded one or more grants from a previous funding announcement will continue to function as Participating States for active projects even if they elect not to participate in the program.

AMS expects that once a State commits to participate, it will not abandon its duties except for justified reason or under unusual circumstances.

Core responsibilities of the Participating State include:

- Accepting applications from multi-state partners, even if the multi-state partners are not located in the same State as the Participating State;

- Conduct initial qualification screening of applications to ensure they meet all requirements outlined in the SCMP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO);
- Submitting screened applications via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by the NOFO's deadline; and
- Assuming administrative responsibility for any application it submits that is selected for funding.

4.0 PRE-AWARD REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING STATES

- (1) Provide AMS a point of contact (POC) who will handle inquiries from the public about the SCMP.
 - a. A list of Participating States and their POCs will be posted to the [AMS SCMP Participating States webpage](#). Until then, inquiries from potential applicants may be forwarded to AMS SCMP.
 - b. Once the list of Participating States and their POCs is posted to the AMS SCMP website, AMS will direct applicants with inquiries about the SCMP to the applicable Participating State contact.
- (2) Refer all stakeholders interested in applying for a SCMP grant to the [SCMP webpage](#).
 - a. Inform all interested stakeholders/potential applicants that the NOFO provides the complete information needed to prepare an application.
 - b. A Participating State may elect to advise, consult, and provide feedback on applications to applicants to assist interested multi-state partners in developing mutually beneficial applications, but this is not a requirement. However, if a Participating State elects to provide such service to one, it must assist all potential applicants who request such assistance and feedback.
- (3) Participating States that have questions about whether an application fits within the scope of the SCMP should contact the AMS contact listed at sagpggrants@usda.gov. AMS will share any new information resulting from such inquiries with the Participating States.
- (4) Participate in teleconference and/or webinar training sessions held by AMS.
- (5) Follow AMS protocols for accepting and screening SCMP applications to ensure the applications meet both the definition of a multi-state project and the requirements outlined in the NOFO.
- (6) Submit screened applications via [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) by the deadline established by AMS.
- (7) If awarded, complete an in-depth review of the project budget, including cost share, to ensure all cost items are allowable, allocable, and reasonable. As necessary, negotiate with the multi-state partners if there are any budget items that do not meet those requirements. Provide AMS with a final project budget upon completion of the negotiations.
- (8) If awarded, perform a risk assessment of the multi-state partners who will receive federal funds when carrying out the project, prior to executing the grant agreement award, to determine monitoring strategies for the project.

4.1 DEVELOPING APPLICATIONS

Participating and nonparticipating States that intend to have a substantive role in a project may develop their own applications. In such cases, the State must recruit at least one partner located in different State and who will have a substantive role in the project. Participating States are encouraged to use their experience, knowledge, and resources to help find partners for applications they do not develop themselves, but this is not a requirement.

A Participating State that develops its own applications will submit the applications directly to AMS along with other applications it has received that meet the NOFO requirements.

4.2 SCREENING APPLICATIONS

Participating States need to use judgment in screening applications for compliance with the NOFO requirements. If there is a missing application component, please request that the multi-state partners provide it before submitting the application to AMS. When evaluating applications to determine alignment with SCMP and its requirements, Participating States must ensure that the applications:

- (1) Materially adheres to the requirements of the NOFO;
- (2) Fits into at least one of the NOFO's project area types;
- (3) Meets the NOFO's definition of a multi-state project;((multi-state projects must address regional or national level specialty crop issues: food safety; plant pests and disease; research; crop-specific projects addressing common issues; and marketing and promotion.)
- (4) Differs from and/or supplements but does not duplicate projects currently or previously funded by the SCBGP or another Federal award program; and
- (5) Does not name any partner with current performance and compliance violations relating to a SCBGP-funded project.
- (6) Adhere to the 25% cost share requirement and includes the necessary documentation as detailed in the [SCMP Notice of Funding Opportunity](#). Applications that are materially compliant may be submitted. All deadlines are provided in the SCMP NOFO. Applications that are submitted to AMS late or that do not materially comply with the requirements of the NOFO will not be considered in the AMS competitive review. You may reference the Late, Nonresponsive, and Incomplete Applications Policy on the [AMS Policies and Procedures](#) page for more information.

5.0 POST-AWARD REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATING STATES

- (1) As necessary to carry out the project, use sub agreements or subcontracts which comply with [2 CFR § 200](#). The awarded Participating State must maintain control of the project objectives, set policies, and ensure that the project is carried out in accordance with all applicable Federal statutes and regulations as well as with the AMS agreement, [AMS General Terms and Conditions](#), and [USDA General Terms and Conditions for Federal Awards](#).
- (2) Adhere to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) [2 CFR § 170.320](#).
- (3) Comply with the requirements for pass through entities per [2 CFR § 200.332](#)

- (4) Adhere to the AMS agreement award terms and conditions including reporting and financial accountability requirements, all administrative functions, and proper close out.

6.0 DEADLINES

State departments of agriculture must notify the AMS contact listed at sagpgrants@usda.gov no later than September 30, of the application year, if they would like to be designated a Participating State.

The deadline for multi-state partner applicants to apply to Participating States will be announced in the SCMP NOFO.

The deadline for Participating States to apply to AMS via Grants.gov will be announced in the NOFO.

7.0 AGENCY CONTACTS

7.1 PROGRAMMATIC QUESTIONS

For questions, please contact the SCMP staff by e-mail about the grant program at sagpgrants@usda.gov.

7.2 ADDRESS

Specialty Crop Multi-State Program
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