Ohio Specialty Crop Promotion Program

2011
Request for Proposals

Proposal Application Deadline:
May 27, 2011 @ 4 p.m.

Ohio Department of Agriculture
Attn: Lori Panda
8995 East Main Street
Reynoldsburg, Ohio 43068
614.466.8798

Program Overview
The Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) will be receiving a federal allocation from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for specialty crop promotion in 2011. ODA is currently soliciting projects to soley enhance the competitiveness of Ohio specialty crops. It is the intent that all funding will be used to advance the long-term economic and viability of Ohio's specialty crop industry while increasing the marketability of specialty crops.

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will allocate approximately $600,000 of grant funding to Ohio to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. The Ohio Department of Agriculture will award multiple grants to sub-recipients from these funds. **Grant awards will range from a minimum of $15,000 up to a maximum of $100,000.**

Because USDA is the funding authority, they have the final approval for projects submitted through this notice. ODA will utilize a review panel to make funding recommendations to ODA Director James Zehringer. The review panel and Director's decision will be forwarded to USDA to make the final determination concerning the awards. Projects cannot begin until the USDA has made their official award announcement and the contract between ODA and the sub-grantee has been signed by all parties. Projects are permitted to last up to two years in duration (October 2011 – October 2013).

Purpose of Grant
Specialty crops are identified as fruits, vegetables, dried fruit, honey, maple syrup, tree nuts and nursery crops (including floriculture). The full list from USDA can be found here.

Applicant Eligibility Requirements
The Ohio Department of Agriculture will only accept proposals for consideration for specialty crop block grant funds from food and agricultural non-profit organizations, cooperatives, associations or commodity groups, universities and research institutions (hereinafter referred to as "eligible applicants") that represent specific specialty crop sectors.

Individuals and partnerships (hereinafter referred to as "partnering entities") may participate in this grant program by developing and submitting proposals, through an eligible applicant. If an eligible applicant is partnering with a partnering entity the eligible applicant will be the grantee with the Ohio Department of Agriculture for the block grant funds, and be the party responsible for the completion of the grant and associated requirements. Eligible parties are encouraged to seek applications or proposals from their membership to be considered for submission for a specialty crop block grant.

Private individuals and companies are not eligible to apply. Employees of the Ohio Department of Agriculture, members of his or her immediate family, or business partners of the aforementioned are not eligible to receive a grant. Members of the review committee are not permitted to apply for the grant if they are the applicant or have a financial obligation to project.

A new requirement of the 2011 Specialty Crop Block Grant is each applicant must obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number which is a nine-digit number established and assigned by Dun and Bradstreet, Inc. (D&B) to uniquely identify business entities. A DUNS number may be obtained from D&B by telephone (currently 866-705-5711) or by clicking here.

You are not required to have the DUNS number before submitting your application to the Ohio Department of Agriculture for the 2011 Specialty Crop Block Grant program, but you will be required to have the number before accepting funds as a recipient.

Proposal Process

Announcement of grant opportunity	April 29, 2011
Application deadline	May 27, 2011
Review panel recommendations	June 8, 2011
Ohio plan submitted to USDA	July 1, 2011
Expected date of grant awards	October 2011

Submission Criteria

To be considered, applications must be a complete application package and submitted electronically using the online application to Lori Panda panda@agri.ohio.gov no later than 4:00 pm. on May 27, 2011.

Grant Eligibility Requirements

A. Proposals shall be designed to address obstacles or opportunities that solely impact the competitive advantage of Ohio's specialty crop industry; develop a plan to address these obstacles or opportunities. *Proposals must clearly identify measures that can quantify the results or outcome of the proposed project. Proposals that are able to demonstrate clear profit and employment opportunities to the specialty crop industry will be given a higher rating during the review process.* Grant projects may focus on, but are not restricted to these areas:

- Development of season extension and sales opportunities
- Provide improvements in the aggregation and distribution of specialty crops
- Develop value-added products using Ohio specialty crops (All projects seeking assistance to develop a value-added venture must submit complete financial statements and a completed feasibility study.)
- Support for efforts to reduce or mitigate risk for specialty crop producers
- Diversification and expansion of production and processing
- Implement programs or projects that provide outreach and education on the importance of the industry with regards to Ohio's economy, food safety or the nutrition and health benefits of specialty crops.
- Provide technical and direct support to beginning producers
- Assist specialty crop producers in cooperative marketing efforts
- Enhancing food safety and related areas
- Initiatives to assist Ohio's nursery industry
- Leveraging investment of previously awarded grants to take project to the next level

B. All applicants must provide matching funds of a minimum of 25% of the requested grant amount. This match can be cash or in-kind contribution. Please note that funds can only be used for expenses related directly to the project.

C. Examples of Unacceptable Projects

a. 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 a farmer's market.

b. 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 project or to expand production of a single business.

D. Examples of Acceptable Projects

- An organization requests funding to contract with a university 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.

- Grant funds are requested to educate farmers throughout the state to extend Ohio's growing season.

- A complete list of previous sub-recipients can be found at the Ohio Department of Agriculture website (give website address).

Application Instructions and Proposal Format

An online application is available at www.agri.ohio.gov. Proposals will include the following elements described in detail in the online application and links to supporting documents. Reviewers will consider opportunities to link separate proposals with similar goals and objectives and may make suggestions for resubmission of a collaborative proposal.

1. Project Title
2. Abstract
3. Partner Organization
4. Project Purpose
5. Potential Impact
6. Expected Measurable Outcomes
7. Work Plan
8. Budget Narrative
9. Project Oversight
10. Project Commitment

11. Support Letters

All proposals must include three (3) letters of support for the project from industry members that confirm a need for this project. The letters must be received with the original grant application.

12. Appendices

- Current résumés for each individual working on the project
- Three (3) industry support letters, and
- Any other evidence of project necessity
- Copy of IRS 501 (c) 3 determination

ODA may ask a potential grantee for additional information on any of the application requirements prior to awarding the grant or entering into a grant agreement with the grantee. ODA reserves the right to fund the project in part, add or delete tasks and ask for clarification on the work plan, timeline, expected measurable outcomes or budget. No agreement will be entered into until ODA is satisfied with all of the project specifications.

Important Definitions

In-kind Contributions: Actual services provided by applicant or third party – no money changes hands. The estimated amount of in-kind contributions must be included in the budget.

Matching Funds: Additional cash or cash equivalent that is provided by the applicant or third party. Estimated amount of matching funds also needs to be included in the budget as a separate cost category. If funds are being provided by someone other than the applicant; the individual and/or company will have to submit a letter of financial commitment.

Total Project Cost: All necessary and reasonable costs related to the completion of the project as identified in the budget.

Equipment: This category includes items of property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of $5,000. If the cost is under $5,000, then include these items under SUPPLIES.

Supplies: This is anything with acquisition cost under $5,000 and could be anything from office supplies and software to educational or field supplies.

Travel: When submitting reimbursement for travel, you are required to follow the State of Ohio travel rules. These rules will be provided to you with your award letter.

Project Revisions

After a proposal is accepted and a grant agreement is entered into between the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the grantee, no modifications or changes can be made to substantially change the project scope, objectives or budget, extend the project period, change key persons associated with the grant, or increase the budget amount without submitting a request in writing to the ODA. Any shift in the budget more than 20 percent must be approved by the USDA.

General Compliance

Grantee agrees to comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws in the conduct of the work under the grant agreement.

Furthermore, the Grantee acknowledges the application and documents submitted to the Ohio Department of Agriculture are considered public records pursuant to R.C. 149.43(A)(1) unless the records are not releasable due to an exemption or are protected under another state or federal law. Specifically, the Grantee may claim that some of the documentation submitted is considered a trade secret, and must establish that the record qualifies as a trade secret by following the requirements set forth in 1333.61(D) of the Ohio Revised Code, including, but not limited to,

indicating which documents are considered by the applicant as trade secrets, submitting a statement describing the measures the applicant has taken to safeguard the confidentiality of the information, and what value or injury would result in the release of the information. The applicant is responsible for taking the necessary steps to establish that a document is a trade secret under R.C. 1333.61 (D).

Eligible/ Ineligible Expenses
Refer to the USDA document for cost principles, allowable and ineligible expenses under the program.

Additional Documents:
Upon approval, successful applicants will be required to complete and submit the following documents to ODA, among others:

Contract or Memorandum of Understanding with ODA
Form W-9,
Vendor Information Form
Declaration regarding material assistance/non-assistance
Contact information form

Payment
Payments are provided as a reimbursement of expense incurred. **Reimbursement requests are to be submitted once a quarter with the written quarterly report.** In order to receive reimbursements an invoice must be submitted to ODA after actual expenses are incurred by the grantee. Supporting documentation for both the reimbursement and match is required with the reimbursement request. All documentation of expenses shall be required as part of the budget closeout report. Ten to 25% of the total grant award will be withheld until the project is completed and all reports have been submitted.

REPORTING PROCESS FOR APPROVED APPLICATIONS

Quarterly, Annual and Final Reporting
Grantees shall submit reports detailing the progress of each project. Progress reports must be submitted to the ODA on a quarterly and annual basis. Refer to the USDA quarterly and annual explanation. A final performance report will also be required and submitted in the format requested by the USDA. Refer to the USDA final reporting instructions. Details of the reporting requirements are included on the ODA Specialty Crop Block Grant website.

Any entity that qualifies under the participant eligibility statement may submit more than one proposal, but only if proposals are for completely different projects.

For more information on Ohio's 2011 Specialty Crop Block Grant application process contact Lori Panda at 614.466.8798 or panda@agri.ohio.gov.

Proposal Evaluation Procedures

Proposals will be rated by a review panel appointed by the Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The following criteria will be used to review and rank proposals:

Weight	Criteria *(Proposals that are able to demonstrate clear profit and employment opportunities to the specialty crop industry will be given a higher rating during the review process.)*
20	**Project Purpose** Are the need and purpose of the project clear and well defined?
25	**Potential Impact** Will the project have a positive impact on the targeted specialty crop industry? Will it create job opportunities? Will it enhance the competitiveness of that industry? Will that impact be realized within the next five years?
20	**Expected Measurable Outcomes** Are the objectives clear and appropriate? Does the project include one or two measurable outcomes that directly support the project purpose? Does each measurable outcome include a specific goal, target, benchmark and performance measure? Is there a plan for monitoring performance toward meeting each outcome?
15	**Work Plan** Is the work plan complete? Is the work plan feasible? Is the timeline reasonable? Do the tasks relate to the project objectives and expected measurable outcomes? Are their sufficient and qualified personnel and partnerships to accomplish this work? Does the project have adequate oversight to ensure proper administration? RESEARCH PROJECTS: Is there an outreach component?
10	**Project Commitment** Is industry support for the project demonstrated? Do stakeholders have an active role in any activities outlined in the project work plan? Are industry stakeholders providing matching or in-kind contributions?
10	**Budget and Budget Detail** Is the amount requested reasonable? Are line items reasonable and appropriate? Does the budget detail adequately explain and justify expenses? Are the expected benefits commensurate with the total investment?