

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Farm Bill

Request for Proposals

Fiscal Year 2014 Funding Cycle

Application Deadline:
May 15, 2014



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

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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 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture and authorized by the Farm, Food, and Jobs Bill (2014 Farm Bill). 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) is currently awaiting notice of 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.)
- Education/Training/Technical Assistance
- Promotion/Marketing
- Food Safety/Product Handling

Project Duration

Specialty crop block grant funds will be made available around **October 1, 2014**. Funded projects must be completed by **October 1, 2016**.

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 28.** 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 a project summary of 250 words or less suitable for dissemination to the public. It should include the need for the project, a brief description of the goals and outcomes, and your plan for evaluating and measuring the success of the project or program.

- **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.
- If any of the project activities or costs has the potential to enhance the competitiveness of non-specialty crops (ex: farmers market, general buy local, CSA etc.) describe the methods or processes you will implement to verify all grant funds are expended on activities and costs that only enhance the competitiveness of

eligible specialty crops. If you propose a cost-share or match to cover non-specialty crop activities and costs, include the specific costs or contributions proposed to meet the cost-share or match, the source of funding or contributions, and describe how you determined the appropriate amount of cost-share or match. (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 is a continuation of a project that the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) funded previously, describe how the project differs from and builds on the previous project's efforts. Describe also the likelihood of the project becoming self-sustaining and not indefinitely dependent on grant funds. Specifically, provide a summary (3 to 5 sentences per project) of the accomplishments of the previous project that have led you to seek continued funding.
- Have you submitted the project to another Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP for funding and/or is another Federal or State grant program other than the SCBGP funding the project currently?
 - If no, indicate that you have not.
 - If yes, identify the Federal and/or State grant program by name and describe how the new project differs from and supplements efforts of the SCBGP and the other Federal or State grant program rather than duplicates funding efforts. The SCBGP will not fund duplicative projects.

- **Potential Impact.**

This section shall show how the project potentially benefits the specialty crop industry and/or the public or multiple states rather than only a particular commercial product, single organization, institution, or individual. The following shall be addressed in this section:

- Who are the specialty crop beneficiaries of the project?
- How many specialty crop beneficiaries will the project benefit?
- How will the project benefit the specialty crop beneficiaries?
- What is the potential economic impact of the project if it can be estimated?
- If applicable, how will the project have a multi-state (benefitting two more or states) or national impact?

o **Expected Measurable Outcomes.**

The following shall be addressed in this section:

- o Provide at least one distinct, quantifiable, measurable project outcome that solely supports enhancing the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops. If the outcome measures are long-term and occur after the project's completion, then identify an intermediate outcome that occurs before the end of the grant period and that is expected to help lead to the fulfillment of long-term outcomes. For further information on expected measurable outcomes, please see Attachment III.
 - Provide a GOAL - A goal is what you hope to achieve as a result of conducting the activities and producing the outputs (tangible results that can be seen, touched, handled, or moved about) of the project. Examples of outcome-oriented goals could include a change in knowledge, change in behavior, change in conditions that make a difference for the beneficiaries of the project.
 - Provide a PERFORMANCE MEASURE. Identify a performance measure for each goal that you will use to measure the actual project results compared to the expected results. These 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).
 - Provide a BENCHMARK - For each performance measure provided, include benchmark. The benchmark is the baseline data against which you will measure your success. Examples of a benchmark could include current or initial level of knowledge, current behavior, or current conditions.
 - Provide a TARGET - For each benchmark provided, indicate the TARGET. The TARGET is the level of change that you anticipate by the completion of the project. This is NOT the target audience or target population.
- o Provide your PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN. How will you monitor your progress toward achieving each GOAL?
- o What are your data sources for monitoring performance? For example, will you conduct surveys or use questionnaires?
- o How will you collect the required data? Be sure to include the frequency of your data collection.

- o Describe how you will share the results of the project with specialty crop growers and other interested specialty crop stakeholders.

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

- **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:

- o Project Activity: Describe the project activities that are necessary to accomplish the objectives. Make sure you include your performance monitoring/data collection activities. If outcomes will be measured outside of the grant period, indicate how the monitoring will occur after the grant period ends.
- o Include a timeline that indicates when each activity will occur (at least month and year) and beginning and end dates for the project. Make sure the work plan timeline shows that the project will be completed within the allowable grant period.
- o Indicate the project participants 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. If you request funds for travel, these activities must also be included.

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 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	\$\$\$	\$\$\$	\$\$\$

- o **Travel.** Explain the purpose for each Trip Request. Please note that travel costs are limited to those allowed by formal organizational policy; in the case of air travel, project participants must use the lowest reasonable commercial airfares. For recipient organizations that have no formal travel policy and for-profit recipients, allowable travel costs may not exceed those established by the Federal Travel Regulation, issued by GSA, including the maximum per diem and subsistence rates prescribed in those regulations. This information is available at <http://www.gsa.gov>.

Indicate the destination, purpose of trip, number of people traveling (max of 2 per trip), 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.

Trip Destination	Purpose of the Trip	Type of Expense (airfare, car rental, hotel, meals, mileage, etc.)	Unit of Measure (days, nights, miles)	Number of Units	Cost per Unit	Number of Travelers Claiming the Expense	Funds Requested

- o **Equipment.** Describe any special purpose equipment to be purchased under the grant. "Special purpose equipment" is tangible, nonexpendable, personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost that equals or exceeds \$5,000 per unit and is used only for research, medical, scientific, or other technical activities.

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.

Item Description	Justification for Equipment	Funds Requested

- o **Supplies.** List the materials, supplies, and fabricated parts costing less than \$5,000 per unit and describe how they will support the purpose and goal of the proposal and solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Show the total for all SCBGP funded supplies.

Item Description	Justification for Supplies	Per-Unit Cost	Number of Units/Pieces Purchased	Funds Requested

- o **Contractual.** Contractual/consultant costs are the expenses associated with purchasing goods and/or procuring services performed by an individual or organization other than the applicant in the form of a procurement relationship. If there is more than one

contractor or consultant, each must be described separately. (Repeat this section for each contract/consultant.)

- o Provide an itemized budget (personnel, fringe, travel, equipment, supplies, other, etc.) with appropriate justification.
- o 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 the contract covers such as professional services, travel, lodging, etc. Show the total for all SCBGP funded contractual expenses.
- o If contractor employee and consultant hourly rates of pay exceed the salary of a GS-15 step 10 Federal employee in your area (for more information please go to <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/>), provide a justification for the expenses. This limit does not include fringe benefits, travel, indirect costs, or other expenses.
 - 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-15 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.

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.)

- o **Other.** Include any expenses not covered in any of the previous budget categories. Be sure to break down costs into cost/unit. Expenses in this section include, but are not limited to, meetings and conferences, communications, rental expenses, advertisements, communications, speaker/trainer fees, publication costs, and data collection.

Item Description	Justification of the Expense	Per-Unit Cost	Number of Units	Funds Requested

- 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.
- o When paying for the travel of a person to attend a conference, meals and lodging may be included in the cost without additional justification.
 - o 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. If you budget meal costs for reasons other than meals associated with travel per diem, provide an adequate justification to support that these costs are not entertainment costs.
 - o 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.

- o **Program Income.** Program income is gross income—earned by a recipient or subrecipient under a grant—directly generated by the grant-supported activity, or earned only because of the grant agreement during the grant period of performance. Program income includes, but is not limited to, income from fees for services performed; the sale of commodities or items fabricated under an award (this includes items sold at cost if the cost of producing the item was funded in whole or partially with grant funds); registration fees for conferences, etc. 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.

Source/Nature of Program Income	Description of how you will reinvest the program income into the project to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops	Estimated Income

- **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 the specialty crop stakeholders other than the applicant, individuals and organizations involved in the project who support this project and why.
- **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 15, 2014. 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:

Susan Head, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
P.O. Box 1609
Jackson, MS 39215
Email: susan@mdac.ms.gov
Phone: (601) 359-1196

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:

- Project Title
- Activities Performed.
 - Briefly summarize activities performed, targets, and/or performance goals achieved during the reporting period. Specifically, discuss the tasks provided in the *Work Plan* of the approved project proposal. 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 the *Expected Measurable Outcomes* identified in the approved project proposal 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 such as changes or delays to the approved *Work Plan* activities and *Expected Measurable Outcomes*. 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 adjustments were made to 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.
 - When it is necessary to modify the *Project Purpose*, substantially change the *Expected Measurable Outcomes* and/or the proposed *Work Plan* deliverables, then it would be necessary to submit a formal scope amendment.
 - When it is necessary to make cumulative changes to the budget that exceed 20% of the project's total budget within the project's approved *Budget Narrative* or separately budgeted projects, then it would be necessary to submit a formal budget change.

- **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 entire grant period. Whenever possible, describe the work accomplished in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Specifically discuss the tasks provided in the *Work Plan* of the approved project proposal. Include the significant results, accomplishments, conclusions and recommendations. Include favorable or unusual developments.
 - If the overall scope of the project benefitted commodities other than specialty crops, indicate how project staff ensured that funds were used to solely enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.
 - 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.
 - Highlight the major successful outcomes of the project in quantifiable terms.
- **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

Susan Head
(601) 359-1196
susan@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	Kava
Blueberries	Lavender
Chickpeas	Lentils
Christmas trees	Maple syrup
Cocoa	Mushrooms
Coffee	Organic fruits and vegetables
Cut flowers	Peppermint
Dry edible beans	Potatoes
Dry peas	Seaweed
Foliage	Spearmint
Fruit grapes for wine	Sweet Corn
Garlic	Sweet Potatoes
Ginger root	Sweet Sorghum for human consumption
Ginseng	Vanilla
Herbs	Vegetable seed
Honey	
Hops	

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: _____

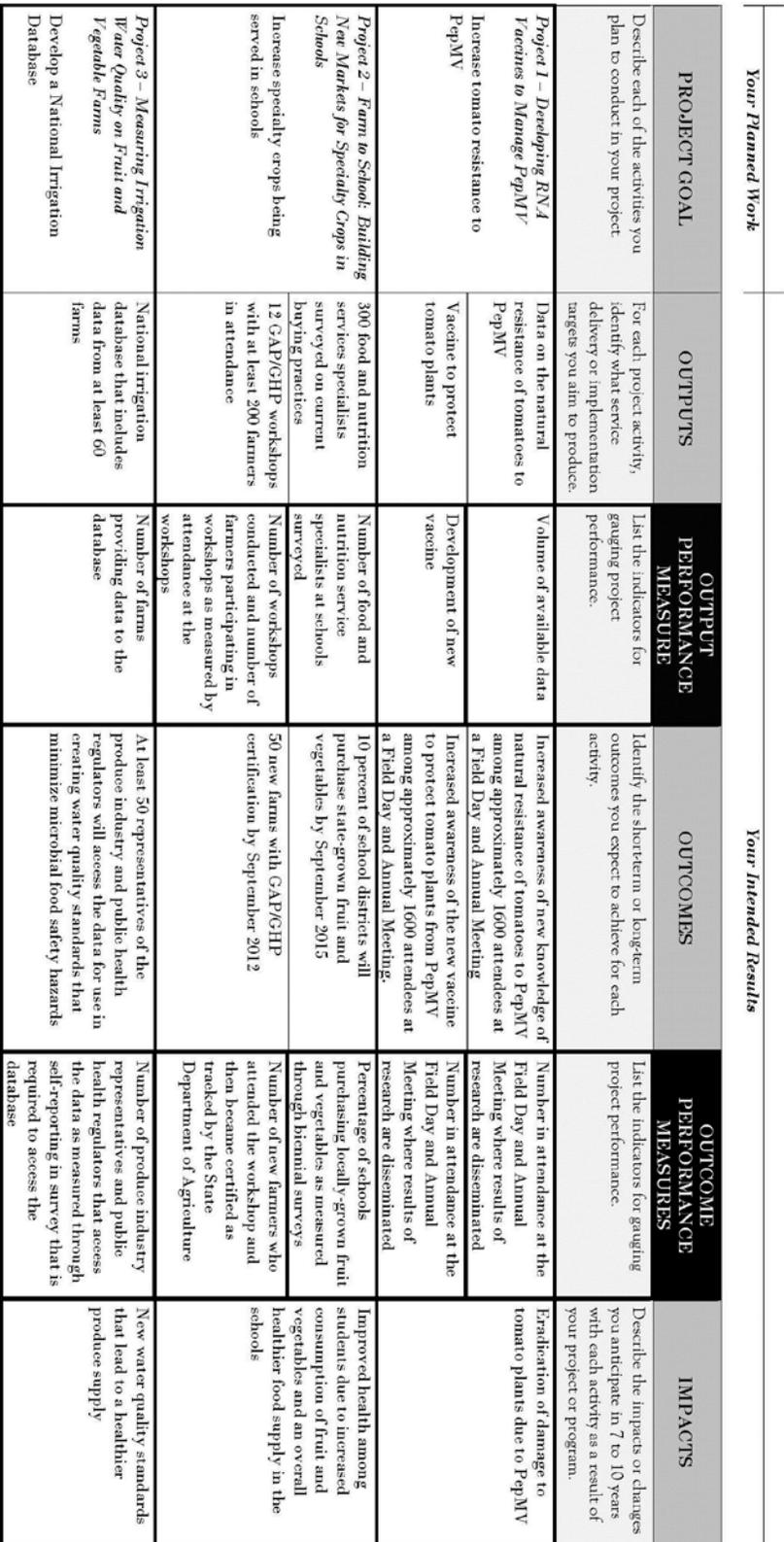
Signed: _____ Date: _____

Print: _____ Title: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

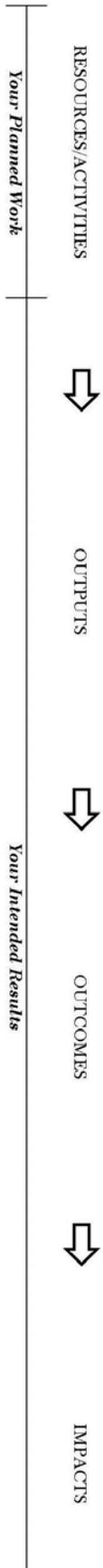
Print: _____ Title: _____

Sample Specialty Crop Block Grant Program Logic Model



RESOURCES/ACTIVITIES	⇒	OUTPUTS	⇒	OUTCOMES	⇒	IMPACTS
<i>Your Planned Work</i>						
PROJECT GOAL	OUTPUTS	OUTPUT PERFORMANCE MEASURE	OUTCOMES	OUTCOME PERFORMANCE MEASURES	IMPACTS	
Describe each of the activities you plan to conduct in your project.	For each project activity, identify what service delivery or implementation targets you aim to produce.	List the indicators for gauging project performance.	Identify the short-term or long-term outcomes you expect to achieve for each activity.	List the indicators for gauging project performance.	Describe the impacts or changes you anticipate in 7 to 10 years with each activity as a result of your project or program.	
<i>Project 4 – Enhancing Sustainable Specialty Crop Production</i> Increase in knowledge of specialty crop issues and ability of specialty crop farmers to improve or enhance their farm-related enterprises	8-week workshop series with at least 50 individuals in attendance at each session 3 independent workshops with at least 30 individuals in attendance at each	Number of workshops and number of people in attendance at each session as measured through weekly attendance records and registration records Number of workshops and number of people in attendance at each as measured through weekly attendance records and registration records	Mean increase in specific knowledge area of 40 percent At least 50 percent of participants will plan to use knowledge gained to improve or enhance their farm-related enterprise	Percentage of increase in knowledge as measured through pre- and post- tests of information covered in the workshops Percentage of participants that will plan to use knowledge gained as measured through a post-workshop evaluation that asks if they plan to use what they learned	Specialty crop producers will have a better understanding of what factors allow them to most effectively and efficiently produce specialty crops and therefore production and profitability will increase	
<i>Project 5 – Establish a Super Berry Market in the State</i> Increase the number of growers and producers of Super Berries and raise awareness of Super Berry potential and related health benefits	New relationships with area farmers, alternative crop producers and institutions New website	Number of new relationships with area farmers, alternative crop producers and institutions interested in research and development Existence of a new website	3 or 4 new Super Berry producers At least 150 hits on the website each month	Number of new Super Berry producers Number of hits on the website as measured through a website tracking tool	A thriving Super Berry industry which is one of the top in the nation	

Your Intended Results



PROJECT GOAL	OUTPUTS	OUTPUT PERFORMANCE MEASURE	OUTCOMES	OUTCOME PERFORMANCE MEASURES	IMPACTS
Describe each of the activities you plan to conduct in your project.	For each project activity, identify what service delivery or implementation targets you aim to produce.	List the indicators for gauging project performance.	Identify the short-term or long-term outcomes you expect to achieve for each activity.	List the indicators for gauging project performance.	Describe the impacts or changes you anticipate in 7 to 10 years with each activity as a result of your project or program.
Project 6 – Specialty Crop Solutions for Health-Distressed Communities Increase sales of and accessibility to specialty crops in health-distressed communities	Promotional materials (20 full-color promotional banner, 8 Spanish-language ads, newsletter, etc.) to support the Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign	Number of promotional materials developed, utilized, and disseminated	300 percent increase (to \$1,200 sales volume annually) in nascent retail sales of local farmer-direct crops	Amount of increase in sales as measured by the Specialty Crop Association and self-identified by specialty crop growers	A thriving specialty crop industry consisting of both large and small producers who are providing specialty crops to under-served communities throughout the state
			5 new specialty crop farm stands		
Project 7 – Training Series to Increase Local Fruit and Vegetable Production at the Local Market Strengthen and grow the specialty crop industry	Educational workshops	Number of workshops and number of participants as measured through registration and attendance	A 75 percent increase in both knowledge and awareness of specialty crop production practices and marketing options	Percentage of increase in knowledge and awareness as measured by pre- and post-assessments of participants' knowledge and awareness	More farmers will have transitioned to production of specialty crops due to their greater understanding of the process and profitability potential
	Field visits to commercial vegetable/fruit farms	Number of field visits and number of participants as measured through registration and attendance			
	Field trips to the State University Research and Extension Center	Number of field trips and number of participants as measured through registration and attendance			

Performance Measurement Definitions

Performance Indicator

- A specific numerical measurement for each aspect of performance (e.g., outcome or output) under consideration.

Inputs

- Resources (i.e., expenditures or employee time) used to produce outputs and outcomes.

Process

- The workload or activities performed. The amount of work that comes into a program is the process.

Outputs

- Products and services delivered. Output refers to the completed products of internal activity: the amount of work done by the organization or by its contractors (such as number of miles of road repaired or number of calls answered).

Outcomes

- Events, occurrences, or conditions that are outside the activity or program itself and that are of direct importance to customers and the public generally. An outcome indicator is a measure of the amount and/or frequency of such occurrences. Service quality is also included under this category. While outputs are what work the organization does, outcomes are what these outputs accomplish.

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.

ATTACHMENT V

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 15, 2014. 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:
Susan Head, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce
P.O. Box 1609
Jackson, MS 39215
Email: susan@mdac.ms.gov
Phone: (601) 359-1196