



South Carolina
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

2026 SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT PROGRAM SCBGP APPLICATION RUBRIC

CRITERIA #1: PROJECT PARTNER AND SUMMARY (15 POINTS)

- The extent to which the applicant clearly summarized the project’s key partner(s), goals, and work to be completed.
- The extent to which the project will provide a direct benefit to South Carolina’s specialty crop industry.

Excellent	No deficiencies. Strong, convincing justification for the project, with an extremely innovative and creative statement. Project is likely to succeed and will have a broad impact to the South Carolina specialty crop industry as a whole.	13 – 15
Very Good	Slight deficiencies. Convincing justification for the project, with a rational and innovative statement. Project will most likely succeed and have a broad impact to the South Carolina specialty crop industry as a whole.	9 – 12
Good	Minor deficiencies. Sound justification for the project, with a good statement. The project has the potential to succeed and likely will have an impact on the South Carolina specialty crop industry as a whole.	5 – 8
Fair	Several deficiencies; are not likely a feasible project. The justification needs extensive development, the statement is poor, and the ideas are not well-developed overall.	1 – 4
Poor	Major deficiencies in one or more aspects of the project. Applicant either fails to make a case for the project, or the project does not fit the intent of the grant program. Required section(s) are missing.	0

CRITERIA #2: PROJECT PURPOSE AND PLAN (25 POINTS)

- The extent to which the applicant describes the *specific and existing* issue or need the project will address.
- The extent to which the applicant addresses the *relevance* to South Carolina’s specialty crop industry.
- The extent to which the application presents a *clear, viable, and well-conceived* overall methodology for fulfilling the goals and objectives of the proposed project.

Excellent	No deficiencies. Clear, innovative, focused, feasible plan with proper resources. The project will benefit multiple South Carolina specialty crop stakeholders, organizations, businesses, and/or individuals. Can be completed within the proposed timeframe.	21 – 25
Very Good	Slight deficiencies. The project is feasible, personnel and partnerships are appropriate, and the timeframe is doable. They will benefit more than one organization. Can be completed within the proposed timeframe.	16 – 20
Good	Minor deficiencies. Would benefit from more detail, specificity, and/or a stronger focus. The project will likely benefit more than one organization and can likely be completed within the proposed timeframe.	11 – 15
Fair	Several deficiencies. Unclear as to relevant aspects of the work plan, personnel, data-sharing, and overall approach. Project may benefit more than one organization and may be completed within the proposed timeframe.	6 – 10
Poor	Major deficiencies. Vague, confusing plan. Difficult timeframe to understand with no plan to share data. Likely will only benefit one individual, and/or the project will probably not be completed within the proposed timeframe.	0 – 5

CRITERIA #3: EXTERNAL SUPPORT (20 POINTS)

- The extent to which the project is supported by external stakeholders and identify grower needs.
- Note: Letters of support are expected

Excellent	Multiple letters of support are attached. Supporters are from South Carolina, involved in the pertinent industry, actively engaged in the project, and indicate how they will support the project through to its completion. Application clearly reflects how external stakeholders will benefit.	16 – 20
Very Good	Multiple letters of support are attached. Supporters are from South Carolina, engaged in the project, and have an interest in the fulfillment of the project. Application reflects how external stakeholders will benefit.	12 – 15
Good	At least one letter of support from South Carolina is attached. Supporters mention how the project is important to them and the industry as a whole. Application reflects how external stakeholders will benefit.	8 – 11
Fair	One or no letter(s) of support which may or may not be from South Carolina. The application includes an explanation of external support.	4 – 7
Poor	No letters of support are included. The application does not directly mention external support but may allude to it within context.	0 – 3

CRITERIA #4: MEASURABLE OUTCOMES (15 POINTS)

- The selected outcomes and indicators are precise, attainable, and meet the purpose of the grant program and will significantly benefit stakeholders.
- The extent to which the applicant adhered to USDA AMS instructions for selecting outcomes and indicators.

Excellent	No deficiencies. The outcome and indicators are well-selected for the overall objectives of the project and align well with the activities outlined in the plan. Goals are reasonable and attainable within the time frame of the plan.	13 – 15
Very Good	Slight deficiencies. The outcome and indicators match the overall objectives of the project and align with the proposed activities. Goals are reasonable and attainable within the time frame of the plan.	9 – 12
Good	Minor deficiencies. The outcome and indicators are not in precise alignment with the goals and objectives or with the project activities.	5 – 8
Fair	Several deficiencies. The proposed project is unlikely to succeed, and the work has been done before. The relationship of outcomes and indicators of the project plan is unclear.	1 – 4
Poor	Major deficiencies. The proposed project cannot fulfill its goals and objectives, and the work is unoriginal. Required information is missing.	0

CRITERIA #5: BUDGET (15 POINTS)

- The extent to which the budget narrative and justification gives a *sufficient description* of each category.
- The extent to which the overall budget is sufficiently *detailed* and *consistent with the size/scope* of the project.

Excellent	No deficiencies; budget clearly correlates to project goals. The budget is appropriate to the scope of the project and has significant return on investment. All items are allowable and reasonable; this budget makes South Carolina specialty crops more competitive.	13 – 15
Very Good	Slight deficiencies; budget largely correlates to project goals. The budget is appropriate to the scope of the project and has decent return on investment. All major and most minor budget items are allowable and reasonable.	9 – 12
Good	Minor deficiencies; budget may not consistently correlate to project goals. Budget has fair return on investment. Most major and minor items are allowable and reasonable.	5 – 8
Fair	Several deficiencies; budget does not correlate well to the intent of the project. Overall budget may over or underestimate the cost of the project, with limited return on investment. Some items are not allowable and/or reasonable.	1 – 4
Poor	Major deficiencies and shortcomings. Many items are not allowable and/or reasonable. Little correlation between budget and project goals, and disparity between size of request and project goals. No obvious return on investment.	0

CRITERIA #6: OVERALL APPLICATION (10 POINTS)

- The extent to which the overall application presents a *clear, focused, and viable* plan to increase the competitiveness of South Carolina specialty crops.
- The extent to which *application instructions* were adhered to.

Excellent	A well-written, specific, and overall excellent application. Project is certain to provide a marked impact on the industry and state, and will have an impact beyond the time frame of the project.	9 – 10
Very Good	Not quite as revolutionary or broad-reaching, but still a very good project that will benefit the South Carolina specialty crop industry. Detailed and persuasive.	7 – 8
Good	Minor deficiencies in the application. Vague in certain parts, and not as beneficial to the state as a whole.	4 – 6
Fair	Lacking in detail. Vague and confusing overall, with little to no positive impact on the specialty crop industry as a whole. Does not inspire confidence in the success of this venture.	1 – 3
Poor	Major deficiencies. Plan is unlikely to succeed. Major parts have been left out, and those that are written are hard to follow or illogical. This project will not significantly affect the specialty crop industry of the state.	0