



**GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
(GDA)**

**USDA/AMS SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT
PROGRAM**

**2021 GDA GRANT MANAGEMENT
PROCEDURES MANUAL**

STAKEHOLDER INPUT: The Georgia Department of Agriculture seeks your comments about this Grant Management Manual. We will consider the comments when we develop the next Manual for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program. Submit written stakeholder comments via e-mail to: grantsdivision@agr.georgia.gov. In your comments, please state that you are responding to the fiscal year (FY) 2021 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program – Grant Management Manual.

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**2021 GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
(GDA)
USDA/AMS SPECIALTY CROP BLOCK GRANT
PROGRAM
Grant No. 21SCBPGA1021-00
GDA GRANT MANAGEMENT
PROCEDURES MANUAL
September 30, 2021 – September 29, 2024**

CONGRATULATIONS on being awarded a Specialty Crop Block Grant for your project! Please **read this manual carefully** to become aware of your responsibilities as a recipient (subgrantee) of federal funding. The manual identifies the roles and responsibilities of all parties, and describes the processes and procedures required by the terms and conditions that you agreed to as described in your executed Cooperative Agreement and Statement of Work documents. **The Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) has the authority to withhold or recapture grant funding from a subgrantee if they fail to comply with the required grant award terms and conditions** (7 CFR § 3016.21).

The USDA/AMS 2021 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program has been allocated from the Agricultural Act of 2018 (Farm Bill), to be divided among 50 states and territories. Georgia received funding for 2021, which was then divided among various research, education, and marketing projects that applied through a competitive application process.

GDA GRANT MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

GDA is responsible for administering the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) for Georgia. This responsibility includes ensuring subgrantees' compliance with federal and state statutes and regulations, grant terms and conditions, and project reporting requirements. GDA will review performance reports and conduct site visits. GDA will also submit required project status reports and financial reports to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

GDA will provide subgrantees with on-going consultation and assistance during the term of the grant project. GDA will be available to answer questions regarding project

administration, federal and state requirements and regulations, and grant agreement terms and conditions.

Subgrantees (also referred to as *sub-awardees* and/or *non-federal entities*) will follow all applicable requirements of this manual as well as the USDA's **2021 SCBG General Award Terms and Conditions**:

https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/FY2021_GD_TermsandConditions.pdf

SUBGRANTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Subgrantees are fully responsible for conducting the project and for its *results*. They must closely monitor the project to ensure adherence to all statutes, regulations, and grant terms and conditions. Subgrantees will need to carry out the activities described in the **Work Plan** section of their project application/proposal in order to achieve project goals, objectives, and desired outcomes.

Subgrantees are also responsible for timely and accurate *reporting* of project status and all project activities during the term of the grant. **Subgrantees are solely responsible for obtaining GDA's prior written approval for any project scope and/or budget changes.**

FEDERAL WORK AUTHORIZATION PROGRAM

Before any federal grant funding is awarded through GDA, the subgrantee must register and participate in the federal work authorization program, i.e., the E-Verify Program. Please see O.C.G.A. § 13-10-91. This registration involves the subgrantee signing a notarized affidavit (with attached identification document) attesting that the subgrantee has registered with, is authorized to use, and uses the federal work authorization program; and if applicable, the user identification number and date of authorization for the subgrantee. The affidavit is considered an open public record.

FEDERAL FUNDING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

Beginning with the FY 2011 SCBG, the state agency (GDA) will report every first-tier subaward that obligates \$25,000 or more, to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) Subaward Reporting System found at <https://www.fsrs.gov/>. The reporting is due by the end of the following month after signing a contract (i.e., if signing in October, then due by November 30).

The subaward information required for this reporting may include the total compensation and names of five top executives in certain situations. If necessary, GDA will contact you to obtain this information before November 30.

STATE OF GEORGIA ALTERNATE W-9 FORM

Pursuant to IRS Regulations, a subgrantee must furnish their Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) to the State whether or not he is required to file tax returns. If this number is not provided, the organization may be subject to a 28% withholding to ensure that accurate tax information is reported to the IRS. GDA will supply this form to each subgrantee on request.

GRANT AWARD PAYMENTS

Unless otherwise instructed, use the below form as the **coversheet** to request reimbursements. You must also include an **INVOICE** (with date and invoice number) on your organization's letterhead: include on it an itemized list of how the charges add up to the total amount you are requesting and specify which budget category each charge should be drawn from:

http://agr.georgia.gov/Data/Sites/1/media/ag_news/grants/scbgp_reimbursement_request.xlsx

A subgrantee's grant award *reimbursement* payments require prepaid invoice/expense documentation and shall be limited to the minimum amounts needed to meet current disbursement needs and shall be scheduled so the funds are available as closely as is administratively feasible to the actual disbursements by the subgrantee for program costs (usually 30-45 days).

Grant Reimbursement Requests must be *emailed* to GDA's Grants office **within one year of expenditure** and include detailed descriptions/invoices/source documents for the costs. The Reimbursement Request will be reviewed by GDA's Grants staff: this will include a comparison of the request to the original grant application to verify that the purchase is in line with the workplan/activities/budget outlined therein. *Note that costs will likely be disallowed if they were not included in the approved application or were not otherwise pre-approved by GDA.*

Once approved, the Reimbursement Request will be forwarded to GDA's Finance Division, which will make an electronic transfer to sub-grantee's financial entity for the amount of the costs (per 7 CFR Part 3016.20(6) and 2 CFR 200.403) within **45 days** of the invoice's approval by the Grants division. The Finance Division may ask for additional documentation. If so, the subgrantee will be contacted for this information.

Designate on the invoice the applicable categories for the request. These categories include:

Employee salaries and wages: salary, wages, and fringe benefits charged by employees working on the grant activity/project. (2 CFR 200 Subpart E, Subpart A)

- (1) Where an employee works *solely* on a grant, a **certification** signed by the employee or supervisor is on file semi-annually to attest to this.
- (2) Where employees work on more than one Federal award, a Federal award and a non-Federal award, an indirect cost activity and a direct cost activity, etc., a distribution of their salaries or wages will be supported by **personnel activity reports** which include after-the-fact reporting of actual distribution of activities, account for the total activity for which the employee is compensated, and include the employee's signature. These reports must be prepared at least monthly and coincide with one or more pay periods and be kept in the sub-grantees' records.

Operating Expenses: actual expenses incurred for the purpose of achieving the goals and objectives of the grant project. Such expenses include, but are not limited to, general expenditures and supplies, travel (2 CFR 200.474 and <https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy>), minor equipment (\$5,000 or less), printing, and postage. ***Dated receipts/invoices marked as paid must be provided as back-up documentation.*** Receipts for travel costs (airfare, hotel, rental car, parking, conference fees, etc.) must be submitted, except for meal costs, as long as meal costs are within per in-state diem rates. For travel within Georgia: see <https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy>. Out of state travel must follow GSA per diem rates: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>

Contractors/Consultants: can be used for services that cannot be provided by other full or part-time staff employed by the project. Generally, these services are for a short-term period and provide a specific and identifiable product or service. Individual contractor salary costs cannot exceed the rate of a **GS-15/Step 10** federal employee, which is \$68.36 per hour (as of 2021 for the Atlanta metro area, subject to change), unless there is acceptable evidence of a higher cost being necessary (prior approval from GDA is required). If the contract is between \$5,000 and \$25,000, you **MUST** obtain, in writing, work and cost information from at least three competing companies. Contracts over \$25,000 are subject to fair and open competition and **MUST** be publicly advertised and go out for public bid (contact GDA's Procurement Officer for assistance). Contractors are subject to the same travel-reimbursement rules identified in the above paragraph if travel is being paid for with grant funds.

Other Direct Costs: all other actual expenses that do not fall under the above categories, such as major equipment (see page 7), public relations, marketing, media, communications, and training.

All awarded grant funds must be expended by the expiration date of the grant agreement: September 29, 2024. No exceptions or extensions.

FEDERAL COST PRINCIPLES

For each type of recipient organization, there is a set of federal principles for determining allowable costs. As of 12/26/14, Federal Cost Principles are determined by the Uniform Guidance:

State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments	2 CFR 225
Private Nonprofit Organizations (this includes commissions)	2 CFR 230
Educational Institutions	2 CFR 220

An **allowable cost** must be *directly* related to a particular cost objective of a project, and be incurred solely to advance the work under the sponsored grant. Allowable costs include, but are not limited to: salaries and wages, fringe benefits, consultant services, travel, telephone, equipment, equipment lease/rental, subcontractors and materials, data processing, bookkeeping, clerical, public information, training and communications.

An **unallowable cost** is a charge that the federal awarding agency or state determines to be unallowable, in accordance with the applicable federal cost principles or other terms and conditions provided in the grant award.

Unallowable costs include, but are not limited to: hospitality suites, alcoholic beverages, costs of entertainment, catering, general costs of government, construction, lobbying, political activities, sponsorships, co-branding, general purpose office or garden supplies and equipment, excessive airfare, costs that are above the State of Georgia (in-state) or GSA (out-of-state) per diem rates, giveaways of food (including the specialty crop being promoted), promotional merchandise or “swag”, and awards or prizes. A cost will also be determined to be unallowable if it does not *directly*, “enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.”

For more specifics, see [Appendix A - Unallowable and Allowable Costs](#) and [Appendix B to part 230](#) (Selected Items of Cost)

RESTRICTIONS/LIMITATIONS ON FUNDS

There are restrictions and limitations on grant funds with regard to capital expenditures and travel costs:

General purpose equipment, buildings, and land are **unallowable** as direct costs. General purpose equipment means equipment, which is not limited to research, scientific or other technical activities. Examples include: office equipment and furnishings, telephone networks, information technology equipment and systems, reproduction and printing equipment, and motor vehicles.

Special purpose equipment is **allowable** as direct costs, **provided that items with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more have the prior written approval of GDA and USDA/AMS** (please see Capital Equipment below). Special purpose equipment means equipment which is used only for research, scientific, or other technical activities. For special purpose equipment purchased with the *prior written permission* of GDA/USDA/AMS, the subgrantee will maintain property records of the equipment, physically inventory the property at least once every two years, develop a control system to ensure adequate safeguards for loss, damage, or theft, and develop adequate maintenance procedures to keep property in good condition. When the equipment is no longer needed by the subgrantee and the per unit fair market value is less than \$5,000, the subgrantee may retain, sell, or dispose of the equipment with no further obligation to USDA/AMS. If, however, the per unit fair market value is \$5,000 or more, then GDA *must* request disposition instructions from USDA/AMS. See 7 CFR Part 3015 Subpart R-Property and 7 CFR Part 3016.32.

Capital Equipment means an article of nonexpendable, tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more. For equipment purchased with the prior written permission of USDA/AMS, the subgrantee will maintain property records of the equipment, physically inventory the property at least once every two years, develop a control system to ensure adequate safeguards for loss, damage, or theft, and develop adequate maintenance procedures to keep property in good condition. When the equipment is no longer needed by the subgrantee and the per unit fair market value is less than \$5,000, the subgrantee may retain, sell, or dispose of the equipment with no further obligation to USDA/AMS. If, however, the per unit fair market value is \$5,000 or more, then GDA must request disposition instructions from USDA/AMS. See 7 CFR Part 3015 Subpart R-Property and 7 CFR Part 3016.32.

Travel costs are the expenses for transportation, lodging, subsistence, and related items incurred by employees who are in travel status on official business as part of the organization and in direct support of the grant objectives. When determining these costs, the subgrantee must use the per diem limits as published: for meals, hotels, and mileage within Georgia, see <https://sao.georgia.gov/state-travel-policy>. For out-of-state meals and lodging, use current [GSA rates](#). Dated *receipts* must be provided to GDA for

hotels, rental cars, airfare, and for other expenses in order for these expenses to be reimbursed. Do not submit receipts for food unless requested by GDA.

Foreign Travel (to or from the U.S.) is not permitted by GDA using funds from this grant. Exceptions may be made for travel to Canada and Mexico.

*****Within 18 months of the start of the grant (by March 2023), at least 50% of available grant funds should have been requested for reimbursement. Funds not drawn down in full by 30 months (March 2024) are subject to immediate recapture by GDA and redistribution to other projects*****

PERFORMANCE REPORT REQUIREMENTS

Annual Performance Reports: As the SCBGs are three-year grants, two annual performance reports are required from the subgrantee. These reports are inclusive; they should include **all** progress made using 2021 grant funds up to September 30th of that year.

**Due Dates: Annual Report #1 – November 1, 2022
Annual Report #2 – November 1, 2023**

These date are subject to change. Each subgrantee will receive an email reminder notice of each performance report due date several weeks before it is due along with instructions for completion and a template.

Final Performance Report: The final performance report is a compilation of the entire project and its outcome. A template will be sent with the reminder of the report's due date. Plan to provide QUANTITATIVE proof of actual performance/results as outlined in the PERFOMANCE MEASURES section of your original grant application.

Please re-read the accepted version of your project's proposal/application while writing your final performance report. Determine if you achieved your goals and outcomes as stated in your proposal/application and if the beneficiaries were affected by the project's accomplishments and/or the potential economic impact of the project.

This final report may be posted on the USDA/AMS-SCBGP website and as such, represents an important vehicle for sharing project findings with federal and state agencies, as well as the public. Explanations of each category can be found at www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp

Due Date: November 1, 2024

NOTE: If your project work is completed BEFORE the three-year period ends, you may complete a Final Performance Report in place of the Annual Performance Report.

PROJECT SCOPE/OBJECTIVE/KEY PERSON CHANGES

Changes in a project's **scope and/or objectives** may be requested *in advance of spending* when an element of the grant agreement needs to be changed (e.g., scope-of-work activities, dates, and deliverables) from those previously approved. These requests must be made *in writing* to GDA's grant administrator, and provide sufficient information to explain the need for the change. All budget changes must also be approved in writing.

After GDA receives the request for the project scope change, GDA will submit a written request to USDA/AMS-SCBGP for approval. If you are unsure if you can make a certain change, please email or call the grant administrator.

Any change regarding a key person working on the project, such as the PD or PI, requires an email with that information and must be submitted to GDA for approval.

BUDGET MODIFICATION REQUEST

Requests to move funds from one budget category to another in order to cover eligible expenses must be requested by email to GDA *in advance of spending*. In the email request, please provide a *detailed* explanation of how the spending falls in line with the goals/activities/outcomes of the grant.

PROJECT/PROGRAM INCOME

If income is earned from the work of the project, it must be used for:

- (1) Expanding the project or program;
- (2) Continuing the project or program after the grant support ends; and/or
- (3) Supporting other projects or programs that, "further enhance the competitiveness of eligible specialty crops."

It must be stated within the Final Performance Report where the income was used.

SITE VISITS AND PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

GDA may conduct site visits and/or performance report reviews during the course of the grant agreement. GDA shall have the right of access to any of the subgrantee's grant agreement or subcontract documentation and/or records which are pertinent to the project. Information to be reviewed include whether measurable outcomes are being

met; review of financial records and documentation to ensure funds are being used for their intended purpose; attending project activities; and making recommendations.

RECORD RETENTION REQUIREMENTS

Subgrantees must retain 2021 SCBG financial records, statistical records, and all supporting documents pertinent to these grant funds **until at least 12/31/2027**. Records that must be retained include, but are not limited to:

- time cards/records that reflect the actual hours being worked by each employee on the grant project;
- actual expenditure invoices obtained for direct costs associated with the grant project;
- any employee reimbursement claims that reflect lodging, per diem, and transportation receipts;
- supporting documentation for the calculation of indirect cost percentage; and
- all other supporting documentation related to the grant project.

END OF GRANT/PROJECT

Upon receipt and approval of the subgrantee's Final Performance Report, the project will be considered completed/closed. GDA will notify the subgrantee if the Final Performance Report has not been received or approved; if funds are still to be disbursed, GDA may withhold payment until the report is received and approved.

After the end of the grant/project, the subgrantee is still responsible for grant requirements, such as record retention and/or financial accountability.

Unspent grant funds and/or earned interest income must be returned to GDA upon completion or termination of the grant period.

All awarded 2021 SCBG funds must be expended by the expiration date of the grant agreement: September 29, 2024. NO EXTENSIONS OR EXCEPTIONS.

HELPFUL WEBSITES

http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr200_main_02.tpl

<http://agr.georgia.gov/grants.aspx>
www.ams.usda.gov/scbgp

-SCBGP Guidance Document
-SCBGP Sample Performance Reports
<https://e-verify.uscis.gov/enroll>
www.fsrs.gov – Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act

GDA CONTACT INFORMATION

SCBG Coordinator
Georgia Department of Agriculture
GrantsDivision@agr.georgia.gov
Grants Office; Room 216
19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr. SW
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR SUBGRANTEES:

Below are some things you MUST be aware of regarding this grant, as they are the most common areas of concern. Not knowing them will cost you in the form of unreimbursed expenses and/or, at worst, a cancelled project:

1. When GDA reviews your reimbursement requests, we pull your grant application (and any subsequent amendment requests) and look at your budget. If the expense is *not* listed in the budget on the application, we will most likely disallow it. To avoid this scenario, *ask* if the item (that's not in your application or amended budget) can be purchased *before* you spend the money. Note that ALL expenses must *directly* relate to the scope and activities of your project. Per USDA, expenses must be reasonable, allocable, and [allowable](#). Note that GDA prefers communication by email so we have a written record of what's been discussed and what's been approved (with 60+ projects, along with the other grants we administer for GDA, it's hard to remember phone conversations).
2. Back-up documentation/receipts must be included with invoices for reimbursements for Travel (hotel, airfare, rental cars, conference registration, etc.). Receipts are not required for meals, as these claims are limited to the current per diem rates for [in state](#) and [out of state](#) meals. If the hotel or conference provides a meal (like continental breakfast or lunch), you must subtract that amount from the daily per diem that you claim. All lodging must use the [GSA rates](#) (exceptions can be made for conference rates, but should be approved in advance). Mileage claims must include a spreadsheet showing the start/end point, the number of miles traveled, and the person traveling.
3. Receipts are also required for all direct Operating Expenses (the Equipment, Other & Supply budget categories). If you purchase something with grant funds and also use it outside of *this* grant, you may only charge to this grant the percentage it's used for this project (allocable cost). As noted in your application, you cannot use these grant funds to purchase office supplies (pens, paper, printer ink, etc.), general field supplies (shovels, pruners, wheelbarrows, carts, buckets,

etc.), or for fuel or vehicle maintenance of any kind (unless these items were pre-approved in your grant application). Again, stick to your application budget, but *ask first* if you need to deviate from it in order to conduct your project. Note that equipment purchases (single items costing \$5K+) must be dispositioned at grant's end: GDA and/or USDA reserve the right to take possession of the equipment for another project.

4. If you submit 3 or more receipts (for travel or operating expenses) at once, also send a spreadsheet that lists how the expenses add up to the total on the invoice, broken-out by budget category. This is especially helpful for travel expenses when claiming mileage and per diem meals (break-out per person and provide dates of travel, as well as the name(s) of the person(s) who traveled, and where they traveled from/to if claiming mileage).
5. A lot can change in 3 years: if you leave the organization or someone else takes over the grant (or other personnel changes occur that affect the project), or if something comes up and work on the project must change significantly, inform us ASAP. If you need to change your project's scope/activities/outcome/budget/etc., know that we can do an amendment! No project is set in stone and we have options, but they dwindle the closer we get to 9/29/24. Not completing your project as planned or leaving funds unspent *will* affect your ability to obtain future SCBG funding.
6. Turn in your annual and final reports *on time*. We will send an email ~30 days before they are due along with a template and instructions. Do not wait to get started on them. Do not skim on detail. Do not let *your* report be the one that delays the entire state's report to USDA (as this information will be relayed to the Review Committee if/when you submit your next SCBG project application). Remember that reports are *inclusive of all activities* that have occurred since the start of the grant period (9/30/2021). Also know that your application and reports may be published on USDA's [website](#) for review by the public. And anything you submit to GDA, including email, is subject to our state's [open records laws](#).
7. Do NOT wait until the end of the 3-year grant period to send in reimbursement requests: plan to submit them at least quarterly (but no more than monthly). Receipts/purchases more than 1 year old may be disallowed. Spend and request reimbursements from GDA in a timely fashion and in accordance with your application's budget and plan. If at least 50% of your grant funds are *not* drawn-down within 18 months (3/1/23) of the grant's start-date (9/30/21), you will need to provide a detailed explanation for the delay *and* a revised workplan. Grant funds not drawn-down in a timely manner are subject to recapture/reallocation and unspent funds (at the end of the grant period) *will* affect your organization's ability to receive SCBG grants in the future. Note that there are *no* time extensions for this grant beyond 9/29/24. No exceptions.
8. While they are not required for reimbursements, you must keep accurate [timesheets](#) for any persons paid, even only partially, with grant funds. The times logged must be for *actual* time spent working on your 2021 SCBG project: estimates are not acceptable. The employee and supervisor must certify the hours worked. You are required to provide these timesheets during

site visits by GDA staff or to send them to GDA on request. Ditto for fringe benefits charged to the grant (keep detailed records). Project records must be kept until 12/31/2027, but may be destroyed thereafter unless you are otherwise instructed to keep them.

9. A copy of the *fully executed contract* is required for Contractual work reimbursements. Check all contractors [here](#) using the “Quick Search” option before you use them (do not use them if they are debarred). If you think there *may* be a conflict of interest (example: A board member’s spouse’s cousin owns the firm you want to use to design your website): ASK GDA *before* you spend the money. This is a situation where it’s MUCH better to ask permission than beg forgiveness. Know that if a contract will exceed \$4,999, you *must* get 3 competing quotes for the service and be able to justify the one you chose. Contracts over \$24,999 must go out for public bid (meaning *publicly advertised* so the general public is given the opportunity to *compete* for the contract). State and Federal procurement rules, which this grant is subject to, are quite complex; we are glad to work with you on this. Missteps here will involve GDA’s Legal Department and will have your organization paying back grant money.
10. Once you email to GDA an invoice and documentation, know that we have it and will *not* send you a verification/acknowledgement of this. If we have questions or need more info, we’ll email you. If you don’t have the reimbursement funds in your account within 45 days of sending the invoice, please let us know so we can research it.
11. Lastly, GDA Grants personnel makes a point to meet/see all the PI’s at the SERFVC in Savannah each January, so look for one of us to come say hello. We are also available for meetings that week or anytime at your location or virtually, whichever works best for you. If you are having an event (paid for with grant funds) or field day/educational session (showcasing your project), please let us know and we’ll try to attend. We love to see SCBG projects in action!

All of the above (and more!) is covered in the 2021 SCBG Procedures Manual, but we just wanted to highlight the most common areas where grantees typically have issues. Please do not ever hesitate to contact GDA with questions. **Thank you** and we look forward to working with you toward the successful completion of your project!