



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**Over \$500,000 in funding available to New Mexicans through
USDA’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program**

NMDA to hold workshops in December in advance of Feb. 14 proposal deadline

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LAS CRUCES, N.M. – Over \$500,000 in funding is available to New Mexico producers through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and the New Mexico Department of Agriculture (NMDA). NMDA will hold virtual workshops in December in preparation for the grant proposal deadline on Feb. 14, 2024.

Outreach workshops for potential applicants to learn more and to gain a better understanding of the program will be held as follows:

Tuesday, Dec. 5 at Noon

Register in advance for this meeting at:

<https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcqdemtpzggEtQsHp9Qo3thytSm2mcoouEb>

Thursday, Dec. 7 at 3:30 p.m.

Register in advance for this meeting at:

<https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZolc-qrrDIqHNJHFQdffgG7gELMCXffoYw8>

Friday, Dec. 8 at 7:30 a.m.

Register in advance for this meeting at:

<https://nmsu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZMkcO6qqTssHNxKj4TwTdf5pEIg2rDuQofb>

After registering, individuals will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

New Mexico Secretary of Agriculture Jeff Witte said his team at NMDA is here to help producers through the application process.

“I encourage anyone who is eligible to apply for this grant to take advantage of the free workshops we are offering, so our team may guide you along the way,” said Witte. “We don’t want anyone in the New Mexico agriculture community to miss out on this funding opportunity.”

If someone is unable to attend any of the workshops, he or she may schedule a one-on-one meeting by emailing specialtycrops@nmda.nmsu.edu by Friday, Dec. 8. Emails must include the preferred date and time.

The USDA established the grant program to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops, which are defined by the USDA as “fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops.” Through enhanced competitiveness of specialty crops, the goal is to improve food access in underserved communities and improve development of local and rural food systems.

The program is part of the Farm Bill, and the USDA allocates funding to state departments of agriculture. Interested individuals and non-federal entities (producer groups, non-profits, trade associations and colleges/universities) are eligible to apply. Grant funds cannot be awarded to projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single organization, institution or an individual.

All project proposals must prioritize either marketing, training, certification, food safety, pest control or plant health for the benefit of specialty crops and must be submitted to NMDA by Wednesday, Feb. 14. A panel of experts and NMDA staff will review all submissions.

Before applying, applicants should consider their eligibility for federal funds, types of expenses needed, infrastructure, timeframe, potential beneficiaries, possible partners, reimbursement of expenditures and other factors. Considering all of these factors beforehand can help determine the potential need for federal aid.

Questions about the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program or the workshops should be directed to specialtycrops@nmda.nmsu.edu. To submit a Specialty Crop Block Grant Program application through NMDA’s grant management platform, please visit NMDA’s [webpage](#) and scroll down to “Additional Information.”

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Cutline: The New Mexico Department of Agriculture is holding three virtual workshops in December in preparation for the Feb. 14 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program proposal deadline. Carrots are considered a specialty crop by the United States Department of Agriculture. (Envato Elements stock photo)



Cutline: The New Mexico Department of Agriculture is holding three virtual workshops in December in preparation for the Feb. 14 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program proposal deadline. Lavender considered a specialty crop by the United States Department of Agriculture. (Envato Elements stock photo)