Grants Program: The Center for Produce Safety

2024 Request for Proposal Guidance: Pre-Proposal

The Center for Produce Safety (CPS) is a 501(c)(3), U.S. tax-exempt, charitable organization focused exclusively on providing the produce industry and government with open access to the actionable information needed to continually enhance the safety of produce.

Public Partners: Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) located at: California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA–SCBGP), Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS–SCBGP), Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA–SCBGP), and Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA – SCBGP). Additional funding sources may be announced during the review process.

RFP Deadline: Pre-proposal and signed Guidance Receipt Acknowledgement must be emailed to Bonnie Fernandez-Fenaroli at proposals@centerforproducesafety.org. Email must be received by CPS no later than 12:00 noon (Pacific Standard Time) on Wednesday, November 8, 2023 – no exceptions will be made to this deadline; paper copies will not be accepted. Items must be sent in one email as two separate attachments.

It is strongly suggested that researchers review CPS previously funded research projects at www.centerforproducesafety.org before submitting a pre-proposal.

Full proposals will be by invitation only. Invitations and instructions to submit a full proposal will be sent to invited scientists on the week of December 18, 2023. Full proposals must be submitted by 12:00 noon (Pacific) on Thursday, February 1, 2024.

Project Period: One-year and two-year proposals will be accepted. Proposals of less than one-year term are also accepted. Projects will begin January 1, 2025.

Total Funds Available: Up to $3,000,000.

OBJECTIVE

Research activities sponsored by The Center for Produce Safety (CPS) and partner entities are to be directed to answering critical research questions that fill the gaps in our basic understanding in specific areas of food safety practices for fruit, vegetable, and tree nut production, harvest and post-harvest handling. The objective is to provide the produce industry with practical, translatable research data that can be used at levels throughout the supply chain.

GENERAL RESEARCH GUIDANCE

Consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables is a key element in the health and nutrition of people worldwide. The variety of products and year-round availability has opened up many exciting new ways for consumers to enjoy fruits, nuts, and vegetables as never before. But along with this trend, the produce industry has faced numerous incidents over the last decade in which outbreaks of foodborne illness have been traced to the consumption of fruits, nuts, and vegetables. The produce industry has attempted to meet these food safety challenges with the development of commodity-specific food safety programs centered on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) at the raw or commodity finished product level, and fully integrated processing food safety approaches anchored by HACCP-based programs for packaged products. As food safety guidance documents and standards for an array of commodities have evolved to become more measurable, industry scientists have struggled with a deficit of specific scientific knowledge on which to base metrics.

RESEARCH PRIORITIES
Please refer to the 2024 CPS Research Priorities on the CPS website.

PROJECT FUNDING
After the review of all proposals, awards will be assigned by CPS to one or more funding sources.

GRANT LIMITS
Research awards may not exceed $200,000 in total costs per year. Please read each priority closely for individual funding limits. The research project term may not exceed two years. (Proof-of-concept awards may not exceed $50,000 in total costs, and the term may not exceed one year.)

RESEARCH PROJECT TERM
January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025 for one-year research projects & proof-of-concept projects.
January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2026 for two-year research projects.
Note: Project term may be less than 12 months for proof-of-concept and regular research projects.

ELIGIBILITY
Projects should benefit the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, individual, or commercial product. Funds will not be awarded for projects that directly benefit or provide a profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.

The following CPS guidelines pertain to all project funds (including Specialty Crop Block Grant Program [SCBGP] funds) that may be distributed through this program:

- To be eligible for a grant, the project must solely enhance the competitiveness of U.S. or U.S. territory grown specialty crops in either domestic or foreign markets. Specialty crops are fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture). Lists of eligible specialty crops and ineligible commodities are provided on the USDA website at https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/USDASpecialtyCropDefinition.pdf.

- A recipient of funding from the 2024 Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) must comply with the guidance for federal awards published in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) for grant funds awarded to state, local, and tribal governments; public and private colleges and universities; and non-profit organizations. All recipients are subject to the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards contained in 2 CFR part 200 and 2 CFR part 400. Recipients are responsible for ensuring that they and their contractors and/or consultants comply with federal regulations.

- Recipients must comply with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) of 2006, which will require obtaining a DUNS Number and maintaining a current registration with the System for Award Management at https://sam.gov/content/entity-information.

- Recipients must be able to comply with the Federal regulations requiring activity reports to support salary and wage and fringe benefit expenditures charged to SCBGP grants. Each report must account for the total activity for which each employee is compensated, as well as the hours worked on a particular SCBGP grant project.

- Recipients must be able to provide a copy of their representing institution's audited financial statements on an annual basis to ensure they have received a single audit in accordance with the Uniform Guidance or verify that a single audit was not required to receive for that year.

- Principal Investigator degree requirement – A person listed as the Principal Investigator on a pre-proposal must have a doctorate degree (Ph.D., D.Sc., or equivalent).

- Number of proposals that may be submitted – A person may be listed as a Principal Investigator on no more than two pre-proposals. A person may not be listed on more than three 2024 proposals as a PI or Co-PI.

CPS awards are consistent and compliant with the USDA Guidance and Federal Cost Principles and SCBGP Cost Principles. It is the responsibility of the applicant to be consistent with these principles. Additional guidance documents are available at the CPS website.

PROOF-OF-CONCEPT PROJECT – Please contact CPS at proposals@centerforproducesafety.org with questions about proof-of-concept awards.

A pre-proposal must be submitted for a proof-of-concept project. CPS encourages proposals in which the primary outcome of the objective is one of the outcomes listed below:
1. To generate preliminary data to demonstrate proof of concept for novel or high-risk–high-reward produce safety solutions
   - Success criteria are heavily weighted to CPS anticipation of providing future funding, if outcomes are successful, and to attract leverage funding for the PI

2. To generate foundational data and practical proof of efficacy for highly focused preventive control or corrective action protocols
   - Success criteria are dependent on a convincing expectation that outcomes are rapidly transferrable to practice or policy and not necessarily dependent on further CPS funding

3. To generate preliminary data for a novel fundamental research concept that fits a long-term CPS priority
   - Success criteria are heavily weighted to CPS expectation that data outcomes will significantly increase the competitiveness for leveraged basic research funding to the PI

These proof-of-concept (POC) proposals should address a question in the 2024 CPS Research Priorities. POC projects are typically short-term studies with budgets of $15,000 to $30,000, and may not exceed $50,000 in total costs or one year in length. For POC proposals that immediately or preferentially benefit a single commodity, industry sector, technology provider, or service provider, it is typically expected that the beneficiary will commit at least 25% matching dollar funds and 25% valuation of in-kind support in the form of analytical equipment, consumable supplies, or facility operational expenditures (farm, equipment, pilot or commercial system). Provisions for protection of sponsor CBI (Confidential Business Information) are possible and expected, but results of POC research are subject to the same requirements for transparency and public disclosure accessibility as standard CPS awards.

PRE-PROPOSAL REVIEW
Pre-proposals will be reviewed by members from the CPS Technical Committee and ad hoc reviewers. Scientists invited to submit a full proposal will be informed the week of December 18, 2023. Pre-proposal instructions are available below (page 4) and on the CPS website www.centerforproducesafety.org.

OFFICE HOURS
Office Hours will be provided for scientists to answer their questions about industry practices and the proposal process during the week of January 8-12.

INDUSTRY FACILITY SITE VISITS
Research scientists preparing a proposal have an opportunity to tour a produce facility before they submit a proposal. Facilities are available throughout the United States. Details about visits are located on the CPS Grant Opportunities webpage.

2024 Pre-Proposal Instructions

Use the outline below to prepare your pre-proposal (outline is provided on 2024 Pre-Proposal Form). You must use each of the 12 section headings to provide the information requested. You are allowed a maximum of three single-spaced pages to describe your proposed project. Use a sans serif font (Arial or Calibri preferred), no smaller than 11 point. No figures, graphical images, or tables can be used. Pre-proposals must be received via email to the Center for Produce Safety proposal email address proposals@centerforproducesafety.org by **12:00 noon (Pacific)** on **Wednesday, November 8, 2023** (no exceptions). Each pre-proposal must be submitted by email as a MS Word file; paper copies will not be accepted. A signed copy of the CPS 2024 Guidance Receipt Acknowledgement must accompany the pre-proposal as a separate pdf file. Any letter(s) of industry support may be provided with the pre-proposal as a separate attachment. Also, you may send a short list of suggested reviewers for consideration and/or you may include a short list of persons to whom the proposal should not be sent for review—list the names, titles, affiliations, addresses, email addresses, and phone numbers; include a brief justification for any restricted reviewers. **All required documents should be submitted as separate attachments within one email.** Do not send multiple emails.

Research awards may not exceed $200,000 in total costs per year. Research project term may not exceed two years. Proof-of-concept projects are typically short-term studies with budgets of $15,000 to $30,000 and may not exceed $50,000 in total costs or one year in length.

1. CPS RESEARCH PRIORITY (Refer to 2024 CPS Research Priorities and state priority number(s), section title and sub-section number and title)

2. PROPOSED PROJECT TITLE- **130-character limit with spaces** (note: Be clear and concise. If proposal is a resubmission, it must be noted at the end of the title: e.g., Lactic acid bacteria prevent growth of Listeria during cucumber distribution RESUBMISSION)

3. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, institution, email address

4. CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR(S), institution(s), email address(es)

5. RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES (note: Justify specific approach or technology validation.)

6. PRIOR EXPERIENCE RELEVANT TO PROJECT OBJECTIVES

7. PROPOSED METHODS

8. MEASURES OF SUCCESS

9. REVIEW OF CRITICAL LITERATURE AND EXISTING TECHNOLOGY THAT ESTABLISHES THE PROJECT RATIONALE (note: Explain how your proposal is different, or adds to the body of knowledge of published research.)

10. ESTIMATED TIMELINE

11. PROPOSED BUDGET – Year 1 $_____ Year 2 $_____

    Is this a proof-of-concept project? _____

12. BACKGROUND REFERENCES (note: Provide complete references for research cited in #9 – include author(s), paper title, journal name, volume and page numbers in citation.)

2024 CPS Research Priorities are posted on the Center for Produce Safety website, www.centerforproducesafety.org