



Got Grant Money?

Washington state farmers' markets and other organizations among those to receive federal grants to promote themselves and improve farm practices.

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Money for states interested in developing more efficient farming practices, including farmers market organizations, is available through the USDA's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

This year, 12 Washington agricultural organizations are on the receiving end of nearly \$260,000 to do just that. Forty-seven states applied for 2008 block grant funds.

The 12 Washington organizations successfully applied for the funding through the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA).

The state then selected candidates for a single application it submitted to the USDA.

Your First Step

If you believe your group or organization has a program worth supporting, get in touch with your state's Specialty Crop Block Grant Program contact person. They'll let you know if you're eligible and how to complete the process.

What's In the Application?

For specifics, you'll want to talk to your state's contact person; but generally, the block grant program is designed to help state organizations make improvements in the way they grow and market fruit, vegetable and horticulture products.

It's looking for programs that help your state stay competitive, expand markets, save and create jobs.

For each project, the USDA considers such factors as: Specific issues, problems, interests or needs being addressed. Timeliness and importance of the project. The impact and benefits of the project.

Applicants need to be ready to provide detailed information on items such as project purpose, potential impact, expected measurable outcomes, a work plan, budget information, and project oversight and commitment.

About Washington's Projects

According to the WSDA, the state is the third leading producer of specialty crops in the nation.

The state's growers rank number one in U.S. production of commodities ranging from apples and hops to spearmint oil and raspberries, reports the department.

The WSDA said it included "projects that build on the expertise and success of the industry, have the potential to boost the income of farming families, develop or expand direct marketing opportunities for farmers, or support economic growth in rural Washington."

The Washington state projects to receive funding: Washington State Horticultural Association (\$49,500) to provide tree fruit growers a workbook of technical support and education on safe and sustainable practices.

FarmCity Alliance, Mercer Island Farmers Market (\$17,400) to expand customer awareness and attendance of the market through promotion and outreach.

Washington State University (\$35,591) to conduct research to prevent the spread of Grapevine fanleaf disease to promote sustainability of the wine grape industry.

Cascade Harvest Coalition (\$29,500) to conduct a marketing research project and develop a strategy for growing sales opportunities at Puget Sound farmers markets.

Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance (\$18,759) to promote sales at Seattle farmers markets by producing and mailing a newsletter twice a year during the high market season that will reach 136,000 potential customers.



Washington Mint Commission (\$30,000) to develop and demonstrate Solvent Free Microwave Extraction of essential mint oil. The process could reduce significantly the amount of energy required in the production of mint oil and increase the overall efficiency of mint production.

Vashon Island Growers Association (\$5,705) to develop a promotional campaign and provide community education about their Wednesday and Saturday farmers markets.

Washington State Farmers Market Association (\$10,100) to promote Washington farmers by increasing the number of the 2009 Farmers Market Directory Guides that are printed and distributed.

Washington State Potato Commission (\$35,717) to continue a food safety training program with informational materials to help potato growers become certified under USDA's Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) program.

Institute for Washington's Future (\$17,000) to hold conferences for producers to learn about the latest research and development on the application of bio-products for improved soil fertility and pest control.

Maple Valley Farmers Market (\$8,800) to establish a new farmers market in Maple Valley where producers can sell their fruit and vegetables.

Poulsbo Farmers Market (\$1,043) to help promote farmers and their products by developing and distributing marketing materials.

Will your organization be among those receiving funding from the next round of grants?