KENTUCKY SMALL FRUIT INITIATIVE
2021 On-Farm Research Grant Call for Proposals

Amount funded per project: up to $50,000
Proposal submission deadline: June 15, 2021 by 11:59 p.m. EST

Research Grant Schedule
May 1, 2021: Calls for Proposals Released
June 15, 2021: Proposals Due
July 1, 2021: Selected Proposals Funded and Announced

Introduction

The Kentucky Horticulture Council (KHC) recognizes the value and importance of research projects in developing solutions to small fruit production problems in Kentucky. The Small Fruit On-Farm Research Grant Program provides opportunities for ag professionals working directly with farmers to conduct on-farm research projects to improve small fruit crop production and improve profitability for Kentucky growers. This program emphasizes relationship-building between the researcher and growers and directly helps support farmers in their efforts to efficiently and profitably produce small fruit crops.

Who Can Apply

This grant is open to ag professionals who regularly work with Kentucky small fruit crop growers on farm production and marketing problems. These can include: grower groups, governmental agencies such as NRCS, non-governmental organizations, for-profit businesses, Cooperative Extension agents, university specialists, and regional educational institutions.

On-Farm Research Grants must be developed, coordinated, and led by ag professionals who regularly work with Kentucky small fruit crop growers and who will conduct the on-farm research with at least one grower cooperator. Projects must be scale-appropriate for Kentucky and project results shared with growers, including a presentation at the annual Kentucky Fruit and Vegetable Conference.

Applicants must complete a proposal describing their project and explaining how it will help farmers understand and adopt practices that will increase the competitiveness of Kentucky's small fruit crop industry. KHC will accept proposals from applicants outside the state only where a clear relationship with Kentucky growers is evident.

What are Small Fruit Crops?

Small fruit crops are defined as edible fruits produced on small plants, including such crops as blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries.

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Applicants should submit proposed projects in one of the following focus areas:

1. **Labor Efficiencies.** On-farm trials of scale-appropriate equipment that will mechanize labor intensive tasks including planting, production tasks, transporting, or harvesting small fruit crops. Examples include mechanical harvesting equipment or row cover systems.
2. **Remote Sensing and Monitoring.** On-farm trials of equipment and systems that detect and acquire information in the field from a distance without physical contact to generate data for management decisions. Examples include UAVs for field monitoring or automated pest monitoring of pheromone traps.
3. **Precision Application.** On-farm trials of equipment and systems that sense and calibrate applications based on plant characteristics (i.e. location and architecture) to help growers optimize coverage and manage pesticide costs. Examples include intelligent sprayers or mobile phone apps.
4. **Organic Production**: On-farm trials that address organic production of small fruit crops. An example is physical barriers to exclude spotted wing drosophila.
5. **Appropriate Technology**: On-farm projects that develop a device or piece of machinery that promotes small fruit crop production and cannot be purchased off the shelf. The device or machinery must have application for Kentucky farmers, be able to be built by growers, and enable them to operate more efficiently.

Preparing the Proposal

Refer to the following template when preparing proposals. The following information is **required** for submitting proposals. When ready to submit a proposal, apply by emailing the completed application and budget to info@kyhortcouncil.org. Be sure to submit proposals prior to the application deadline. Once the June 15, 2021 deadline passes, late proposals may be accepted at the review committee's discretion, if additional funding is available.

A. Basic Information

Project Title. The title of the proposed project.

Principal Investigator (PI) or Project Coordinator. List the principal investigator or project coordinator, the lead institution/organization, full address, telephone, and e-mail. Include the role of the principal investigator or project coordinator in the project.

Administrative Contact. List the name of the administrative contact, including institution/organization name, full address, telephone, and e-mail. The administrative contact is the person who handles grant contracts and has signature authority.

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Financial Contact. List the name of the financial contact, including institution/organization name, full address, telephone, and e-mail. The financial contact is the person who submits invoices and answers questions concerning invoicing and payments.

Project Cooperators. List at least one (1) farmer cooperator, and any other major cooperators, involved in the project. Include the role of each cooperator on the project. Do not list more than six cooperators. Maximum of 500 words.

Type of Institution/Organization. Indicate the type of the main institution/organization applying for the grant. This can include grower groups, for-profit businesses, governmental agencies, NGOs, land-grant universities (1862 or 1890), or other local college/university.

Primary Location(s). Indicate the county/counties where the research will be conducted.

Proposed Start Date. The project start date for the KHC On-Farm Research Grant will be July 15, 2021.

Proposed End Date. Project duration is one or two years. No project can extend past December 31, 2022.

B. Proposal

Statement of Problem. Provide a statement of the problem being addressed and how it is related to, or affects, small fruit crop production in Kentucky. Begin the statement of the problem as: "The purpose of this project is to…" Limited to 500 words.

Statement of Proposed Solution. Provide a statement of the proposed solution to the problem. Limited to 500 words.

Approaches and Methods. Provide a brief description of the methods, demonstrating how the solution addresses the statement of the problem. What is the methodology? There must be a direct relationship between the approach and methods and the project relevance to small fruit crop production. Limited to 1,000 words.

Project Relevance to Small Fruit Crop Production in Kentucky. Applicants must demonstrate how a project is relevant to growers in Kentucky. State how the project and the expected results contribute to small fruit crop production in Kentucky. Tell us how the project will address an element of production and make it more efficient or sustainable. How will this project improve quality of life for producers, communities, and consumers in the Kentucky? Limited to 1,000 words.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Will this project support underserved producers and/or increase equity in Kentucky? If yes, how? Limited to no more than 1,000 words.

Timetable. Provide a timetable of the work to be completed. Limited to 250 words.

Literature Cited. List cited literature that supports the justification of the research project being proposed. Limited to 500 words.

C. Outreach Plan

The KHC On-Farm Grant Program requires an outreach component to research grants to ensure project results are shared with growers and have the widest possible benefits for agriculture across Kentucky.

Indicate outreach or educational plans for the project. Outreach plans may include workshops, field days, on-farm demonstrations, farmer training, online training efforts, curriculum development, videos and webinars, educational publications, journal articles or presentations at meetings or conferences. A presentation at the annual Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference is mandatory. Indicate how the outreach plan will be achieved if COVID-19 or other restrictions prevent travel related to the outreach plan or prevent any in-person events, such as trainings, workshops, conferences, or field days. Limited to 1,000 words.

D. Budget and Budget Narrative

Provide a budget and provide a justification in the budget narrative for each allowable item listed on the budget. This project does not allow indirect costs and requires a 25% matching funds/cost-shares. Matching funds can only be allowable expenses.

Allowable Expenses

- o Costs of sampling and sample analysis. This can include in-field data collection or lab data analysis.
- o Renting equipment needed for the project. The rental must not extend beyond the project's timetable.
- o Materials and supplies needed for the project. The materials and supplies must remain within the scope of the project and be a reasonable request relative to the research being conducted.
- o Limited travel needed for this project, which can include lodging, mileage, meals, and meeting registration, as appropriate to conduct project work and disseminate research

findings. The travel must relate specifically to the project's goals/activities and be justified in the budget narrative.

- o Hiring labor needed to effectively conduct and complete the project within the proposed timetable. This can include hiring grower labor beyond normal farming duties. Hired labor must remain within the scope of the project and be a reasonable salary request. Documentation is required.
- o Expenses related to the project's outreach plan. This can include holding a field day, workshop, farm tour or demonstration program; printing of educational materials, such as fact sheets, manuals or curriculum; or the development of other resources such as apps, webinars, or videos. Educational materials developed for the outreach plan must remain within the scope of the work and be a reasonable request. An example would be the amount requested for the printing of educational materials relative to the size of the audience the resource is intended to reach during the life of the project. These educational resources must be made publicly available to all Kentucky growers.
- o Light refreshments at educational events, such as workshops or field days.

Non-allowable Expenses

- o Starting a farm, NGO, business or other community organization, or expanding an existing farm, NGO, business or other community organization. Providing any kind of financial support relative to the operation of the farm (including land rental or purchase payments), NGO, or business of community organization.
- o Providing support of any kind for capital expenses or permanent farm improvements, including purchasing permanent greenhouses, high tunnels or other buildings; purchasing permanent irrigation equipment; purchasing permanent fencing; establishing a small fruit crop planting; or purchasing crop seed for use beyond the research plots and timetable of the project.
- o Breakfasts, lunches, or other full meals for the project's outreach plan, or educational/resource event or program.
- o Tuition or Indirect Charges.

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How Proposals Will Be Reviewed

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All funding of KHC On-Farm Research Grants is awarded competitively and more proposals may be submitted than funding is available. A proposal will be less competitive, or may not be funded at all, if it doesn't conform to the requirements in the Call for Proposal.

Proposals are first reviewed by a Technical Review Committee made up of Kentucky growers (2), Cooperative Extension agents (1) and specialists (1), researchers (1), and other ag professionals (2), including a staff member from the Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy.

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The Technical Review Committee evaluates proposals based on the following questions:

1. Is the project relevant to small fruit crop production in Kentucky?
2. Does the proposed project promote the understanding, rigorous testing, and adoption of production practices relevant to Kentucky's farming community?
3. Is it clear in the proposal that the applicant regularly works directly with farmers?
4. Is at least one farmer cooperator identified in the proposed project?
5. Are the funds requested in the proposal allowable items?
6. Is an outreach component outlined in the proposal?

Once these questions have been answered, the Technical Review Committee continues to evaluate the proposal focusing on the following criteria:

1. Determining whether the proposed project addresses one or more of the proposed focus areas in addressing a problem or issue for small fruit crop production in Kentucky.
2. Reviewing the approaches and methods for a direct relationship between the methodology and the project relevance to small fruit crop production in Kentucky.
3. Reviewing the timetable to determine if the project can be effectively completed in the time provided based on the goals and objectives proposed.
4. Reviewing the outreach plan to determine whether it benefits its intended audience and is the most effective way of reaching small fruit crop growers.
5. Evaluating the project's budget to determine if the requested amount is reasonable and realistic, and is clear on what the funds will be spent on.

Applications will be ranked based on the outlined criteria using a standard evaluation rubric. By early March, applicants will be contacted by e-mail regarding proposal status and review comments on proposals will be made available. If awarded an On-Farm Research Grant, the applicant will be asked to sign a contract prior to receiving any funds. Once the contract is signed, the applicant agrees to conduct the activities outlined in the proposal. Any changes in budget or activities must receive prior approval from KHC. The award funding will be paid through reimbursement of allowable project expenses with accompanying documentation.

Other Information

Questions should be directed to the grant administrator, Cindy Finneseth at Cindy@KYHortCouncil.org or call 859-490-0889. This grant program is administered by the Kentucky Horticulture Council (KHC) under an agreement with the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund (KADF).

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