



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

Ohio Competitive Grant Program for Viticulture Research

Contact: Christy Eckstein, Executive Director, Ohio Grape Industries Committee

Date of Issue: March 13, 2025

Deadline: Friday, April 18, 2025

Overview

The Ohio Grape Industries Committee (OGIC) is requesting proposals for viticulture research projects for FY26-27 (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2027.)

The competitive viticulture research grant program will provide funding for innovative applied and basic viticulture research projects that strive to enhance and improve the quality of Ohio grapes and/or grape products made from midwestern-grown grapes, juice, and/or wine. Principal investigators may be located within or outside of Ohio. Research partnerships and collaborative projects are strongly encouraged.

Background

The OGIC is a quasi-state agency housed within the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The mission of the OGIC, as mandated by the General Assembly in 1981, is to create viable, income-producing grape enterprises in the State of Ohio by providing marketing and promotion efforts, and research and extension opportunities to improve the quality of grape products and profitability of grape growing as an agri-business.

Wines produced in Ohio are made from Ohio-grown grapes and outsourced grapes from around the world. Ohio produces wines from *vitis vinifera*, hybrid and *labrusca* grapes, as well as fruit and mead.

The Ohio grape and wine industry is comprised of 400+ licensed wine manufacturers and approximately 170+ vineyards. Nearly 90% of Ohio's winemakers produce 5,000 gallons or less annually. The Ohio industry, ranked 7th in the country, has seen tremendous growth in the number of wineries and vineyards in the past seven years with the industry growing from 244 licensed wine manufacturers in 2016 to 420+ in 2025. The rapid growth in the number of new wineries and vineyards has led to the establishment of many wine and grape enterprises with limited skills and experience in winemaking and grape growing.

For Ohio's grape and wine industry to remain competitive regionally, nationally and internationally, these limited skills need to be addressed by research and extension in the areas of enology and viticulture including entomology, plant pathology, virology, and weed science.

Viticulture Priorities

In March 2023, the Ohio Grape Industries Committee (OGIC) conducted a statewide survey to identify research and outreach priorities of the grape and wine industry. *Survey responses are attached.*

The priorities for viticulture research focused on growing high-quality grapes in Ohio include:

- Grape fruit quality
- Vine health maintenance

- Best viticultural practices – adapting to weather/climate change
- Cold injury from winter freeze and spring frost and protection methods
- Vine nutrition and health (develop nutrient/water quality management for optimal vine health)
- Knowledge of fruit quality production parameters/attributes in wine grapes to predict wine quality
- Fruit maturity management
- Crop and pest management challenges – plant pathology/disease; deer/birds; weed control; plant pests/insects; soil health
- Weed management approaches – herbicides; ground cover; and mechanical tillage
- Information needs – disease spray program development and drift issues; disease management strategies for grape production; fungicide resistance management; and herbicide efficacy on targeted weeds

Proposal Requirements

The proposal should focus on addressing the applicant's ability to provide the services outlined in the Viticulture Priorities section above. Applicants must provide the following information:

1. Detailed description of viticulture research to be completed, including recommended personnel, estimated timeline and budgetary request.
2. Description of how the research addresses industry priority(ies)
3. Explanation of how information developed during the grant project would be communicated to end users, including the Ohio Grape Industries' Viticulture Extension provider - The Ohio State University.
4. Proposals should not exceed 8 pages in length.
5. Applicant should be aware that proposal information and progress reports will be widely disseminated to industry stakeholders.

Budget

The OGIC has allocated up to \$84,250 each fiscal year or \$168,500 in total for the viticulture research grant program.

Indirect costs/overhead charges are not covered. Awards cannot be used for tuition, tuition reimbursement, or travel not related directly to the project.

Review Process

Each proposal received will initially be evaluated by the OGIC's Quality and Research Advisory Groups and if deemed desirable forwarded to the Ohio Grape Industries Committee for final evaluation. Research projects will be selected for award based on a combination of both scientific merit and relevance to industry priorities. Multi-institutional proposals are encouraged to address specific issues and to allow the results of the sponsored research projects to have a broader reach.

Proposal Submissions

All proposals should be submitted to the OGIC, Attn: Christy Eckstein, 8995 E. Main Street, Reynoldsburg, OH 43068 or christy.eckstein@agri.ohio.gov, no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, April 18, 2025.