

## **Funds for Workforce Development**

**Funds Available: \$130,000 total; \$5,000-\$50,000 per project**

**Proposals Due: October 6, 2010**

The Vermont Agriculture Innovation Center (AIC) was created in 2009 when Senator Patrick Leahy secured \$469,000 in funding through the USDA's Agriculture Innovation Demonstration Center program. The goal of the Innovation Center program is to fund state-based Agriculture Innovation initiatives that provide technical, marketing and organizational development services to value-added agricultural businesses. Value-added businesses include farms that do some level of processing for raw products, alternative production (e.g. organic), diversified farming, or local foods marketing. The AIC is chaired by the VT Secretary of Agriculture Roger Allbee and directed by 13 board members, representing food system components and primary agriculture sectors of the state of Vermont. For FY 2010, Senator Leahy has secured one million dollars for the Vermont Agriculture Innovation Center to continue its work and disburse funds to strategically enhance value-added agriculture in the state of Vermont. FY 2010 funding will be available in five high-leverage project areas, including **Workforce Development**.

Agricultural Innovation funds will be used as a part of workforce development to assist the farms, organizations, businesses, and individuals who have the potential to carry out the strategic initiatives and foster individuals to become engaged in the marketing or the production of value-added production systems.

**Activities pertaining to general agriculture production without a value-added strategy or focus are not eligible for funding.**

The Vermont Agriculture Innovation Center will make \$130,000 available from 2010 USDA-RD funding for organizations and/or individuals to offer workforce development projects that attract and build value-added agricultural skills, and/or provide value-added experience-based learning programs. Vermont can benefit by ensuring that current skills training matches the needs of value-added agricultural systems in addition to fostering and increasing a skilled workforce in the area of value-added agriculture. Workforce development projects are being sought in the following areas:

- Establishing or improving value-added apprenticeship or internship programs that match interested individuals with farms, organizations, businesses or individuals engaged in the marketing or the production of value-added products.
- Establishing or improving training programs that teach value-added agricultural skills to employees of producers, processors, or service providers wanting to engage in the marketing or production of value-added products. For example, a dairy farmer wants to get into cheese making but does not want to do it himself. He or she can send their employee(s) to learn how to make cheese.
- Establishing or improving training programs that teach value-added agricultural skills to future farmers or pre-farmers wanting to engage in the marketing or production of value-added products.

### **Targeted Producer Sectors:**

All producer groups are targeted through this work including but not limited to:

- 14 to 25 year olds interested in value-added farming, and who have a relationship or connection with an existing value-added farm or business.
- Pre-farmers who are interested in a career change to value-added agriculture
- Agricultural employees wanting to gain value-added skill sets

### **Eligible Applicants:**

Applications are encouraged from existing service provider organizations, educational institutions, incubators, individual consultants and anyone else with experience in building skills for future farmers. Projects may address more than one of the topic areas listed above. **Strong preference will be given to proposals that**

**demonstrate partnerships between multiple organizations, have a statewide reach, are innovative, and build on existing programs.**

**Projects must meet the following criteria:**

- **Be completed prior to September 30, 2011.**
- Present a budget that uses between \$5,000 - \$50,000 of Agriculture Innovation Center funds **and has a match of non-federal funds equal to at least 60% of the total budget.** In-kind contributions *can* count towards this match. For FY 2010, in recognition of time constraints, the AIC will review and consider **strong** proposals with an insufficient match, pending further match development. Meeting the 60% match requirement must be verified prior to contracting and release of AIC funds.
- Proposal does not exceed 4 pages for the proposal narrative; an additional page may be used for budget information, and an appendix may be used to list board members and/or to list personnel and their qualifications.
- All proposals are due: **October 6, 2010** and are to be **submitted electronically** to: [RTorres@vermontcf.org](mailto:RTorres@vermontcf.org)

**Required Proposal Outline:**

1. Name of Organization(s) & Contact Information.
  - If there are multiple organizations presenting a collaborative proposal, please identify one primary contact.
  - Identify board of directors for applying organizations.
  - Number of years in business for each applying organization or business.
  - Current activities related to Workforce Development and any examples of relevant past experience at your organization(s).
2. Project area or areas addressed in the application & brief description of how you plan to address each.
3. Description of value-added business/businesses targeted in the proposal.
4. Project Goals
5. Performance Measures
  - Plans for measuring effectiveness of services provided (what will be measured, how it will be measured, when it will be measured)
6. Expected Outcomes
  - What will the expected outcomes of this project be and how will it enhance value-added agriculture
7. Timeline
8. Target Audience
  - If the target audience is primarily service providers please describe the producer audience that these service providers reach. Producer audience must meet USDA definition of value-added.
9. Marketing & Outreach Plan
  - All marketing & outreach materials will need to recognize AIC as a funder
10. List the personnel who will work on the project, and their qualifications.
11. Detailed budget including non-federal match funds.
  - Contracted services or in-kind donated services require a per-hour or per-diem rate.
12. Include a budget narrative.
13. Include the page number, lead organization, and project title(s) on each page.