

TOWN OF HARDWICK

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS Consultant for Business Feasibility Study

Issue Date: June 13, 2017

Respond by: Wednesday, June 28th, 4:00 p.m.

Project Description

The Town of Hardwick, located in Caledonia County, VT, is located with the 3-county region of Vermont known as the "Northeast Kingdom". The region, historically one of the poorest in VT, is part of a federally designated USDA Rural Economic Area Partnership (REAP) Zone. The Northeast Kingdom has a poverty rate of approximately 13.5%. The town and region are also located within the newly reorganized 6-county Northern Vermont Economic Development District (NVEDD). Like other rural counties in Vermont, natural resources (agriculture, and forestry) are leading export sectors. This is especially true in Hardwick where over the past 5-6 years, the Town has undergone an economic resurgence through the growth of value-added agricultural and forest-based enterprises, including the successful Vermont Food Venture Center - a business incubator for start-up food processing companies that was partially funded by an EDA investment.

A 2011 analysis of the regional economy commissioned by Northeastern Vermont Development Association (NVDA) revealed that agriculture, forestry, and durable manufacturing were among the major export-oriented sectors for the Northeast Kingdom. This project will conduct a feasibility study for a commercial business facility that will directly address a need for economic infrastructure to support existing (and thriving) commercial/production businesses to grow in the Hardwick area. The diverse nature of the businesses we expect to use the facility - agriculture and forest-related - will help to build economic resilience, and promote a quality of life for which Hardwick has become known in recent years. This project is in alignment with the local and regional economic development priorities and plans, as well as the recently published [Northeast Kingdom Food System Plan](#). This project is also in alignment with the [Town of Hardwick's Municipal Plan](#) goals and objectives (pg 53).

Primary Objective of the Hardwick Business Team

The Town of Hardwick, working with the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) and NVDA, as well as area business leaders in value-added agriculture and forestry sectors, intends to conduct an Economic Planning and Feasibility/Siting/Design Study for a multi-tenant commercial business facility that would accommodate both existing production businesses that are expanding and provide space for next-stage businesses that are ready to transition out of the VT Food Venture Center in Hardwick, Vermont.

Scope of Services

The proposed feasibility study would include:

1. *User Needs Analysis*: Assessment of the current and future business needs for area businesses (interviews and list provided by Hardwick Business team)
2. *Site Evaluation*: Evaluation of three sites for the key factors (such as transportation, accessibility, retail market location, permitting and environmental impacts), *building requirements in each site and facility economics*

Findings from the feasibility study will assist the Hardwick Business Team in selecting an appropriate site. They intend to hire an architect to develop conceptual designs.

The selected consultant will perform a feasibility study and planning activities related to the possible development of a multi-tenant business facility to potentially include manufacturing space, retail/display space, and/or fulfillment and distribution space in a location in the Hardwick area that would help support the working lands industry and the overall development of the area businesses and the Village Center. The selected consultant will negotiate a scope of work with the Hardwick Business Team, which will likely consist of the following activities:

1. Review existing strategic planning documents, such as the [Farm to Plate Plan](#), [NEK Regional Food System Plan](#), [NVEDD Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#), [Strategic Industries Report](#) and [Regional Plan for the Northeast Kingdom](#) as they relate to project objectives.
2. Review all business needs assessment materials as gathered by the Hardwick Business team and research comparables.
3. Review the existing condition of the following potential sites: Yellow barn, 281 VT Route 15 west, Hardwick, VT, Bank building, 21 Mill Street, Hardwick, VT, and Atkins Field, Granite Street, Hardwick, VT.
4. Engage with all appropriate Town/State Departments necessary to assess feasibility of potential sites with respect to project objectives and regional development objectives, namely:
 - Existing businesses within Hardwick should have the infrastructure to expand and grow, further developing the local economy.
 - Farming, agriculture, and working lands enterprises will remain an important and viable sector of the regional economy.
 - The region's agricultural output should increase and diversify. Value should be added to local staple products and raw materials.
5. Develop an operational plan and 1 year budget
6. Complete report and attend and assist the business development network in presentations before the Town and grantors

Interested Candidates Should Respond by Wednesday, June 28th

Please submit a 1-2 page letter of interest outlining your experience providing services for similar endeavors and organizations. Include a minimum of three (3) professional references for whom a similar project has been completed within the past ten (10) years. Please include a resume or C.V. If you intend to subcontract with other consultants, please include their relevant experiences, references, and resumes as well.

Submit your responses to Jon Jewett, Town of Hardwick, by mail at, Town Manager's Office, Town of Hardwick, PO Box 523, Hardwick, VT 05843 or email – jon.jewett@hardwickvt.org.

Please note that this project is funded by a Municipal Planning Grant from the State of Vermont. All work related to this grant must be completed by May 31, 2018. The selected candidate will be expected to sign a contract that meets requirements of the state procurement requirements, including Vermont's Fair Employment Practices Law, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Thank you for your interest!