



Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

VERMONT FARM & FOREST
VIABILITY PROGRAM

The Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, a program of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, provides business planning and technical assistance to businesses in the Vermont food system with the aim of strengthening the business management skills of enterprises throughout the local food value chain. We provide a range of services – from in-depth business planning to short-term, specialized technical assistance – by matching participating enterprises with the best consultant, or team of consultants, who have the specific skills to meet their needs.

ELIGIBILITY & SELECTION PROCESS

Eligible businesses include slaughterhouses and meat processors, grain/legume/vegetable processors, on and off-farm value-added producers, co-packers, and storage/distribution businesses that source locally produced food. We also enroll key regional food systems organizations that are actively engaged in increasing farm to school and farm to institution activities in their areas of the state. While businesses of any size are eligible to enroll, we consider the following three criteria:

- Your business must be based in Vermont,
- You must have at least 2 years of experience managing this or another related business, a
- Your business must be primarily involved in adding value to Vermont's agricultural products

Applications will be selected based on clarity of the proposal, how well the proposal meets the program's objectives, and the readiness of the project. In some cases waivers are available for businesses that don't meet these eligibility requirements. Applications are accepted at any time of the year. If your application is selected, Viability Program staff will pair you with an advisor to provide one-on-one services.

ENROLLMENT

There is a \$75 fee to enroll in the Vermont Farm and Forest Viability Program. Please submit the \$75 enrollment fee check with your application. We will return your check if we are not able to enroll you in the program. Farms or businesses that are owned by a non-profit organization or foundation, or are supported by a non-profit or foundation are required to pay a larger fee. If your business meets this definition, please contact program staff (contact information below).

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Complete the attached application form,
- 2) Enclose a \$75 check or money order made out to VHCB, and
- 3) Mail to: Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program
VHCB, 58 E. State Street, Montpelier, VT 05602

Please contact Calley Hastings, Program Manager, at 828-3370 or calley@vhcb.org with any questions.

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

VHCB, as a public instrumentality, is subject to the Vermont Public Records Law, 1 VSA § 315. The statute contains specific exemptions for tax-related information of persons, personal financial information of an individual, and trade secrets. Therefore, the information submitted by farmers, other participants and service providers to VHCB will be held in confidential files at VHCB and will not be available for public inspection under the Public Records Law.

VHCB considers the following information about farms, farmers and other participants to be subject to public record: names of farmers, farms and other participants that have applied to or are enrolled in the program; their town of residence; type of farm or business; and the purpose and amount of any implementation grant or technical assistance award applied for or received.

VHCB staff will require copies of completed farm business plans for several reasons: (1) to monitor quality of work conducted by those receiving VHCB funds, and (2) to collect data on the economic viability of the farms being assisted, in order to measure the success of the Program over time.

Business plans contain confidential financial information, such as past and projected income statements. Business plans may also contain trade secrets and marketing strategies that farmers or other participants wish to keep confidential for reasons of competitive advantage. Business planners and technical assistance providers must agree to keep business plans confidential to protect farmers' interests, but must agree to furnish copies of completed business plans to Vermont Housing and Conservation Board staff. Notwithstanding the Records Law exemption, when VHCB shares business plans with selected staff of the Program's statutory administrative partner, the Agriculture Agency, or with selected staff of the Viability funding organizations or agencies – private foundations, USDA NRCS and USDA Rural Development– strict confidentiality guidelines will be followed. Staff or contractors who are approved for viewing business plans will not be allowed to make copies, or to share information from the plans with any other person. When plans are removed from VHCB files for inspection, the approved staff will be required to sign for the documents, and sign again when they are returned to the files.

Note: The Vermont Housing & Conservation Board is an equal opportunity provider and employer

Return application with a \$75 check
(made out to VHCB) to:
VT Farm & Forest Viability Program
VHCB
58 E. State St.
Montpelier, VT 05602



Vermont Housing &
Conservation Board

VERMONT FARM & FOREST
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Received:

Office use only

FOOD SYSTEMS BUSINESS APPLICATION

A. CONTACT INFO:

Applicant Business Name: _____

Contact Name(s): _____

Mailing address: _____

Town: _____, VT Zip: _____ Email: _____

Location (i.e. Street & Town, if different): _____

Telephone: _____ Mobile: _____

Website: _____

Structure of business (check one): Sole Proprietor Partnership LLC Corporation

How did you hear about the program? _____

B. TYPE OF ASSISTANCE BEING REQUESTED (Check all that apply)

Business Planning

Technical Assistance: (select below)

Marketing Production Financial Management Human Resources/Staffing

New Product or Service Ownership Transfer Growth/Expansion Other

Please describe briefly: _____

C. MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The business is based in Vermont:	<input type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False
To the best of our knowledge, the company has no outstanding overdue obligations due to the Vermont or federal government. If false, explain:	<input type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False
For the next six-to-twelve months, management is prepared to commit significant time to preparing and implementing a business or technical assistance plan.	<input type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False
The business is primarily involved in the processing, storage, marketing, and/or distribution of agricultural or value-added food products.	<input type="checkbox"/> True <input type="checkbox"/> False
Number of years that business has been operating in Vermont	

D. TYPE OF FOOD SYSTEMS BUSINESS (Check all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> On-farm processor/value-added producer | <input type="checkbox"/> Distributor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Off-farm processor/value-added producer | <input type="checkbox"/> Co-packer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slaughterhouse and/or meat processing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please describe below): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storage facility | |

E. BUSINESS PERFORMANCE DATA

	For current year (if ≥6 months) or most recent full year	For previous full year
Gross Sales	\$	\$
Net Income	\$	\$
Net Worth	\$	\$
Full-time nonfamily employees	# FTEs:	# FTEs:
Full-time family employees	# FTEs:	# FTEs:
Part-time/seasonal employees	# FTEs:	# FTEs:
Gross Payroll	\$	\$

F. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION – ALL applicants please attach

- 1) Description of the business, its products and/or services, and markets. Please include the following when applicable:
 - Brief history and years in business
 - Description of products made or services provided
 - Scale of business (production volume or throughput, number of jobs per year, etc)
 - Markets you sell your product to, or who you provide services to
- 2) Description of who manages the business and their experience and expertise.
- 3) Description of why you are applying to this program (including any ideas or plans for changing or improving your operation).
- 4) Details of any technical assistance you are already receiving.
- 5) Description of your use of Vermont agricultural products, such as:
 - % of the inputs you use to make your value-added products that come from VT farms
 - % of the services you provide that are used by VT farmers
- 6) **If available**, attach financial statements (income statements and/or balance sheets) for the past 1-2 years.