



Vermont Housing & Conservation Board

VERMONT FARM & FOREST VIABILITY PROGRAM

The Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, a program of the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, offers business planning and technical assistance services to Vermont farmers as part of a statewide effort to improve the economic viability of Vermont agriculture.

ELIGIBILITY & SELECTION PROCESS

To be eligible for the program, farmers must:

- be year-round Vermont residents, currently farming in Vermont,
- be actively involved in the day-to-day management of the farm,
- have at least two years' experience managing this farm, and
- have grossed at least \$15,000 on the farm in the most recent tax year

Filling out the application is not a guarantee that you will be selected to receive services, as the program has limited slots available. Applications are accepted at any time, and enrollment decisions are made after the following application deadlines throughout the year: **March 31, May 31, August 31, November 30.**

Applicants are screened for eligibility (see above), along with interest and ability to commit time and effort to participation. Applications should demonstrate the need to develop a plan to improve their business, help with an upcoming transition, or another compelling purpose. The program is not able to enroll all eligible applicants, therefore more thorough information in the application will enable reviewers to have a better understanding of the business and need for assistance.

ENROLLMENT

There is a \$75 fee to enroll in the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program. Please submit the check, made out to VHCB, 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 farm meets this definition, please contact program staff (contact information below).

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Complete the attached application form,
- 2) Enclose the enrollment fee 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.

PROCESS

Once enrolled, farms work with a farm business planner through one of our organizational partners or directly with an individual consultant. Our staff works with enrolled farmers to identify a good match for the farm. Farmers and planning consultants then meet and work together for approximately one year to produce a written business plan. In the second year of participation, farmers are provided with additional technical assistance and help updating their plans. Farmers who have completed business plans with the program will have many of the pieces already in place to be competitive when seeking grants. Grants available through the Viability Program are found here: www.vhcb.org/viabilitygrants.

At the present time the cooperating organizations are:

- Center for an Agricultural Economy
- Intervale Center
- NOFA-Vermont
- University of Vermont Extension
- Land for Good

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.

Cooperating organization: (office use only)

- UVM Extension
- Intervale Center
- NOFA-VT
- Land For Good
- Center for an Ag Economy



Received:

Office use only.

FARM BUSINESS APPLICATION

Name(s) of farmer applicant(s) _____

Mailing address (street) _____

Town _____, VT Zip _____ Telephone _____

Farm Name _____ Email _____

Town where farm is located (if different) _____ Website _____

MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS (please circle Yes or No)

Are you a year-round Vermont resident, currently farming in Vermont? Yes No

Are you actively involved in the day-to-day management of the farm? Yes No

Do you have at least 2 years' experience managing your current farm? Yes No

Did your farm produce at least \$15,000 of gross farm income in the most recent tax year? Yes No

If you answered "Yes" to all of the above you are eligible for the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program. Please call for help in finding other sources of assistance if you are not eligible.

1. YOUR FARM INFORMATION

I (we) own the farm as part of a...

- sole proprietorship
- partnership
- corporation
- other ownership arrangement (specify): _____

I (we) lease the farm from someone else

How did you hear about the program?

- from a friend/other farmer
- from the VT Farm & Forest Viability Program website
- at an event/conference
- in a publication
- from a service provider or consultant
- If so, please list _____
- other: _____

Please give acres of:

Total owned _____

Total rented _____

Forage crops (hay, corn, etc.) _____

Pasture _____

Vegetables or berries _____

Ornamentals _____

Tree fruits _____

Sugarbush _____

Food Grains _____

Other (specify) _____

Please give numbers of:

Mature dairy cows _____

Young dairy cattle _____

Dairy goats _____

Dairy sheep _____

Other sheep _____

Beef cattle _____

Hogs _____

Poultry _____

Horses _____

Other (specify) _____

Please give numbers of:

Fulltime family laborers _____

Part time family laborers _____

Fulltime hired laborers _____

Part time/seasonals hired _____

Please check if your farm:

Is certified organic

Has on-farm processing

Sells direct to consumers

Has an agri-tourism element

FARM INCOME		FARM OWNER INCOME (combined for all farm owners)	
Gross farm income for most recent tax year	Net farm income for most recent tax year	Off farm income for most recent tax year	Total gross income from most recent IRS form 1040 (line 22)
\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

**Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program
FARMER BUSINESS APPLICATION, PAGE TWO**

2. Please attach a one-page description of your ideas for business planning, including plans for changing or improving your farm enterprise. Please address the following:

- A. A brief description of your farm business
- B. Your ideas and plans for the future
- C. What you hope to get out of enrolling in the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program
- D. What technical assistance you are already receiving or actively seeking

3. Please check your top priorities for specific technical assistance you might be interested in receiving during the business planning process (up to 6 boxes):

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cash flow analysis | <input type="checkbox"/> Animal health/nutrition | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal/family stress | <input type="checkbox"/> Marketing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Borrowing capacity | <input type="checkbox"/> Composting | <input type="checkbox"/> Health insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> Wholesale markets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farming with disabilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Manure management | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Supported Ag. | <input type="checkbox"/> On-farm sales |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farm transfer | <input type="checkbox"/> Forage crop management | <input type="checkbox"/> On-farm processing | <input type="checkbox"/> Labor management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement/estate planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Pasture management | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental concerns | <input type="checkbox"/> Agri-tourism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sale of development rights | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic transition | <input type="checkbox"/> Energy efficiency/renewables | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enterprise analysis | <input type="checkbox"/> Organic crops | | |

4. Please answer the following questions:

Are you willing to set aside significant time (at least several hours twice a month) to meet at your farm with a Viability Program business planner and technical assistance providers? YES NO

Is your farm currently under foreclosure or is your farm business currently in a bankruptcy proceeding? YES NO

Are you considering transferring the farm (sale or lease) to another farmer in the immediate future? _____

Are there family members who don't share ownership of the farm, but who have an interest in becoming owners?
(please describe) _____

Is your farm enrolled in a financial record-keeping program? _____

Do you have detailed balance sheets and income statements for the last two years? _____

Is your farm enrolled in production record keeping such as DHIA or crop enterprise reporting? _____

Do you have any formal education in farm management? _____

How many years have you managed a farm? _____

Is the farm enrolled in use value appraisal/current use? _____

Is the farm protected by a conservation easement? _____

I/we have read and understand the attached Viability Program "Confidentiality Policy". I/we hereby authorize the Program to disclose information about our farm, provided that Program restricts access to confidential information. The information given in this application is true to the best of my (our) knowledge.

Signature(s) _____ Date _____

Please attach \$75 application fee. See Application Instructions for details.

Return application to: Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, VHCB
58 E. State Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

For more information contact:
Calley Hastings, Program Manager
(802) 828-3370, calley@vhcb.org