



## 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 increasing local food consumption, access, processing, and distribution. While businesses of any size are eligible to enroll, we consider the following three criteria:

- Your business must be based in Vermont
- Your business must be primarily involved in the processing, storage, marketing, and/or distribution of agricultural or value-added food products
- You must have at least 2 years of experience managing this or another related business

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. Depending on your needs we may recommend other resources to you. 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](mailto: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*

Cooperating organization:

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

Check Received: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_



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**Food Business Application**

Name(s) of business applicant(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address (street) \_\_\_\_\_ Town \_\_\_\_\_, VT Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Address where business is located (if different) \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Website \_\_\_\_\_ Circle the best way to contact: Email Phone Mail

**MINIMUM ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

Is this business based in Vermont?  Yes  No

If you are a value added food business, does your business source a significant portion of raw product from Vermont?  Yes  No  N/A

Is the business primarily involved in the processing, storage, marketing, and/or distribution of agricultural or value-added food products?  Yes  No

Do you have at least 2 years' experience managing this or another related business?  Yes  No

*If you answered "yes" to all of the above, you are eligible for the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program.*

*If you are not eligible, you can call (802)-828-3370 for help finding other sources of assistance.*

**What is the business structure of your operation?**

- Sole proprietorship
- Partnership
- Corporation
- Limited Liability Company
- Other

What year did you begin managing the business? \_\_\_\_\_

**How did you hear about the program?**

- from a friend/other farmer   
  from the VT Farm & Forest Viability Website   
  at an event/conference  
 from a publication   
  from a service provider or consultant : \_\_\_\_\_  
 other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of food systems business (Check all that apply)**

- On-farm processor/value-added producer   
  Off-farm processor/value-added producer   
  Distributor   
  Slaughterhouse and/or meat processing   
  Co-packer   
  Other

**Business Income**

Gross business sales for the most recent tax year	Net business income for most recent tax year
\$	\$

<b>Please give numbers of:</b>	
Full-time family laborers (including self)	
Part-time family laborers	
Full-time hired laborers	
Part-time/seasonal hired laborers	

**Please check your top priorities for specific technical assistance you might be interested in receiving during the business planning process:**

- Cash flow analysis   
  Production   
  Financial management  
 Human resources/staffing   
  New product   
  Ownership transfer  
 Growth/expansion   
  Other

**Please answer the following questions:**

**Are you willing to set aside significant time (several hours per month) to meet with and prepare for meetings with your Viability business advisor?**

- Yes     No

**Do you have immediate financial concerns that you would like to address? (Ex: cash flow, bankruptcy, foreclosure, engaged in mediation, loan repayment, etc.)**

Yes  No  Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Yes  No

**What describes your financial record-keeping system best?**

Farm credit  Private bookkeeper  Quickbooks  Peach Tree  
 Written ledger  Spreadsheets  None  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please indicate how you identify yourself:**

Black or African American  Latino/Latina/Latinx  Middle Eastern or Arab  
 Asian or Southeast Asian  First Nation/Indigenous to America  Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian  
 White  Prefer not to respond  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Using the page below, or your own paper, please attach a one-page description of your ideas for business planning, including plans for changing or improving your food enterprise. Please address the following:

- a. A brief description of your business
- b. Your ideas and plans for the future
- c. Description of your use of Vermont agricultural products such as:
  - i. % of the inputs you use to make your value added products that come from Vermont
  - ii. % of the services you provide that are used by Vermont farmers
- d. Markets you sell your products to, or who you provide services to
- e. What you hope to get out of enrolling in the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program
- f. What technical assistance you are already receiving or actively seeking

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

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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

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