

## **Working Lands Enterprise Initiative**

The 2012 Legislative session brought with it a renewed commitment to Vermont's values by passing the Working Lands Enterprise initiative for the management and investment of \$1 million into agricultural and forestry based businesses. Over 97 percent of Vermonters value the working landscape. Approximately 20 percent of Vermont's land is used for agricultural purposes and 75 percent as forestry. The backbone of Vermont's "working landscape" is the economic viability of the agriculture and forestry based businesses. It is Vermont's working landscape that allows us to be a key economic engine within the northeast metropolitan markets of the regional food system.

The Working Lands Enterprise initiative, [Act 142](#), (<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/docs/2012/Acts/ACT142.pdf>) created the Working Lands Enterprise Fund (WLEF) and the Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB). The WLEB is made up of private sector members throughout the supply chains of agriculture and forestry, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Vermont Housing Conservation Board, Vermont Economic Development Authority, and Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund.

Some of the goals of the Working Lands initiative, as outlined in the Findings section of [Act 142](#), are to;

1. Stimulate a concerted economic development effort on behalf of Vermont's agriculture and forest product sectors by systematically advancing entrepreneurship, business development, and job creation;
2. Increase the value of Vermont's raw and value-added products through the development of in-state and export markets;
3. Attract a new generation of entrepreneurs to Vermont's farm, food system, forest, and value-added chain by facilitating more affordable access to the working landscape; and
4. Increase the amount of state investment in working lands enterprises, particularly when it leverages private and philanthropic funds.

The Working Lands Enterprise Fund demonstrates the state's investment in the working lands enterprise economy. The fund is directed by the WLEB and is administered by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets in cooperation with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation and the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development. The three funding categories (below) are identified by the Vermont legislature in [Act 142](#) and defined by the WLEB. The amount of funds in each category will be determined by the WLEB based on the response and need from applicants.

## **Working Lands Enterprise Board Request for Proposals**

The Working Lands Enterprise Board (**WLEB**) is pleased to announce the release of three Requests for Proposals (RFP):

### **1. Agriculture, Forestry & Forest Products: Enterprise Investments**

**(\$3,000-\$15,000 grants, Required Minimum 25% cash match of grant amount requested)**

Agriculture, Forestry & Forest Products Enterprise Investments are available to new or growing businesses (including farm and/or forest landowners), Partnerships, Limited Liability Corporations, Sole Proprietorships, Cooperatives, Corporations, S Corporations, L3Cs, and B Corporations and/or non-

profits that are involved in the production of agriculture and/or forest related products. Investment focus areas will include business and technical assistance and infrastructure development. **First time applicants or applicants who have never received state grants before are strongly encouraged to apply.**

### **2. Agriculture, Forestry & Forest Products: Working Lands Service Provider Grants**

**(\$10,000 - \$100,000 grants, Required Minimum 50% cash and in-kind match of grant amount requested)**

Agriculture, Forestry & Forest Products Service Provider Grants are available to non-profit organizations, associations, colleges or universities, private sector or partnership groups. Grants are available to service providers to provide/conduct training and/or production related technical assistance, needs assessments/studies of baseline data critical to sector development, professional and organizational development, product research services, marketing assistance, market development, business and financial planning, access to capital, regulatory and business development assistance, and addressing workforce development needs. Primary applicant must be a Vermont based entity.

### **3. Agriculture, Forestry & Forest Products: Capital and Infrastructure Investments**

**(\$15,000 - \$100,000 grants, Required Minimum 1:1 Match (in-kind and at least 50% cash) of grant amount requested)**

Capital and Infrastructure Investment grants are available to agricultural and/or forestry & forest products based businesses (including farm and forest landowners) and non-profit organizations (e.g., food hubs, farmers' markets, shared processing facilities), for capital investments that will increase operational capacity and have an impact on their industry beyond their immediate business. Eligible activities include, but are not limited to, specialized personnel, access to land (acquisition or easements); building and equipment costs (e.g., processing, storage, distribution); long-term working capital, information technology; farm or forest based renewable energy business expansion; and other collaborative ventures that build capacity within the supply chain, open new markets, and/or create a replicable, innovative model.

#### Applicant & General Inquiries:

Website: [www.vermontworkinglands.com](http://www.vermontworkinglands.com)

Email: [working.lands@state.vt.us](mailto:working.lands@state.vt.us)

Phone: 802-585-9072