



**WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE**  
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Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets  
Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation  
Agency of Commerce & Community Development

## **Working Lands Enterprise Fund FY19 Business Grant Projects**

### **Ardelia Farms, Irasburg, Orleans County (\$19,910)**

Ardelia farm is a 4-year-old cut flower farm located in Irasburg, Vermont specializing in the production of specialty cut flowers, most notably Sweet Peas. The demographic of the Northeast Kingdom provides perfect microclimates for the production of cut sweet pea (*Lathyrus odoratus*) flowers. Prolonged moisture and high humidity provide ideal conditions for the development of *Botrytis cinerea* causing spotting and rot on flower tissues and a sharp reduction in vase life. The only way to prevent this ubiquitous fungus is to keep tunnel temperatures above the dew point and ventilate and circulate the air mass beyond the capacity of passive ventilation. The grant will fund a combination of heaters, ventilation fans and horizontal airflow fans necessary to create the proper conditions for producing this specialty crop.

### **Beaver Meadow Consulting, Norwich, Windsor County (\$25,000)**

Milk production in Vermont, managed for use by cheesemakers has resulted in very successful high-quality cheeses over the past two decades with economic benefits for both the dairy farmer and cheese producer. This project will evaluate the scalability of this model to include many dairy farms operating within an existing Cooperative (St. Albans Cooperative) and coordination with a larger Vermont cheese company (Grafton Village Cheese Co.) It would test whether other smaller cheesemaking companies would be willing to purchase this milk at a price which is economically sustainable for the dairy farmer. The goal is to collect data to inform a collaboration between two existing business types and strengthen their existing businesses; a regional Cooperative (St Albans Cooperative Creamery) and existing cheesemaking company (Grafton Village Cheese Co. being the largest) along with other smaller cheesemaking companies.

### **Bread & Butter Farm, Shelburne, Chittenden County (\$20,000)**

Bread & Butter Farm is a diversified farm on 550 acres, known for integrating a mission driven business with a farm business and; building community through food, music, art, and educational programming. This project is seeking expanding operations to a (10) seat restaurant that would house a commercial kitchen with the intention of expanding value-added farm store products. Bread & Butter currently raise 100% grass fed beef, pigs, organic veggies and offer educational programs for children and adults. All of these enterprises have been enhanced by the presence of the bakery, housed right in the hub of the farm store. Bread & Butter have always envisioned expanding the bakery into a commercial kitchen to offer farm to table meals and sell value-added products. Many farm partners and an experienced management team will bring this project to fruition.



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### **Fisher Brothers Farm, Shelburne, Chittenden County (\$20,000)**

This project is the purchase of a 44-quart commercial batch freezer allowing further expansion of production capacity for farm-to-cone Sisters of Anarchy (SOA) Ice Cream. This farm grows nearly all of the flavor elements. The grant ensures that sufficient capacity exists as they shift ice cream scale from seasonal to year-round product, and, expand outside of Vermont. In 2018, Fisher Brothers Farm brought ice cream to over 180 off-site events in the region, had regular seasonal radio advertising, and built more robust social media engagement, which built significant brand awareness. Customers began to seek out the product at events, and out-of-state customers frequently asked how they can get farm-to-cone ice cream outside of VT. Fisher Brothers considers their ice cream an ultra-premium product. The plan is to avoid brick and mortar, and instead launch an ice cream mail order business to leverage the direct-to-consumer trend and the consumer appetite for the convenience of food delivery.

### **Footprint Farm, Starksboro, Addison County (\$14,700)**

Footprint Farm is a certified organic vegetable farm in Starksboro, VT. They utilize intensive methods to grow a diversity of vegetables on 1.5 acres of land plus three high tunnels. The business supports a (70) member, 30-week CSA, two booths at the Shelburne Farmers market, and weekly deliveries to wholesale accounts. The farm was founded in 2013 and has shown rapid growth in each of its six seasons in business. This project will complete a years-long infrastructure and systems development for the farm. Footprint Farm has set the groundwork for a year-round farming operation with a winterized washing and packing facility, multiple high tunnels, and wintertime market opportunities. With the addition of the equipment requested in this grant (generator, cargo van, temperature monitoring system) Footprint will be able to reliably grow, wash, store and deliver vegetables year-round.

### **Karim Farm and Creamery, Ryegate, Caledonia County (\$20,000)**

Karim Farm and Creamery is currently expanding production from 90 lb to approximately 200 lb per week. Expanding the "cave", in this facility for aging cheese is critical. Aging the cheese wheels on-site allows the continued hands-on attention that is part of the "European farmstead" approach. Adding a second 8 X16 ft wing will create different micro biomes efficiently, while a 12 X 12 connecting space will provide both an environmental buffer and a tasting area for tourists. Expanding this cave will need capital for building materials and climate control.

### **KJ Pratt Logging & Tree Service, Jericho, Chittenden County (\$15,000)**

This project is to acquire a firewood processor, to expand the low-grade wood division of their business. The business currently rents a processor yet has a high demand for wood. In order to keep up with the demand, the grant is timely. Firewood requests have increased every year the last three years since the program began. Currently wood that could be utilized locally for heating is being sent as hardwood pulp and not staying in state. The acquisition of a firewood processor



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would ensure most of their low-grade wood products would stay local and sustain the Vermont economy.

### **Rebop Farm, Brattleboro, Windham County (\$25,000)**

Rebop Farm is working on site prep for a new farm store and community space, scheduled to be completed and open in the winter of 2019. Working Lands funds will invest in a commercial septic, well, and associated excavation costs. The proposed project projects an increase in store capacity, improving the retail space and adding to current agritourism program with the expanded workshops, farm dinners, concerts, and community events. Current farm events (workshops, demos, farm dinners, concerts, community potluck) - a primary sales driver, are consistently sold out and limited by space.

### **Rockledge Farm, Reading, Windsor County (\$25,000)**

Rockledge Farm is located on a 200-year-old farm. Owners use converted space in original historic farm barns for a Retail Gallery, workshops and materials storage. The focus of this project is to significantly increase the efficiency and volume of the production of their woodenwares. Converting additional space in the unfinished building housing their workshop is also a goal. Space conversion will add two woodworking stations, a finishing room, a storage and shipping center, and space for client support staff (job coaching aides). The farm's woodenware is marketed wholesale and sold retail at the farm own location and online. Currently woodenwares sales account for 35% of total gross sales. Raw materials are purchased locally in Vermont, from smaller lumber mills, logging firms, and from property owners.

### **Agricola Meats, Panton, Addison County (\$50,000)**

Agricola Meats is installing new equipment for the processing of cured meats. This grant is part of a larger project that includes the purchase and renovation of a federally inspected facility and securing working capital for the start-up of this business. Part of the project includes the development of the Vermont Pork Coalition, a group of farms that will provide hog carcasses to Agricola Meats. Agricola Meats is committed to creating cured meat with unique flavors tied to each farm. Agricola Meats will produce cured meat for Vermont farms while placing farmers at the center of this business plan. The focus will be the creation of a unique line of products based on the flavors that naturally grow throughout Vermont, promoting a culture where the farmers are the protagonists and the meat is the ambassador to their story. Funds will be used to purchase the curing chambers, resembling large refrigerators that control humidity, temperature and air flow. Matching funds will be used to acquire the processing facility, purchase additional equipment, and purchase marketing and distribution expertise.



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### **Five Generations Farmstead Creamery West Glover, Orleans County (\$150,000)**

Five Generations Farmstead Creamery (FCFG) are building a new, state-of-the-art, on-farm creamery in which they intend, over a four-year period, to process all the milk they produce into cheese. All funds they applied for would be used to purchase essential cheese making equipment with which to outfit the creamery, including a vat, pasteurizer, draining and processing tables, and a cheese press. The creamery would also be available for lease to other dairy producers. This project is essential to the continued existence of the dairy. If closed, it would have a dramatic, negative effect on West Glover. By transforming their milk into cheese, the Youngs anticipate capturing an additional revenues more annually than they would generate with only bulk milk sales. This Farm feels the price of artisan cheese is much more stable than bulk milk and this stable income will allow the farm to continue functioning, while also adding to Vermont's stellar lineup of artisan cheeses, directly creating jobs with livable wages, and increasing numerous other jobs across various industries.

### **Gagnon Lumber, Pittsford, Rutland County (\$120,000)**

This project will extend Three Phase power to the Gagnon sawmill in Pittsford, replacing diesel generation with grid power. The upgrade will stabilize energy costs, securing the long-term viability of the mill at the Pittsford location. It proposes to strengthen a multi-generation Vermont wood products business that saws 2,100,000 board feet of Vermont hardwoods and softwoods and produces 6000 tons of wood chips (240 loads) each year for papermaking and to heat Vermont schools. Gagnon Lumber takes in 2,000,000/board feet of sawlogs, and 4000+ tons of chip wood each year, all within a 40-mile radius of the mill and 99% of it from Vermont. Gagnon produces 1,300,000 feet of hardwood lumber sold to primarily wholesale customers throughout the northeast. Most hardwood is sold green, but in recent years they have developed kiln dried hardwood accounts here in Vermont which require contracting the drying to Massachusetts, a 270-mile round trip. The upgrade will enable the business to expand and diversify its wood chip production and pursue development of other products, such as kiln dried lumber, dry woodchips and firewood that use low grade wood. It will strengthen markets that enable good forest stewardship on over 100,000 acres in central Vermont and help secure the long-term viability of the 10 jobs at the mill and the other 40+ jobs it supports in logging, trucking, and other affiliated sectors.

### **Kirby Mulch LLC, Kirby, Caledonia County (\$130,000)**

This grant will assist Kirby Mulch to produce high-quality compost and mulch soil blends from wood by-products for use in horticulture, landscape, roadside construction, and residential applications. Kirby Mulch Company LLC will also process kiln-dried firewood. As a receiver of wood by-products including stumps, brush, pallets, etc. along with agricultural waste, the business proposes it will serve as a valuable link in the local forestry supply chain. The new wood by-product market that will be created by Kirby Mulch Company LLC purports to have the



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potential to strengthen the overall Northeast Kingdom forest sector, currently at risk of forest fragmentation. Through diversification, should the demand for mulch, compost or kiln dried firewood decline in the future, production focus will shift from one product offering to another. Working Lands Enterprise funds will be used to support the purchase of screening equipment, a kiln wood drying unit, a facility scale, construction of a small office building, road installation and drilling of a well to support on-site water needs. Working land sector jobs will be created in the Northeast Kingdom through the project, bringing value chain and forestry sector collaboration to a forest rich area of Vermont. By creating a new market for low-grade wood, healthy forestry clearing practices will financially benefit landowners thus combating forest fragmentation.

## **Working Lands Enterprise Fund FY19 Service Provider Grant Projects**

### **Intervale Center, Burlington, Chittenden County, (\$19,965)**

The Intervale Center will use Working Lands Enterprise funds to provide coaching services in (35) new and beginning farmers in 2019-2020. As in years past, these customized services are designed to meet the individual needs of each new business and result in 75% of clients demonstrating increases in confidence and skill. These increases translate to more effective business management during the start-up phase, which prepares new farmers to access capital and more comprehensive business development services and increases their ability to manage successful and sustainable businesses long-term.

### **Vermont Woodworks Council, Rutland, Rutland County, (\$20,000)**

Working Lands Enterprise Funds will enhance an initiative by Vermont Woodworks Council and the Northern Forest Center to strengthen Vermont's wood manufacturing industry. This grant would support financial assistance, business consulting, and financial coaching to enable three wood products companies to pursue innovations and/or growth opportunities. These efforts will sustain and strengthen good jobs and company profitability and position Vermont wood manufacturers to take advantage of growth opportunities.

### **The Center for Women & Enterprise, Burlington, Chittenden County, (\$20,000)**

The Center for Women & Enterprise's project: Business and Financial Planning for Women-Owned Working Lands Businesses in Vermont, will be funded by this grant. The Working Lands Enterprise Funds will invest in the organization to provide (20) women-owned working lands businesses with over (30) hours each of entrepreneurial education and follow-up support, free of charge, via Business Planning and Strategic Planning programs. This project aims to empower



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women in the Northeast Kingdom and southern Vermont to build successful businesses, increase financial resources, create jobs, and drive economic growth.

### **University of Vermont Extension, Burlington, Chittenden County, (\$19,943)**

Building on the successful collaborative foundation of [www.ourVTwoods.org](http://www.ourVTwoods.org), this project seeks to 1) develop new interactive and engaging online tools to enhance awareness of and coordination throughout the forestry and wood products sector and 2) to expand online learning opportunities for VT licensed foresters. These new online educational tools will address several critical leverage points of the forest economy, including workforce development, relationship building between different actors along the forest and wood products value chain (from landowners to consumers), and greater public awareness.

## **Working Lands Enterprise Fund FY19 Service Provider Contract**

### **Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, Montpelier, Washington County, (\$80,000)**

Within the organization of Vermont Housing & Conservation Board is the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability programs. The mission of the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program is to enhance the economic viability of Vermont farms and forestry enterprises. Vermont Housing and Conservation Board's (VHCB) scope of work will be implemented in two phases: succession planning & business assistance and capital readiness. VHCB will provide exiting farmers and forest products business owners with retirement and transfer planning and will provide forest landowners possessing significantly sized properties with family succession planning to ensure healthy, working forests. Farm and forest products businesses will be enrolled to do long-term transfer planning, estate planning, and retirement planning for the exiting generation. The project will address Business Literacy, Coordination of Resources, and Capital Readiness. Areas of technical assistance to promote long term economic viability, will be addressed, serving (26) farms and forest sector businesses.