

Request for Proposal

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Release Date: 11/29/2021**Response Due: 12/21/2021**

PROJECT DETAILS

Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center – Transition to Grazing

The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) hosted at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAF), seeks a contractor to oversee travel logistics, communications, and funds management for a three-day event in Southwest Missouri. A cohort of up to 30 Northeast farmers and additional technical service providers will travel to Missouri for a three-day dairy grazing learning journey. Contractor is not necessary for onsite event management but will be expected to be available to NE-DBIC to troubleshoot issues during the event, as needed.

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT

Name: Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center/ Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets

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TIMELINE

Release Date: 11/30/2021

Contract Start Date: 1/11/2022

Responses Due: 12/21/2021

Contract End Date: 7/11/2022

BUDGET

Maximum budget per project: \$15,000

OTHER BUDGET COMMENTS / RESTRICTIONS / INCENTIVES

None.

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2019, the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC), hosted by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAF) was named one of four national USDA Dairy Business Innovation Initiative centers. The NE-DBIC supports a wide array of opportunities for dairy farmers of cows, goats, and sheep, and value-added processors across the Northeast region of the United States including New England, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. The NE-DBIC has since invested heavily in projects focused on supporting farmers in transitioning dairy production systems to grazing models, including three grazing cohort technical assistance groups across the region, serving approximately 30 farmers in Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, and Pennsylvania, with additional cohorts starting in 2022. The NE-DBIC has also invested in direct technical assistance through projects with both Maine and Vermont Extension Services for farmers interested in transitioning to more grazing/forage-based production.

In May 2022, NE-DBIC will host a learning journey to Missouri for up to 30 farmers and a small number of technical assistance providers. The goal of this experience is to give farmers and technical assistance providers an immersive experience with exposure to alternative, New Zealand-based approaches to grazing production systems in a geographic area with many similarities to the Northeast. In a field-based experience, participants will spend the days visiting several farms in the vicinity of Springfield and Monett, Missouri, engaging through informal educational workshops/Q&A sessions at the end of each day, followed by evening social events hosted by individual area farms.

Farmers that attend this event will be selected by NE-DBIC, with priority going to those dairy farmers that are currently enrolled in one of the current grazing technical assistance cohorts. NE-DBIC will require a deposit to secure the spot for any participant who applies. NE-DBIC will cover the cost of hotels and lunch for each participant for each day of the program. Additionally, each farmer participant will be eligible to receive up to \$1,000 in reimbursements for costs incurred from participating (including travel, substitute labor costs at their own farm, etc.) with some restrictions. Technical assistance providers may or may not be responsible for their own costs of participation.

STATEMENT OF WORK

The NE-DBIC seeks a contractor to coordinate both event logistics and management of funds related to this project. Contractor is not necessary for onsite event management but will be expected to be available to NE-DBIC to troubleshoot issues during the event, as needed.

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- Event Logistics
 - Identify sub-contractors and negotiate contracts for lodging (including conference/meeting rooms), transportation, and lunch each day of the event
 - Coordinate meeting spaces and other needs as appropriate
 - Provide overall event guidance, strategy, and assistance to ensure a smooth and positive experience for participants
 - Assist with the development of the full event schedule
 - Format and print nametags for all participants (attendees, speakers, etc.)
 - Develop any event supplies and final programs/materials
 - Be available to troubleshoot with vendors/location on behalf of NE-DBIC if there are unforeseen challenges related to sub-contracted services

- Communications
 - Develop, with input from NE-DBIC, a welcome packet of information for participants which includes information about airports to fly into, transportation to and from the airport(s), a list of reimbursable expenses (and how to ensure sufficient documentation), event itinerary, restaurants, activities of interest in the area, and local transport options, etc.
 - Field participant travel, logistical, and reimbursement questions
 - Provide ongoing communication with NE-DBIC staff

- Financial Management:
 - Act as a fiduciary for up to \$75,000 in funds for costs related to hotels, transportation, lodging, meals, speaker fees, supplies, participant reimbursements.
 - Using list of selected participants from NE-DBIC, manage all aspects of farmer and technical service provider reimbursable deposits: receive and process payments via credit cards and checks and process reimbursements following event.
 - Receive, process and compile expense documentation from farmer participants and forward to NE-DBIC for approval prior to payment.
 - Provide regular updates and detailed reports of participant payments to NE-DBIC.
 - Thoroughly review of all bills/invoices for accuracy then forward to NE-DBIC for approval prior to payment.
 - Maintain and monitor budget throughout the planning; provide NE-DBIC with continual updates.
 - Final financial reconciliation and detailed reporting.

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TARGET AUDIENCE

Active dairy farmers and technical assistance providers located within the Northeast region (New England, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and/or Pennsylvania) with a goal of transitioning to a grass-based production system will be the audience for this work.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES & DELIVERABLES

The deliverable deadlines below may be subject to negotiation with selected contractor. Contractor will submit to AAFM's contract manager all documentation outlined above, unless otherwise agreed upon during the contract drafting process.

- Contractor will conduct a planning meeting with NE-DBIC staff to discuss and finalize proposed timeline of activities by January 14, 2022.
- Contractor will create a bank account from which to manage all funds related to this grant by January 31, 2022.
- Contractor will secure lodging, meeting spaces, and event transportation reservation by February 28, 2022.
- Contractor will work with NE-DBIC staff to develop an event strategy and run of show.
- Contractor will maintain a responsive and professional communication with NE-DBIC staff and participants.
- Contractor will, in a timely manner, review and provide all bills/invoices from services rendered to NE-DBIC for approval and will process payment within 5 business days of approval.
- Contractor will provide biweekly participant expense and deposit reimbursements reports following the event to NE-DBIC for approval and will process payment to participants within 3 business days of approvals.
- Contractor will maintain and monitor accurate financial management throughout the contract period, providing updates to contractor monthly, or more often as requested.
- Contractor will provide a final accurate financial reconciliation and detailed final report.
- Participants will indicate overall satisfaction with event logistics and reimbursement process.

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SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Please include the following with your response to this bid:

1. **Contractor background and experience.** Contractors are required to show a working knowledge of coordinating events related to this type of experience; describe how they are qualified to manage documentation that aligns with federal requirements; and an understanding of the event logistics needed for the Southwest Missouri geographic area.
2. **Resumes of project team leader and other team members.** Resumes should be no more than 2 pages in length and demonstrate the contractor's background and experience related to this proposal. Including related references is encouraged.
3. **Proposed timeline, activities, and approach to client-contractor communication.** Proposal should define a vision for the client-contractor relationship regarding financial management of the event, event logistics, communications, and on-call support.
4. **Project budget:** Please submit a budget that is both realistic and reasonable to complete the scope of services. Budget must tie specific activities to deliverables, with clear cost associated with each component of the proposal. Proposal shall include an hourly rate for estimated services and any related expenses to be billed, including all materials that need to be printed or purchased for attendees. All State of Vermont contracts are paid based on successful completion of deliverables and approval by the contract manager. Selection of a contractor will strongly consider realistic, necessary, and efficient use of funds.
5. **Proposals** should include all relevant costs required to complete the work as detailed above, note any travel requirements, and include necessary costs to meet insurance requirements of State of Vermont, Standard Attachment C. All costs and activities should conform to Section 8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities of the [2020 AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).
6. **A Certificate of Insurance** which meets the criteria as outlined in [Attachment C](#)
7. **An IRS Form W-9** signed within the last 6 months, if respondent is not currently a State of Vermont supplier.
8. **Contractor's [Unique Entity Identifier \(UEI\)](#)** which should be obtained through SAM.gov