Request for Proposals

**Vermont Grass Farmers Association is seeking consultant support to develop a plan for its next stage of development.**

Introduction
The VGFA is a 501(c)3 non-profit founded in 1996 with the mission to help farmers generate wealth through grass-based farming. Its membership consists of farmers, non-profits, and land owners who work to support a more environmentally and economically sustainable agricultural model.

Organizational goals include:
- Enhancing soil and water
- Building farmer-to-farmer connections
- Upholding the viability and resilience of Vermont’s livestock farms.

Current programs include:
- Vermont Grazing & Livestock Conference--partnering to reach over 350 farmers from six states
- Mini Grant Program--promoting the next level of on-farm research
- Workshops and Pasture Walks--getting off the farm is the best way to learn
- Building the Rutter Fund--promoting farmer-to-farmer mentoring
- State Technical Committee representation--helping set statewide natural resource policy.

Organizational structure:
Currently the VGFA shares a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Vermont Extension Center for Sustainable Agriculture to provide staffing support through targeted federal pasture outreach dollars. Staffing covers conference organization, some on-farm events and board general support. The Board of Directors meets 9 times a year to provide administrative oversight and overall strategic direction.

Organizational Evolution
Over the past several years the VGFA Board has been going through a strategic planning process asking several questions about the organization’s future. The 20th Anniversary of the Vermont Grazing & Livestock Conference will take place in January, 2016 and is intended to highlight future directions and actions.

Through a series of phone calls and facilitated retreats the Board has come to the conclusion that in order to address current opportunities and to fully invest in its mission it must increase organizational capacity.

Services Required
As a first step towards increasing its capacity, the Board is proposals from qualified consultants to develop an Organizational Action Plan that will allow for the hiring of its first staff member. With the right individual fit, the consultant may have the opportunity to become the paid staff member. The plan elements should include:
• **Business and financial assessment** including prospective funding sources and an overall business strategy for the organization to increase its budget, hire some amount of paid staff and maintain the increase going forward. The business plan should have a 3-5 year horizon and be oriented toward organizational self-sufficiency. A mixed-source fundraising plan would be a clear plus, with potential revenue sources identified.

• **Constituent outreach and membership-building plan.** Recognizing that the board is a small part of the organizations current capacity it is essential that through this planning process the organization connect with and seek input from its current and former members, its potential members and friends of the organization, as well as increasing the membership base for income and human capacity.

• **Action plan,** with a menu of actionable items for the next 1-2 years, including timeline and responsibilities (staff/board/external).

**Amount Budgeted**
Rather than a defined budget, the board requests an outline for specific activities or deliverables, in order to build a budget based upon the best fit from the applications received. The VGFA expects a project duration of 3-4 months part time to develop the plan, and has budgeted to support that.

**Qualifications**
Individuals and organizations who have experience with non-profit organizational development, non-profit business planning, and sustainable agriculture are encouraged to apply. Of particular interest to the board are applicants who can bridge the non-profit world and the on the ground world of agriculture. We are seeking well-networked agricultural consultants with strong organizational analysis and financial planning backgrounds. Marketing and fund-raising or grant writing experience a plus.

**Evaluation Criteria**
Selection will be based on:
• Experience
• Connectedness to sustainable agriculture
• Strength of stated plan (outline)

**Directions for Submission**
Proposals should be limited to no more than two pages and consist of the following elements:
• Statement of approach – how will the applicant address the organization at this stage of its life? How does the applicant plan on integrating constituents into the planning process?
• Draft work plan to complete the plan, including timeline.
• Applicant qualifications with descriptions of relevant past work.
• “Time” budget proposal

Proposals should be submitted electronically to Jenn Colby at jcolby@uvm.edu by June 5th. It is expected that a consultant will be in place before the Board’s July 21 Meeting.

For more information about the VGFA, visit:  
[http://www.uvm.edu/~pasture/?Page=vgfa.html](http://www.uvm.edu/~pasture/?Page=vgfa.html)