

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative
The Northern Forest Center and the North Country Council

Agriculture

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Economy Initiative is a joint project of the Northern Forest Center and New Hampshire's North Country Council.

North Country Council (NCC) is an economic development district and regional planning commission serving Coos, Carroll and Grafton counties in New Hampshire. NCC encourages effective community and regional planning for the development of economic opportunity and the conservation of natural, cultural and economic resources.

The Northern Forest Center is a non-profit organization founded in 1997 to mobilize people across the region to build a sustainable economy, conserve the landscape and revitalize the region's communities.

2.0 PROJECT APPROACH

The purpose of the Sustainable Economy Initiative is to develop a strategic blueprint for sustainable economic development in the Northern Forest region based on balanced investment in business, community and environment. A county list defining the "Northern Forest" for the purposes of this initiative is attached.

The project has developed directly from the work and findings of the Northern Forest Lands Council 10th Anniversary Forum. In the first of four recommendations endorsed by the Northern Forest governors, the Forum called for "community and economic development strategies across the region to reinvigorate the rural economies of the Northern Forest."

The Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative aims to:

- Deliver a regional strategy and action plan for revitalizing the declining Northern Forest economy and sustaining the long-term health of its people and lands.
- Provide a framework for new public and private investment in Northern Forest communities.
- Recommend specific actions for leveraging the competitive advantages of the region's natural resource-based economic sectors in to sustainable economic development.
- Create region-wide commitment to action and form networks of individuals, communities, organizations, and governments ready for implementation.

3.0 SCOPE OF WORK FOR THE CONSULTANT

The Sustainable Economy Initiative is scheduled for completion in June, 2008. In order to meet this goal, this Request for Qualifications is to specifically enlist a qualified contractor to

complete the following areas of need:

3.1 **Sector description and growth potential.** Prepare a 15-20 page description and analysis of the agricultural sector- with an emphasis on local agriculture (defined below) in the Northern Forest region. The final product will:

- a. Define the sector and its relative importance to the overall Northern Forest economy using current data and universally accepted measures;
- b. Introduce the important issues and trends for the sector regionally, nationally, and internationally;
- c. Synthesize key issues and concepts drawn from existing data and information and the conclusions of previously conducted analytical work;
- d. Point out key opportunities and challenges for the sector in the region looking forward.

Definitions

Local Agriculture: Produce, meats, or other goods grown or processed in the Northern Forest Region

3.2 **Industry Assessment.** Develop an agriculture industry scorecard (by state) that rates the industry in each Northern Forest state, and substantiates that rank, in the following areas:

- a. **Leadership:** Determine if there is consistent leadership on the local, regional, and state level for this industry area and if the leadership is effective in advocating for their constituents and impacting positive change in the sector for communities, economies, and the environment.
- b. **Policy:** Determine if the sector is advancing policies to support constituents and is impacting positive change in the sector for communities, economies, and the environment.
- c. **Investment:** Determine if there is sufficient investment in the sector from multiple stakeholders (private and public) to support constituents and is impacting positive change in the sector for communities, economies, and the environment.
- d. **Knowledge Development and Dissemination:** Determine if there is an effort on the part of the sector to understand macro and micro trends and if this information is being disseminated to constituents and is impacting positive change in the sector for communities, economies, and the environment.
- e. **Infrastructure:** Determine if there is an appropriate support system in place to foster creativity and innovation and if there is a sufficient physical infrastructure to provide opportunity for constituents and is impacting positive change in the sector for communities, economies, and the environment.
- f. **Innovation:** Determine if there is ongoing innovation to support a dynamic industry.

3.3 **Best practices.** Develop a descriptive inventory of approximately 50 replicable, innovative, and effective agriculture initiatives, organizations, networks, or businesses in the region based on the six criteria described below. This inventory shall include at least five initiatives from each Northern Forest state and build on the existing SEI organization

and research inventory (online at <http://www.northernforest.org/project-inventory.shtml>). The inventory should also include several **rural, regional-based** best practices from international locations.

Initiatives should be considered and evaluated for inclusion in the inventory based on their demonstrated or anticipated ability to impact positive change in the sector in one or more of the following six areas:

1. **Leadership:** e.g. provision of effective leadership within and for the industry on the local, regional, and/or state level for this industry area; effective advocacy for constituents
2. **Policy:** e.g. developing and/or advancing policies to support and grow the sector and support constituents
3. **Investment:** e.g. providing or attracting investment in the sector from multiple stakeholders (private and public)
4. **Knowledge Development and Dissemination:** e.g. an effort to understand macro and micro trends impacting the sector and/or effective dissemination to constituents
5. **Infrastructure:** e.g. provision of a support system to foster creativity and innovation in the sector; new physical infrastructure to provide opportunities for constituents
6. **Innovation:** e.g. new business practices; R&D

Each inventory entry should include the following information and be organized in a Microsoft Access database or Microsoft Excel worksheet:

- a. A description of the initiative, highlighting areas of excellence corresponding with the six criteria above.
 - b. Name of entity, address, website link and principal contact and contact information.
 - c. Mission/goal statement or guiding principles
 - d. Industry area and target clientele (incl. fee range)
 - e. Scale and profile of business (amenities, age, number of products or services available) and future areas of growth
- 3.4 Propose a regional blueprint for expanding a local agriculture strategy based on regional initiatives and entities (as outlined in item #2) identifying:
- a. Demand for locally produced foods outside the region. Develop an overall matrix with specific market outlets for local products.
 - b. Demand for regional level distribution system to connect local suppliers to Northern Forest Region, New England and Mid-Atlantic markets.

4.0 SCHEDULE

Work associated with this project will begin as soon as possible after awarding of the contract and must be completed by May 16, 2008. A project timeline should be included with the proposal.

An interim product that includes full drafts of the sector description and industry assessment components (See 3.1 and 3.2. above) of the requested work and a working draft of the best practices and regional blueprint components (see 3.3 and 3.4 above) is required by April 11, 2008. Final products for all three components must be delivered by May 16, 2008.

5.0 BUDGET & COMPENSATION

A maximum of \$20,000 will be available for Consultant work under this RFQ. Payment for services will be made on a lump sum basis with periodic payments based on progress.

6.0 RESPONSE FORMAT

Responses to this RFQ should consist of:

- A cover letter expressing the firm's interest in working with NCC and NFC and identification of the project manager and/or principal staff – including any subconsultants – that will provide the requested services.
- The approach to be taken toward completion of the project and an explanation of any proposed variations to the work program.
- A list of individuals that will be committed to this project and their professional qualifications.
- Documentation of relevant experience, including a brief project description and a contact name and address for reference.
- Any other information illustrating the respondents' qualifications for performing the work outlined in this RFQ.
- A cost proposal containing estimated cost of each work element and a total project cost. The cost proposal should be submitted in a separate envelope, or-if submitting electronically- in a separate attachment labeled “[consultant name] cost proposal.”

7.0 SUBMISSIONS/SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals from interested consultants must be **received no later than Wednesday, January 30, 2007, 5 pm.** NFC and NCC staff will review proposals and make the final decision regarding selection of a Consultant or Consultants. A Consultant selection and response will be made within ten business days after the submission deadline.

The criteria used in evaluation of the proposals will include:

- Clarity of the proposal, understanding of the project objectives, and responsiveness to the work program.
- The respondent's experience and qualifications to perform the requested service.
- The extent to which the proposed costs, and indicated level of effort, are supported by the activity associated with each work task.
- The degree to which the respondent demonstrates an ability to work effectively and coordinate activities with NFC, NCC and other interested parties.

**Mail all submissions and
Direct all inquires to:**

**Shelly Angers
Northern Forest Center
P.O. Box 210
Concord, NH 03302**

**Telephone: 603-229-0679 ext. 109
Email: sangers@northernforest.org**

Attachment #1- Northern Forest Counties

As considered by the Northern Forest Sustainable Economy Initiative

Maine

Aroostook
Franklin
Hancock
Oxford
Penobscot
Piscataquis
Somerset
Washington

New Hampshire

Coos
Carroll
Grafton

New York

Clinton
Essex
Franklin
Fulton
Hamilton
Herkimer
Jefferson
Lewis
Oneida
Oswego
Saratoga
St. Lawrence
Warren
Washington

Vermont

Caledonia
(Chittenden)*
Essex
Franklin
(Grand Isle)*
Lamoille
Orange
Orleans
Washington

* Metropolitan counties not typically included in the Northern Forest region, but important to understanding economic patterns in the region