

**VYTAL PLANT SCIENCE RESEARCH  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)**



Planning Activities, Project Manager  
Pennsylvania Industrial Hemp Engine Development Project

ISSUED: May 15, 2023

QUESTIONS DUE: May 31, 2023 by 5:00 PM

PROPOSALS DUE: June 15, 2023 by 5:00 PM

INTERVIEWS: To be determined.

PROJECT STARTS: July 1, 2023 (tentative)

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### Project Synopsis

A broad Pennsylvania coalition of public and private entities led by Vytal Plant Science Research, a nonprofit biotechnology corporation dedicated to driving innovation and economic growth in agriculture and plant derived bio-manufacturing industries, has received an NSF Engines Type 1 Development Grant from the National Science Foundation to plan the development of the Pennsylvania Industrial Hemp Engine (<https://www.paihe.org>).

By translating research into practice in partnership with academic, public, private, and nonprofit entities, this Engine seeks to establish a sustainable regional supply chain of industrial hemp that will support the manufacture and deployment of innovative bio-based products for application in green building construction, packaging, textiles, renewable energy, and land remediation. It will also educate a diverse workforce pipeline and nurture entrepreneurship opportunities that will result in increased food security, reduced carbon emissions, and a more circular economy.

The Engine is seeking a contractor that will coordinate a broad strategic planning effort among existing partners resulting in a cohesive plan that meets requirements for a follow-on Type 2 Engine implementation funding application. If awarded, this Type 2 funding would provide up to \$160 million over ten years to implement plan programs and initiatives.

For more information on the NSF Regional Innovation Engines program, visit:

<https://new.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/regional-innovation-engines>

To meet this opportunity, the contractor (hereafter referred to as Project Manager) will coordinate committee work and stakeholder engagement to develop a statewide strategic plan designed to:

- coordinate research and commercialization activities;
- align resources to address the primary gaps in the ecosystem, namely existing regulatory impediments, inferior plant genetics, limited farmer education and confidence in the market, as well as need to identify market potential, public misconceptions of industrial hemp and need for consumer education, and lack of industrial processing facilities to support a sustainable supply chain;
- build upon the work already underway by the PA Hemp Steering Committee, an advisory coalition to the PA Department of Agriculture; ongoing research and educational initiatives at Penn State University, Thomas Jefferson University, and other institutions; and several farms and industries already engaged in industrial hemp production and biomaterial manufacturing;
- broaden the participation of structurally disadvantaged and underrepresented populations – such as women, persons with disabilities, Blacks/African Americans, Latinos/Hispanics, and other racial and ethnic minority populations in the biotech ecosystem in Pennsylvania, and;
- leverage and continue to expand the work of broader multi-institutional STEM education initiatives that are already in the early planning stages among partnering organizations.

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Key objectives of the plan are to:

- develop strategies to fill primary gaps and address critical needs;
- identify funding for the programs necessary to incentivize investment and sustain the Engine;
- identify key infrastructure requirements that will result in a sustainable supply chain necessary to support the manufacture of innovative bio-based materials and products;
- identify innovation resources necessary to support product development, business startups, and investment; and
- develop a Workplace Equity Strategy that meets DEIA objectives for supporting the recruitment, persistence, and retention of diverse employees in the hemp ecosystem in Pennsylvania.

Long term goals are to realize an estimated \$3.5 Billion market opportunity for the Commonwealth, create at least 14,000 jobs throughout the entire supply chain, and position Pennsylvania as a national leader of industrial hemp production and manufacturer of plant-derivative bioproducts.

Risk mitigation and a culture of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) is to be embedded at all levels and within the planning process itself. DEIA activities will include the development of metrics to evaluate DEIA engagement in targeted regions across all sectors of the project to identify gaps and areas of need. With established partnerships that bridge all sectors of this integrated initiative, a synthesis of DEIA messaging will be organized through a strategic communications strategy that ensures that all minority populations in Pennsylvania can be addressed and that metrics are in place to capture this engagement.

Once a planner is hired, the project is expected to be completed within 18 months. The budget for this component is \$150,000.

### ***Lead Organization Responsibilities***

Vytal Plant Science Research (VPSR) is the lead and fiscal agent for this planning grant. The Project Manager will be managed by the CEO of VPSR with advisement from Engine leadership representing academia, private industry, non-profit community and economic development organizations, and state agencies. The leadership team will be responsible for committee formation and work product throughout the planning process.

### **Scope of Work**

The following scope of work is to be performed by the Project Manager under the NSF Engines Development Grant. The list is indicative of the work duties to be performed, but not wholly inclusive in that additional related tasks may be negotiated as a part of this scope of work as they are discovered to have relevance. Through the completion of the activities within the scope, specific measurable outcomes are expected to be reached, resulting in a final project outcome of a completed NSF Engines Type 2 grant proposal.

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The Project Manager will be responsible for facilitating the strategic planning process under the direction of the Leadership Team and informed by Engine Advisory Board members and other stakeholder input. He/she will provide technical guidance and management of the planning process, and guide, coordinate, and compile all committee work product that will result in development of the plan.

Key components of the plan methodology are anticipated to include, but may not be limited to:

- A. Literature review and compilation of relevant data;
- B. Stakeholder and public engagement, including but not limited to facilitated meetings and discussions with the Leadership Team, committee members, and partners; key stakeholder interviews; and design of public surveys. Note that the consultant will not be responsible for holding public meetings but rather advising the Leadership Team on developing a public engagement strategy that may be implemented through its stakeholder network.
- C. Determination existing conditions and current state of Engine;
- D. Refinement of Engine vision, goals, and objectives;
- E. Gap analysis and identification of opportunities and constraints relevant to achieving goals and objectives;
- F. Development of specific research, program, policy, infrastructure, communication, risk management, DEIA, investment, and organizational strategies necessary to grow and sustain the Engine;
- G. Development of immediate, short and long-term action items/projects, determination of lead organizations, and estimation of costs;
- H. Development of metrics for Engine evaluation;
- I. Development of an NSF Engines Type II Proposal narrative and budget necessary to prepare the Engine for implementation funding.

### ***Proposals must include:***

- 1) Statement of Qualifications
- 2) Project Manager Bio(s) and Relevant Experience
- 3) Description of How the Project Manager Will Approach the Project

The rubric for screening the Project Manager Proposals will be reviewed using the below criteria:

<b>Weight</b>	<b>Category</b>
50%	Technical Capability
20%	Experience
20%	Approach
10%	Regional Understanding

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### ***Responding to this RFP***

Proposals will be accepted through June 15, 2023 at 5:00 pm. Applicants may be individual contractors and/or teams with a lead applicant. Proposals must be submitted in PDF format to David Minnig at [dminnig@vpsresearch.org](mailto:dminnig@vpsresearch.org). Top proposers may be asked to interview before a final selection is made.

Questions regarding this RFP should be submitted in writing via e-mail to David Minnig no later than 5:00 PM on May 31, 2023. A consolidated response to questions will be distributed via email to all prospective consultants on June 7, 2023.

### ***Conditions of the Scope of Work***

This will be a firm, fixed-price contract that will include all labor and reimbursable expenses, not to exceed \$150,000 during the first two years of the NSF Engine grant. Negotiations may be undertaken with contractors whose proposals, price, and other factors show them to be qualified, responsible and capable of performing the work. Because this contract requires broad expertise in several areas, VPSR reserves the right to suggest additions to and subtractions from the teams interviewed, and to negotiate with consultants and sub-consultants interviewed to develop a consulting team acceptable to all parties. Following this selection, VPSR will negotiate a contract or contracts for the work and, with the selected consultant, determine the project schedule.

The Project Manager will be paid on a regular basis (no more frequently than monthly) upon receipt of proper invoices, certifications, and progress reports. Payment will be made on a reimbursement basis for services actually performed. Invoices should list expenses charged to this project.

VPSR is not liable for any cost incurred by contractors prior to receiving a "Notice to Proceed" letter.

All documents, maps, digital files, intellectual property, reports, projections or other information produced as a result of the consultant's work under this scope of work are to become public record under the curatorship of VPSR.