



Request for Proposals (RFP)
Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership
Regional Coordination Support

Release Date: Monday December 7, 2020

Proposals Due: Tuesday, January 12, 2021

Contact for Proposals:

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Introduction and Purpose

The Vermont Agricultural Water Quality Partnership ([VAWQP](#)) is composed of nine agencies and organizations that provide education, technical and financial assistance to the Vermont farming community to address water quality and other natural resource concerns on farms, and signed an MOU committing to collaboration in January 2018. The purpose of the Partnership is to coordinate efforts to improve water quality and wildlife habitat on farmland; deliver educational, technical and financial assistance in the most efficient way possible; provide the best possible service experience for landowners; and help the Vermont public understand the water quality achievements of the agricultural community and supporting partners. Coordination efforts include regular meetings and trainings, collective learning and policy dialogue, and facilitation of communication through a website, newsletter, shared file system, and other technologies.

On behalf of the VAWQP, the State Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC) seeks proposals from entities interested in serving as **Regional Coordinators** to support the mission and strategic plan of the Partnership at the local level. The purpose of this coordination is to encourage information sharing, collaboration and coordination among technical and financial assistance providers in order to help farmers achieve measurable water quality results and protect habitats in the most high-quality, cost-effective and positive way possible. NRCC seeks Regional Coordinators in five regions throughout Vermont including:

- Northeast: Orleans, Essex and Caledonia Counties
- Northwest: Franklin, Grand Isle and Lamoille Counties
- Central: Chittenden, Washington and Addison Counties
- Southeast: Orange, Windsor and Windham Counties
- Southwest: Rutland and Bennington Counties

Initial funding for VAWQP regional coordination is provided by the Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food and Markets - Agriculture Clean Water Initiative Program (VAAF), through an agreement with the Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Council (NRCC), a state agency supporting Vermont's 14 Natural Resources Conservation Districts. NRCC will develop and manage subagreements resulting from this RFP.

Scope of Work

Regional Coordinators will build upon past efforts to promote regional collaboration to advance the mission and strategic plan of the VAWQP at the local level. Activities of the Regional Coordinators will include, but are not limited to:

- Serving as an ambassador of the VAWQP Partnership for staff, organizations and media in their region, providing information regarding the purpose of the Partnership, and encouraging participation in regional Partnership initiatives;
- Convening meetings of local Partner staff at least twice annually, with representatives of all VAWQP member organizations invited. (These meetings are intended to facilitate information exchange, learning and coordination of efforts to support the water quality and habitat protection efforts of the agricultural community. The meetings may also be used to elicit local staff recommendations regarding agricultural water quality and habitat protection policies and programs to be communicated to the VAWQP leadership. VAWQP regional coordination meetings may dovetail with other regional water quality meetings such as Local Working Groups, Tactical Basin Planning meetings and Strategic Watershed meetings to avoid duplication, but must have a unique focus on agricultural water quality and habitat restoration as outlined in VAWQP mission and strategic plan.);
- Utilizing various communications approaches and technologies to promote information exchange and learning among local VAWQP staff;
- Developing opportunities that comply with Farm Bill 1619 requirements for confidential sharing of information regarding assistance to and work with specific farms for non-regulatory purposes;
- Collaborating with the VAWQP State Coordinator to orient partner staff to the Partnership. The VAWQP State Coordinator will attend regional meetings when appropriate, and provide support to the Regional Coordinators;
- Providing written reports to NRCC semi-annually and verbal reports to the VAWQP Steering Committee annually. (Reports will summarize activities, challenges, lessons learned, next steps and recommendations.); and
- Providing brief highlights about regional coordination efforts to be included in the VAWQP Newsletter.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants must be a member of the VAWQP. (Natural Resources Conservation Districts are eligible to apply as members of the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts.) The Partnership encourages collaborative proposals between organizations and welcomes creative approaches in achieving regional coordination goals.

Performance Period

Regional Coordinators will serve two-year terms beginning March 1, 2020, with the possibility for renewal pending progress and availability of funding.

Funding and Budget

A total of \$55,000 is available to support five Regional Coordinators for two years. Grantees may request an upfront payment of 20% funding, after which funding will be dispersed twice annually upon receipt and approval of progress report and invoice.

Proposal Content

Proposals may be up to three pages, single-sided in length, including budget, and should include the following content:

- Contact person for the proposal with full contact information;
- Description and work plan of how the applicant will meet the requirements outlined in this RFP, including how the work will advance the mission and strategic plan of the VAWQP and interface with other regional initiatives;
- Proposed personnel;
- Description of capacity and relevant experience of the applicant to serve as Regional Coordinator; and
- Budget that includes personnel hours and billable rate, travel, supplies, and any proposed subcontracts.

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed and evaluated by several VAWQP agency leaders. Recommendations for award will be submitted to the VAWQP Steering Committee for approval. Selection of grantee will be based on the following criteria:

- Proposed activities and work plan (40%)
- Demonstrated capacity, past experience and success (40%)
- Cost effectiveness (20%)

Proposal and Award Timeline

- **Question and Answer Session:** Friday, December 18, 2020, 10-11am via Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84435355447>
- **Proposals Due:** Tuesday, January 12, 2021
- **Notification:** Monday, February 1, 2021