



New York Wine & Grape Foundation

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**Request for Proposals**  
**Business Plan for New York**  
**Viticulture Sustainability Certification Program**  
**December 9, 2020**

**1. Background Information:**

The New York Wine & Grape Foundation (NYWGF) was created by the State of New York in 1985 as a private, non-profit organization. The enabling legislation established a financing mechanism for promotion and research, providing the industry with both short-term assistance and the potential for long-term viability. NYWGF's programs are developed by a 21-member Board of Directors in consultation with other representatives from industry and state government. The activities carried out by NYWGF are designed to support all uses of New York-grown grapes from all regions of the state. The mission of the NYWGF (updated in February 2018) is to "promote the world-class image of New York grapes and wines from our diverse regions to responsibly benefit farmers, producers and consumers through innovative marketing, research, communication, and advocacy." The vision of the NYWGF (updated in February 2018) is "to be the world's premier region for cool and cold climate viticulture."

New York's grape growers face several challenges to premium wine and grape production, including cool temperatures, heavy rains and high humidity increasing the cost and complexity of vineyard management. Simultaneously, New York's Finger Lakes face environmental degradation from land-use management practices that pollute adjacent and downstream waterways. Sustainable vineyard practices are widely regarded as essential to reduce environmental impact and improve the quality of wine for the Finger Lakes region and beyond.

In 2007, a statewide working group completed development of *VineBalance: New York Guide to Sustainable Viticulture Practices*. This exhausted workbook established the initial guidance criteria for producers to self-assess the sustainability of their operations. However, the statewide scope of the workbook makes it overly complicated, time consuming to complete, and occasionally non-applicable in certain regions. Furthermore, at over a decade old, some standards are now in need of updating

**2. Statement of Request:**

NYWGF seeks a consultant to create a business plan for new sustainability certification program for the New York grape and wine industry. The program is intended to start as a pilot program for Finger Lakes grape growers with the intent to expand statewide and potentially regionally. The program will serve grape growers who cultivate vinifera, hybrid, labrusca varieties.

The purpose of the plan is to provide high level strategic and structural recommendations for program design based on industry best practices, while balancing limited financial resources for sustaining the program over the long term.

Working closely with the Executive Director and under the direction of the Board and its committees, the consultant will be responsible for the development a business plan focused on:

- Key Stakeholder Needs
- Programmatic Feasibility
- Long-Term Financial Sustainability

The ideal candidate will be experienced in non-profit financial models and governance, association management, marketing, human resources, and sustainability certifications/programs deployed by other industries.

### **3. Scope of Services:**

#### **Phase 1: Benchmarking and Model Evaluation**

Assess comparable sustainability certification programs for best practices, revenue sources, program expenses, and constituent engagement. Case models include Long Island Sustainable Winegrowing, California Sustainability Winegrowing Alliance, LIVE Certified, Vineyard Team, and Sustainable Winegrowing New Zealand.

- a. Research organizational business models of existing sustainability certification programs available within grape/wine sector, other agricultural industries and best in-class programs from other industries. Provide an analysis of the costs of running a certification program, and the dues, fees and other sources of revenue required to be breakeven or profitable.
- b. Use organizational business model research to make recommendations for New York program financial sustainability via dues, program fees, public and private grants, revenue generating ventures, sponsorships, and other forms of philanthropy.
- c. Review project plan for USDA NCRS CIG grant to prioritize scope of activities over next 5 years to launch pilot sustainability program in Finger Lakes with the objective to build towards a statewide certification program.
- d. Develop and present interim report and findings to Executive Director and Board.

#### **Deliverables:**

Interim report summarizing findings, evaluation program financial sources and project plan proposed in USDA NCRS CIG grant, three to five (3-5) appropriate and informative organizational business model case studies. Propose a program models that would best fit the needs of the New York wine and grape industry.

#### **Phase 2: Business Plan Design and Finalization**

Develop business plan based on the program model proposed in Phase I and create a business plan tailored to NYWGF's current operations, existing and future goals. This should include:

- Implementation and Buildout Plan: Provide a strategy for leveraging current available funding to launch pilot program in Finger Lakes

- Provide budget estimates for program management, grower recruitment and education, grant writing services, and grower inspection.
- Advise on the feasibility and cost of amending Cornell University's VineBalance Workbook to focus on sustainable viticulture practices in the Finger Lakes. See <https://www.vinebalance.com> for more details.
- Operational Plan: Provide a detailed plan for annual program management
  - Describe anticipated back office needs and requirements for an office administrative system with costs for equipment, furniture, systems set-up and training (including a client tracking database)
  - Recommendation for program governance structure, and any requirements for legal assistance and registration or incorporation including estimated legal costs
  - A critical path for pilot phase to statewide buildout that addresses the needs in grower recruitment, grower education, inspection and certification, human resources, marketing, training, equipment and capital requirements, aftercare, legal, administration and bookkeeping
- Marketing and Recruitment Plan: Determine depth and breadth of stakeholder involvement and costs associated with gathering, analyzing, and incorporating feedback to improve long-term programmatic and financial viability.
  - Determine key stakeholder input milestones
  - Determine input channels
  - Determine analysis and reporting mechanisms (both to internal and external audiences)
  - Provide analysis of ROI for stakeholder input (both to internal and external audiences)
  - Provide draft marketing plan (focus on grower recruitment) for program launch including costs and timeline
  - Determine feasibility of aligning with the New York State Grown and Certified program; see <https://certified.ny.gov>
- Human Resources Analysis: Provide a detailed assessment of human resources required to properly execute sustainability certification program.
  - An assessment of capacity of management and staff to deliver current and future identified products, and where outside consultants will be required to deliver program and professional services
  - An assessment of the minimum and optimal level of staffing to properly execute program and ensure long-term program viability
  - An organization chart for all positions involved in sustainability certification program
- Financial Analysis: Provide a complete set of pro forma financial statements for a five-year period.
 

Outputs of the pro forma financial statements:

  - An income and expense statement for program year one through five.
  - A cash flow statement for year one through five.
  - Five years of balance sheets
  - Description of program funding sources:
    - Program dues structure
    - Program fees
    - Analysis of available grant funding
    - Sponsorships
    - Private donors

- Revenue generation recommendations
  - Recommended fund development plan to ensure long-term financial sustainability
  - Present various breakeven (or not) financial scenarios that project how long it will take to make program available statewide and integrate/align with existing in-state sustainability programming
  - Appropriate notes, lists, assumptions, charts and schedules supporting financial statements

#### **4. Project Deliverables:**

- **Phase I** Benchmarking Analysis and proposed model report **due by January 25, 2021**
- **Phase II** Final report containing the detailed business plan model and timeline for the next 5 years to execute the proposed model from Phase I.
- Final presentation of the plan and key steps for NYWGF to complete in the next 12 months.

**The timeframe for the completion of this project is February 26, 2021.**

#### **5. Project Budget**

The budget for this project will not exceed **\$18,000**. This amount must cover all professional services, legal services, and administrative costs, including all fees, travel, telephone, postage, printing, accommodations, meals (if applicable) and GST.

However, the quality of the technical component of any proposal and the expertise of the firm/consultant will be considered in negotiating the final price for the services to be rendered.

#### **6. Evaluation of Proposal**

- Detailed work plan, schedule and budget for this project
- Demonstrated business planning and sustainability certification experience
- Key project personnel and relevant credentials
- Examples of management of similar projects

##### **Authority**

The selected agency will work under the direct supervision and with the prior approval of NYWGF for all program activities. All expenditures must fall within the program budget and must be pre-approved by NYWGF.

#### **7. Discrimination Clause**

The NYWGF is an equal opportunity employer and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital/familial status. The NYWGF complies with all provisions of the U.S. government's Executive Order 11246 dated September 24, 1965 and the rules, regulations and relevant orders of the Secretary of Labor.

## **8. Instructions for Submitting Proposals**

Proposals should be submitted electronically to:

Samuel Filler

Executive Director

Email: [nywgfsustainabilityrfp@nywgf.org](mailto:nywgfsustainabilityrfp@nywgf.org)

Phone: 315-924-3700

**Questions regarding this RFP should be directed to [nywgfsustainabilityrfp@nywgf.org](mailto:nywgfsustainabilityrfp@nywgf.org) no later than December 16, 2020.**

**All proposals are due by 5:00PM on Wednesday, December 23, 2020.**

*NYWGF reserves the right not to award a contract if in the opinion of the evaluators, no suitable proposal is received. NYWGF is not liable for any costs associated with any company's response to this RFP.*