NORTHEAST DAIRY BUSINESS INNOVATION CENTER

Release Date: 3/12/2025

Response Due: 4/11/2025

PROJECT DETAILS

Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center – 2026 Regional Dairy Summit

The Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC) hosted at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM), seeks a conference management company to oversee logistics, communications, and funds management for the Northeast Dairy Innovation Summit. This two-day conference will be held in March 2026, bringing together dairy stakeholders from across the Northeast region. Contractor is expected to be available onsite for event management assistance and to troubleshoot issues during the event, as needed.

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT

Name: Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center/ Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

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TIMELINE

Release Date: 3/12/2025

Responses Due: 4/11/2025

Contract Start Date: 4/30/2025*

Contract End Date: 5/15/2025*

*To be finalized during the contracting process.

BUDGET

Maximum budget for contractor services: $25,000

Contractor will also act as a fiscal agent for additional funds to be utilized for Summit operations, estimated to be $50,000, to be finalized during the course of the contract. Total contract value will include contractor services and fiscal agent funds.

OTHER BUDGET COMMENTS / RESTRICTIONS / INCENTIVES

None.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

In 2019, the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center (NE-DBIC), hosted by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) was named one of four national USDA Dairy Business Innovation Initiatives. The NE-DBIC supports a wide array of opportunities for dairy farmers of cows, goats, and sheep, and value-added processors across the Northeast region of the United States including New England, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania.

The NE-DBIC invests heavily in projects supporting regional resiliency and sustainability for the Northeast dairy sector, including projects focused on dairy farm innovation and dairy processing innovation and expansion.

In April 2024, NE-DBIC held a two-day regional summit in Albany, NY. That summit brought together regional stakeholders around dairy innovation, project impact, and future opportunities to increase resiliency and sustainability. Approximately 220 people attended.

In March 2026, NE-DBIC will host another two-day summit, building off of the 2024 event. The contractor will identify an appropriate location for the summit, support Summit logistics and planning, and provide financial management services with guidance from the NE-DBIC team. Important aspects of the location will be discussed with the contractor prior to them soliciting event locations.

This summit will carry forward the focus on dairy farm and processor innovation, as well as shine a spotlight on dairy workforce development and NE-DBIC funded research. The summit will address how farmers and processors can develop relevant and forward-thinking production systems, and how policy makers can support resiliency that leads to profitable, sustainable dairy businesses for farmers, processors, and the larger region.

We expect between 250 to 350 attendees, with a range of speakers and breakout sessions on topics including workforce development, grazing, innovative technology, ecosystem services, value-added milk production, regional partnerships, and community- and climate-forward dairy production. Dairy farmers that attend this event will be eligible for discounted lodging and conference fees.

STATEMENT OF WORK

The NE-DBIC seeks a conference management company to oversee the Northeast Dairy Innovation Summit, and to coordinate event logistics, communications, and management of funds related to this project.

The conference management company will oversee fiscal management, attendee registration, and on-site support. Specific tasks will include the following:

- Event Logistics
    - Solicit event location proposals, identifying the top 3-5 options that meet the Summit needs, and finalize location details with contract manager input and sign-off.
    - Negotiate contracts for lodging, transportation, and meals including two days of lunch.
    - Coordinate meeting spaces and other needs as appropriate.
    - Provide overall event guidance, strategy, and assistance to ensure a smooth and positive experience for participants.
    - Arrange and pay for speaker travel.
    - Develop, manage, and coordinate attendee registration and create attendee list.
    - Assist with the development of the full event schedule based on location space.
    - Format and print nametags for all participants (attendees, speakers, etc.).
    - Be available to troubleshoot with vendors/location on behalf of NE-DBIC if there are unforeseen challenges related to sub-contracted services.

- Communications
    - Develop, with input from NE-DBIC, a welcome packet of information for participants which includes information about airports to fly into, transportation to and from the airport(s), a list of reimbursable expenses (and how to ensure sufficient documentation), event itinerary, restaurants, activities of interest in the area, and local transport options, etc.
    - Respond to participant travel, logistics, and registration questions.
    - Provide ongoing, regular, and professional communication with NE-DBIC staff.

- Financial Management:
    - Act as a fiduciary for up to $50,000 (final amount may be modified) in funds for costs related to hotels, transportation, lodging, meals, speaker fees, and supplies.
    - Receive, monitor, and utilize sponsorship funds.
    - Receive, process and compile expense documentation from conference speakers and forward to NE-DBIC for approval prior to payment.
    - Provide regular updates and detailed reports of participant payments to NE-DBIC.
    - Thoroughly review all bills/invoices for accuracy then forward to NE-DBIC for approval prior to payment.
    - Maintain and monitor budget throughout the planning; provide NE-DBIC with continual updates.
    - Final financial reconciliation and detailed reporting.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Active dairy farmers, dairy processors, technical assistance providers, and policy makers located within the Northeast region (New England, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, and/or Pennsylvania).

PERFORMANCE MEASURES & DELIVERABLES

The deliverable deadlines below may be subject to negotiation with selected contractor. Contractor will submit to AAFM's contract manager all documentation outlined above, unless otherwise agreed upon during the contract drafting process.

- Contractor will conduct a planning meeting with NE-DBIC staff to discuss and finalize proposed timeline of activities within one week of contract signing.
- Contractor will create a bank account from which to manage all funds related to this grant by May 15, 2025.
- Contractor will secure lodging, meeting spaces, and event transportation reservation by June 15, 2025.
- Contractor will work with NE-DBIC staff to develop an event strategy and run of show.
- Contractor will maintain a responsive and professional communication with NE-DBIC staff and participants.
- Contractor will, in a timely manner, review and provide all bills/invoices from services rendered to NE-DBIC for approval and will process payment within 5 business days of approval.
- Contractor will provide biweekly participant expense and deposit reimbursements reports following the event to NE-DBIC for approval and will process payment to participants within 3 business days of approvals.
- Contractor will maintain and monitor accurate financial management throughout the contract period, providing updates to contractor monthly, or more often as requested.
- Contractor will provide a final accurate financial reconciliation and detailed final report.
- Participants will indicate overall satisfaction with event logistics and reimbursement process.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Please include the following with your response to this bid:

1. **Contractor background and experience**. Contractors are required to show a working knowledge of coordinating events related to this type of experience; describe how they are qualified to manage documentation that aligns with federal requirements; and an understanding of the event logistics needed for the Northeast region.
2. **Resumes of project team leader and other team members.** Resumes should be no more than 2 pages in length and demonstrate the contractor's background and experience related to this proposal. Including related references is encouraged.
3. **Proposed timeline, activities, and approach to client-contractor communication.** Proposal should define a vision for the client-contractor relationship regarding financial management of the event, event logistics, communications, and on-call support.
4. **Project budget:** Please submit a budget that is both realistic and reasonable to complete the scope of services. Budget must tie specific activities to deliverables, with clear cost associated with each component of the proposal. Proposal shall include an hourly rate for estimated services and any related expenses to be billed, including all materials that need to be printed or purchased for attendees. All State of Vermont contracts are paid based on successful

completion of deliverables and approval by the contract manager. Selection of a contractor will strongly consider realistic, necessary, and efficient use of funds.

5. **Proposals** should include all relevant costs required to complete the work as detailed above, note any travel requirements, and include necessary costs to meet insurance requirements of State of Vermont, Standard Attachment C. All costs and activities should conform to Section 8.0 Allowable Costs and Activities of the 2021 AMS General Terms and Conditions.
6. **A Certificate of Insurance** which meets the criteria as outlined in Attachment C
7. **An IRS Form W-9** signed within the last 6 months, if respondent is not currently a State of Vermont supplier.
8. **Contractor's Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)** which should be obtained through SAM.gov