

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Orchard Lease
Vermont State Colleges System d/b/a Vermont State University

ISSUED BY

Vermont State University

APPLICATION DEADLINE

Monday, May 13th, 2024, 5:00 pm Eastern Time

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Email PDF versions of all documents to Glenn.Evans@vermontstate.edu by the deadline, using the following naming convention:

Email Subject Line: *Orchard Lease Proposal*

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE RFP

Questions regarding this RFP may be directed to Glenn Evans Glenn.Evans@vermontstate.edu. Please put ***Orchard Lease RFP Question*** in the subject line of your message. All questions must be submitted by April 29, 2024, 4:00pm ET. Answers will be provided by May 3, 2024, 4:00pm ET, and will be available on www.vsc.edu/rfps.

SITE VISIT

The Orchard will be available for pre-bid viewing at 363 South Randolph Road, Randolph Center, VT 05061 on:

- Tuesday, April 23th from 9:00am to 11:00am
- Friday, April 26th from 1:00pm to 3:00pm

Please call 802-261-5943 once you have arrived and we will be by momentarily to assist. Please submit any questions in writing prior to the end of the Question-and-Answer period described above.

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VERMONT STATE COLLEGES SYSTEM OVERVIEW

The VSCS is currently undergoing a significant transformation, with the guidance of the Governor, Legislature, the Board of Trustees, and the State’s Select Committee on the Future of Public Higher Education in Vermont. The VSCS began working on internal transformation in summer 2020 with the VSCS Forward Task Force and several institutional tasks forces including NVU Strong and VTC’s Transformation Advisory Team.

The [Vermont State Colleges System](#) (VSCS) is comprised of two member institutions – [Community College of Vermont](#) (CCV) and Vermont State University (VTSU). The system educates over ten thousand Vermonters and non-Vermonters each year, employs over three thousand Vermonters, and in Spring 2020, graduated over eighteen hundred Vermonters and out-of-state students into the workforce with certificates and degrees.¹

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Vermont State Colleges System seeks interested parties to submit competitive bids to lease the five-acre You-Pick Apple Orchard in Randolph Center, VT.

The initial lease duration will be one year, ideally beginning Spring 2024. With agreement, subsequent lease terms shall be extended up to a three-year duration, with appropriate opt-out clauses.

Specific Orchard information can be found after the Submission Requirements section of this RFP.

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¹[VSCS Sourcebooks](#) as well as [Board & Committee Meeting Materials and Minutes](#) are available on the System’s website.

EVALUATION

Responses will be evaluated on experience, capabilities, alignment of mission and core values, and costs. Priority will be given to a proposal that shows an:

1. Ability to maintain the orchard to a professional standard, using integrated pest management practices (IPM) and other best-practices in the care of the trees, the production of healthy quality fruit, and the sustainability of the orchard environment.
2. Willingness to provide VTSU access to Orchard operations to serve as an educational learning space/resource, and for coordinated functions with VTSU departments, programs and alumni, including:
 - a. Being the entry location for an annual campus cross-country race
 - b. Sales of apples to external organizations/partners
 - c. Access to the orchard for alumni day events
 - d. Sale of VTSU-Randolph maple syrup at the farm shed during u-pick season
 - e. VTSU student, faculty and staff discounts on apples
3. Willingness and qualification to provide instruction (e.g., lead tours, serve as a guest lecturer or provide support in areas of orchard management (e.g., pest management, production systems, pruning, marketing);
4. Openness to taking on VTSU student interns, and;
5. Retaining a community function to the orchard, including education and exposure of the public to a quality orchard experience, collaborations with local foodbanks for donations, outreach with schools, etc.

Method of Award

The proposals will be reviewed and scored by the Center for Ag and Food Entrepreneurship team and sent to leadership for final approval based on the submission requirements utilizing the scoring rubric attached. The VSCS, in its best interests, reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals, to accept or reject any item or combination of items therein, to waive any irregularities or informalities in any proposal or items therein, and/or to negotiate with particular bidders following the evaluation of proposals without right of recourse by other bidders. A top proposal would be assessed in the judgment of VSCS as best complying with all considerations set forth in this RFP. When VSCS has tentatively selected a successful proposal, VSC may engage in discussions with the bidder to formulate plans in greater detail, to clarify unclear items for either party, and to otherwise complete negotiations prior to formal selection.

Scoring

Criteria	Weight	Maximum Points	Weighted Total
Experience/Business	3	10	30
Approach/Interest	3	10	30
Timeframe/Management	2	10	20
Fee	2	10	20
Total			100

GENERAL CONDITIONS

1. This RFP does not commit the Vermont State Colleges System to award a contract.
2. This RFP and the process it describes are proprietary to the VSCS and are for the sole and exclusive benefit of the corporation. No other party, including any Applicant, is granted any rights hereunder. Any response, including written documents and verbal communication, by any Applicant to this RFP, shall become the property of the VSCS and may be subject to public disclosure as described in the Confidentiality section, below.
3. Submission of a bid indicates acceptance by the party of the conditions contained in this RFP, unless clearly and specifically noted in the proposal submitted and confirmed in the contract between Vermont State Colleges System and the chosen party selected.
4. Responses shall be binding upon the chosen party and irrevocable for up to 60 days following the close of applications.
5. From the release date of this request for proposal until award of the contract, no contact with Vermont State Colleges System personnel or board members related to this solicitation is permitted. Direct all communications to the designated contact on the first page of this request.
6. The Vermont State Colleges System reserves the right to:
 - a. Request clarification and additional information from any party during the evaluation process.
 - b. Re-advertise with either an identical or a revised scope of work or cancel requirements in their entirety.
 - c. Issue subsequent RFPs based on refinement of concepts proposed in response to this request.
 - d. Conduct investigations of the qualifications of the Applicant as deemed appropriate.
 - e. Request the Applicant modify the submitted proposal to more fully meet the needs of the Vermont State Colleges System.
7. The VTSU Orchard shall be returned at the end of the lease in the same condition it was acquired in. (IE Pest management/ Number of spraying applications, or freshly pruned)

CONFIDENTIALITY

The Vermont State Colleges System complies with the Vermont Public Records Act, 1 VSA § 315 *et seq.* which requires public agencies to allow any person to inspect or copy any public record upon request. Accordingly, applicants for this RFP are hereby advised that any communications, data or other information received by the Vermont State Colleges System during the RFP process could be subject to a public records request. However, certain public records are exempt from public inspection and copying, as set forth in 1 VSA § 317©, including, for example, those portions of a record which meet the statutory definition of a trade secret. Accordingly, consultant should submit a second copy of their proposal, from which any portion of the proposal that the consultant reasonably believes to be exempt from disclosure under the Public Records Act has been redacted. By submitting a proposal, you indicate that you understand the requirements of this section and the potential applicability of Vermont's Public Records Act to your proposal.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

All submissions are due no later than May 15, 2024, 5:00 pm Eastern Time.

Write a brief proposal that addresses the services requested. Please clearly state:

1. Your experience and/or existing business.
2. Explain your interest in leasing of the VTSU Orchard.
3. Your timeframe and management plan for taking over daily operations and oversight of the Orchard.
4. The value at which you would be willing to pay for a yearly lease

ORCHARD INFORMATION

There are roughly 4.5 acres, with 400 apple trees, historically managed by farm staff. Most apples are sold you-pick, to third parties, or donated to foodbanks. All of the trees were pruned by a hired professional. Trees are a combination of standard/semi-dwarf trees, mostly Macintosh and Cortland, some Empire, Macoun, Northern spy, and Liberty.

The orchard has been maintained conventionally. Pest management applications occurred up through 2023 with an older John Bean Airblast Sprayer, and seasonal mowing with a Kuhn Flail Mower. Water is available via 2 hydrants in the orchard.

The orchard includes a retail apple shed (no power or water), a small tin shed used for pesticide storage and mixing, and a small wooden shed for storage. There is a designated parking area. The retail operation includes a stockpile of wagons and apple pickers to aid customers in picking fruit. The University manages a webpage and call number to direct and inform customers.

Historic financial averages for the orchard (2019-2022) are:

Apple sales: \$19,445

Material inputs (crop protection, pruning, general supplies, excluding VTSU labor): \$3,969

