



Project Overview

We are seeking the services of an individual or agency who can help us re-imagine the design and user experience of our current website, hardwickagriculture.org. We'll also need assistance with some integrations including: switching to a new URL and associated updates to email and Google Workspace accounts; support with merging contact lists in Mailchimp; and support with integrating our existing Mailchimp account to our new Neon CRM account.

Thanks for sharing your vision for how we can accomplish these things together!

About Us

At the Center for an Agricultural Economy, we take care of each other and the land. Our work is centered in respect, abundance, biodiversity, and generosity. Our programs reflect the needs and values of the people here in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, though our impact extends across the state and throughout the Northeast. We have a diverse range of programs and activities that provide direct support for farmers and food enterprises across the region and provide opportunities for our local community to engage with the land and agricultural systems that nourish us on many levels. Our programs and activities are all woven together by our commitment to *food, people and place*:

Food

We are building a hub for local food. We provide critical infrastructure and business services for farmers and rural food producers of all sizes.

Vermont Food Venture Center

We rent commercial kitchens and storage space to farms and food businesses while providing complimentary technical assistance.

Just Cut

We process local vegetables into ready-to-use cuts for institutional kitchens throughout Vermont and the region.

Farm Connex

We deliver goods for producers whose operations are too small, too rural or too perishable to work with traditional distribution services.

People

We work with people by generating economic opportunities in our region. We invest in the livelihoods of farmers and food workers by providing resources for them to thrive.

Vermont Farm Fund

We maintain a revolving loan fund that provides timely, no-fuss access to capital for businesses in crisis, startup, or growth.

Farm & Food Business Advising

We offer specialized support and assistance to meet the unique needs of farmers and food producers.

Place

We create shared places in our community. We nurture the relationships between food access, community resilience, and environmental and social justice.

Community Space at Atkins Field

We steward a 15-acre field and forest property with wide open gathering spaces, vibrant community programs, and unique amenities.

Place-Based Education

We co-create programming with students, teachers, and administrators to integrate meaningful place-based learning into our rural education system.

Food Justice

We organize and amplify the voices of those impacted by injustice in order to move toward greater food sovereignty in the Northeast Kingdom.

Infused in all of this is a commitment to food and social justice, an emphasis on environmental wellbeing, a foundation in honest and ethical practices, and a bold curiosity that keeps us investigating how we can create resilient and regenerative food systems. We are a dedicated and dynamic group of people who are committed to socially, economically and ecologically thriving communities. We work alongside neighbors and partners to foster interdependence, take risks, and initiate change.

Join us in cultivating abundance for everyone.

Our Current Context

20 Years

We are a maturing organization (celebrating 20 years next year!) going through some big organizational thinking and growing *this* year. In fact, the need for our work has been growing steadily over the past 5 years and we've been scaling up to meet that demand. In the last three years alone, CAE has more than doubled the number of staff and the annual budget has grown from \$1.2 million in 2019 to \$3.4 million 2023. We have integrated several (previously independent) programs into our core services and continue to support an array of corollary initiatives and projects. Much of this growth occurred during the pandemic, which demonstrates the foundational and critical need for our work related to food security, food safety, and food system resilience. We anticipate this growth trend will continue over the next few years, as we embrace the opportunities that continue to arise among our staff, constituents, operations, and programs. For more information, please view our [recent impact reports](#).

Expanding Footprint

In the near future, we will be expanding our footprint in the Hardwick community with an additional location on our campus to house operations for Farm Connex. Our administrative headquarters and our Food Venture Center are already well established locations. Collectively, these three locations will continue to house our various program activities and provide resources for our clients and community. We anticipate the need to build cohesion between the three locations, as well as ensure clarity and accessibility both for the public and for our staff. We see the website as a critical component in that cohesion, and envision exciting ways we can create online, place-based engagement through maps, virtual tours, etc.

Changing Leadership Model

Our leadership model has recently shifted from a singular executive director who oversaw program managers and staff to a trio of organizational leadership. We have added two new director level positions: a Deputy Director who oversees the farm and food-based programs and coordinates with those program managers; and a Human Advocacy Director who oversees the community-based programs and affiliate projects. In addition to our formalized leadership structure, we have many leaders and visionaries working in our ranks. We empower project and program managers to make decisions, which means there is decentralized management of constituents, communications, website maintenance, etc. As we shift into this agile way of working, it is more important than ever to make sure everyone is on the same page. We believe the refreshed website will be a powerful tool to ensure alignment on many levels.

Brand Update

We are in the process of a holistic brand re-assessment with a local design firm who is providing us with ongoing graphic design, strategic design and creative direction for the duration of 2023. [Peltz Creative](#) will be working closely with CAE staff, leadership, stakeholders and contractors to bring our organizational brand to a new level of resonance, as well as help ensure consistency and harmony across all channels of our external communications.

We're looking for the website redesign to accompany and enhance these repositioning and growth areas, but are not looking for a website service team to lead the efforts. We are seeking a web developer who can be a thoughtful, respectful and productive partner in our organizational restructuring while maintaining primary focus on website development and related integrations.

CAE's most recent website was built in 2016 on the Drupal platform. It served us well for that time, but as our programs have grown in breadth and complexity, we are looking for a new website that is more flexible, and has the framework to allow for an engaging and dynamic interface. We are open to many possibilities for what our organization's new online presence will be.

Questions & Challenges

Ever-shifting Landscapes

Because we are agile and responsive to the needs of our community, our programs and service offerings are multi-faceted and ever-changing. Therefore, it can be difficult to clearly and consistently communicate with our (also widely divergent) audiences. We would like to streamline and simplify the way people access information on our website while upholding the rich, layered complexity that makes our work so effective. Peltz Creative will be working throughout 2023 with CAE staff and stakeholders toward iterative, multi-tiered solutions for these challenges. We are hoping the web development team will collaborate in this process and help envision how communications solutions can be expressed online.

Complex Online Footprint

We have several high-level programs that maintain their own websites: the [Vermont Farm Fund](#), [Just Cut](#), and [Farm Connex](#). These sites are (and need to be) distinct from our organizational website, but we would like them to be integrated with our organizational website more successfully than they are currently. We are also part of several community-based projects that maintain their own websites (i.e. [Nourish Hardwick](#)), which can also create some audience confusion. An ongoing challenge is how to organize, position, and clarify these multiple related websites within the CAE online experience and overall brand.

Audience Insights

We will be working with Peltz Creative to more clearly identify the audiences for the primary CAE website, understand their needs and motivations, and integrate those insights into our shared work on the website. We will need to identify how we are driving audiences to our new website, and how their online experience with us can increase their support of or engagement with our organization. How does the website move them to action? What is the action they can take on the website or elsewhere?

Content Management

We have a lot of content on our existing site, some of which will move to the new website and some will not. How do we efficiently deal with content management, creation and migration?

Positioning Positive Growth

Our organization was founded and is rooted in Hardwick, Vermont, and works closely with our local community. As we've grown and added new programs, our social enterprises and much of our work is now regional and state-wide. We are aware this aspect of our growth comes with some tension or questions of allegiance. We would like our online presence to celebrate our position as a state-wide organization and the wide reaching impact of our social enterprises, while simultaneously celebrating the work we do in Hardwick and the surrounding communities.

Our Goals & Assumptions

Overarching Goals

- 1) To help our audiences understand our organization and programs more clearly. We would like to present streamlined/efficient content and wayfinding so that we can create ample space for relational experiences and galvanizing shared stories.
- 2) To create a primary method to bring our revised organizational brand to life. The refreshed look, feel and tone of our organization is being co-developed with Peltz Creative, and we hope to partner with a web developer who can embrace and advance this effort with their unique set of skills and insights.
- 3) To provide an easier, more intuitive back end management experience for staff who are adding/editing content. We would like to establish conventions so that content updates done by a wide variety of people can maintain quality, consistency, and alignment with our redeveloped brand standards.
- 4) To create an engaging, uplifting, dynamic, and visually appealing online experience.

Tactics, Assumptions and Questions

- How can we create better synthesis with our social media accounts?
- How can we use our existing, high-quality video assets in a more compelling way?
- Do we launch a blog feature as a way to share stories?
- We need better ways to take online donations
- We assume the end result will be optimized with SEO best practices
- We assume ADA compliance
- We assume end results will be responsive for for smartphones and tablets

- We would like to publish our annual report and selected other publications and documents. How might this be accomplished? Micro-site(s)?
 - Do we produce content in any language other than English?
 - How can we leverage maps as a way to communicate the reach and scope of our work? We're interested in exploring interactive mapping features.
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Scope of Work

We anticipate the work to rebuild our website will include the following broad categories, however, these are not required and we seek your guidance to lead us through the process to reach the goals identified above.

Discovery & Information Architecture

We are seeking support in thinking holistically and creatively about how CAE can articulate our vision, values, programs and other brand tenets through a re-imagined website experience. We also need help organizing our programs and information in the best way possible, including navigation, sitemap, content flow, etc. Questions to consider:

- *How would you approach this project from a big-picture perspective?*
- *How would you tackle information design, content management, and/or site architecture?*

Visual Design & Technical Build-out

We want it to align with our brand, we want it to look great, and we also want it to work really well for the user. We are looking for strong visual design skills and the potential for customization as needed. We need a user-friendly back end interface for staff maintenance. Peltz Creative and CAE staff will collaborate with the web team on the development of the visual design direction and provide ongoing creative direction and feedback. Questions to consider:

- *Please share your thoughts on working from a team-based approach and more information about your design process.*
- *Please be specific about which platform you will use to build the site and why you believe it is a good fit for this project.*
- *Please describe your process for building/iterating/testing the new site and how you will support the launch.*

Domain name change

We currently use hardwickagriculture.org but this will change to a new URL (still to be determined). We need full support making the switch. Questions to consider:

- *Please articulate what you imagine being required to make a successful domain name switch.*
- *Please describe how you will support our transition to a new domain name, including changes to staff emails and other items implicated by a domain name change.*

Google Workspace Merge

Since we've recently acquired a few programs and initiatives, we currently operate with 3 Google Workspace accounts. We need help streamlining these.

- *Please describe how you can work with Google Workspace integrations.*

Mailchimp Merge & Neon Integration

We need some support with two systems that relate to and integrate with our website: [Neon One CRM](#) and Mailchimp. We are hoping to work with a web team who is either familiar with these platforms for database and constituent management tools and/or willing to develop the necessary skills to work with them.

As we move forward with a new website, our hope is for effective integration with Neon, which we use for online donations and workshop registration. We're interested in how we can optimize use of this tool; for example we realize Neon has more capacity for graphic design and branding than we have had time to explore. In general, we welcome a team with knowledge of the platform to help us leverage all its potential.

We would also like someone to help us with some list maintenance in Mailchimp. Specifically, we need to merge two separate Mailchimp accounts, ensure the resulting list does not include duplicates, upgrade to a paid account, and properly segment the new list(s). If possible, we would also like support to cross reference the names in Mailchimp with those in Neon to make sure everyone is accounted for and in the correct place.

- *Please describe your proficiency and experience with Neon and Mailchimp.*
- *Please share your experience with database management tools in general*
- *How would you approach and support these mergers & integrations?*

Maintenance

After the completion of this project, we anticipate the need for occasional support and smaller, discrete projects from time to time; occasional support to ensure we are using the new site to its full potential; and occasional maintenance and assistance with software updates.

- *Please describe if /how you would approach a long-term relationship for ongoing maintenance and/or occasional help with discrete projects.*

Evaluation Criteria

The following are key features we are looking for in competitive candidates:

Comfortable and enthused by working in a team-based, collaborative manner

Led by values of respect, equity and inclusion and/or who have strong guiding principles that align with our principles

An understanding that this project does not fit neatly in a box and will require agility, creativity and future-oriented thinking

Adept in managing and organizing complex content/information and skilled in producing dynamic visual content

Efficient and clear communicators with a good dose of realistic positivity

Able to provide full wraparound support with integrations and mergers, including some proficiency in Neon and Mailchimp.

Proposal Submissions

Please provide the following three components in your proposal.

1) Please provide a written response to this proposal.

We are not imposing any limitations or requirements here, so please share whatever you feel is appropriate for us to consider. You may refer to the evaluation criteria or prompt questions provided.

2) Please provide examples of other websites you've built.

In particular, we are looking for examples you have created that illustrate skills or solutions that could be applied to the complexities and particulars shared in this proposal.

3) Please provide a proposed timeline and budget for this proposal.

We have funds earmarked for this job in the range of \$30,000-\$40,000, but we invite you to propose the budget you anticipate will be required to do the work well.

RPF Submissions Due: Monday, April 17, 2023

Video Interviews (for selected candidates): The week of May 8-12

Notification of Decision: No later than Wednesday, May 17

Email RPF Submissions and any questions to: Lylee Rauch-Kacenski at lylee@hardwickagriculture.org