



Center for an
Agricultural
Economy

Home of the
Vermont Food
Venture Center

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Executive Director Search – Organizational Profile and Vision

Introduction

The Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) is recognized as an innovative organization within the local food system of Vermont and New England. The organization tackles core issues within the food system, utilizing community and economic development strategies and a whole systems approach. The organization seeks an individual passionate about connecting community to place-based economies, a collegial leader willing to roll up their sleeves in a small organization, and a strategic systems thinker to guide, sustain and develop this growing organization. CAE's new Executive Director will possess a combination of managerial and entrepreneurial skills and will lead a team of exceptional and committed staff.

Founded in 2004, the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in Hardwick, Vermont. CAE envisions a future with thriving landscapes, healthy local food, and vital, equitable communities.

We believe a place-based agricultural economy and intentional community development is the path to this future. Through programs that support food access, farm viability, and working landscapes, CAE is building a healthy, regenerative food system by promoting local foods and the people who produce them. We believe in a whole systems approach that meets the needs and aspirations of the community and ensures economic and ecological stability and abundance.

We seek an individual who appreciates CAE's deep connections to the greater Hardwick area and is able to help cultivate a broader base of committed supporters. A strong candidate would have knowledge of federal grants and programs, agriculture, local food system work, rural Vermont, economic development and place-based strategies. Familiarity with conservation, municipal planning, development and mission-driven social enterprise management is helpful.

The Executive Director will be responsible for providing leadership and direction toward the achievement of CAE's mission and goals; administering the operations and programs of CAE; executing the policies established by the Board of Directors; overseeing the preparation of meaningful reports reflecting the financial health of the organization; providing human resources leadership and staff supervision; and representing the goals and work of the organization to the wider community.

Center for an Agricultural Economy

CAE is a leader in the local food system development and maturation. CAE is recognized as an innovative and entrepreneurial organization, willing to take on tough projects and see them through. Some of the major activities of the organization include:

Vermont Food Venture Center: a 15,000 sq foot food and farm business incubator, with rental kitchens and storage space, fee-for-service technical assistance and shared infrastructure

Farm-to-Institution Social Enterprise: embedded within the Food Venture Center, CAE's own minimal processing program, purchasing local vegetables and providing volume processed products, specifically for food service and institutional markets

Farm & Food Businesses Advising: in partnership with Vermont's Farm and Forest Viability Program, CAE provides technical assistance, business planning and more to farm, food and working lands clients – one-on-one in depth advising

Innovative Financing: The Vermont Farm Fund and Vermont Equipment Access Program are CAE's two innovative financing mechanisms to support growing farm and food entities. Both are revolving funds; the Farm Fund has made over 70 loans for more than \$1million across the state, and the Equip Access Program has leased equipment to value-added processors graduating from the Venture Center and Mad River Food Hub.

Place-Based Education: a partnership with our rural school district, emphasizing and supporting sustainability and place-based education structures, with student and community-led initiatives and partnerships

Food Access & Equity: spanning volunteer events and an ongoing commitment to our partnerships with the Hardwick Area Food Pantry, this area includes "Grow Your Own", and Pies for People, and other specific activities each year

Community Programs at Atkins Field: using our commons in downtown Hardwick, we are focusing on support for community gardeners, Farmer's Market, and the creation of a multi-use educational and recreational space that embodies our history and our agricultural assets for the region

An elected Board of Directors of approximately 11 Vermonters approves the annual budget, works collaboratively with the Executive Director and senior staff on strategic planning, and conducts the fiduciary function of overseeing the performance of the organization. The Directors are also CAE's link to the communities and citizens of the greater Hardwick area bringing community perspectives and intelligence to board discussions and strategic thinking.

Primary Responsibilities of the Executive Director

Organization Budget and Financial Responsibility. Evaluates the ongoing success of CAE and plays a lead role in ensuring long-range fiscal stability. In collaboration with the Finance Director, develops CAE's annual operating and capital budget, and presents it for board review and approval. Oversees the

administration of budgets and tracks budget performance throughout the year, and reports on such to the board.

Donor Development and Foundation Cultivation. Helps grow programmatic financial resources by engaging in fundraising initiatives and assuming responsibility for major donor cultivation, and playing a key role in implementing major donor strategies and programs. In collaboration with the Development Manager, oversees philanthropic foundation relationships, communications and solicitations.

CAE Program Growth and Sustainability. Plays a leadership role in research, design improvements, development, and evaluation efforts related to existing CAE programs, projects, and operating systems. Responsible for leading the ongoing impact evaluation and framework for CAE's Theory of Change.

Organizational Culture. Leads and ensures the continued growth and effectiveness of people practices that value learning, professional development, mutual respect, collaboration, and transparent and proactive communications with all team members, and encourages development of people strategies and programs to attract, engage, support, develop, reward, and retain CAE's valued employees

Organizational Leadership and Outreach. The Executive Director serves as a leading public communicator of CAE's goals, mission and successes. Develops and maintains partnerships and alliances with non-profit and for-profit entities aligned with CAE's objectives. Regularly engages in problem solving and relationship-building with members, donors, public officials, and members of the public. Works with local, regional, state, and federal government entities to promote awareness of CAE's programs.

Mission and Vision. Works closely with the Board of Directors in the evolution of CAE's Strategic Plan, and in the definition of long-term goals and short-term objectives. Provides administrative leadership, liaison functions, and staff support to the board and its committees, and with the board chair, develops and co-manages board agendas and accountability.

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

- Knowledge equivalent to completion of a college degree and a minimum of 5 years of relevant experience managing and developing an entrepreneurial non-profit or small business, public policy development, economic program development and management, and/or development and fundraising. Another combination of education and experience providing comparable knowledge and skills may be acceptable. Several years of experience as an Executive Director and/or small business leader preferred.
- Experience leading an organization through times of transition and growth.
- Broad and substantial knowledge of the pertinent policy issues, applicable laws, and regulations of local food systems preferred.
- Developed capabilities in program and operations planning and evaluation, fiscal management, budget development and implementation, human resources management, fundraising, community relations, and policy development.

- Excellent planning, organizational, administrative, strategic thinking, analytical, and creative problem-solving skills.
- Executive leadership experience and capabilities with a collegial, inclusive approach to working with, supporting, and facilitating the development of a strong staff. This includes a developed ability to promote initiative, independence, and teamwork.
- Experience working with a board of Directors in a nonprofit setting, preferably with a transparent and engaged relationship between board and E.D. concerning strategy, finance, and basic organizational direction.
- Track record of developing strong personal and professional networks.
- Strong understanding of and ability to function in a rural environment and culture. A familiarity with the history, culture, and polity of Vermont preferred.
- Excellent interpersonal, oral, and written communication skills, including public speaking, storytelling, presentation, advocacy, and developing and maintaining external relationships.
- Authentic, enthusiastic, personable, transparent and tactful. Experience working successfully with a diverse array of stakeholders with positive results.

How to Apply

Applicants will be considered on a rolling basis and are asked to kindly submit a cover letter and resume to recruitment@hardwickagriculture.org for consideration by the search committee. Interviews will begin in February.

If you have questions, you may also contact our external search partner, Beth Gilpin Consulting, at recruitment@hardwickagriculture.org. Beth will be monitoring this email account and would be happy to speak with individuals seeking additional insights before applying.

The Center for an Agricultural Economy is proud to be an Equal Opportunity Employer. In addition, CAE takes pride in a workplace setting that is open, safe and welcoming, and is committed to cultural competency trainings and ongoing learning for our staff.