



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Organizational Partnership for Coordination of the Vermont Envirothon Program

Issued by the **Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD)** in coordination with the **Vermont Envirothon Steering Committee**

Release Date: September 14, 2026

Proposal Deadline: October 4, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.

1. Introduction

The Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (VACD), on behalf of the Vermont Envirothon Steering Committee, is seeking proposals from Vermont Natural Resources Conservation Districts (NRCDs) interested in serving as the **Organizational Partner** for the statewide Vermont Envirothon program.

For more than two decades, the Vermont Envirothon has provided hands-on environmental education for high school students, engaging them in natural resource science, watershed stewardship, critical thinking, and problem-solving. The program is supported by a dedicated volunteer Steering Committee made up of representatives from Vermont Fish & Wildlife, the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Agency of Agriculture, NRCS, USFS, local NRCDs, and other conservation organizations.

Recognizing the increasing need for program stability and growth, the Steering Committee has determined that an organizational partner—with staffing capacity, administrative infrastructure, and strategic leadership—is essential to the program’s future success. VACD will serve as fiscal agent; the selected NRCD partner will lead day-to-day coordination, implementation, and development of the program.

This RFP is intended to secure coordination services for the 2027 Envirothon competition, with the possibility of renewal for subsequent program years based on performance, funding availability, and any refinements to the program model.

Eligible Applicants:

- Proposals are welcome from any Vermont Natural Resources Conservation District.

- Districts may apply individually or collaboratively.
- Subcontracting is permitted with Steering Committee approval for curriculum development, event staffing, communications, or other specialized tasks, provided roles are clearly described.

The selected partner will work closely with VACD and the Steering Committee during an initial transition period to ensure continuity of program delivery beginning in the week of **October 26, 2026**.

2. Scope of Work

The selected NRCD partner (or partnership of NRCDs) will lead coordination, delivery, and advancement of the Vermont Envirothon. Responsibilities include the following core areas:

A. Program Coordination & Event Management

- Plan, coordinate, and deliver all aspects of the annual Vermont Envirothon, including Training Day and Competition Day.
- Manage logistics: event site scheduling, registration, communications with coaches and teams, volunteer and judge coordination, event materials, scoring systems, food, awards, press outreach, and post-event follow-up.
- Oversee timelines, permission slips, T-shirt and plaque orders, thank-you letters, and coordination with the Vermont Envirothon national competition.
- Ensure events adhere to accessibility, safety, and youth-protection standards.
- Produce an annual workplan outlining tasks, timelines, and staffing roles.

B. Statewide Outreach, Recruitment & Public Engagement

- Design and implement a statewide recruitment strategy to increase program participation.
- Coordinate with NRCDs conducting school outreach and recruitment in their regions.
- Maintain year-round public relations, including website updates, brochures, welcome packets, social media presence, newsletters, and attendance at youth and educator conferences.
- Strengthen participation from rural, underserved, and under-resourced schools.
- Build relationships with teachers, schools, community partners, and youth-serving organizations.

C. Curriculum, Training & Educational Resource Development

- Maintain and update, if needed, curriculum and teacher support resources related to soil, aquatics, wildlife, and forestry. The Steering Committee will provide baseline resources from past events.
- Develop or coordinate development of 2027 Current Issue Study Guide. The 2027 Current Issue will be “Soil Health Management: Agricultural Principles and Stewardship”. The Steering Committee will provide example study guides from past years, connect the awardee with subject-matter experts across agencies and organizations, and participate in review and approval of the 2027 Study Guide. While the awardee will serve as primary compiler/author, substantial content guidance and topic expertise will be available.

- Update and maintain the Envirothon training resources guide.
- Provide training webinar series for coaches and teams. The virtual model used in recent years includes station leaders offering live one-hour sessions with 30 minutes of optional Q&A with recordings made available to teams. The awardee will coordinate scheduling, platform hosting, and distribution of session recordings, while station leaders will develop and deliver the training content.
- Collaborate with subject-matter experts and contracted curriculum specialists.

D. Fundraising & Grants

- Lead fundraising for annual program operations
- Identify funding opportunities; prepare grant applications; maintain timely reporting for all grantors.
- Pursue sponsorships, donor relationships, and strategic partnerships.
- Coordinate fundraising goals and messaging with VACD and the Steering Committee.

E. Steering Committee Engagement, Administration & Program Management

- Support the Steering Committee by scheduling and facilitating meetings, preparing agendas, sharing progress updates, and maintaining clear workplans and timelines.
- Provide quarterly written progress reports summarizing accomplishments, challenges, and participation metrics.
- Manage program administration including contracts, recordkeeping, communications, and required reporting.
- Prepare an annual budget, track expenses, and coordinate with VACD for financial oversight.
- Serve as the central point of communication among district partners, educators, state and federal agencies, funders, and community collaborators.

F. Minimum Annual Deliverables

The selected NRCD partner will be responsible for completing the following minimum deliverables each program year:

- 2027 Vermont Envirothon Workplan submitted to VACD & Steering Committee by November 30.
- Statewide Recruitment Plan finalized by January 15.
- Draft Current Issue Study Guide completed by February 15.
- Final Current Issue Study Guide completed by March 1.
- Provide update on confirmed teams as of March 15. If a minimum of four teams representing at least two schools has not been reached, the Steering Committee will decide prior to April 1 whether to continue with plans to hold the event in 2027.
- Training logistics for a virtual training series finalized and public announcement sent by March 1.

- Training series hosted during the month of April.
- Competition Day fully planned (site confirmed, volunteers recruited) by April 1.
- Voluntary After Action Review (AAR) meeting or survey completed with the Steering Committee, station leaders, site host, and school representatives within two weeks of Competition Day.
- Annual Budget, Final Report, and Participation Summary submitted by June 30.

Completion of these deliverables will be linked to contract renewal and annual funding decisions.

3. Desired Qualifications

Proposals should demonstrate the following organizational qualifications:

Education & Experience

- Experience in environmental education, watershed science, natural resources, or related fields.
- Proven ability to coordinate educational events, youth programs, or statewide initiatives.
- Successful track record in outreach, recruitment, and engagement with schools and youth-serving organizations.
- Familiarity with Vermont's environmental education networks, NRCDs, state agencies, and conservation partners.
- Experience with grant writing, fundraising, and program sustainability.
- Curriculum development or teacher professional development experience (preferred).

Program & Project Management Skills

- Strong organizational and project management abilities.
- Ability to coordinate complex logistics involving multiple sites, volunteers, partners, and timelines.
- Experience with budgeting, contract management, and reporting.
- Capacity to lead and support volunteer committees.

Communication & Relationship-Building

- Excellent verbal and written communication skills.
- Ability to build trusting relationships with educators, resource professionals, and community partners.
- Experience in outreach, marketing, and public engagement.

Fundraising & Sustainability

- Demonstrated success in securing grants, sponsors, and diversified funding sources.
- Experience developing multi-year funding strategies.

Technical & Content Knowledge

- Working knowledge of aquatic ecology, watershed science, forestry, soils, wildlife, or related fields.
- Familiarity with field-based, hands-on learning models.

Leadership & Professional Attributes

- Self-directed, highly motivated, and adaptable.
- Commitment to youth development and environmental literacy.
- Ability to represent the Envirothon professionally in statewide and regional settings.
- Commitment to equity, inclusion, and statewide access.

Technology Skills

- Proficiency with standard office software, spreadsheets, databases, and virtual meeting tools.
 - Ability to maintain website content and manage digital communication platforms.
 - Comfort with virtual training formats and online learning tools.
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4. Proposal Requirements

Proposals from a single NRCD or collaborative group of NRCDs are welcome.

A complete proposal must include:

1. Cover Letter

- Organizational interest and vision for the Envirothon program.
- Summary of capacity and alignment with program values.

2. Narrative Proposal

- Approach to each major task in the Scope of Work.
- Plan for statewide NRCD involvement.
- Description of strategies to increase participation, expand equity, and reach underserved communities.

- Identification of any subcontractors and their roles.

3. Organizational Capacity Statement

- Qualifications and relevant experience.
- Past performance with similar programs.
- Proposed staffing structure and roles.

4. Budget

- Estimated annual cost to deliver the full scope of work.
- Staffing hours, fringe, operating costs, event and curriculum costs, and administrative overhead.
- Short-term fundraising strategy.
- Any proposed in-kind contributions.

5. Timeline

- Proposed annual work schedule including transition, recruitment, curriculum development, Training Day, Event Day, and reporting.

Note: For FY27, VACD anticipates that approximately \$10,000 in existing funds will be used to support the Envirothon, consistent with historical program costs. Applicants are encouraged to identify additional funding opportunities to help support this year's program and should plan for continued fundraising to help sustain the program in future years. Proposed budgets should clearly identify anticipated program costs and any expenses expected to be supported through fundraising or other outside sources.

5. Contract Term

The initial contract will cover **October 26, 2026 through June 30, 2027**, with potential renewal (July 1 through June 30 of the following year) based on performance and funding availability. The Envirothon Steering Committee Chair will schedule an initial coordination meeting for the week of October 26. The selected partner will be expected to attend this meeting (tentatively October 28, with flexibility to adjust based on mutual availability).

6. Submission Instructions

Proposals must be submitted electronically to:

Julia King

julia.king@vacd.org

Subject Line: “RFP Submission – Vermont Envirothon Organizational Partner”

Deadline: October 4, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.

7. Procurement Timeline

- RFP Released: September 14, 2026
 - Deadline for Questions: September 20, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.
 - Answers Posted: September 25, 2026 by 5:00 p.m.
 - Proposal Deadline: October 4, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.
 - Envirothon Steering Committee Review: October 5 - 13, 2026
 - Selection Notification: October 19, 2026 by 5:00 p.m.
 - Contract Start: October 26, 2026
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8. Selection Process

The Vermont Envirothon Steering Committee will review all proposals and score them based on:

- Quality of proposed approach – 30%
- Organizational capacity & staffing – 25%
- Single-Year Funding strategy – 20%
- Statewide outreach & equity strategy – 15%
- Cost effectiveness – 10%

VACD will administer contracting following the Steering Committee’s selection.

9. Questions

Please direct all questions regarding this RFP to **both** of the following contacts:

Julia King

VACD, Communications Manager
julia.king@vacd.org

Jessica Sherlock

VACD, Deputy Director
jessica.sherlock@vacd.org

Questions must be received by September 20, 2026. Answers will be posted publicly at www.VACD.org/Envirothon-RFP to ensure equal access.