Summary and Purpose:
Applicants are invited to review and respond to this Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Specialty Crop Agricultural Workforce Development Program (AWDP). The AWDP is funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Specialty Crop Block Grant program. AWDP will better integrate and align workforce needs of the specialty crop industry with educational pathways provided by California’s Community Colleges.

Goals include the creation of career pathways and advancements for agricultural workers within the Community College system, increasing connections of the potential workforce with growing job availability with agricultural employers and expanding opportunities for local and regional food systems and climate smart agricultural programs. All of this is accomplished with a lens of equity and focus on socially disadvantaged and underserved individuals.

The Central Valley Community Foundation and partners were recently awarded $65.1 m through the Department of Commerce for its F3 Future of Food Innovation Initiative. This initiative centers around agriculture as the economic lifeblood of the Central Valley and as a central driver of the nation’s food supply. F3 brings together partners from a five-county region (Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kings) to build a climate smart ag economy that centers around disinvested workers and addresses the most pressing climate issues including clean air and water.

A major component of the F3 Initiative, AgTEC, creates a pipeline of high-skilled workers through an 8 campus community college partnership that will develop an Agrifood Systems certificate allowing for incumbent workers to access higher paying jobs. Once created, the program can train up to 8,400 workers annually and half of those spots will be reserved for those highest at risk of losing their jobs due to automation.

AWDP aligns and upscales agricultural workforce skills and training to meet modern needs of the specialty crop industry. Advances in agricultural technology, climate smart ag production, supply chain challenges and transformation of local and regional food systems create unique educational opportunities for individuals considering a career in agriculture.

As challenges surrounding skilled labor shortages continue to grow, opportunities arise to transform our educational offerings and integrate them with the needs in the specialty crop industry.
EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND CONSULTING DESCRIPTION:

The Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) is seeking two contracted regional directors to oversee implementation of AWDP at the local level. Contractors will work with CVCF to support the AgTEC Initiative, recruit and connect employers to Community Colleges to explore workforce development and job placement opportunities, and support the development of the first of its kind competency based education certificate. Contracted Regional Directors could create advisory boards to promote compatible program development and employ other, related strategies to deliver the expected outcomes.

Duties and outcomes include, but are not limited to:

- Assess skills gaps and career opportunities in the specialty crop sector by analyzing labor statistics data and working with industry leaders;
- Analyze, identify and quantify challenges and opportunities to developing ag career pathways within the Community College system including, but not limited to: issues surrounding teacher shortages, inclusion and consideration of curricula to be included in agriculture pathways (i.e. ag-related curriculum), etc.;
- Engage selected Community Colleges to envision, create and implement aligned agricultural career pathway opportunities for students through the creation of AgTEC’s Agricultural Systems Certificate;
- Connect Community Colleges with potential employers for internships, apprenticeships and other employment opportunities for students;
- Build mutually beneficial relationships between Community Colleges and potential employers to ensure successful career pathways for students and workers;
- Host regional meetings aligning potential employers with Community Colleges and/or student population (determine on an as needed basis);
- Create necessary materials to attract students and host regional meetings;
- Travel to Community Colleges and meet with industry partners and farmworker organizations on an as needed basis;
- Work with CVCF team to engage specialty crop industry leaders and fulfill necessary reporting requirements under the Specialty Crop Block Grant program; and
- Attend regional workforce development conferences.

LOCATIONS:

CVCF’s office is located in Fresno, CA. Selected consultants will provide their own office space and be available for in person meetings at CVCF, participating Community Colleges, and industry sites as needed.
COST DETAILS:
Seeking two contractors to work in the Fresno/Madera/Tulare/Kings Region with a cap of $405,000 each through August 2025 ($405,000 is the total amount per contractor over the course of three years).

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS FOR PROPOSERS:
Candidates for this RFP have significant experience with local economic and workforce development initiatives in the agricultural sector, experience with the Community College system and development of career pathways and/or curriculum, and knowledge of California’s specialty crop industry and the industry associations and networks that support the sustainability of specialty crop producers.

PROJECT DURATION: January 1, 2023 – August 30, 2025

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION:
Proposals must be under 15 pages in length, include a full statement of qualifications, and a scope of work that ensures delivery of the outcomes listed above. Proposals must be submitted by January 13, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. to heather@centralvalleycf.org.

CVCF believes this RFP is complete in its scope and explanation of work. However, if questions arise, please e-mail heather@centralvalleycf.org.

CONTACT INFO:
Heather Brown, Chief Operations Officer – heather@centralvalleycf.org
Elliott Balch, Chief Impact Officer – elliott@centralvalleycf.org