Request for Proposal: Wood-Based Textiles Market Opportunity Assessment

Organizational Background:

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund is a statewide non-profit whose mission is to accelerate the sustainable development of Vermont's economy, focusing on a few key sectors: agriculture, forest products and clean energy, with a climate resiliency and equity lens. In partnership with the Working Lands Enterprise Board Forestry Committee, we developed the Vermont Forest Industry Network in 2018 to create a space to facilitate value chain activities that will encourage businesses in the forest economy to expand or develop new products or services. Our exploration of mass timber, for example, paved the way for new relationships that resulted in the Fairbanks Museum applying for and receiving funding to build a mass timber demonstration project for its museum expansion. Our investigation of biochar enabled landowners, foresters, loggers and biochar businesses to discuss challenges related to sourcing local material and created opportunities for new relationships in that sector to grow. The Network has provided a venue for businesses throughout Vermont's forest economy to learn about new market opportunities they would otherwise not likely investigate.

Current Situation:

Wood-based textiles such as lyocell (brand name Tencel™) are becoming more commonly found in a variety of apparel products (see here for details), but most are manufactured in other parts of the world. With growing interest in finding sustainable alternatives to plastics in clothing, research and development has progressed, but commercialization of wood-based textiles in our region has not yet materialized.

Project Scope

We are currently seeking a contractor with expertise in textiles manufacturing and development to conduct a market opportunity assessment to develop wood-based textiles in Vermont and surrounding states. The assessment should analyze:

- The **current state** of wood fiber production for textiles, globally and in US
- The Vermont and overall Northeast potential fiber **supply** which could be mobilized for wood fiber textiles
- The potential **market size and demand** for US wood fiber textiles
- Identification of what currently exists and what is missing in the **processing supply chain** for VT and US wood fibers (i.e., to look for gaps that could be filled by new or existing companies)
- Identification of **market opportunities and barriers** for foresters and loggers, for existing brands (e.g., Darn Tough, Patagonia, VT Teddy Bear, Burton, Skida, Orvis, VT Flannel Co.) and for funders and investors

The Market Opportunity Assessment should study specific opportunities and challenges for developing wood-based textiles that utilize low grade wood from Vermont and surrounding states. The decline in profitable markets for this grade of wood has been identified as a key factor driving the decline in forest products businesses in the Northern Forest region.

Required Deliverables:
- A report aimed at the forest products and textiles industries in the Northeast that provides information related to market potential and barriers, and an opportunity for value chain development. The report should be in PDF format for use on VSJF's website, and also in a format that can be printed for distribution.
- A slide presentation that can be shared via online webinars or in-person events that summarizes key highlights of the report.

Proposed Timeline:
Project must be completed by Sept. 15, 2023

Budget: Please outline your proposed budget for this project.

Submission Requirements:
- Name
- Address/Phone/Email of primary contact
- Website for your firm and brief description
- Bio of primary staff
- Summary of proposed work plan (no more than one page)
- Proposed schedule
- Cost breakdown for project

Please submit proposals via email to Christine McGowan, christine@vsjf.org by February 10, 2023