RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT APPLICATION TOOLKIT FY2021

CFDA NUMBER: 10.351

CFDA TITLE: RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT

ACEDC: ECOGLOBAL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Checklist

Required forms:

- ☒ SF424 Application for Federal Assistance
- ☒ SF424-A Budget Information Non-Construction Program
- ☒ SF424-B Assurances Non-Construction Program
- ☒ 400-1 Equal Opportunity Agreement
- ☒ 400-4 Assurance Agreement
- ☒ AD1047 Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters
- ☒ AD1049 Certification Regarding Drug-Free Workplace Requirements
- ☒ RD Inst. 1940-Q, EXH A-1 "Certification for Contracts, Grants, & Loans"
- ☒ AD3030 Representations Regarding Felony conviction and Tax Delinquency Status for Corporate Applicants
- ☒ RD1940-20 Request for Environmental Information
- ☒ Project Jobs and Businesses Assisted
- ☐ 1980-88 Strategic Economic and Community Development (Section 6025) Priority

Non-Profits Also Include in Appendix A:

- ☒ Articles of Incorporation (including any amendments)
- ☒ Bylaws (including any amendments)
- ☒ Certificate of Good Standing issued by the Vermont/New Hampshire Secretary of State. Certificate should be less than a year old.
- ☒ IRS letter granting non-profit standing
- ☒ Resolution passed by the board authorizing entity to apply and administer the RBEG/RBOG, including the name and title of the person authorized to sign grant documents.
- ☒ List of Board Members

United States Department of Agriculture

Section 1: Summary Information

Legal Name of Applicant: **Addison County Economic Development Corporation**
Requested Grant Amount: **$30,000**
DUNS **# 006142324**
SAM/CCR Registration Cage Code: **6MFU0** Expiration Date: **10/12/2021**

Project Summary

EcoGlobal is leading the North American expansion of a proprietary manufacturing technology that upcycles single use plastic film and flexible packaging into recyclable products. ACEDC will assist EcoGlobal to complete a feasibility study that builds on previous company research on this technology toward the goal of building a company headquarters and a two-line production facility in Middlebury, Vermont. The project would create new jobs and play an important role in strengthening rural economic development.

Certifications/ General Information

1. Relationships to RD employees

To assure the high standards of honesty, integrity, and impartiality maintained by Rural Development employees, we need to identify any Rural Development assistance to be provided to employees, their relatives, or their business or close personal associates. This includes insured or guaranteed, loans or grants to individuals or organizations. If you know of any relationship or association you (the applicant) may have with a Rural Development employee, please provide this information, or advise if there is none. Your response will allow us to make special provisions for processing but will not affect your application status.

Immediate family, other relatives or close associates who are USDA Rural Development employees, if any, are listed here **N/A**
If none, indicate here: **None**

2. Location

No (small and emerging) business located within or adjacent to a community in excess of 50,000 population may be served with the services provided with grant funds. Note your agreement here that no (small and emerging) business to be served will be located in or adjacent to a community of 50,000 populations or more: **Agreed**

3. Citizenship requirements

All (small and emerging) businesses assisted with grant funds must be at least 51 % owned by U.S. citizens or resident aliens. Note your agreement here that all (small and emerging) businesses assisted will be at least 51 % owned by U.S. citizens or resident aliens: **Agreed**

4. Small and emerging private business enterprise requirements

All businesses assisted with RBDG funds must meet the following definition: "Any private business which will employ 50 or fewer new employees and has less than $1 million in projected gross revenues." Note your agreement here that all businesses assisted will meet the RBDG program definition of small and emerging private business enterprise: **Agreed**

SECTION 2: Applicant Eligibility

Applicant Type– Please Check One:

☐ Public Body/Government Entity
☒ Nonprofit Entity

Addison County Economic Development Corporation is a 501 (c) (6), not for profit Vermont Corporation whose mission is to create an entrepreneurial and innovative environment, nurturing businesses to launch, grow, and thrive.

SECTION 3: Project Eligibility

Application Type – Please Check One:

☒Enterprise Grant ☐Opportunity Grant

ACEDC seeks an Enterprise Grant to support a business feasibility study for a manufacturing company to locate their headquarters and manufacturing facility in Middlebury, VT.

Enterprise Grant *Applicants Only*:

- Development or Financing of Small & Emerging Private Businesses

EcoGlobal, LLC, a federal HUB Zone certified small business with offices in Chelsea, VT, is leading North American expansion of a proprietary manufacturing technology that uses compression upcycling of single use plastic film and flexible packaging to produce recyclable products. ACEDC will assist EcoGlobal to complete a feasibility study of the viability of building their headquarters and a two-line production facility on rail-accessible land owned by Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont.

EcoGlobal has worked with the Town of Middlebury, Middlebury College, state and regional officials over several years to develop the concept and identify a potential location. The company has also undertaken years of research and exploration of the product market.

ACEDC proposes to use the Rural Business Enterprise Grant to retain PDR Development, a Vermont-based business and manufacturing consultant, to work with EcoGlobal over a six-month period to create and deliver a comprehensive feasibility study, designed to inform next stage planning and investment.

EcoGlobal's proposed Ekopolimer facility aligns with rural economic development goals including workforce development and better opportunity for unskilled workers. The feasibility study itself will involve several local firms including consultants and engineers. If the project goes forward, it will support many local businesses including design and engineering firms, constructions firms, legal and accounting firms, the railroad, and single-use plastic collection entities, and area farms. It would also involve partnerships with Middlebury College, such as Environmental Studies and other internships and research. The resulting project could create up to 180 new jobs (100 production, 40 support/technical, 40 administrative) over a period of 5-10 years and play an important role in strengthening rural economic development in the region. The production process also achieves important environmental outcomes -- diverting single use plastic films, including agriculture film, from the landfill to produce recyclable products.

For request to purchase equipment

Provide a detailed list with estimated cost per item. **N/A**

For revolving loan fund requests only **N/A**

ACEDC: ECOGLOBAL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Section 4: Written Narrative

4.1 Project Need:

ACEDC seeks to advance EcoGlobal's interest to headquarter their North American company and a two-line production facility in Middlebury, VT. Producing a feasibility study will better equip EcoGlobal, Middlebury College, Town of Middlebury, ACEDC, State of Vermont, investors, and other stakeholders with facts to support further development of the project, which will advance rural economic development, reduce waste, and support a circular waste economy.

EcoGloboal is building upon a proven technology that mechanically converts Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE) (primarily plastic film and flexible packaging) directly into long-lasting products with commercial value in the marketplace.

The EcoGlobal team has been looking for the right location for their North American operations and first production facility. With strong Vermont connections among the team, they have done a preliminary assessment and concluded that there is a property in Middlebury that appears to be the right location for the facility. Before they are in a position to commit additional time and resources, they need to do a deeper dive on the location and be sure that it can meet their needs. The feasibility study will allow them to work with local partners and outside experts to assess the viability of the parcels and pave the way for the needed investment to build the facility.

4.2 Project Benefits:

A USDA-funded, near-term feasibility study will enable ACEDC to advance its mission of rural economic development. The study will provide a critical building block and foundational assessment for the community and enable EcoGlobal to secure funding to plan, build and operate its headquarters and a production facility. The post-feasibility project could create up to 180 new, direct jobs (100 production, 40 support/technical, 40 administrative) and play an important role in strengthening rural economic development. EcoGlobal's proposed Ekopolimer facility aligns with rural economic development goals including workforce development and better opportunity for unskilled workers. The production process also achieves important environmental outcomes -- diverting single use plastic films, including agriculture film, from the landfill to produce recyclable products.

4.3 Eligible Grant Purpose:

The proposed use of the grant reflects the broader purpose and articulated statutory objective of the Rural Business Enterprise Grant. Broadly "To assist small and emerging businesses and/or non-profits in their communities to create and support jobs;" and specifically "Technical Assistance Activities, such as feasibility studies and marketing plans."

4.4 Area to be Served:

Generally, the project would benefit Addison County, Vermont. The proposed EcoGlobal project would generate property taxes for the Towns of Middlebury and New Haven, Vermont. Employment opportunities would draw from the greater Middlebury Labor Market Area, southern parts of the Burlington/South Burlington Metro Area, northern portions of the Rutland Micro Area, and will likely reach into the Essex, New York labor region as well.

4.5 Method and Rationale to Select Service Recipients:

The service area was selected, in part, because of the owner's connections to and affinity for the region (he is a graduate of Middlebury College). The ACEDC Executive Director has worked with EcoGlobal since its inception and ACEDC has worked with the company for over four years, cultivating the potential to locate the facility in Middlebury. Over the past several years, EcoGlobal has invested significant time and resources in considering Middlebury, Vermont for its headquarters and a processing facility, consulting with the Town of Middlebury, Middlebury College, State of Vermont, federal and other officials. The potential consultant for the project was selected for his expertise and knowledge in this sector and region.

Through this process EcoGlobal has identified a specific parcel owned by Middlebury College that they believe could meet their needs. They have been in contact with the College but have not proceeded on any formal process. They recognize the need to gather more information to assess the viability of this parcel before they take any further steps.

The potential consultant on this project was selected for his expertise and knowledge in this sector and region. He has worked in Vermont with a number of companies and small businesses in the area and has a good understanding of the challenges and opportunities that the Middlebury area offers.

4.6 Coordination with Area Economic Development Activities:

The feasibility study and potential manufacturing facility coordinates well with several regional goals and objectives. For example, the project supports goals and objectives stated by the Addison County Regional Plan, specifically:

- **Section 5.2 Business Support Goal: "To actively support the development of new small- and medium-sized businesses in order to spread both job opportunities and impacts on communities throughout the region."**
- **Section 7.2 Solid Waste Goal: "To manage the region's solid waste in a safe, cost-effective and efficient manner and to work on reducing the amount of waste generated per person.**
- **Section 4.2 Agriculture Sector Goal to: "Encourage protection, enhancement, and sustainable stewardship of the quality of agricultural lands to minimize off-farm impacts.**

A letter of support from the Executive Director of the Addison County Regional Planning Commissio is included in Appendix F.

ACEDC: ECOGLOBAL FEASIBILITY STUDY

The project supports similar goals and objectives stated in the Town of Middlebury Town Plan and by the Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County (CEAC).

The project complements economic activities undertaken by ACEDC to encourage business start-ups, job creation, and positive environmental impacts.

As consultant, Stephen Gladstone, will draw upon EcoGlobal's planning work, and the knowledge and expertise of the ACEDC, Town of Middlebury, Middlebury College, Town of New Haven, Addison County Regional Planning Commission, CEAC, as well as State, Federal and private officials to create the feasibility study.

4.7 Businesses to be Assisted and Economic Development to be Accomplished:

The primary business to be assisted by the feasibility study is EcoGlobal, LLC. The feasibility study itself will involve several local firms including the lead consultant, PDR, assisted by several contributing consultants and engineers. The study will provide a critical building block and foundational assessment for the community and enable EcoGlobal to secure funding to plan, build and operate its headquarters and a production facility.

If the project goes forward, it will support many local businesses including design and engineering firms, constructions firms, legal and accounting firms, the railroad, single-use plastic collection entities, and area farms. Some of these firms have provided Letters of Commitment. It would also involve partnerships with Middlebury College, such as Environmental Studies and other internships and research.

The economic development goals achieved include new business creation, job creation, and strengthening the rural economy. EcoGlobal's proposed Ekopolimer facility aligns with rural economic development goals including workforce development and better opportunity for unskilled workers. The production process also achieves important environmental outcomes -- diverting single use plastic films, including agriculture film, from the landfill to produce recyclable products.

4.8 Jobs Created/Saved:

The business feasibility study enables a case for developing the EcoGlobal headquarters and a two-line Ekopolimer production facility. The feasibility study is expected to be completed within six months. The timeline from completion of feasibility study to an operational facility is 24-36 months.

Employment Outcomes:

- **Phase 1: Feasibility Study: 1-5 jobs supported (maintained)**
- **Phase 2: Planning, design, and engineering: 10-20 jobs supported (maintained)**
- **Phase 3: Construction: 20-30 jobs supported (maintained)**
- **Phase 4: Operational Facility: Up to 180 permanent direct new jobs created (100 production, 40 support/technical, 40 administrative) and over 200 indirect jobs.**

Number of jobs expected to be created __**180**___ or saved __ **55**_____

4.9 Applicant Expertise:

For 25 years, ACEDC has been leading and coordinating economic and community development efforts in Addison County in collaboration with regional, state and federal partners. Together with the Addison County Regional Planning Commission, ACEDC convenes the Addison County Development Cabinet and the Addison County Recovery Team. ACEDC assisted efforts to create the Addison County Workforce Alliance, the Climate Economy Action Center of Addison County, and The Makery, our regional maker space.

ACEDC recently managed a $63,000 contract with the Vermont Department of Labor that involved all 12 regional development corporations and two contractors to present workforce summits in each region. ACEDC manages an annual operating budget of over $200,000 and a loan portfolio that has loaned over $5 million for 100 projects in the region.

Since 1994, ACEDC has received four USDA/Rural Development Intermediary Relending Program loans totaling $1.6 million. These loan funds revolve so ACEDC has loaned over $5.3 million for 101 projects in the region, with a default rate of under 9%. ACEDC currently administers a loan portfolio of $1.3 million for 26 loans with an outstanding balance of over $882,000.

ACEDC also administers funds from several other programs, including a $125,000 annual operating grant from the Agency of Commerce, $60,000 in FY20 Vermont Buildings & General Services grants to four businesses, and a $63,000 FY20 contract with the Vermont Department of Labor.

The resumes of Fred Kenney, Executive Director and Elizabeth Burdine, Finance Director are included in Appendix E.

ACEDC is requesting that USDA/RD waive any requirement to publish an RFP and seek bids to produce the feasibility study. We are requesting permission to let a sole source contract for the feasibility study because there is a known local consultant with knowledge of the area, experience in the sector, and knowledge of EcoGlobal. PDR Development is a Vermont-based business, manufacturing and product development consultant with over thirty years of experience. Mr. Stephen Gladstone's resume is included in Appendix E. The names, bios and experience details of the contributing consultants are also included in Appendix E.

ACEDC: ECOGLOBAL FEASIBILITY STUDY

4.10 Work Plan Narrative:

In consultation with EcoGlobal, ACEDC proposes to contract with Stephen Gladstone to prepare a written report (with supporting documentation) on the feasibility of locating EcoGlobal's headquarters and a two-line Ekopolimer production facility on rail-accessible parcels owned by Middlebury College in Middlebury and New Haven, Vermont. The feasibility study will summarize and assess critical business feasibility metrics including:

- **Business proposition**
- **Feedstock availability**
- **Potential Products**
- **Markets**
- **Production Scale**
- **Site Potential & Limitations**
- **State and Local Policies & Regulation**
- **Workforce Availability**
- **Community & College Partnerships**
- **SBIR Availability**
- **Finance Options**
- **Opportunity Analysis**

The written report, in electronic form, will be supported by photographs, video and maps of the site. It will include supplemental information about EcoGlobal, Ekopolimer and products, and relevant market sources.

The study is meant to provide an analysis for ACEDC, EcoGlobal, Middlebury College and others interested in advancing this objective. The study would begin within two weeks of award confirmation and be completed within six months.

Feasibility Study Steps:

- **Outreach to key strategic partners in the community and region**
- **Meeting with technical experts in key areas—permitting, legal, site work, finance construction, etc.—Clarify areas of focus and detail specific deliverables to be included in their reports**
- **Compile reports and develop draft document for review**
- **Work with team to edit and refine study report and fill in identified gaps**
- **Develop and incorporate graphics, charts and helpful data**
- **Finalize study and present to ACEDC for review**

Suggested Performance Criteria:

- **Award +1 Week: Contract awarded to consultant.**
- **Award +2 Weeks: Consultant first meeting with contributing consultants.**
- **Award +20 weeks: Draft study prepared**
- **Award +24 weeks: Feasibility study completed**

4.11 Project Budget Information:

a. Sources of Funding

Matching Funds:

Verification of match must be provided in Appendix D

Contributor	Amount
Applicant	$0
Project Consultants	$16,800
Total Contributions	$16,800

b. Project Budget Summary

Summarize the total project budget by task. Project should reasonably be completed within 1 full year after it has begun. Insert additional rows as needed.

Main Activity #	Task Name and Description	Start Date	End Date	RBDG Funds	Supplemental Funds	Total Project Costs
1	Business Feasibility Study	July 1, 2021	Dec 31, 2021	$27,000	$16,800	$43,800
2	Project Administration	July 1, 2021	Dec 31, 2021	$3,000	$0	$3,000
	TOTAL PROJECT			**$30,000**	**$16,800**	**$46,800**

c. Task Budget Format

Task #1 Budget Categories	**RBDG Funds**	**Supplemental Funds**	**Total Project Costs**
Personnel			
Fringe Benefits			
Expenses	$1,200		$1,200
Contractual	$25,800	$16,800	$42,600
Total	**$27,000**	**$16,800**	**$43,800**

Expenses include photography, copies, videography, mapping, travel,

For detail on Consultant costs, see Appendix D.

Task #2 Budget Categories	**RBDG Funds**	**Supplemental Funds**	**Total Project Costs**
Personnel	$3,000		$3,000
Fringe Benefits			
Travel			
Supplies			
Contractual			
Total	**$3,000**	**$**	**$3,000**

Cost for ACEDC to administer grant.