



## Case Study: VA FAIRS



Besides working directly with farmers and agricultural businesses, MATSON CONSULTING's expertise also includes its work with Second Tier organizations like the **Virginia Foundation for Agriculture, Innovation, and Rural Sustainability (VA FAIRS)**.

VA FAIRS is located near Richmond, Virginia, and is a cooperative development center dedicated to the assistance of individuals, cooperatives, small businesses, and other similar entities in rural areas. VA FAIRS seeks to develop and advance agricultural, economic, and social interests by facilitating and coordinating technical, financial, cooperative, and general educational assistance to agricultural and value added ventures in the state of Virginia. Matson Consulting has partnered with from their inception, and helped with the initial set up and structuring of VA FAIRS by writing their first RCDG Grant application. Matson Consulting functions as the technical expertise arm of the foundation, and works with VA FAIRS clients to accomplish the foundations mission.



### Our Work

Our work with Second Tier clients is often two-fold: we serve as outside expertise in the assistance of their farm and agricultural clients as well as assisting the second tier client themselves through consulting services and the procurement of funds.

Matson Consulting provides a high level of professional expertise that facilitates the delivery of the second tier client's services. We offer a portfolio of skills that add value to rural business development work:



- **Strategic Planning:**  
Discussion to determine the needs and direction of the organization.
- **Association Formation:**  
Advisement on the best business structure that would achieve a client's goals.
- **Institutional Capacity Building:**  
Assistance with staff training and mentoring, and conflict resolution.
- **Management Consulting:**  
Aid a management team in project implementation.
- **Grant Management Facilitation:**  
Assistance with funding and program management.

**The partnership of Matson Consulting and VA FAIRS has resulted in over 70 client projects, multiple grant and business development workshops, several million dollars in grant work, and several co-authored publications and industry studies.**

*“Matson Consulting has provided business plans, marketing plans, feasibility studies, grant proposals/applications, as well as produced workshops on various topics in conjunction with VA FAIRS.” says Executive Director Chris Cook. “They are the best I have found out there; they are extremely objective, and not afraid to dispense advice that clients need to hear.”*

Many tools are used during the course of the assistance we provide, and vary based on the desires of our Second Tier client, and in turn, the unique needs of their clients.

- **Feasibility Studies:** When an existing or proposed business venture approaches VA FAIRS about conducting a study, Matson Consulting provides an objective evaluation of a proposed project to determine whether or not it can be executed feasibly.
- **Business Planning:** The creation and implementation of a business plan that will guide a venture in adding further value to a product and help generate profits and jobs. Our planning efforts can focus on individual value added cooperatives or encompass a multi-county strategic planning effort.
- **Technical Assistance:** Help in avoiding, preventing, and overcoming the difficulties encountered throughout a business development project, whether on an individual or regional basis.



- **Grant Facilitation:** Assistance throughout the entire grant process, from identification of funding sources and development of the grant application, to the management of funds once a grant is awarded.
- **Board Training:** Providing direction regarding the governance of a venture, and the election and training of board members.
- **Survey Design and Execution:** The design, execution, and compilation and analysis of data for membership and marketing surveys.

In working directly with VA FAIRS, Matson Consulting has provided strategic planning expertise and advice, as well as work on the design and implementation of a website. We have assisted VA FAIRS through several rounds of grant applications and the administration of awarded grants.

Matson Consulting is proud of our partnership with VA FAIRS and is excited about our continued work impacting agricultural enterprise in the state of Virginia.