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Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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{NO DATA ENTERED}

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{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

The long term goal of Land Stewardship Project's (LSP) Farm Beginnings program is to increase food security in the region and nationally through the support and training of beginning farmers. Specifically, Farmers Growing Farmers: Next Generation Education in Four Learning Stages will enhance and improve the delivery of farmer training by piloting new approaches that together with successful existing trainings will provide education and support for 1,200 beginning and prospective farmers including 168 successful farm business start-ups over a three year period. These outcomes will be a substantial contribution to the overall national goal of training beginning farmers and ranchers through the Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program. To achieve the long-term goal of increased food security, beginning farmers must acquire skills and overcome barriers to enter into and succeed in agriculture. Well-established skill based training models assert that an individual must pass through a series of stages in order to move a certain skill from a beginning level to a more advanced level. Through this project LSP will apply what is known about the staged skills acquisition model to enhance current training and to pilot new approaches with the goal of increasing the rate of success of beginning farmers. Specifically 1200 beginning farmers will measurably improved their knowledge and skill in one or more of the following ways: utilizing beginning farmers resource and training opportunities through farmer-to-farmer network; improved management of production strategies including organic, rotational grazing, CSA and fruit production; addressing pre-farming risk and analyzing opportunities and assessing legal issues related to land purchases and leasing. With increased technical assistance and expanded financing opportunities 168 beginning farmers will be successful in their farm start up as measured by implementing actions specific to individual needs including: using a support network of peers, experienced farmers, community resource people and consultants; creating a strategic farm plan; prioritizing action steps according to individualized skills assessment; implementing stewardship farming practices; internalizing and applying planning and management skills; building equity; managing equity well resulting in livestock loan repayment; manage equity well resulting in increased savings toward farm investment and acquisition of land for farming Through this effort LSP aims to improve the conditions for all beginning farmers and rural residents in the region through strengthening farmer networks, more established farmer leaders and educators, more beginning farmer leaders, transfer of land to beginning farmers, increased use of conservation practices on the farms of beginning farmers and rural communities experience economic benefit from growth of local food economies.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

This project will result in increased knowledge for 1,200 beginning and prospective farmers including 168 successful farm business start-ups over three years. Land Stewardship Project (LSP) and partners will develop a comprehensive approach to assist beginning farmers, as they move from exploration to successful farming. We build on 13 years of successful

implementation of LSP's Farm Beginnings training (a year long program of classroom and on-farm skill building taught by experienced farmers). A staged skills acquisition model will be used to enhance current training and to pilot new approaches. There are three objectives: 1 - Provide beginning farmers with new training that moves them from novice to proficient. We will design and implement a new two-year Technical Assistance Pilot Program that is focused on increasing beginning farmer competency and proficiency in farming Outputs: 750 beginning and prospective farmers attend on-farm training; 240 beginning farmers attend 4 hour workshop to assess skill and passion for entering farming; 210 beginning farmers complete 39 hours of course work toward development of a farm plan through Farm Beginnings; LSP staff work with established farmers and other educators to develop 4 new skills assessment and growing season learning plan templates; LSP staff work with videographer and established farmers to develop 2 - 20 minute videos focused on beginning farmers skill building; 2,500 beginning farmers view farmer network handbook and/or online videos; The network of farmer-to-farmer educational opportunities is increased through the publication of 3 network handbooks that lists 200-300 farmers; LSP staff work with farmer-led steering committee to develop TAPP assessments and protocols and 20 beginning farmers enroll in TAPP. 2 - Increase farm start-up viability through expanded equity building opportunities, training and technical assistance through LSP's Livestock Loan Program and a Minnesota Individual Development Account Program. Outputs: LSP Staff and farmer-led steering committee work with 11 beginning farmers who receive a livestock loan; LSP staff develops recruitment materials for promoting IDA for beginning farmers 3 - Increase regional understanding, connections and strategies for land access for beginning farmers and engage established farmers through workshops, educational materials and a Land Access Toolbox focusing on transferring land to the next generation. Outputs: Toolbox of land access resources available on-line for beginning farmers and land owners; on-line materials viewed and used by 600 people A professional evaluator will develop ongoing evaluation and reporting strategies to assess the grant results.

What was accomplished under these goals?

Objective 1 - Provide beginning farmers with new training that moves them from novice to proficient.

For all three years of this project a total of 1012 beginning and prospective farmers have received training either on-farm, through Farm Dreams or the Farm Beginnings Strategic Farm Planning Course. During the three years of this project we dedicated a more focused effort on monitoring the progress of 189 beginning farmers enrolled in the Farm Beginnings Strategic Farm Planning Course. According to our most recent surveys, eighty percent of these Farm Beginnings graduates are actively engaged in farming resulting in 109 successful farm starts over the three years of this project.

For 2013 measurement of short term outcomes and impacts was focused on beginning farmers enrolled in LSP's Farm Beginnings Strategic Farm Planning Course. Data presented in this report is drawn from the evaluation of course sessions held in two locations (Roberts, WI and Morris, MN) from October 2012 through March 2013. The course curriculum was similar in both locations. The course met for nine sessions, a total of 40 hours of class time. There were a total of 50 participants, representing 31 farms, enrolled in the course. A total of 43 people responded to the follow-up survey resulting in an eighty-six percent response rate. The follow-up survey evaluated the course as a whole, assessed knowledge and skills levels, and identified their plans for farming in the 2013 season. The following results are consistent with our on-going evaluation and indicate that the Farm Beginnings Strategic Planning Course is having an immediate and positive impact on preparing beginning farmers. Out of the 43 beginning farmers who responded to the survey the following information was gathered. Knowledge of farm planning (5 = Highly knowledgeable and 1 = No knowledge at all, all scores out of a 5 point scale) Precourse: 1.95; Postcourse: 3.98; Change: positive 2.03. Preparation to do own farm planning (5 = Highly prepared and 1 = Not prepared at all, all scores out of a 5 point scale) Precourse: 1.67; Postcourse: 4.19; Change: positive 2.52 points. Planned Behavior Change: At the close of the course 81 percent of the participants said they "definitely" plan to farm in the 2013 season.

In the longer term, we are still seeing a high level of Farm Beginnings graduates actively engaged in farming. Our annual follow-up survey of graduates from all three years yielded responses from 57 beginning farmers. Although not enough responses for statistical accuracy, there are some consistent trends from the results of this survey. Out of the 57 respondents the following information was gathered, sixty-eight percent are managing their own farms, another twenty-five percent are engaged in farming in some way (i.e. working or managing someone else's farm) and ten percent are not actively involved in farming for a variety of reasons (i.e. still looking for property, illness, and in two cases quit farming). This result is consistent with other long-term survey findings showing that high percentage of Farm Beginnings graduates still actively involved in farming even 5 to 7 years out. Of those beginning farmers who are actively engaged in farming forty-one reported having access to 5 acres or less and the rest were of varying size, with the largest being 200 acres. The vast majority of Farm Beginnings graduates increase their use of sustainable practices after taking the class (eighty-two percent). Over eighty percent are marketing the majority of their products directly to consumers. Certainly this is a significant impact for the growth of local and regional food systems. Unfortunately another consistent trend confirmed by our surveys is that beginning farmers are struggling to turn their farming into profitable businesses. Of the graduates reached by this survey forty-six percent reporting making \$5,000 or less farming. Increasing the profitability of beginning farmers in years 3 to 5 is the main focus of LSP's new Journeyman Course.

Objective 2 - Increase farm start-up viability through expanded equity building opportunities, training and technical assistance through LSP's Livestock Loan Program and a Minnesota Individual Development Account Program.

In the fall of 2012 LSP piloted a Journeyman Course to increase the profitability of beginning farmers in years 3 to 5 of

their farm start. Two key partners in the Journeyperson Course worked with us to strengthen the support infrastructure for beginning farmers, the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Services (MOSES and the Minnesota's State Colleges and University's Farm Business Management (MNSCU's FBM),. These three organizations have built a working relationship that aligns our skills, knowledge and resources in the service of supporting and training beginning farmers. In the fall of 2012, 32 beginning farmers, representing 17 farms enrolled in the first year of the Journeyperson Course. Each farm started a 2014 farm plan as part of the January 2012 retreat, received 1-1 mentoring from both an experienced farmer and a financial advisor, and interacted with a peer in the course through on-farm visits, phone calls and emails. Students were surveyed four times during the year – a three-month check-in call with an LSP staff member, an online survey half way through the season, an LSP check-in call following the online survey, and another online survey following an end-of-season retreat. Almost all of the farms took the mid-year survey and ninety-four percent agreed or strongly agreed that the relationship with their farmer mentor has helped to improve their operation. All of the Journeyperson farmers reported that they were making progress in addressing the "weak link" on their farm that they identified as part of the initial retreat that started the course. Just over fifty reported that working with their FBM advisor was helping to improve their farm business. By the end of the year eight-eight percent of the Journeyperson farmers had created a budget for 2013 and fifty percent reported creating a cash flow for their budget. The matched savings component of the Journeyperson Course encourages beginning farmers to create a budget that requires them to put money each month in a savings account. Beginnings farmers are rewarded for savings of up to \$100 per month with a one to one match at the end of 24 months. Currently, almost all of the beginning farmers are regularly saving \$100 per month as part of the matched savings account. That means as a group they have saved almost \$20,400 toward an investment in growth of their farm business.

Objective 3 – Increase regional understanding, connections and strategies for land access for beginning farmers and engage established farmers through workshops, educational materials and a Land Access Toolbox focusing on transferring land to the next generation.

In the last twelve months our effort has focused on gathering and sharing lessons learned from LSP's work to address the barrier of access to land for beginning farmers. The main accomplishment has been the development of the Farm Transitions Toolkit. Through engaging key partners in the development of this toolkit LSP has increased the skills, resources and knowledge in our region to responded to the crisis facing retiring farmers look for ways to pass on their legacy and beginning farmers look for an affordable way to access land.

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

Our focus for developing professional skills and knowledge has been focused on educators, technical assistance providers, farm transition professionals and lawyers who work with beginning farmers who are three to five years into their farm start. Through LSP's Journeyperson Course we worked with 25 mentors and Farm Business Instructors to improve approaches to one-on-one training and technical assistance. In the first year of the Journeyperson Course pilot, fifty percent of the beginning farmers report no benefit from working with a Farm Business Management Instructor. In the summer of 2013 LSP staff met with lead Farm Business Management instructors to provide training on new teaching tools that are proven with Farm Beginnings graduates. These instructors are planning to share the tool within the Farm Business Management program and invite LSP staff back for a follow-up training in January 2014.

Another focused effort has been through the development of the Farm Transition Toolkit. In 2013 LSP staff engaged 30 stakeholders including lawyers, bankers, farmers, educators, advocated and other agricultural professionals. By working in collaboration. this process not only created a new resource for our region, there is now a more solid working relationships with these partners and led to other organizations leading additional efforts. For example, this same group of collaborators developed additional resources including a new Farm Transitions Portal.

Beyond leading a regional effort to build the knowledge, skills and resource for farm transition work, LSP also had its feet on the ground through piloting a Farm Transition Coach service with 15 beginning and established farmers and hosting 30 land owners and 10 beginning farmers through two trainings on conservation leases. These initial, small efforts are helping LSP and the farm transtional professionals learn what it will take to help beginning farmers find affordable access to land for farming.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

Nationally LSP brought the issue of land access into focus through two meetings. On Tuesday, December 4th, 2012 thirty-eight people from eleven states participated in the Just Land Dialogue hosted in Rochester, MN. This meeting focused on sharing successful approaches and national perspectives on the issue of affordable access to land for farming.

Secure land tenure was a focus at the BFRDP project directors' meeting through the keynote presentation, in individual sessions and as the focus of one of the farm tours. LSP hosted 131 people representing 80 beginning farmer training organizations for the 3rd annual Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program Project Directors meeting in Rochester, Minnesota in December 2012. LSP staff and leaders presented on the Farmers Growing Farmers Initiative (Land Stewardship Letter article on page 12).

Through a collaborative effort of over 30 people and four main organizational partners LSP led the development of a new Farm Transitions Toolkit. Although the completion of the Farm Transtion Toolkit was delayed beyond the timeframe of this

project, the Farm Transition Toolkit is now on LSP's website, linked to a new Farm Transition Portal and featured in a regional news article. The Farm Transition Toolkit will be the focus of a session at the 2014 Midwest Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse, WI. We worked with a journalism student to create 5 profiles. One of the profiles was also developed into as short video.

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

{Nothing to report}

Participants

Actual FTEs for this Reporting Period

Role	Faculty and Non-Students	Students within Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Scientist	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	0.91	0	0	0	0.91
Technical	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Computed Total	0.91	0	0	0	0.91

Target Audience

In 2013 LSP reached 421 beginning farmers, 30 land owners and 50 agricultural professional through 51 distinct trainings. Two Farm Beginnings Strategic Farm Planning Courses were held for 50 beginning farmers representing 31 families in the communities of Roberts, WI and Morris, Minnesota. Our audience for the Farm Beginnings Strategic Farm Planning Course continues to be a diverse group. Of a possible 50 responses data was gathered from 33 beginning farmers (responses in the FB 2012 enrollment survey), 17 male and 16 female. Fifty-seven percent were 35 years old or younger. About one-third were limited resource earning \$30,000 in gross income for their family or less during the last calendar year. Of 33 respondents eighty-eight percent were European or European-American, 1 was African-American, 1 Latino, and 1 North American Indian or Alaska native. Forty-eight percent of the people enrolled in Farm Beginnings in 2012 were actively engaged in farming. This is an increase in the number of people actively engaged in farming from previous years. In this group of beginning farmers thirty-three percent owned land, nineteen percent rented land and fifty-five percent had no access to land. These statistics are representative the audience that we continue to engage through all of our trainings.

Products

Type	Status	Year Published	NIFA Support Acknowledged
Other	Other	2013	YES

Citation

DeVore, Brian. September 2013 Farm Transition Toolkit Land Stewardship Project.
<http://landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/farmtransitiontoolkit>

Other Products

Product Type

Other

Description

objective 1 Provide beginning farmers with new training that moves them from novice to proficient (one and

- three year totals). In 2013 421 beginning farmers trained and 1053 for the full three years of this project.
- In 2013 trained 264 beginning and prospective farmers participated in on-farm training to increase their production skills and knowledge. LSP staff led 8 of the field trainings, farmers from LSP farmers network led 28 of these field trainings. For this level of training a total of 605 beginning and prospective farmers have been trained in the full three years of this project.
 - In 2013 trained 76 beginning farmers to assess needs for skill development and training before entering farming. For this level of training a total of 218 beginning farmers have been trained in the full three years of this project.
 - In 2013 trained 50 beginning farmers in 39 hours of course work toward development of a farm plan through the Farm Beginnings Strategic Farm Planning Course. For this level of deeper training a total of 189 beginning farmers have been trained in the full three years of this project.
 - In 2013 trained 31 beginning farmers in advanced financial planning and farm management skills. For this level of training a total of 41 beginning farmers have been trained in the full three years of this project.

Product Type

Other

Description

- objective 1 - Developed new teaching tools for trainers providing technical assistance to beginning farmers.
- In 2013 LSP staff work with 10 beginning farmers on an LSP steering committee to develop, evaluate and pilot the Journeyperson Course.
 - LSP staff organized cross training opportunities for nine farm financial planning professionals and other trainers on approaches to technical financial planning assistance for beginning farmers.

Product Type

Other

Description

- Objective 1 - Expand on-line resources for beginning farmers to connect with LSP's Farmer Network
- In 2013 LSP published 1 Farmer Network Handbooks that lists 154 farmers reaching a total of 400 farmers (1000 farmers reached over a three year period). Farmers in the Network can also access the Handbook online.

Product Type

Other

Description

- Objective 2 - Increase Farm Start-up Viability through expanded equity building opportunities, training and technical assistance.
- LSP Staff provided mentoring and technical assistance with 3 beginning farmers who receive a livestock loan.
 - In 2013 LSP staff trained and mentored 31 beginning farmers enrolled in a pilot Journeyperson Course and Matched Savings Account (MSA).
 - LSP staff develops recruitment materials for promoting MSA for beginning farmers

Product Type

Other

Description

- Objective 3 - Increase regional understanding, connections and strategies for land access for beginning farmers.
- Toolbox of land access resources available on-line for beginning farmers, land owners and farm transition professionals (<http://landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/farmtransitionstoolkit>);
 - LSP staff worked with a journalist, established farmers, land owners and beginning farmers to develop 5 profiles focused on opportunities and barriers for successful farm transitions (<http://landstewardshipproject.org/farmtransitionsprofilesintroduction>).

- LSP staff in Collaboration with Farmers Legal Action Group trained 30 land owners through two workshops focused on strategies for incorporating conservation practices into leases.
- LSP staff trained 15 established farmers, beginning farmers and technical service provides on teaching tools for advising beginning farmers on farm transitions through our Pilot Farm Transition Coach service.
- Trained 131 educators, mentors and technical service provides on LSP's approaches and lessons learned regarding farm transitions during USDA's BFRDP 2012 Project Directors annual meeting.
- Hosted 30 individuals from 11 states for a meeting to share findings and approaches to the barrier of land access for beginning farmers (Just Land Dialogue).

Changes/Problems

None of the changes outlined below required a change in how the project budget funds were allocated.

Change 1 - Invested in larger collaborative process to create Farm Transition Toolkit.

Through a collaborative effort of over 30 people LSP led the development of a new Farm Transitions Toolkit. The completion of the Toolkit was delayed by the collaborative process. LSP made a decision that through engaging key collaborators we had an opportunity to ensure that the Toolkit would be useful and not redundant. Key collaborators included several experts in the field of farm transitions. Through this collaboration key topics were identified, like valuation of sustainable practices, and researched to include in the toolkit. Finding the information and experts to help write these key topics delayed the targeted date for completion of the toolkit. LSP and MISA decided that it was well worth delaying the project so that the Toolkit would include a valuable resource for people in the field working with beginning and established farmers as they chart a farm transition that seeks to maintain good stewardship of the land. Because of the delay of the publication of the Toolkit beyond the time of the grant we have also not been able to share this resource either through public meetings or online. At the writing of this report the Toolkit is on LSP's website, linked to a new Farm Transition Portal and featured in a regional news article. The Farm Transition Toolkit will be the focus of a session at the 2014 Midwest Organic Farming Conference in La Crosse, WI. Through our efforts with regional experts, beginning and established farmers and through convening the Just Land Dialogue and the BFRDP Project Directors LSP identified a need to develop written profiles of the opportunities and barrier related to affordable access to land for farming. We worked with a journalism student to create 5 profiles. One of the profiles was also developed into as short video. This work replaced our plan to create videos.

Change 2 - Replaced Livestock Loan Program with Journeyperson Course and Matched Savings Accounts.

Originally the worked outlined in this grant outlined activities related to LSP's Livestock Loan Program. Through the creation of the Journeyperson Course we have maintained the mentoring and technical services that were a part of the Livestock Loan but shifted the monetary resources and made them available to a broader group of beginning farmers including vegetable farmers. LSP no longer offers the Livestock Loan Program although we continue to work with three families still receiving technical assistance as they continue payment on their loan. Through the creation of the Journeyperson Course LSP staff trained and mentored 31 beginning farmers far exceeding our original goal for the number of beginning farmers at the advanced stages of their farm start-up getting one-on-one technical assistance while they build equity.