

Title:	Building Entrepreneurial, Business Management, and Land Stewardship Capacity for South Carolina New and Beginning Farmers		
Sponsoring Agency	NIFA	Project Status	COMPLETE
Funding Source	Non Formula	Reporting Frequency	Annual
Accession No.	223484	Grants.gov No.	GRANT10576118
Project No.	SCN-2098181	Proposal No.	2010-03113
Project Start Date	09/01/2010	Project End Date	08/31/2013
Reporting Period Start Date	09/01/2010	Reporting Period End Date	08/31/2013
Submitted By	Nelle Bridges	Date Submitted to NIFA	11/26/2013

Program Code: BFRDP

Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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Non-Technical Summary

The average age of South Carolina farm operators is nearly 59 years. South Carolina's farmers are growing older and there are fewer young farmers prepared to take their place upon retirement. At the same time, only 50 farms, comprising 230 acres, indicated that they were producing organic crops, while 21 farms, comprising 593 acres, indicated that they were managing organic pasture land. However, 90 farms comprising 1,904 acres indicated that they were in the process of converting conventional land to organic production. The total number of community markets has expanded greatly in the past few years, coincident with growing public interest for local, fresh, conventional and organically-produced food products. Direct marketing strategies like community supported agriculture projects (CSAs), online marketing tools (e.g. MarketMaker and Local Harvest), the popular press, and even the United States Department of Agriculture (e.g. Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food) have responded in support of the development of new approaches to agriculture. Long-tenured farmers willing to adapt to changing market environments will likely benefit. Many have the wherewithal to stay abreast of these changes, using established networks of public and private sector service providers. Many beginning farmers in South Carolina, however, do not have the knowledge networks, the personal relationships, or the capacities to take advantage of the myriad programs and services available to help make them successful. This program is designed to leverage existing investments in programs across a wide array of local, state, and federal agencies and to direct these resources toward building capacity in new and beginning farmers in SC.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

Long-term Goals: Increase the number of viable farms and to decrease the average age of farmers in South Carolina.
Objectives: 1. Teach fundamentals of farm business management, and provide exposure to more advanced topics. 2. Increase participant awareness and familiarity with the SC Conservation Partnership (local, state and federal natural resource and agricultural agencies) and the technical and financial incentives that are available to help them improve and sustain their natural resources. 3. Help beginning farmers to better understand their personal and professional goals, values, and motivations, to better "Know Thyself". 4. Encourage the development of thoughtful business plans, including selection of legal structure, development of land acquisition strategies, and Internet marketing strategies. 5. Provide experiential learning through real-world application. 6. Provide contact with willing and able mentors. 7. Provide immersion experiences for some participants. The objectives center on enabling new and beginning farmers to be successful, productive, and innovative members of their local agricultural community by providing them with the tools, knowledge and skills necessary to be successful entrepreneurs, sound business managers, exemplary stewards of SWAPA (soil, water, air, plants, and animals),

and successful marketers of the unique products they create, and, perhaps most importantly, individuals who have a sense of pride and quality of life as a result of their investment and participation in the agricultural community of South Carolina.

What was accomplished under these goals?

The grant called for the development and delivery of program to annual cohorts of 36 participants over three years. Individual and joint applications were accepted; joint applicants were counted as one participant (148 applications received; 134 approved). We were able to deliver at least part of the program to 158 people. Eighty-one (81) participants received certificates of satisfactory completion over the course of the three years, representing 115 people actually completing the program.

Year One (Sept. 2010-Aug. 2011): Applications received: 37; Approved: 37

- 35 started the program (25 ind/10 joint; total=45 people)
- 26 finished the program (9 ind/17 joint; total=34 people)
- 3 were not actively farming when they started the program

Year Two (Sept. 2011-Aug. 2012): Applications received: 51; Approved: 48

- 38 started the program (22 ind/16 joint; total=54 people)
- 26 finished the program (13 ind/13 joint; total=39 people)
- 7 were not actively farming when they started the program

Year Three (Sept. 2012-Aug. 2013): Applications received: 60; Approved: 49

- 46 started the program (35 ind/11 joint = 57 people)
- 29 finished the program (16 ind/13 joint = 42 people)
- 6 were not actively farming when they started the program

Year One Program Evaluations

Of the 26 graduates, 12 completed the on-line program evaluation.

- **100%** would recommend the training to others
- **100%** reported the program had provided valuable networking opportunities with other farmers and resource providers (state and federal agencies)
- **92%** reported the program had met their expectations
- **87%** reported they were using new concepts
- **82%** reported the topics covered were relevant to their business
- **58%** reported the training changed their approach to farming

Year Two Program Evaluations

Of the 26 graduates, 24 completed the on-line program evaluation.

- **100%** would recommend the training to others
- **100%** reported the program provided valuable content to help them be a more successful farmer
- **100%** reported the program provided valuable networking opportunities with other farmers and resource providers (state and federal agencies)
- **96%** reported the program had met their expectations
- **91%** reported the program was likely to change their approach to farming
- **87.5%** reported using new concepts

Year Three Program Evaluations

Of the 29 graduates, 27 completed the on-line program evaluation.

- **100%** would recommend the training to others
- **100%** reported the program provided valuable content to help them be a more successful farmer
- **100%** reported the program provided valuable networking opportunities with other farmers and resource providers (state and federal agencies)
- **93%** reported the program had met their expectations
- **93%** reported the program was likely to change their approach to farming
- **100%** reported using new concepts

In addition to the promised initial activities, we were able to steward the funds effectively enough to coordinate and deliver two multi-state regional workshops for BFRDP directors and others. The workshop topics were:

- 1) Best practices for farm internship/mentorship programs.
- 2) Best practices for farm incubator programs.
- 3) Black soldier fly production basics for small farmers.

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

Paid Internship and paid mentor opportunities were offered by grant subcontractors Carolina Farm Stewardship Association

(CFSA) and Lowcountry Local First (LLF). Over twenty participants took advantage of the intense, hands-on training. State agency representatives, Clemson Extension agents, CIECD personnel and experts from other land grant institutions presented a series of workshops on the following topics: Financial and Risk Management, Marketing Strategies, Funding Sources, Conservation and Environmental Issues, NxLevel, Legal Issues in Agriculture, QuickBooks Pro for Ag, and the Color Code Personality Assessment. (61 days of workshops, farm tours, regional workshops and optional workshops) Regional workshops focused on business plan development and entrepreneurship (leveraging the FastTrack/NxLevel program) were held in March and April each year across the state to allow individuals an opportunity to learn and work together in smaller groups. County Extension Agents (Ag and CD) coordinated tours to a variety of large and small farms in the Pee Dee, Charleston, Midlands and Upstate areas. Participants were encouraged to "plug in" to at least statewide industry-oriented conferences with the intent of helping to groom future potential industry leadership.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

During the course of the program, the Program Director was interviewed by television stations, newspapers, and others in the press. In addition, most of these reporters were interested in interviewing a sampling of the program participants and we facilitated those connections. Extensive interviews across the state by an external consultant working on a report commissioned by the SC Dept of Agriculture, SC Dept of Commerce, the Coastal Conservation League, and others resulted in this program being highlighted as worthy of state funding to sustain it.

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	0.3	0	0	0	0.3
Professional	0.3	0	0	0	0.3
Technical	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative	0.8	0	0	0	0.8
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Computed Total	1.4	0	0	0	1.4

Target Audience

New and Beginning Farmers from South Carolina.

Products

{Nothing to report}

Other Products

{Nothing to report}

Changes/Problems

{Nothing to report}