

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Growing Farms Online: A comprehensive online whole farm planning course for Oregon's beginning farmers and ranchers.</b>		
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**Program Code:** BFRDP

**Program Name:** Beginning Farmer and Rancher

**Project Director**

Garry Stephenson

541-737-5833

garry.stephenson@oregonstate.edu

**Recipient Organization**

EXT - OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

CORVALLIS, OREGON 97331

DUNS No. 53599908

**Performing Department**

Crop and Soil Science

**Co-Project Directors**

Beller, David

Kane, Deborah

**Departments**

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Food and Farm Program

**Non-Technical Summary**

This Standard Project will develop a comprehensive online course for Oregon's beginning farmers and ranchers (BFRs). The course focuses on whole farm planning and includes a number of ground-breaking features. It is a powerful partnership between non-profits Ecotrust, Mercy Corps Northwest and Oregon Tilth; Oregon State University's Small Farms Program and Austin Family Business Program; and contributions from USDA agencies serving Oregon. BFR education needs to be accessible to participants widely distributed over the landscape who cannot always access face-to-face programs. The literature demonstrates the effectiveness of online education and the technological readiness of most BFRs. The online course will convert and expand on proven curriculum from Oregon's highly successful BFR workshop series Growing Farms: Successful Whole Farm Planning which fosters holistic planning by integrating the physical, biological, family, and business components of farms and ranches. The course integrates training and support for Ecotrust's FoodHub which offers BFRs low risk access to the marketplace. The project includes several delivery options including "blended" online/face-to-face, as well as lower technology options so all BFRs can participate whatever their internet speed. Additional participant support is provided through electronic and face-to-face communities of practice and access to financial infrastructure via non-profit and government venues. This project targets Oregon's rural, peri-urban, and urban BFRs. The focus is curriculum development within the Production and Management Strategies to Enhance Land Stewardship and Business Management and Decision Support Strategies priority areas. The course is replicable and modules may be adapted to conditions in other states.

**Accomplishments**

**Major goals of the project**

Project to provide sustained long-term sustainable comprehensive instruction & support to enhance success of Oregon's beginning farmers & ranchers (BFRs) who are widely distributed & lack access to face-to-face instruction. Primary objectives: 1. Develop comprehensive online course for Oregon's BFRs, 2. Integrate support & infrastructure to encourage BFR success, 3. Create communities of practice (COP) to support BFR education and networks, 4. Enhance institutional capacity to effectively educate BFRs in a sustainable manner within routine staff and budget boundaries. Project will develop a comprehensive online course for Oregon's BFRs in rural, peri-urban, and urban settings by converting, expanding existing successful workshop series Growing Farms: Successful Whole Farm Planning. Online course to include sequenced basic & enhanced topics to foster holistic planning by integrating physical, biological, family & business components of farms & ranches. Training and support for use of FoodHub (cutting edge low risk online marketing tool) included as are electronic and face to face COP & participant training to access financial, cost-share, risk management resources. Project to be guided by

partners and Growing Farms Farmer Advisory Committee. It will be institutionalized within the Oregon State University Small Farms Program, course materials to be maintained, updated, improved, expanded long after the grant. Develop a comprehensive online course for Oregon's beginning farmers and ranchers. Integrate support and infrastructure including a low risk marketing tool, the FoodHub, to encourage beginning farmer and rancher success. Create communities of practice to support BFR education and networks. Enhance institutional capacity to effectively educate beginning farmers and ranchers in a sustainable manner within routine staff and budget boundaries.

### **What was accomplished under these goals?**

1. We have produced six modules for online dissemination that cut across most farming and ranching systems and were designed around a framework that accounts for differences of motivation and education among the audience. They are:  
 Dream it: Strategic planning  
 Do it: Farm operations  
 Grow it: Production  
 Manage It: Farm finances  
 Sell it: Marketing strategies  
 Keep it: Managing risk and credit
2. Each module consists of a curriculum outline with goals and learner objectives; educational content including exercises, narrated power point presentations, video segments of farmer case studies, text-based materials, additional online and text references; optional assignments; optional quizzes with instant answer key and feedback; self-evaluation opportunities; and a course evaluation form.
3. The online curriculum was created with input from a farmer advisory committee composed of seasoned farmers and face-to-face workshop alumni.
4. The learning management system used to deliver the online course allows us to track student progress, including such data as: time logged in, pages visited and online activities completed. A test at the end of each module will provide another evaluation tool. Participants are requested to complete a course evaluation form at the end of each module. One year after the launch, we will survey students who have taken the course to explore how the course made a difference for them, and capture any impacts related to it.
5. This project has been designed to be sustained beyond project funding. With periodic updates and revisions, the comprehensive course may be used indefinitely. It is replicable and could be adapted to other states. We have created institutional structure within the OSU Small Farms Program that will ensure maintenance, updating, improvement, and expansion of the course materials long after the life of the grant.
6. A marketing plan for the curriculum has been designed and is in process.
7. Website launch press releases are ready for distribution.
8. We have established four women's farmer-to-farmer networks in four regions of the state; there are 450 participants statewide. These integrate characteristics of face-to-face and virtual communities of practice and augment curriculum materials for participant training with hands-on activities.
9. Through non-profit partner EcoTrust, we have created and launched a cutting-edged, low-risk online marketing tool. FoodHub is a marketing corollary to social media in which buyers and sellers create and maintain business profiles, provide details such as certifications held and products available, giving buyers and sellers a direct line of sight to one another. A detailed, interactive tutorial and integration into modules provide participants immediate access to this low-risk marketing tool.
10. In concert with development of these efforts for online education, face-to-face educational programs that inspired the online modules have been offered at geographically dispersed locations in Oregon each year. Funds from the grant WERE NOT USED to support this activity.
11. We have acknowledged the support of USDA-NIFA-BFRG in all outputs of this project.

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

Graduate students—one student was supported for over two year with a Graduate Research Assistantship. She managed the videography portion of the project: interviewing six case study farmers, working with a professional videographer, guiding video editing and interface with educational curriculum.

Train-the-trainer workshops about starting and facilitating Farmer to Farmer networks were offered in 4 states. Initial women farmer network meetings at each location. March 2013: Missoula, MT; Moscow, ID; Corvallis, OR. April 2013: Mt. Vernon, WA and Portland, OR.

### **How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?**

The various modules have been or are in the process of beta-testing. The full curriculum will be launched spring, 2014 through Oregon State University's Professional and Non-Credit Education unit ([pne.oregonstate.edu](http://pne.oregonstate.edu)). The availability of the curriculum to the target audience will be made known to them through Professional and Non-Credit Education's marketing strategies, as well as via press releases, feature media articles including interviews with the faculty concerned, and via social media, email distribution lists, and our rich and diverse small farms and extension networks.

National Women in Sustainable Ag Conference workshop on the Farmer to Farmer communities of practice. The grant has supported 4 face-to-face networks with part-time coordinators who plan workshops, classes and gatherings, expanding the

reach of the network. Members of these networks number about 450.

Dr Stephenson presented a poster on the project at the 2011 BFRDP project director's meeting and an oral presentation on the project at the 2012 BFRDP project director's meeting.

The full curriculum will be launched Spring, 2014

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

We will launch the online curriculum and promote it nationally through the University's news and communications unit, via social media, email distribution lists, and our rich and diverse small farms and extension networks. USDA-NIFA-BFRG support will be acknowledged consistently throughout the launch and beyond.

The curriculum will be promoted through PNE marketing arm.

The curriculum will be offered in a variety of formats:

1. Online/face-to-face hybrid by Oregon State University Small Farms faculty
2. Online/face-to-face hybrid facilitated by Extension staff in states outside Oregon.
3. Fully online facilitated by OSU Small Farms faculty and offered nationally.
4. Fully online self-paced, independent and offered nationally.
5. Eventually offered as a for-credit university course in the hybrid format.

### 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	0.3	0	0.3
Professional	0.7	0	0	0	0.7
Technical	0.5	0	0	0	0.5
Administrative	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Computed Total	1.2	0	0.3	0	1.5

### Target Audience

The target audience for this project includes current and aspiring small scale farmers and ranchers. One key feature of this audience is that is that they seek learning and self-evaluation resources that will guide them in integrating the physical, biological, family, and business components of farming and ranching. Audience members are largely market wise, and tech savvy. They have access to high speed internet or satellite access, and use social media. Education internet-delivered online courses is within the capability of our target audience and is the most efficient way to reach remote audiences.

The four primary objectives of this Beginning Farmer and Rancher project are:

- Develop a comprehensive online course for Oregon's BFRs,
- Integrate support and infrastructure including a low risk marketing tool to encourage BFR success,
- Create communities of practice to support BFR education and networks,
- Enhance institutional capacity to effectively educate BFRs in a sustainable manner within routine staff and budget boundaries.

### Products

{Nothing to report}

### Other Products

#### Product Type

Educational Aids or Curricula

#### Description

Six online modules consisting of over 30 hours of content

**Product Type**

Educational Aids or Curricula

**Description**

PNW 638, Creating Farmer Networks: A Toolkit for Promoting Vibrant Farm Communities. Oregon State University Extension Service, Corvallis OR. Feb. 2013.

**Changes/Problems**

{Nothing to report}