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Program Code: BFRDP

Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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Departments

{NO DATA ENTERED}
Central Northeast Area

Non-Technical Summary

The majority of agricultural product sales in Nevada include cattle and calf production, followed hay, dairy products, vegetables, potatoes and all other crops. Nevada has seen an increase in the number of individuals beginning specialty crop operations with an estimated total of more than 150 small specialty crop producers statewide (Bishop, 2008; Curtis & Bishop, 2008). These producers primarily direct market their products through farmers markets, roadside and farm gate stands and through Community Supported Agriculture projects (Curtis, Kobayashi & Bishop, 2008). The livestock, forage and specialty crop industry in Nevada comprise an essential component of the economic stability in rural communities. According to the 2008 Nevada Agricultural Statistics Report, 95.63% of all land in Nevada is devoted to farming and ranching activities (82.78% pasture, 12.8% cropland). The 2008 U.S. Census of Agriculture reports, that for the state of Nevada, 3,131 farms are operating with the majority producing cattle and/or hay including alfalfa, timothy, and others (USDA National Agriculture Statistics Service, 2008). Specific tasks include: Year 1 will begin with eight 2-day workshops to improve business and financial management skills through the creation of a business plan; Year 2 will add an additional eight 2-day workshops to focus on improving water resource management skills and irrigation strategies while building on production management skills to increase profitability and efficiency; and Year 3 will finish the project with eight 2-day workshops focused on improving marketing skills to position farms to operate more competitively for changing markets and thus improve profitability. The three year program with one-on-one mentoring will utilize an evaluation design and will feature a combination of instruments and methodologies. Evaluation methods will produce both quantitative and qualitative impact data. Pre-test and post-tests, featuring a Likert-type scale, will be designed to accompany curriculum materials and workshop content in order to gage immediate knowledge gains and attitude changes. Selected BFR participants will be interviewed to acquire feedback about the usefulness of the project materials and instruction as well as project design (mentorships/outreach). This information will reflect impacts as well as provide feedback to improve the project design in subsequent years. The project is expected to accomplish both short and long-term goals as stated: The long-term goal of this Standard BFRDP Project is to create and enhance the sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers through education, mentoring, and outreach to own, operate and sustain an agricultural operation. The short-term goal is to increase BRFs participation in USDA programs including farm loan purchases, entering new markets, starting and sustaining an agriculture operation, and entering into land leases.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

The long-term goal of this Standard BFRDP Project is to create and enhance the sustainability of Nevada's beginning farmers and ranchers (BFRs) through education, mentoring, and outreach activities. Successful implementation of this project will improve ownership skills necessary to operate and sustain an agricultural operation. Supporting objectives are to: 1) Increase Nevada BFR's communication, agricultural entrepreneurship, business and financial management skills necessary to own, operate and sustain an agricultural operation; 2) Increase Nevada BFR's capacity to manage water resources effectively; 3) Increase Nevada's BFR's agricultural management knowledge and skills to implement sustainable agricultural management practices; 4) Increase Nevada BFR's skills to develop a marketing strategy that ensures the competitiveness of their agricultural operation; and 5) Ongoing mentorship of BFRs following workshops will provide guidance for achieving and accomplishing project objectives. American Indians, Hispanics, women and low-income individuals comprise significant proportions of Nevada's total population and qualify as socially disadvantaged and limited resource BFRs. More than 25% of the total budget is allocated to targeting these individuals through tailored curriculum materials, mentorships/outreach specialists with salary dollars allocated to hire specific expertise, including bi-cultural/bi-lingual individuals to work with and mentor socially disadvantaged and limited resource BFRs.

What was accomplished under these goals?

The Nevada BFR project (Herds and Harvest) evaluation design employed a multi-method, multi-year approach, consisting of questionnaires and retrospective surveys. Data obtained from assessments were analyzed using statistical analysis software for quantitative data (SPSS, Version 19.0) and descriptive and thematic analyses were used (interrelation development) for qualitative data. Impact data collected provided important information about the most effective methods utilized to educate BFRs.

Prior to program involvement, BFR participants are asked to complete an assessment in order for educators to obtain baseline data. The assessment included question items to help gauge current BFR use of written business plans, awareness of USDA financial assistance, income from agriculture, size of operation, skill level, definition of success, and demographic information. Following each workshop, participants were asked to complete a retrospective assessment designed to measure immediate knowledge gains as a result of attending trainings. In addition, BFR participants and project educators who engaged in mentoring activities completed an evaluation form designed to provide feedback on frequency, duration and outcome of the mentoring session(s). A Cronbach's Alpha test determined the reliability of the evaluation instruments used and the University of Nevada, Reno Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved all evaluation activities. Below are the outputs and impacts for year one and two.

Analysis of Year three outputs (in progress) and impacts will be completed and reported by the required due date (August 15, 2014). However, a summative to date BFR program evaluation was implemented in May 2014. Approximately 37% of respondents reported that their operations was 5 acres or less, and 26% reported sharing the information that they learned through trainings with others. Table 2 illustrates program information shared following trainings. Table 3 reflects the most useful part of the BFR program based on summative evaluation results.

Table 2. Percentage of BFR participants sharing program information after trainings.

Shared information with...

Percent

Spouse or partner

.54

Children

.23

Employees

.29

Neighbors

.52

Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer within the question.

Table 3. Most useful part of the Herds and Harvest.

Most useful part of the Herds and Harvests program...

Percent

Formal presentations and trainings

.87

Producer Networking

.61

Mentoring: Enterprise Budgets

.47

Great Ideas for Growers

.67
Mentoring: Agriculture Production
.59
Wolf Pack Meats Certification Program
.37
Hoop Houses and Season Extension Tools
.59
Note: Respondents could choose more than one answer to the question.

While BFR evaluation respondents rated enterprise budgets and the Wolf Pack certification program seemingly low as compared with other topics, comments indicated that enterprise budgets were essential to business planning and that the Wolf Pack Meats certification program should be expanded. Table 4 illustrates BFR actions taken, as a result of after attending Herds and Harvest trainings since 2011.

Table 4. Percentage of BFR actions taken following Herds and Harvest trainings.

Actions taken as a result of the mentoring and training program...

Percent
Production practices
.52
Marketing practices
.51
Food safety practices
.61
Improved long-term farm sustainability
.54
Service as a professional development opportunity
.78
Professional development opportunity for my employees
.33

Overall, 75% of BFR program participants reported that the program information and assistance benefited their operation, and 89% states the program was a reliable source of information. Fifty-seven percent reported that the program had helped improve profit in their business, and 83% reported that the information is usually relevant to their interests.

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

Table 1 lists the name of the training program, number of trainings held, and the number of BFR who attended. Business planning and action learning tools were integrated into all training programs.

Table 1. Training Program Attendance for Current BFR Project.

Training Program Name

Number of Trainings

BFR Attending

So You want to Be a Produce Farmer

17

141

Processing and Selling Locally Grown Meat

12

91

Field Crops Considering Drought

15

150

Wolf Pack Meats Certification Program

11

104

Introduction to Food Safety and Horticulture

5

25

Artificial Insemination

1

12

Beyond the Hub: Tribal Programs

8

102

Business Planning

34

121

Cattlemen's Update

9

493

Great Ideas from Growers

16

291

Total**128****1,530**

Note: Number of trainings includes Interactive Television Video sites.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

Program results have been used to reapply for the BFR national grant program, and will be utilized to enhance and improve project delivery methods and programs.

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

{Nothing to report}

Participants**Actual FTE's for this Reporting Period**

Role	Non-Students or faculty	Students within Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Scientist	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	6	0	0	0	6
Technical	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative	0	0	0	0	0
Other	1	0	0	0	1
Computed Total	7	0	0	0	7

Student Count by Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Target Audience

Past performance is based on educational activities beginning August 1, 2011 through May 30, 2014. Currently 600 BFRs participate and/or are enrolled in the program in Nevada under the USDA beginning farmer and rancher definition. Many BFR's have attended more than one training program. Table 1 lists the name of the training program, number of trainings

held, and the number of BFR who attended over the project period. Business planning and action learning tools were integrated into all training programs.

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128

1,530

Note: Number of trainings includes Interactive Television Video sites.

Products

{Nothing to report}

Other Products

Product Type

Databases

Description

We have a BFR mailing and email list for Nevada.

Changes/Problems

We have been refunded for another 3-year project. We will revise our evaluation design and expand the program under our new scope of work.