

Title:	GrassWorks Apprenticeship Program: Career Paths for Beginning Farmers		
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Submitted By	Joseph Tomandl	Date Submitted to NIFA	09/25/2014

Program Code: BFRDP

Program Name: Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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Recipient Organization

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Performing Department

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Co-Project Directors

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Departments

{NO DATA ENTERED}

Non-Technical Summary

GrassWorks Apprenticeship Program provides unprecedented, comprehensive training and support for beginning dairy farmers in Wisconsin by better coordinating the efforts of project partners. The project establishes clear, accessible, successive, institutionally supported steps for an individual to take from novice to successful independent operator. It recognizes the skills and previous experience of potential independent farmers (such as farm hands, hired farm managers and junior operators), allows them enter the program at a more advanced level and provides support for their goals. It also provides multiple entry points for established farmers who want to a) increase profitability by implementing managed grazing; b) diversify their investments and grow the grass-based dairy industry; or c) transition an established farm to the next generation. Investment strategies and potential business partnerships will be anticipated as part of the curriculum. The Project Coordinator and Farm Center Financial Advisor will provide initial consultation with both Master Graziers and apprentices. The Advisor will address financial management issues related to investment/transition models during peer-to-peer sessions. At a later point, the Journeyman Dairy Grazier and the Master Grazier can meet with the Financial Advisor to develop a legal, transparent and mutually beneficial business plan and contract. In screening of applicants to the program, GrassWorks will make every effort to match the goals of incoming Apprentices with those of Master Graziers. The Project Coordinator and Financial Advisor will formalize and document successful investment/transition models so that they can be replicated within the Apprenticeship Program and beyond. Once developed, educational materials on these alternative models will be able to be widely disseminated through the efforts of the project partners and other collaborating agencies, institutions and organizations. The following anticipated models of equity transfer will be developed during the funding period: 1. Spin-off Farm - Master Grazier (and/or other established dairy farmer) invests in new farm operated by Journeyman Dairy Grazier at another location. 2. Expansion - Master Grazier expands operation in current location and establishes milk-sharing partnership with Journeyman Dairy Grazier. This arrangement has worked well in New Zealand and is currently being explored by Professor Larry Tranel, Iowa State University, and several producers in the region. 3. Transfer of Ownership - Late-career/retiring Master Grazier transfers ownership of existing farm to Journeyman Dairy Grazier. This is a strategy for bringing new farmers into land ownership that is already being implemented by the Wisconsin Farm Center and will be addressed by the Financial Advisor. 4. Farm Manager - Journeyman Dairy Grazier attains managerial position on one or more grazing dairy farms. Graduates of the Apprenticeship Program who do not yet want to commit to a particular farm or a specific location will be able to find employment as a dairy manager.

Accomplishments

Major goals of the project

GrassWorks Apprenticeship Program provides unprecedented, comprehensive training and support for beginning dairy farmers in Wisconsin by better coordinating the efforts of project partners. The project establishes formal Apprenticeship clear, accessible, successive, institutionally supported steps for an individual to take from novice to successful independent operator. It combines on-farm training with classroom instruction. It recognizes the skills and previous experience of potential independent farmers (such as farm hands, hired farm managers and junior operators), allows them enter the program at a more advanced level and provides support for their goals. It also provides multiple entry points for established farmers who want to a) increase profitability by implementing managed grazing; b) diversify their investments and grow the grass-based dairy industry; or c) transition an established farm to the next generation. Investment strategies and potential business partnerships will be anticipated as part of the curriculum. GrassWorks will make every effort to match the goals of incoming Apprentices with those of Master Graziers. The Project Coordinator and Financial Advisor will formalize and document successful investment/transition models so that they can be replicated within the Apprenticeship Program and beyond. Once developed, educational materials on these alternative models will be able to be widely disseminated through the efforts of the project partners and other collaborating agencies, institutions and organizations. The following anticipated models of equity transfer will be developed during the funding period: 1. Spin-off Farm - Master Grazier (and/or other established dairy farmer) invests in new farm operated by Journeyman Dairy Grazier at another location. 2. Expansion - Master Grazier expands operation in current location and establishes milk-sharing partnership with Journeyman Dairy Grazier. This arrangement has worked well in New Zealand and is currently being explored by Professor Larry Tranel, Iowa State University, and several producers in the region. 3. Transfer of Ownership - Late-career/retiring Master Grazier transfers ownership of existing farm to Journeyman Dairy Grazier. This is a strategy for bringing new farmers into land ownership that is already being implemented by the Wisconsin Farm Center and will be addressed by the Financial Advisor. 4. Farm Manager - Journeyman Dairy Grazier attains managerial position on one or more grazing dairy farms. Graduates of the Apprenticeship Program who do not yet want to commit to a particular farm or a specific location will be able to find employment as a dairy manager.

What was accomplished under these goals?

This project develop the first formal Apprenticeship for farming in the United States. Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) is a federally recognized training program in managed grazing dairy production. In the past few years, DGA has gone from an innovative idea to the most comprehensive training program for dairy farming in the nation. Among its accomplishments:

- convened a Board of Directors comprised of stakeholders that includes farmers, educators, and industry representatives to identify competencies required to own and operate a managed grazing dairy farm
- established an apprenticeship curriculum for related instruction (known as a DACUM) with Wisconsin Department for Workforce Development Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards, a process facilitated by Worldwide Instructional Designs
- created the comprehensive DGA Training Guidelines or "Job Book" for on-farm training that outlines required competencies and provides a structure to the mentoring process for Masters and Apprentices
- developed a logo and branded materials for DGA to use in its education, outreach, marketing, and fundraising efforts
- created an online application and search system to facilitate the farm matching process and improve program outcomes
- recruited Apprentices and Masters through outreach campaigns at jobs fairs, farming conferences, economic development meetings, workshops, pasture walks and other events throughout the state and the region; wrote case studies on project outcomes to serve as teaching tools for new participants as well as promotional pieces for the program
- developed potential partnerships with industry and private investment groups as well as with state and local agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations
- provided business planning and financial consulting service to program participants
- earned approval as a vendor for Farm Service Agency's Financial Management Training Program
- became registered with the U.S. Department of Labor as a formal Apprenticeship
- approved 35 grazing dairy farms in Wisconsin and Minnesota as DGA Master Dairy Grazier educational sites
- admitted 18 Apprentices to the program and provided nearly 50,000 hours of training – five left the Apprenticeship before graduating; seven graduated to Journeyworker status (three own their own farms, three are in equity earning positions, and one is managing a farm); two Apprentices are in their second year of training; and three are in their first year of training.

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

DGA is composed of 4,000 paid hours of training over two years (the equivalent of a full-time job). 3,712 of these hours are on-farm employment and guidance under a Master Dairy Grazier. 288 hours are paid related instruction.

Farmers seeking to become a Master Dairy Grazier undergo an approval process that includes an interview and farm visit. The minimum qualifications are as follows:

- Must have five years of successful grazing experience or be a DGA graduate.
- Must ensure that apprentices are trained in core work processes or employ a full-time qualified individual to supervise and train the apprentice.
- Whether or not an individual meets above qualifications will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the DGA State Committee for a new employer only.

- Must be a current GrassWorks member.

Each Master farm-site undergoes an approval process to ensure a safe working environment for Apprentices as well as a thorough educational experience in all aspects of owning and operating a managed grazing dairy.

The obligations of a Master Dairy Grazier are as follows:

- Provide full-time employment and safe work environment with compensation beginning \$8 or more per hour for 4,000 hours (or mutually agreed upon in-kind compensation).
- Provide insight and instruction to assist in the development of skills for all aspects of farm management.
- Allow Apprentice to enroll in classes and take time to attend them.
- Be available to go over Training Guidelines (or "Job Book") and evaluate skill development.
- Participate in professional development seminars.

The minimum qualifications of an Apprentice are as follows:

- Must have a minimum of a high school diploma or GED, or a composite score on the ACT of at least 18, or minimum Accuplacer test scores in math and reading.
- Must be not less than 18 years of age.
- Must be physically able to perform the work of the trade with reasonable accommodations and without hazard to themselves or others
- Must have reliable transportation to and from work and school.

Each Master is responsible for hiring an Apprentice who will be a suitable match for his or her farming operation and goals. As an Apprentice gains skills and confidence, the Master documents progress in a comprehensive DGA Training Guidelines, often referred to as the "Job Book," that identifies the core competencies required to operate a managed grazing dairy farm. The Training Guidelines help Masters become more aware of the wide range of skills that they often do as a matter of course and provide structure to the mentoring process.

Upon entering the program, each Master-Apprentice Pair receives a Reference Guide that explains program procedures and requirements as well as a copy of the DGA Training Guidelines. Content for the original Training Guidelines was developed by the Steering Committee in partnership with the Bureau of Apprenticeship Standards, which provided the general format based on Job Books for other industries.

DGA also requires that Apprentices complete 288 hours of paid related instruction to complement on-farm employment, improve knowledge base, and familiarize Apprentices with the grazing community. Related instruction includes formal courses and other educational opportunities.

Apprentices who have already completed comparable coursework may receive credit hours toward DGA graduation requirements. Related instruction components are as follows:

- Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers (WSBDF) at UW-Madison and at several distance learning sites
- Classes in dairy/pasture management offered online and in seminar format through the Wisconsin Technical College System
- Pasture walks, field days, and spring workshops
- The annual GrassWorks Grazing Conference and other conferences and educational events coordinated by support groups in the state

Related instruction incorporates peer discussion groups, which bring in local business leaders, agency representatives, and agricultural professionals, to provide access to more in-depth information as well as networking opportunities. In addition, DGA includes a Holistic Management seminar, professional development training through BAS-WDWD, and business planning support services through Cadwallader Consulting, LLC. DGA is an approved vendor for Farm Services Agency's financial management training program. Graduates achieve the status of Journeyman Dairy Grazier and are capable of owning and operating a dairy grazing farm.

DGA currently has 35 approved farm sites, 13 Apprentices, including 7 Journey Dairy Graziers, and more than 80 applicants awaiting placement.

How have the results been disseminated to communities of interest?

DGA has utilized print media, online outlets, radio and in-person events to promote the program and disseminate results to communities of interest. A professional freelance writer was hired to document program outcomes in full length case studies and to develop a article length version of each that is suitable for publication in Ag-related newspapers and magazines. These will also be used as examples and teaching tools for upcoming Apprentices. The full case studies are available on the new DGA website (www.dairygrazingapprenticeship.org) along with recent press, program information, applications, resources, and links to partners. DGA also created a FaceBook page in order to build its audience and share results. Program Director Joe Tomandl has been interviewed about the program for well-known Ag related papers, such as Agri-View and Country Today, as well as on local radio and television. In 2014, Tomandl spoke in several farming, environmental, and community development forums, including the annual Wisconsin Farmers Union meeting, Future Farmers of America, Healing Our Waters Conference, the Marathon County Economic Development Committee, the Chautauqua Barn Dance, the GrassWorks

Grazing Conference, and the Missouri Grazing Conference.

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

Grant ended August 31st, 2014.

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	0	0	0	0
Technical	0	0	0	0	0
Administrative	2.5	0	0	0	2.5
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Computed Total	2.5	0	0	0	2.5

Target Audience

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship has two target audiences: 1.) current farmers who want to help the next generation, who are interested in new investment opportunities and/or who plan to transition out of farming but have not identified a successor. 2.) aspiring farmers who want to own and operate a dairy farm but cannot find a clear way toward that goal. The beginning farmer audience includes young people, women, hired hands, farm workers, immigrants and Latinos, who do not have savings or equity, who have had difficulty moving into managerial positions in the dairy industry and/or who are reluctant to give up low-paying jobs in order to follow a pathway ownership. It also includes students who want to farm but have no practical experience, as the program not only provides a skills-based education but also offers credit for approved instruction already completed.

Products

Type	Status	Year Published	NIFA Support Acknowledged
Other	Other	2013	YES

Citation

Case Studies published on Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship website: <http://www.dairygrazingapprenticeship.org/studies.phtml>

Other Products

Product Type

Databases

Description

DGA has developed a new online database designed to increase program capacity and improve outcomes for both Masters and Apprentices. Approved Masters can log into the system to search for potential Apprentices by area seeking placement or by key word. They can browse search results and simply click on a promising candidate to view the entire profile. Apprentice candidates are able to log back in to the site to view and edit their profile to keep it current.

Product Type

Educational Aids or Curricula

Description

DGA finalized development and publication of key educational aids: 1) DGA Training Guidelines (or "The Job Book") which is a comprehensive guide to the competencies that an Apprentice must achieve in order to successfully own and manage a grazing dairy farm. Masters use this on site to document Apprentice progress. 2) Three different DGA Guide Books (for Masters, Apprentices, and Partners/Board Members) were developed and published. These provide background on and objectives of the program, requirements and expectations, related instruction template, and contact information. When a Master-Apprentice pair enters the program, each person receives a DGA Guide Book.

Changes/Problems

{Nothing to report}