

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Farm Beginnings for Multicultural and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers in the Hudson Valley and NYC Metropolitan Area</b>		
<b>Sponsoring Agency</b>	NIFA	<b>Project Status</b>	COMPLETE
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<b>Submitted By</b>	Christopher Wayne	<b>Date Submitted to NIFA</b>	11/30/2015

**Program Code:** BFRDP

**Program Name:** Beginning Farmer and Rancher

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**Recipient Organization**

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**Performing Department**

{NO DATA ENTERED}

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{NO DATA ENTERED}

**Non-Technical Summary**

There is growing racial and ethnic diversity among farmers nationwide, however the doors are not always open to empower all people who possess the skills to start new farms. In order to feed the diversity of people who need healthy food, we need a diversity of farmers. Unfortunately, food deserts and the highest incidence of diet-related disease are disproportionately in African-American and immigrant neighborhoods. Urban gardeners, farm workers, veterans and other career changers all possess unique skills and strengths that can be transferred into farm businesses, but often lack access to land and capital, and face barriers like low literacy, limited English proficiency and lack of mentors. These factors create significant challenges in addition to those that all aspiring farmers face. Additionally, socially disadvantaged farmers need a larger local and regional network of farmers that they can relate to. The Farm Beginnings (FB) approach gives aspiring farmers a framework to help them create viable farm businesses by developing whole farm plans that are in line with their values and cultural backgrounds. The USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program has funded efforts around the country to bring FB to an ever widening audience. In this proposed project, FB for Multicultural and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers in the Hudson Valley and NYC Metropolitan Area, the New Farmer Development Project (NFDP) and the Hawthorne Valley Learning Center (HVFLC) will combine their experience to offer the unique FB training to a wide audience of beginning farmers that includes immigrants, African-Americans and other minorities, farm workers, limited resource urban gardeners desiring to scale up, young farm apprentices, veterans and other career changers. By forming a racially, culturally, demographically and geographically diverse network of farmers and farmer mentors, this collaboration will build bridges that empower people who have previously been unable to utilize their skills or act on their desire to farm, to create diverse new farm businesses and healing on many levels through agriculture. The collective expertise of the HVFLC and the NFDP, and the broad network of successful farmers who work with us, uniquely positions us to give aspiring farmers a clear picture of the production and marketing opportunities and challenges of our region, where farms tend to be smaller than in the rest of the nation, and there is a close proximity to dense concentrations of customers and robust and diverse direct marketing opportunities. Outreach for this FB program will be conducted by working with farmer worker organizations, veteran groups, community garden organizations, CRAFT apprentice training groups and other organizations throughout our region, which includes: the Upper Hudson Valley (Albany, Schoharie, Washington, and Rensselaer counties), Mid-Hudson Valley (Colombia, Greene, Dutchess, and Ulster counties), Lower Hudson Valley (Orange, Sullivan and Westchester counties), and the NYC Metropolitan area, including Long Island, Staten Island, central and western New Jersey and eastern PA.

**Accomplishments**

## Major goals of the project

The Project's 3 main objectives, their related outcomes and expected completion dates are as follows: Objective 1: Support the creation of new farm businesses. A. At least 120 aspiring farmers from a variety of racial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds will participate in the Farm Beginnings (FB) training course. (Sept-Nov 2012, 2013, and 2014) B. Out of the 40 FB graduates each year, 6 will go on to participate in the Mentoring Year program; (Jan-Dec 2013, 2014 and 2015) C. Out of 6 mentees, we expect 4 to create new farms each year; 12 by the end of the grant period. (August, 2015) Objective 2: Deepen and adapt the Farm Beginnings (FB) curriculum materials for a diverse audience with a range of learning styles and needs; share the curriculum with other beginning farmer service providers. The FB curriculum is uniquely suited to meet the needs of a diverse audience because it is community based and farmer led, and is based on the identification of the farmers' own values. However, there is a need for additional materials grounded in realities of our region, that also take into account low-literacy and participants with low English proficiency. The curriculum development activities undertaken by this proposed project will include: A. Developing lesson plans and standards for delivery for the Farm Beginnings program in a multicultural setting; (June, 2015) B. Creating a visually-based, plain language Toolkit; (August, 2014) C. Translating FB Toolkit into Spanish and other appropriate languages as needed; (October, 2014) D. Creating a minimum of 20 model enterprise budgets; (August, 2014) E. Documenting the stories of a diverse group of farmers in various stages of establishment throughout our region; (October, 2015) F. Participate in and share curriculum materials and best practices with the Farm Beginnings Collaborative National Alliance; (August, 2015) G. Train 30 beginning farmer service providers on best practices for working with multicultural and socially disadvantaged audiences; (August, 2015) Objective 3: Create robust multi-purpose networks of diverse farmers. The creation of farmer networks is a key part of this project, not only for program delivery, but also for the sustainability of the farms we help to create, and the long-term health of our regional food shed. The cornerstone of the farmer networks is the establishment and support of two (2) Farm Beginnings Steering Committees, one affiliated with each project partner. A. The two (2) FB Steering Committees will meet at least twice a year. The Steering Committee members will also comprise the core group of farmer presenters for the delivery of the FB course, workshops and field days; (March, 2015) B. Steering Committee members will serve as the core group of mentors to at least six (6) FB graduates; (Jan-Dec 2013, 2014 and 2015) C. Through formal and informal gatherings organized by the Steering Committees, farmers will exchange and share information, experiences and resources among and between the networks; (August 2015)

## What was accomplished under these goals?

Objective 1: Support the creation of new farm businesses

- 168 aspiring farmers graduated from the Farm Beginnings training courses at Hawthorne Valley Farm and GrowNYC (48 more than anticipated)
- 98 graduates (58%) were women, immigrants, farm workers, refugees, or low resource aspiring farmers
- 27 graduates participated in the year long mentorship program
- 11 graduates from NYC Farm Beginnings went on to start their own farm businesses
- 111 graduates (66%) remain involved in agricultural in some way, including apprenticeships, internships, farm workers, farm managers, crew leaders, technical assistance providers, educators, food processors, and incubator farmers.

Objective 2: Deepen and adapt the Farm Beginnings curriculum materials for a diverse audience

- Staff created a visual, plain language, and narrative toolkit based on key learning concepts from the Farm Beginnings Whole Farm Planning Curriculum
- The NYC Farm Beginnings Whole Farm Planning Course curriculum was fully translated into Spanish
- 20 model enterprise budgets were created with the assistance of consultant Faith Gilbert, a Farm Beginnings graduate
- Staff attended a yearly Farm Beginnings collaborative meeting where they shared resources with other FB facilitators, deepened networks, and planned strategically for future Farm Beginnings classes.
- Staff trained 41 service providers at the Beginning Farmer Learning Network Meeting in October 2014 on developing organizational capacity to serve diverse audiences. Topic areas included, cultural competency, working with Latino immigrant aspiring farmers, and creating a budget for a Spanish-speaking employee.

Objective3: Create robust multipurpose networks of diverse farmers

- Convened steering committees for both Hawthorne Valley and FARMroots Farm Beginnings and met with them each twice per year.
- Held 5 beginning farmer/established farmer meetups for networking and relationship building
- Had a guest farmer at each of the approximately 48 Farm beginnings classes held throughout the 2012-2015 grant period
- Had steering committee farmers host a variety of on-farm field days and skills workshop

**Success Stories:** Below are three examples of success stories that highlight what was accomplished over the last three years:

**Zachary Pickens:** Zach started his agricultural career as an urban farmer, managing 1/4 acre rooftop farm as part of celebrity Chef Tom Collichio's Riverpark restaurant. In 2014 Zach and his wife Amanda decided that they wanted to start a rural,

commercial farm businesses, and applied to the Farm Beginnings class. They developed a business plan to grow high value crops for sale to the restaurant community in NYC. After graduating, Zach expressed interest in a year long mentorship to gain more scale-appropriate production experience, and FARMroots helped match him with Morse Pitts, an established farmer in the Hudson Valley. Zach quickly proved his worth to Morse, who assigned Zach his own 1 acre plot of land half way through the season. At the end of the season, Zach and Morse expressed a mutual interest in continuing to work together. FARMroots drew up a formalized lease for 3 acres of Morse's land, which Zach will farm in 2015.

**Rise & Root Farm:** Rise & Root Farm is a 5-woman female farm collective that took Farm Beginnings in 2012. As a group of community organizers, activists, and urban farmers, they had decided to turn their focus to starting a rural, commercial farm business founded on food and social justice values. After completing Farm Beginnings, they participated in the year-long mentorship program in 2013, traveling nearly 2 hours each week to visit established farmer Jean Paul Cortens of Roxbury Farm. While there they developed important production skills and learned business management and planning strategies. In 2014 they spent a full season working with FARMroots to identify land opportunities, while continuing to develop production skills through mentorships and apprenticeships in the Hudson Valley. Late in 2014 they signed on to participate in North East Farmland Access's new project, the Chester Agricultural Center. FARMroots assisted them in acquiring them a space at the Union Square farmers markets, where they had a profitable season.

**Eloy Torreblanca:** Eloy grew up in Guerrero Mexico, where he learned to farm on his family farmers. He immigrated to the United States, where he took a series of jobs working in landscaping in upstate New York. After learning about the FB course from a farmworker social service provider, Eloy participated in the first ever iteration run fully in both English and Spanish, using simultaneous interpretation equipment. His set a goal of starting his own diversified family farm in 2015, and spent a year after the course looking for secure land and developing additional production skills. In early 2015 FARMroots assisted Mr. Torreblanca in developing a crop plan for a farmers market in the Parkchester neighborhood of Brooklyn, which included Mexican specialist herbs and vegetables. He attended the market for 18 weeks of the 2015 season and had a profitable first year. He plans to expand his operation in 2016 and is currently working with FARMroots to identify additional land opportunities.

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

Over the course of the grant FARMroots and Hawthorne Valley Farm Staff provided the following training opportunities to program participants:

**Field Days:** Combined, staff held 10 beginning farmer field days throughout the course of the grant. Trips included visits to farms in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Visits were predominately focused on vegetable and livestock farms, identified by staff as businesses with the lowest barriers to entry. On average field days lasted for 5 hours, and included a social lunch event. Field days generally had a theme (greenhouses, crop planning, weed control, pest control) and included a full walking tour of the farm, as well as time for participants to "get their hands dirty". Evaluation from field days showed that the events assisted in changes in knowledge, abilities, skills, and intentions for 92% of participants, while building networks and support systems for 97%. 65% of participants reported a plan to change an existing farming practice based on the field day.

**Advanced Skills Workshops:** Combined, staff held 10 advanced skills workshops throughout the course of the grant. In most farm-based workshop cases, members of the farmer advisory committee, Greenmarket farmers, or mentor farmers hosted skills workshops. These workshops included seasonal extension (J&A Farms), tomato pruning (Amantai Farms), value added production (Robin Puskas), shiitake mushroom production (Christopher Wayne), integration of livestock (Stephen Schneider), composting (Rachel Schneider), planning for profit (Richard Wiswall), increasing sales using online databases (Small Farms Central), crop planning (Jean Martin Fortier). Evaluation from advanced skills workshops showed changes in knowledge, abilities, skills, and intentions for 89% of participants, while building networks and support systems for 72%. 78% of participants reported a plan to change an existing farming practice based on the field day.

**Mentorships:** Staff widely consider the development of the mentorship program as one of the key successes of the project. For farmers coming out of NYC, gaining scale-appropriate farm-based experience is a vital step in the development of their own farm businesses, and doors are often closed. The Year-Long mentorship program opened doors for many farmers, including facilitating farmer networks and providing increased knowledge and skills for 100% of participants. Combined, staff facilitated 31 year-long mentorships, and 11 half-day mentorships. In order to facilitate the program, staff connected Farm Beginnings graduates to established farm businesses in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, facilitated initial phone calls and meetings, formalized relationship through signed MOU's, monitored the completion of at least 200 hours of mentorship throughout the growing season, reimbursed mentee for travel, reimbursed mentor for time, monitored activity logs, and held closing evaluation interviews with both mentors and mentees.

**One on one technical assistance:** Combined, staff assisted 67 Farm Beginnings graduates with on-going one-on-one technical assistance. Predominate areas of technical assistance included business plan formalization (including clarifying mission statement/holistic goal, developing reasonable financial projections, developing a balance sheet, and creating a marketing plan), enterprise budget development, access to land, access to capital, and access to markets. One-on-one technical assistance included in-person meetings, phone calls, and emails. Below is a further breakdown of key areas of support:

**Land Identification:** Staff assisted 21 Farm Beginnings graduates with access to land support. Assistance included online soil mapping, on-site land assessment, farmer/landowner mediation, and lease creation.

**Access to Capital (Kiva Zip Loan Fund):** Staff assisted 23 beginning farmers with developing capacity to access capital. Support included business plan formalization, financial planning, grant writing, loan paperwork assistance, and profile building for crowd lending/funding. FARMroots additionally made 4 microloans through it's newly formed Kiva Zip Superlender agreement. The agreement allows beginning farmers to access up to \$10,000 of interest free capital through Kiva Zip, an online crowdlending platform for small business owners. FARMroots lends 30% of each loan immediately after the loan goes live on the Kiva Zip website, effectively jumpstarting the online campaign. Average loan size was \$7,000 and loans were used for purchase of a BCS walk-behind tractor, a new market van, a refrigerated truck, and transplants and operating costs.

\*\*please note - 5 other beginning farmers have written letters of intent for participation in the program going forward.

**Access to Markets:** Staff assisted 9 beginning farmers on accessing markets for their newly formed farmed. Access included predominately farmers markets, but also included support in accessing CSA and direct-wholesale accounts. Assistance included filling out applications, developing crop plans, identifying community based organizations, and scouting markets.

**Success Stories:** Below is an additional example of a success stories that highlight the accomplishments of the project over the last 3 years:

**Jacob Okam:** Jacob was born in Nigeria to a family of farmers. When representatives from the USDA visited his small town to teach new agricultural techniques, the seed of curiosity were planted for Jacob. In the the early 2000's he immigrated to New York City, where a large population of Nigerian's resided. Jacob quickly immersed himself in agriculture while working as a delivery man for a super market chain. He got a landscaping degree from an online university, his master composters license, and eventually was able to acquire 100 row feet of space in a community garden in Queens, NY in 2013. While there, Jacob learned about the Farm Beginnings program though a manager at that community garden. He applied and was accepted. Jacob took the 2014 Farm Beginnings Whole Farm Training class, where he developed a business plan for his farm, which included plans to grow a wide variety of traditional Nigerian crops. After graduation, Jacob worked with FARMroots staff to identify a suitable piece of land. After visiting 3 different properties with staff, Jacob decided to start his business on the campus of Kean University in New Jersey. In the 2015 growing season Jacob grew 12 different varieties of Nigerian specialty crops, many of which he sold to nigerian wholesalers in Brooklyn and Queens and to the restaurant on Kean's campus. His story was covered in the New York Times, and a dinner with the town's Mayor was held in his (and the farms) honor. Jacob is receiving ongoing technical assistance from FARMroots on crop planning and access to capital. He plans to expand his operation.

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

Project staff distributed results to the communities of interest in a variety of ways. See below for further details:

**Newsletters:** Monthly newsletters to beginning farmers and community members were generated throughout the entirety of the grant.

**Online website:** Predominate findings, such as the Whole Farm Planning Visual Toolkit have been placed on websites for public access, including FARMroots website and the farmanswers.com website.

**Presentations:** Staff have presented at a variety of NYC-based organizations who did not have previous knowledge of the project. These include the Archdiocese of New York, the Columbian Consulate, and the Refugee and Asylee Service Providers (RASP) meeting. Staff have also presented at a variety of regional conferences and workshops on findings from the conferece. For example presentations have been given at the Beginning Farmer Learning Network Meeting (3 times) and at New York State Agricultural Commision Richard Ball's Begining Farm Working Group (5 times).

#### 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 with Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Scientist	0	0	0	0	0
Professional	2	0	0	0	2

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

Role	Non-Students or faculty	Students with Staffing Roles			Computed Total by Role
		Undergraduate	Graduate	Post-Doctorate	
Technical	2	0	0	0	2
Administrative	0.2	0	0	0	0.2
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Computed Total	4.2	0	0	0	4.2

**Student Count by Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) Code**

{NO DATA ENTERED}

**Target Audience**

Previous to this grant, the audience served by the New Farmer Development Project (now FARMroots Beginning Farmer Program (FBFP) was 100% aspiring and beginning immigrant farmers, who either had advanced degrees in agronomy or veterinary medicine, experience working on family farms in their home countries, or worked as farm workers here in the U.S. Through our collaboration with the Hawthorne Valley Farm Learner Center (HVFLC) on this Farm Beginnings Project, FBFP continued to serve this audience, and also broaden its scope to include other limited resource and socially disadvantaged farmers, including African-Americans and other minorities, limited resource urban gardeners looking to scale up, young farm apprentices, veterans and other career changers.

The collaborative effort recognized that many people have skills and experience that can be leveraged into farm businesses. Production skills are not the only ones that are important or relevant when starting a farm. Previous experience in retail, marketing and sales, project management, publicity and communication, mechanics, construction, human resources, accounting, bookkeeping, law, design and research, can all be extremely valuable.

The main criteria for participation in this FB Program was a desire to farm in one of the three regional areas served by this project. Through targeted outreach, the project aimed to attract an audience that was comprised of at least 60% socially disadvantaged and/or limited resource farmers. A sliding scale for project tuition and ensured that all of those with the desire to participate would be financially able to do so.

Another key component of this FB Project was the use of visually-based plain language curriculum materials and audio visual materials and stories. All training and materials were provided in English, Spanish and other appropriate languages as needed. By making the information and training clearly understandable and accessible to all, this FB course attracted a group of aspiring farmers that is racially, culturally, demographically and geographically diverse.

Below is a demographic breakdown of students who completed the Hawthorne Valley/New York City Farm Beginnings Program over the course of the 3 year grant:

## 2012 Hawthorne Valley

- 33 Participants
- 9 African Americans
- 1 Latino
- 1 African refugee

## 2013 Hawthorne Valley

- 36 Participants
- 2 African Americans
- 1 Latino

## 2014 Hawthorne Valley

- 24 Participants
- 1 African American
- 1 Latino

Below is a breakdown of New York City Farm Beginnings Class/Demographics:

Total Black African American Graduates 2012

11

Total White or Euro-American Graduates 2012  
9  
Total Hispanic American Graduates 2012  
2  
Total East Asian or Asian American Graduates 2012  
3  
Total South Asian or Indian Empire Graduates 2012  
1  
Total Female Graduates 2012  
18  
Total Graduates 2012:  
24  
Total Black African American Graduates 2013  
3  
Total White or Euro-American Graduates 2013  
9  
Total Hispanic American Graduates 2013  
8  
Total East Asian or Asian American Graduates 2013  
1  
Total South Asian or Indian Empire Graduates 2013  
1  
Total Female Graduates 2013  
8  
Total Graduates 2013  
22  
Total Black African American Graduates 2014  
3  
Total White or Euro-American Graduates 2014  
15  
Total Hispanic American Graduates 2014  
3  
Total East Asian or Asian American Graduates 2014  
3  
Total South Asian or Indian Empire Graduates 2014  
2  
Total Female Graduates 2014  
19  
Total Graduates 2014  
28  
Total Black African American Graduates  
17  
Total White or Euro-American Graduates  
33  
Total Hispanic American Graduates  
13  
Total East Asian or Asian American Graduates  
7  
Total South Asian or Indian Empire Graduates  
4  
Total Female Graduates  
45

**Products**

{Nothing to report}

**Other Products**

**Product Type**

Educational Aids or Curricula

**Description**

The "Farm Beginnings Whole Farm Planning Visual Toolkit" is the first visual, plain language, and narrative educational aid designed to bridge cultural and experienced-based learning gaps in beginning farmer education.

**Product Type**

Educational Aids or Curricula

**Description**

20 Enterprise Budgets showing financial benchmarks for specialty crops in the Northeast. Budgets are provided for diversified vegetables, Mexican specialty herbs, hops, grains and more.

**Product Type**

Educational Aids or Curricula

**Description**

20 Written Farm stories that serve as a guide for beginning farmers just starting, scaling up, or adding enterprises.

**Changes/Problems**

{Nothing to report}