

Business of Farming (BoF) - Train the Trainer Program

Progress report for WPDP19-25

Project Type: Professional Development Program

Funds awarded in 2019: \$74,984.00

Projected End Date: 12/31/2022

Host Institution Award ID: G128-20-W7504

Grant Recipients: California Association for Micro Enterprise Opportunity; San Diego Small Business Development Center; Dickinson Farm

Region: Western

State: California

Principal Investigator:

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California Association for Micro Enterprise Opportunity

Co-Investigators:

[Carla Holland](#)

San Diego Small Business Development Center

Project Information

Abstract:

Anecdotally, lack of land is considered the primary reason there are not more new farms. It may explain the reason aspiring farmers do not start farming but it does not explain why farmers are failing within the current economy. Lack of land is just a reason, not *the* reason.

The importance of management balance was emphasized in a 1980-87 study of factors contributing to farm profitability (Klinefelter, 2012), and still reflected today in the farm census analysis (Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems: A Report to Congress, AP-068, 2015).

The Business of Farming course provides a strong foundation in small business development and business management, specific to agri-business. With the addition of the Train-the-Trainer program we intend to measurably increase the number business knowledgeable agri-preneurs ensuring success and economic viability of the next generation of farmers.

Using a remote training model to decrease cost and increase impact, the Business of Farming Train-the-Trainer program will create a Business of Farming Facilitators guide and Train the Trainer curriculum, host three Cohorts and implement technological infrastructure to train and support 21 instructors over a 3-year grant which will in turn train and mentor at least 315 farmer / owners.

Project Objectives:

The purpose of this project is to provide training and support for Ag Business Educators engaged in providing technical support and advice to aspiring and beginning small farmers planning to open their own for-profit business, growing produce and other agricultural products for market.

The cornerstone of this training project is three Train the Trainer workshops where Business Educators will learn about the specifics of the Business of Farming and leave with the skills, competency and knowledge to effectively counsel, guide and inform agri-preneurs. To ensure success of the training project there are various activities that need to be completed and objectives that need to be met.

#	Objective	Completed By	Dependencies
1	Create & Finalize BoF Facilitors Guide	5 months after issuance of grant	Grant Issuance
2	Create & Finalize Train the Trainer Curriculum	2 months after completion of BoF Facilitors Guide.	1
3	Coordinate and Conduct ToT Course Cohort 1	Within 5 months of material completion aligned with BoF Course at South San Diego SBDC.	1, 2
4	Provide Trainer Technical Assistance	Within 3 months of finishing Cohort 1, and ongoing.	1, 2, 3
5	Create & Update Technical Resource Portal	Within 3 months of finishing Cohort 1.	1, 2
6	Coordinate and Conduct ToT Course Cohort 2	Year 2 of grant aligned with BoF Course at San Diego SBDC.	1, 2, 3
7	Coordinate and Conduct ToT Course Cohort 3	Year 3 of grant aligned with BoF Course at San Diego SBDC.	1, 2, 3, 4

Cooperators

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Education & Outreach Initiatives

Business of Farming and Train the Trainer Course

Objective:

Increase the number of business-minded farmers and viability of farming operations within the project region. Train 21 trainers within 3 years which will in turn train and mentor at least 315 farmer / owners.

Description:

2019 Progress

The initial part of this grant period has been spent planning for the training courses and curriculum for the Train the Trainer program and coordinating the participating partners for the roll out of the programs.

Thus far, all of the dates for the 20-session, 20-week Business of Farming have been scheduled for June 1, 2020 to August 30, 2020.

And the Train the Trainer 20-session course has been scheduled for May 29, 2020 through September 2, 2020. A recruitment orientation for the first cohort will be held

on May 27, 2020 in conjunction with the 2020 California Small Business Assistance Providers Professional Development Conference. The conference will be attended by over 400 California small business advisors, government contract specialists, financial advisors, manufacturing experts, and service providers for women and veteran owned businesses. This gathering is designed to provide cutting edge information on how better to serve small business owners and to leave with innovative strategies that create a positive impact on the economy.

The portal and facilitators guide are also being developed.

We expect to have more robust outcomes to report in our next report.

In November 2019 Carla Holland, the Director of the San Diego Small Business Development Center transitioned to a different role outside of the organization and we have been planning with Danny Fitzgerald, Associate Director of the San Diego Small Business Development Center until the new Director is hired. Andrew Seko, also transitioned out of CAMEO and Emily Gasner assumed his responsibilities.

2020 Progress

The impact of a pandemic COVID-19 environment in 2020 has impacted the progress of this project significantly.

The train the trainer course, which was meant to be a virtual training after an in-person kickoff was not held during 2020 as planned as a result of all the changes from COVID-19.

The business of farming Train the Trainer curriculum which was being developed was going to need to be significantly updated given all the changes brought by COVID affecting farm businesses to be relevant.

As a way to create interim impact in 2020, a 1-hour long virtual educational webinar was planned, created and held for trainers via zoom and community members working with and interested in resources for farm businesses to teach them ways farm businesses need to and are pivoting as a result of COVID-19 changes in business, legal practices and more. This webinar was held May 8, 2020 and titled: *How Small Farms are Adapting Their Businesses During COVID-19 - A Listening Session for Farm Consultants and Technical Assistance Providers*. Seventeen people attended and benefited from the webinar.

Our project has also had transition in its key participants. The Small Business Development Center hired director Briana Weisinger in the fall 2020 to replace Carla Holland. And shortly thereafter our project educator and key participant in this project, Stepheni Norton, due to health reasons, resigned from the project on 9.28.2020.

In 2021 we are reconvening our main project team members to create new plans to reconfigure the train the trainers as virtual trainings to carry out the deliverables for this project before the end of this project. We look forward to providing more impact information in our next progress report.

Educational & Outreach Activities

- 1 Curricula, factsheets or educational tools
- 1 Online trainings

Learning Outcomes

- 17 Participants gained or increased knowledge, skills and/or attitudes about sustainable agriculture topics, practices, strategies, approaches

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