



### Supporting Relationships for Farm Success

Healthy on-farm relationships between spouses, employees, apprentices and family members are vital to a farm's success.

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension and the Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine started a project in the fall of 2016 focused on farmers and social sustainability. The project is supported by an Northeast SARE Professional Development Program Grant






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### Today's Presenters



**Elaine Bourne,**  
Volunteers of America  
Northern New England



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University of Maine  
Cooperative Extension

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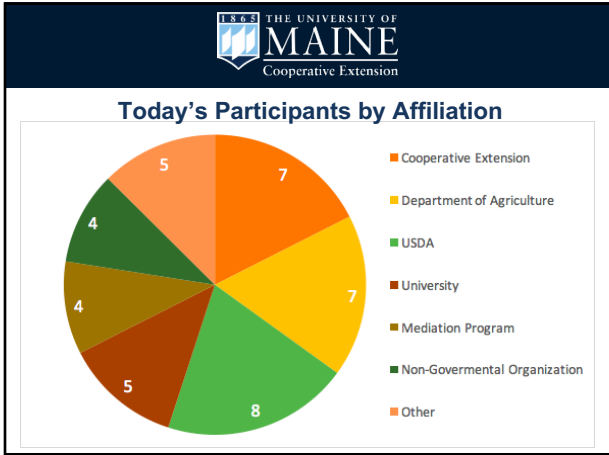
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**Communication Type**

What is your most frequently used form of communication with farmers?

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**What do we mean by Interpersonal Skills?**

- **Communication:** Identifying the relationships and roles on the farm and tools to improve communication between family members, farm partners, employees, customers and other decision makers.
- **Decision-making:** Utilize existing tools to prioritize tasks and plan in advance. Have a clear understandings of management roles and responsibilities, and criteria on what decisions can be made by the person in charge and which require all stakeholders' input.
- **Goal-setting:** Develop farm goals that integrate quality of life values and relationship goal criteria into farm decision making.
- **Time Management:** Utilizing existing resources to assist farmers in optimizing farm roles and responsibilities.

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### Performance Target

45 agricultural service providers increase competence and confidence to understand and respond to beginning farmer concerns about interpersonal relationships, and apply their new skills in one-on-one consultations with 90 farmers who manage 10,755 acres, with an aim to improve farm retention and farmer lifestyle satisfaction.

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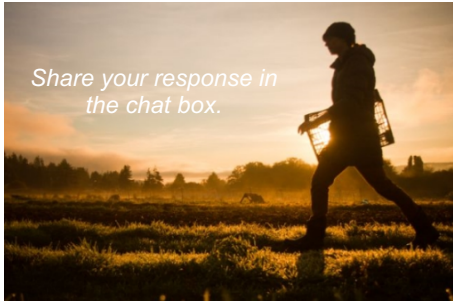
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### What are some qualities of successful farmers?



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**Questions?**

*Please type your questions in the chat box*

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**Agenda**

- A. Project Overview
- B. Toolkit
- C. Wrap-up

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**Project Hypothesis**

Agricultural Service Providers are seeing interpersonal issues arise in consultation with farmers, and service providers will benefit from training to better support farmers in the four project areas of communication, goal setting, decision making and time management.

“Ranchers and farmers are telling us their weakest link is not technology nor information. Their weakest link is human relationship management.”

-Robert Fetsch, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

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**How comfortable are you in addressing interpersonal skills in 1-on-1 consultations with farmers?**

  
 Not Comfortable

  
 Somewhat Comfortable

  
 Comfortable

  
 Very Comfortable

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**Journey to Competence**

From **Unconscious Incompetence**

To **Conscious Incompetence**

To **Conscious Competence**

To **Unconscious Competence**

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**Where We Started**

  
 Develop a Curriculum

**Includes:**

  
 Duties & Tasks  
 That Successful Sustainable  
 Farmers in the Northeast DO

  
 Qualities  
 They HAVE

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### What's Not Included?

#### Duties & Tasks

- A. Plan Whole Farm
- B. Set Up Farm Business
- C. Manage Farm Business
- D. Pursue Education & Professional Development
- E. Nourish Family & Community Relations
- F. Manage Farm Labor Resources
- G. Manage Tools, Equipment & Supplies
- H. Manage Farm Infrastructure
- I. Manage Production & Natural Resources
- J. Raise Livestock
- K. Raise Crops
- L. Market Farm Products & Services
- M. Review & Re-Plan Whole Farm

HOW?  
WHEN?

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#### Learning Stages

#### Dreyfus Model

Recruits / Explorers / Aspiring	0-1 Years Farming	Novice
Start-Up Farmers	1-2 Years Farming	Advanced Beginner
Establishing Farmers	3-5 Years Farming	Competent
Strategizing	4-6 Years Farming	Proficient
Refining	6-10 Years Farming	Expert

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#### Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition

Novice	<i>Knows how to start a tractor, go forward and reverse. Needs supervision and feedback during operation.</i>
Advanced Beginner	<i>Can run a tractor and needs reminders to properly operate loader or PTO</i>
Competent	<i>Can operate a tractor safely</i>
Proficient	<i>Can operate a tractor with skill, judging distances and speed appropriate to current activity</i>
Expert	<i>No longer consciously thinks about how to use a tractor</i>

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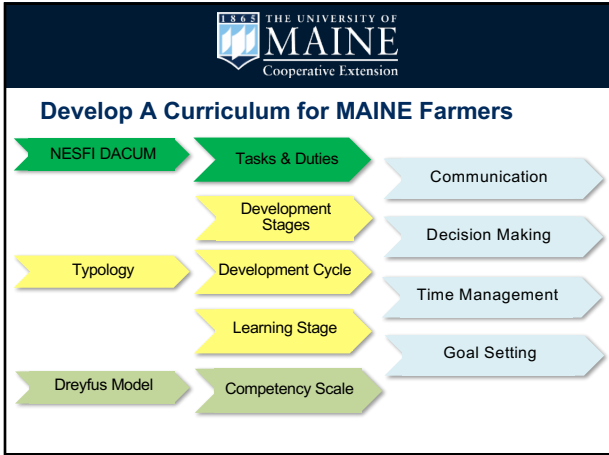
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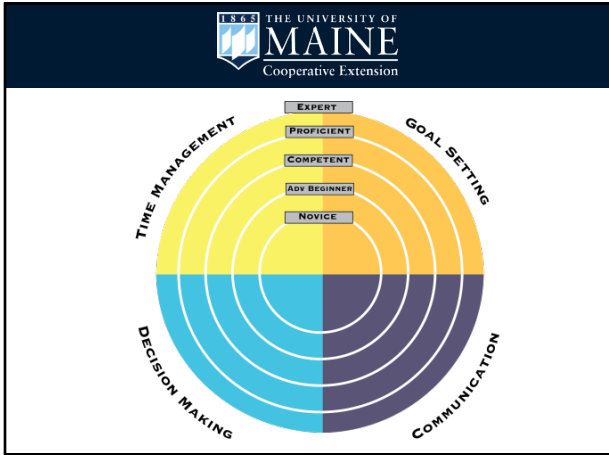
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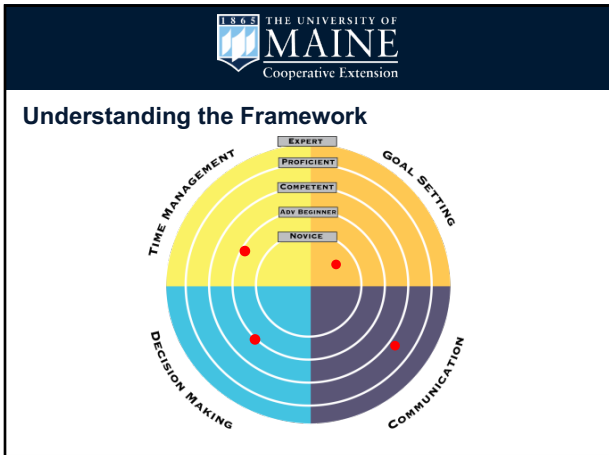
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**Questions?**

*Please type your questions in the chat box*

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**Toolkit Overview**

**Why a Toolkit?**



**When to Use**



One-on-One Consultations



BEFORE, DURING & AFTER



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### What's in the Toolkit?

- Farmer Typology
- Tips for Acting as a Guide
- Checklist
- Resources

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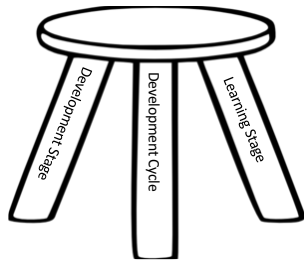
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### Farmer Typology

Holistic Understanding & Assessment




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### Farm Development Stages



- Start-up farmers**  
How does this farmer describe their goals for the farm?
- Prospective farmers**  
Has the farmer done any type of self-evaluation? (personality test, farming aptitude test)
- Establishing farmers**  
Does this farmer have employees, apprentices or others for whom they are a supervisor?
- Strategizing farmers**  
How is the farmer approaching the challenges associated with changes to their business?
- Refining farmers**  
Are there skills or knowledge that this farmer still needs?

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### Using the Farmer Typology

- Think of a farmer you've worked with.....
- What is their development stage?
- What are some of the characteristics that you've used to determine this?

Do you have questions about how to identify a farmer's development stage?

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### Development Cycle

Personal	Business
<b>Development</b> <i>Birth - 18 Years</i>	<b>Seed Stage</b> Focus is on the launch
<b>Start-Up</b> <i>18 Years + Post College or Training</i>	<b>Making It</b> Focus is on growth
<b>Expansion</b> <i>18 Years - 50 years</i>	<b>Taking Charge</b> Focus is on "team building" through employees, partnerships or marriage..
<b>Maturity</b> <i>50- 70 years</i>	<b>Sustain &amp; Produce</b> Focus is on Quality of Life
<b>Transition</b> <i>50+ Proto Retirement</i>	<b>Sell, Retire, Reinvent</b> Focus is on transitions

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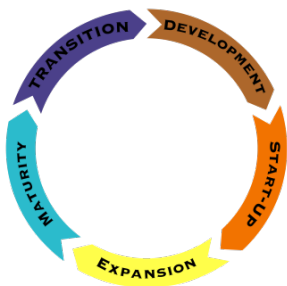
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### Using the Development Cycle



- Did this person grow up on a farm?
- Do they bring experience from another field to their farm business?
- How has the farm expanded? Through marriage, partnership or employees?
- Have the goals of these farmers evolved?
- What will be the legacy of these farmers?

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### Using the Farmer Typology

- What stage of the development cycle are they in?
- What characteristics indicate this stage?  
*Please type your responses into the chat box.*
- Are you curious to learn more about aspects of this stage?

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### Learning Stages



- Novice** –How do skill areas relate to their farm dream?
- Advanced Beginner** - How are challenges identified? Has a self assessment been done?
- Competent** – How can they access training or resources to help improve skills?
- Proficient** – Ready to actively model and teach skills
- Expert** – Act as allies, by sharing their experiences with others

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### Using the Farmer Typology

- What learning stage fits their production knowledge?
- How about their communication skills?
- Will these levels of skill be an asset or a challenge based on what you know?

**Questions?** *Please type your questions into the chat box.*

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### What's in the Toolkit?

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- Checklist
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### Becoming a Guide



What are the characteristics of a good guide?

*Share your response in the chat box*

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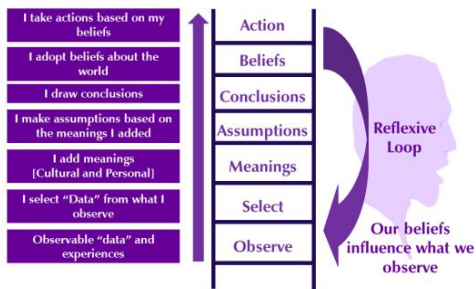
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### The Ladder of Inference




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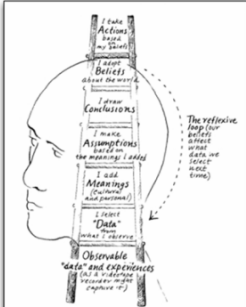
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### The Ladder of Inference



**Actions**  
I will not invite David to the next meeting

↑

**Assumptions**  
If people don't care they shouldn't be invited to future meetings.

↑

**Add Meaning**  
When someone doesn't contribute it means they don't care.

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**Observable Data**  
One committee member is looking at his phone and not contributing to the meeting.

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### Questions about the Ladder of Inference?

*Please type your questions in the chat box*

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### Active Listening Tips

*Asking open-ended questions*

**How** will a new well impact your farm?  
**How** will it change your production?  
**How** will it change your finances?  
**How** will it support your farm goals?

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**Active Listening Tips**

*Clarify*

Can you tell me more about the sequence of events?

I'm not sure I understand, could you explain how you reached this conclusion?

Can you remind me who was involved?

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**Active Listening Tips**

*Naming the Emotions*

How are you feeling about this challenge?

I'm sensing you are concerned about this. Can you tell me more about what you're feeling?

What are some of your fears about this choice?

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**Active Listening Tips**

*Summarize*

"So what I've heard so far is ....."

"What I heard you say was....."

"These are some of things I've heard you say, ..."

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**Words & Phrases to Avoid**

***“WHY”***

Asking “why” something happened or “why” a particular decision was made can be tempting. This approach can trigger a defensive answer which may distract from assessing the situation.

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**Words & Phrases to Avoid**

- “I know what you mean”***
- “I’ve heard that before”***
- “That happened to me once...”***
- “In my experience...”***

These phrases are barriers to communication and convey assumptions that the farmer might take as a cue(s) to stop talking.

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**Words & Phrases to Avoid**

- “BUT” or “HOWEVER” or “SHOULD” or “COULD” or “WOULD”***

These are phrases which can often draw attention back to you (the listener) as an active listener your goal is to have the attention remain with the speaker.

Try substituting **“AND”** where you might use “BUT.”

For example, *“This business plan is so helpful to my understanding of your farm goals **AND** I’ll need additional information to assess whether our programs are the right fit for your funding needs.”*

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**Questions About Active Listening?**



*Please type your questions into the chat box.*

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**Feedback**

Before offering feedback, clarify whether your feedback is meant to offer insight or add context to the speaker's point of view.

Some of these clarifying questions might include:

- "What ideas do you have to address this?"*
- "Is there a specific way you would like my help?"*
- "Have you seen someone else facing this? How did they approach it?"*

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**Feedback**

*Ask* before you share pertinent information, observations, insights and experiences.

*"I have some information that might help with that, would you like to hear it?"*

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### Feedback

If the answer is yes, then keep these tips in mind. Keep the feedback loop open so there is opportunity for the farmer to correct what you may have misheard.

**Limit Your Focus**

*"Well we've discussed several interesting aspects of your operation, I can help you most with time management and your goal to finish your business plan this winter."*

**Prepare your Thoughts**

*"Because I heard you say you were having trouble prioritizing tasks on the farm, I suggest you look at this time management tool."*

**Keep it Positive & Focus on Improvement**

*"I like your ambition and I'd love to support you in writing your business plan. I'd like to start by scheduling some meetings and corresponding deadlines."*

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### Referrals

**Types of Referrals**

**Self** - You are aware of a resource

**Provider** - You contact an agency representative

**Research** - You may need to do more research prior to making a referral.

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### Effective Referrals

To ensure you have a good sense of the support this person has explored or is currently receiving it is a good idea to ask, "Who else have you been in touch with?" and then--

- Ask for Permission
- Explain the Referral
- Know your Limits
- Get to know the Network
- Verify the Need

Questions?

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**Following Up**

The farmer may have already indicated how they would like to proceed with next steps. As a guide, you can remind them of their self-described process through use of paraphrasing and/ or open-ended questions.

“You’ve told me you’d like to have “ \_\_\_\_\_ ” done. When would you like to have it done by?”

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**Following Up**

If the farmer was unable to complete an action item or arrives to a consultation unprepared.

Set a timeline or time frame--*work with them on setting a realistic deadline.*

Consider if something else needs to be done or learned first. *Is this affecting completion of the action item.*

Ask, “what motivates you?” *Consider if follow-up can incentivize them to complete the task.*

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**Following Up**

What type of follow-up do you use?

*You may type your responses into the chat box.*

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**Using the Checklist**

*Please open the document, One-on-One Consultation Checklist. We'll go through it with some examples.*

- **Stage of Development**
- Conversation Openers
- Area of Focus
- Skill Area (self-rating)
- Feedback
- Next Steps

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**Using the Checklist**

**Conversation Openers**

What brings this farmer to your office?

What expectations do you have for the meeting?

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**Using the Checklist**

**Area of Focus**

- Key Phrases
- Approach or Tactics
- Who else?

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**Case Study**

In this example let's pretend you are a loan officer.

Jim and Karen come into your office and tell you about how the last two seasons of dry weather have impacted their business and their ability to grow crops for their markets.

They tell you about how they have been in business for 4 years, selling veggies at 3 farmers market during the growing season. They don't own their land. They rent a house and their fields on a year-to-year basis.

Their house well has gone dry several times which has been stressful. They've lost crops and are frustrated because this means they can't meet the consumer demand at their markets.

They've met with their NRCS agent who tells them they can put together an application for funding, but they won't know if the funding will be there until March or April. They have a quote of \$5,000 from a well driller.

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**Using the Checklist**

**Skill Areas**

Are there aspects of communication, decision making, goal setting, or time management in the farmer's area of focus?

*Please type your responses into the chat box.*

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**Case Study**

How do Jim & Karen describe their relationship with their landlord?

How able are they to negotiate a longer term lease?

Does their current land meet the needs of their future goals?

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**Using the Checklist**

- **Feedback**
  - Referrals
  - Other Suggestions
- **Next Steps**
  - Deadlines or subsequent meetings
  - Action Plan
- **Resources**
  - Listed by project area

**Questions?**

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**Agenda**

- A. Project Overview
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**How comfortable are you in addressing interpersonal skills in 1-on-1 consultations with farmers?**



Not Comfortable



Somewhat Comfortable



Comfortable



Very Comfortable

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### Project Timeline

2017	Project Activities
December	Using the Tools & Feedback to Project Coordinators
2018	Project Activities
January	Complete Digital Resource Available to Participants
January - February	Follow-Up Survey (a draft has been emailed to you)
April	Digital Resource Available on project website

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### Next Steps

- Complete the evaluation (see your email)
- Integrate the Service Provider Toolkit and Checklist into your day-to-day work.
- Ask the project team for help
- Provide feedback about successes, challenges and project materials
- Keep notes for follow-up survey (see your email)

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### THANK YOU!

We hope that you will leave today with new perspectives and tools to help deepen your understanding of the farmers with whom you work.



Presenter Emails:

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- Abby Sadauckas - [absadauckas@gmail.com](mailto:absadauckas@gmail.com)

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