



**Building Sustainable Farm Resiliency through  
Farmer-Centered Business Solutions**

Holly Hutchason

Bryan Allan

# Introduction - W-SARE Grant OW24-006

## Project Summary

Our project's goal is to help farmers strengthen their businesses and financial resilience by providing resources that have been difficult to obtain. Guided by a Farmer Core Team (FCT), we will identify what resources are needed and how they should be delivered. We will then develop and offer these resources, using peer-to-peer communication, the FCT, a comprehensive resource database, and other methods to be determined.

## Phase 1: April - July 2024

Assisted by the FCT, we conducted a needs assessment study through surveys and listening sessions to identify common business challenges. This ensures our interventions are rooted in real-world experiences.

This presentation is a summary of the needs assessment.



WESTERN SARE  
Sustainable Agriculture  
Research & Education

PACIFIC NORTHWEST  
COMMUNITY  
SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

## FARMER SURVEY

*WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!*

- ✓ Share insights to shape free resources aiding farm growth
- ✓ Open to any and all PNW farmers
- ✓ Responses are confidential and participation is voluntary

Email any questions to  
✉ [jay@pnwcsa.org](mailto:jay@pnwcsa.org)

**RSVP NOW**

Visit [pnwcsa.org](https://pnwcsa.org) for more info

The poster features a circular photograph of three farmers (two men and one woman) standing in a field of green plants, smiling and holding small red flowers. The background of the poster is a mix of yellow, orange, and blue geometric shapes.





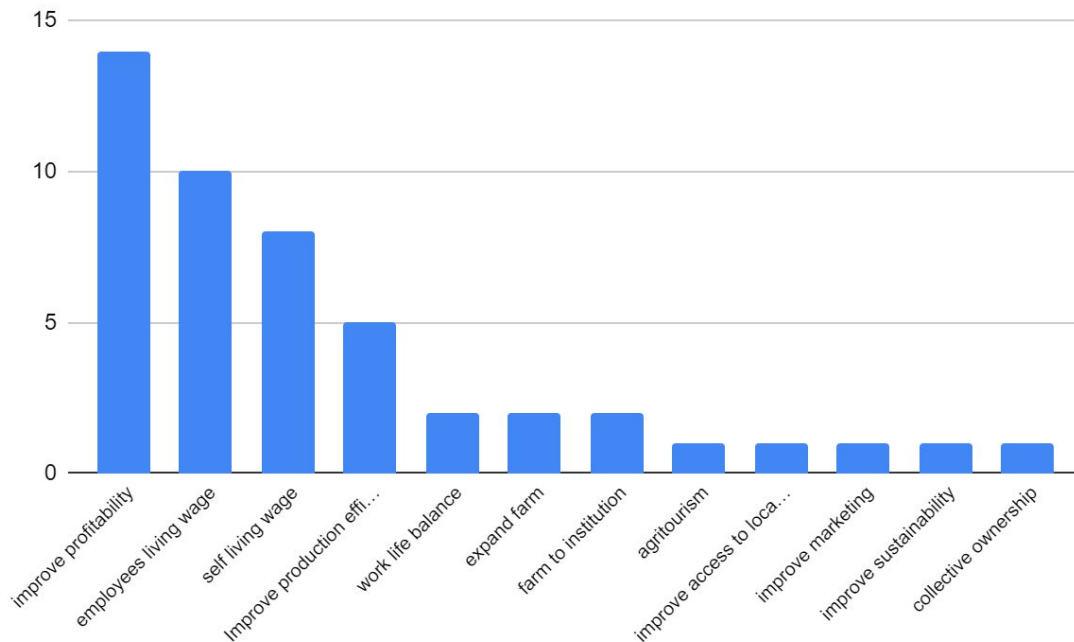
# Participant Summary: Needs Survey

- Respondents varied widely in age and experience, farming as few as 2 years or as many as 47 years
- A majority of farmers are interested in scaling their operations and most participate in CSA or farmers markets as their main sales outlet
- Farmers' preferred learning methods:
  - Mentorship
  - Written Fact Sheets
  - Reading Books
  - Hands-on Demonstrations
  - In-person events



# Participant Summary:

What is your top business goal for your farm in the next 5 years?



# Farmers Challenges Business Management

Farmers had the most difficulties

- Finding a good bookkeeper
- Offering health insurance
- Finding a tax preparer who was familiar with agriculture.

Farmers had less problems with

- Organic certification
- Licensing questions



# Farmers Challenges Accessing Professionals

Most farmers had difficulty finding

- Financial Advisors
- Bookkeepers
- Farm Mentors
- Lawyers
- CPAs

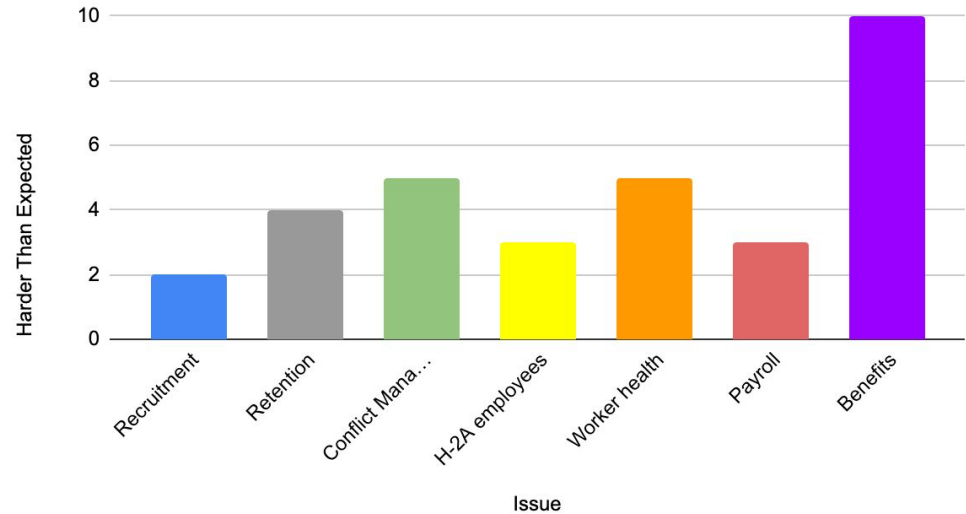
Some farmers also struggled to find

- Insurance Agents
- Marketing Professionals
- Agronomists



# Farmers Challenges Employee Management

Employee management issues affected relatively few farmers with the exception of managing employee benefits





# Farmers Challenges Marketing

Farmers had the most difficulties

- Differentiating from the competition
- Writing Marketing Copy
- Social Media Marketing
- Web Design

Less than half of participants faced specific marketing issues, but many struggled with differentiating themselves from the competition.





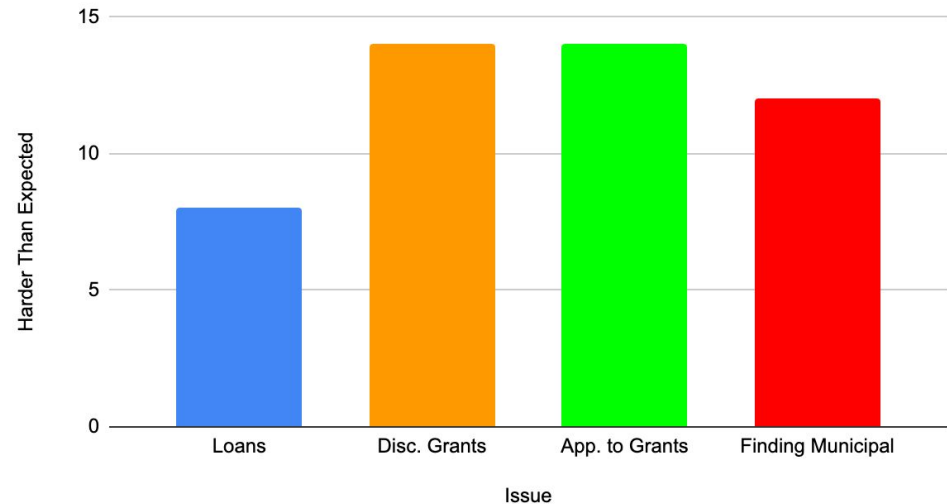
# Farmers Challenges Grant & Capital Access

A majority of farmers reported perceived difficulty discovering and applying to grants

- Acquiring Loans
- **Discovering Grants**
- **Applying to Grants**
- Finding Municipal Grants/Funding

In interviews, many farmers expressed interest in grants that can provide loans or funding **specifically for equipment, infrastructure and supplies**

Harder Than Expected vs. Issue



# Farmers Challenges Educational Technical Resources

The only issue farmers identified in discovering or accessing educational technical resources was machinery maintenance.

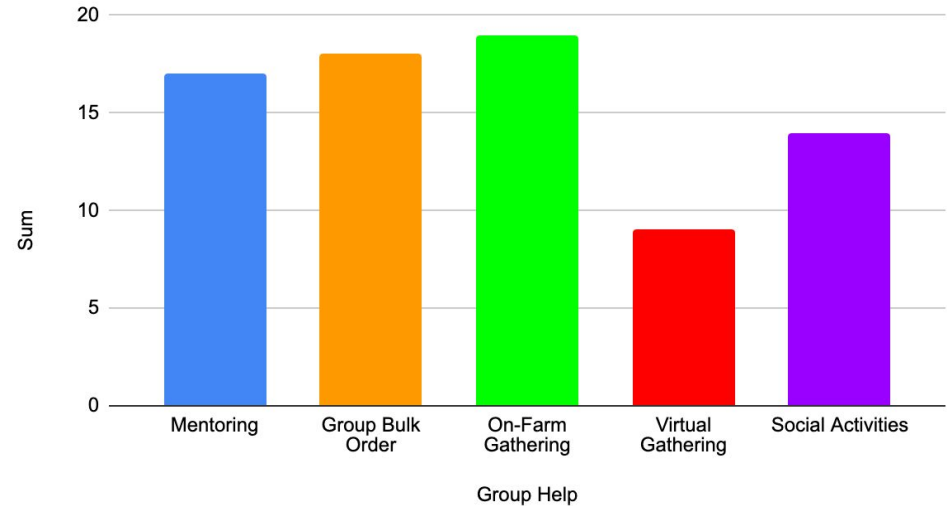


# Farmers Challenges Farmer to Farmer Interactions

- Nearly all respondents favored more farmer-to-farmer interactions, with virtual gathering as the least favored
- Many respondents noted they hoped for collaboration in group ordering:

“I have been wanting to see a group purchasing and selling cooperative for a LONG time. So much potential in the North Willamette valley.”

Sum vs. Group Help



# Farmers Challenges Next Steps

- Leverage existing resources via collaboration with nonprofits and farmers that have made progress on these issues and encourage sharing of relevant materials
- Issues should be addressed in educational formats that are favored by farmers: listservs, written online documentation, classes or consultations by farm mentors
- Utilization of our Farmer Core Team and peer-to-peer learning will be prioritized
- Listservs have become effective communication for farmers, but active documentation is required to ensure farmers are finding answers efficiently and aren't repeating the same conversations
- A decision-tree that helps farmers easily navigate a broad topic database can both help improve access to this information and ensure effective utilization of information (i.e. a checklist of business data collected prior to contacting a financial advisor/bookkeeper)





# Areas of Focus

- **Accessing Professionals:** develop and maintain a Professional Services directory of local specialists (CPAs, insurance agents, tax advisors, etc.); distribute online and in print.
- **Employee Management Support:** Investigate *Becoming the Employer of Choice (BTEC)* curriculum - can we adapt this to the PNW?
- **Improving Profitability:** *Know Your Cost to Grow* - what would it take to offer this curriculum in a meaningful way?
- **Facilitating Mentorship program:** what, who, how, \$\$?

**Timeline:** October 2024 through February 2026 - mainly during the winter

