

Michigan Sustainable Farm Mentors Program

2021 North Central Partnership Grant
Year 2 Results



Katie Brandt
Grant Project Coordinator
Educational Programs Manager
at MSU Student Organic Farm,
Michigan State University

Project Goal

✓ Connect 42 Mentorship Pairs

46 Mentorship pairs (2021 – 2023)

12 Mentors

22 Aspiring Farmers

24 Beginning Farmers



39 Successful Mentorship Pairs

16 Beginning Farmers

each completed 5 hours of mentorship

12 Aspiring Farmers

each completed 2 hours of mentorship

11 Returning Farmers

expect 10 more hours of mentorship each



Mentorship Hours

80+ Hours:

Beginning + Mentor

24+ Hours:

Aspiring + Mentor

65+ hours:

Mentee + Peer

23 Meetings,

Trainings & Input Sessions

2022 – 2023 Goal:

✓ Connect 28 Mentorship Pairs

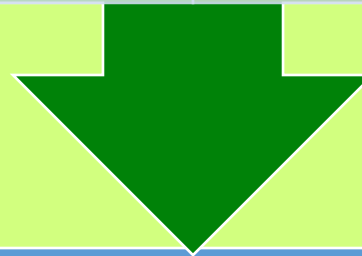
40 Mentorship pairs (2022 - 2023)

8 Mentors

15 Aspiring
Farmers

14 Beginning
Farmers

11 Returning
Farmers



26 Successful Mentorships

9 Beginning Farmers
each completed 5 hours of mentorship

6 Aspiring Farmers each
each completed 2 hours of mentorship

11 Returning Farmers
expect 10 more hours of mentorship each

In 2022,

Mentees included:



9 Beginning Farmers



3 BIPOC

1 Special needs

2 Limited resource producers*

11 Returning Mentees**



6 Aspiring Farmers



3 BIPOC



* **Limited resource producers** is the USDA term for low-income farmers

** **Returning mentees** are beginning farmers re-connected with mentors for more time as recommended in input sessions

GRANT OBJECTIVES FOR YEAR 2 WERE MET. Through mentorship, Beginning Farmers reported improvements to their KASA (*knowledge, attitudes, skills, or awareness*) in all categories.



9 Beginning Farmers

All 8 Beginning Farmers who completed both surveys reported at least 1 IMPROVEMENT to their Triple Bottom Line (Profitability, Stewardship or Quality of Life)

5 out of 8 INCREASED Understanding of their Farm Financials

3 out of 8 INCREASED Understanding of their Soil Health + Soil Knowledge

4 out of 6 INCREASED their belief that their LAND MEETS THEIR NEEDS

2022 BEGINNING FARMER MENTEE & MENTOR TESTIMONIALS:

“I would like to thank you for the opportunity. The program has been a fantastic resource for me personally and our farm ...Honestly just having a connection to someone that farms, but doesn't have a COI/is a competitor is huge. My mentor in the past is a great person, but we try to not talk farming because it is a complicated relationship. ”

– Austin W., **Beginning Farmer Mentee**



“My mentor taught me about making the farm work for me and structuring efforts with personal life in mind.”

- Sara H., **Beginning Farmer Mentee**



“The mentor program was crucial for me in building relationships with farmers in my area as well as helping me source materials in affordable ways for a beginning farm.”

- darien w., **Beginning Farmer Mentee**



“I really enjoyed trying to de-mystify the FSA and NRCS processes and paperwork with my mentees. This was something I really struggled with as a beginning farmer myself, and had to learn the hard way. I would have loved having a guiding hand through these sometimes cumbersome USDA departments.”

- Alex C., **Farmer Mentor**



15 Aspiring Farmers



11 Returning Farmers

6 Accessed Mentor/Peer Input



4 4 report INCREASED KASA about land, credit, or farm/business training



Will report in March on Mentor/Peer Input and KASA

ASPIRING FARMER MENTEE & MENTOR TESTIMONIALS:

“This program helped me to see that things take time - the value of tenacity and keeping at it”

- Jasmine B., Aspiring Farmer Mentee



“A success that I achieved during the mentorship program was really the sharing of ideas and information with my peer mentee Zac and his wife – they were great! ... We both took our backgrounds and our insights and we were helping to brainstorm for each other”

- Julia M., Aspiring Farmer Mentee



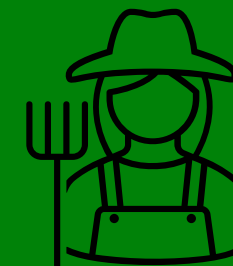
“This mentorship is helping me overcome the challenge of not knowing how to start conversations with my family about farm succession planning. My mentor has given me language and questions to ask. She has confirmed the importance and given me inspiration, encouragement, support and wisdom to move forward in succession planning for our family farm.”

– Melissa W., Aspiring Farmer Mentee



I love being a mentor and I benefitted from having a mentor when I was starting out..”

– Lindsay D., Farmer Mentor



When mentors & mentees don't connect....

Busy farmers & dropped communications



Renew successful
mentorship pairs

- **8 Returning Mentees** re-connected with their mentors
- **10 hours of mentorship per mentee** in 2023 & 2024

New Mentorship
Pairs

- **3 New Mentees** will pair with mentors
- **10 hours of mentorship per mentee** in 2023 & 2024
- **1 new Mentor** will pair with a mentee

Pass it on!

Sharing best practices with mentorship organizers

- Toolkit & Video
- Curriculum
- Articles
- Slides

A screenshot of a video player showing a presentation titled "Tour the Toolkit!" and "CREATE A GREAT FARM MENTORSHIP". The presentation includes sections for "Michigan Sustainable Farm Mentors", "PLAN FOR REAL CONNECTIONS", "GREAT FARM MENTORS...", "FIND & PAIR FARM MENTORS", "SETTING GOALS", "BUILD RELATIONSHIPS", and "LISTEN & LEARN". It also features a "RESOURCES TO CREATE A GREAT FARM MENTORSHIP..." section with a QR code and a "SIGNUP" form. The video player interface shows a play button, a progress bar at 0:00 / 8:15, and a URL at the bottom: https://projects.sare.org/sare_project/onc21-085/.

Peer to Peer Learning and Mentorship
CONNECTING NEW FARMERS WITH MENTORS

Primary Activities

Overview of the main activities in this module

Planning a Mentorship Project

Brainstorming how to design mentorship for local communities

How do you start a mentorship program that is right for the beginning farmers you are working with? How do you stay in touch with mentors and mentees to make sure they are actively communicating?

Supporting Mentors

Getting experienced farmers ready to connect with a mentee

Preparing experienced farmers to connect positively with a mentee. This includes brainstorming discussion prompts, practicing reflective listening and more.

Supporting Mentees

Connecting Mentors with Mentees

Check-ins! Peer

Meet & Greet

Connecting Mentors with Mentees

Welcome to the Mentorship! Explaining the mentorship expectations and timeline, then facilitating breakout rooms where each mentor-mentee pair can set goals for learning and communication.

Evaluation Charrette

Gather success stories & recommend improvements

Charrettes work well online or in-person. For an online charrette, breakout rooms and shared note-taking will allow all participants to contribute on 4 aspects of the mentorship. An introduction prompt will offer time to share successes with the full group.

https://projects.sare.org/sare_project/onc21-085/

Long-Term Success

\$39,999 in SARE funds → \$1.6 Million in USDA-TOPP Funds for Michigan

Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP)

1. Mentorship

- 30 mentor pairs per year in Michigan until 2027
- My experience from this SARE project now informs 11 Midwest TOPP state projects

2. Technical Assistance (TA)

- 2 Full Time Conservation District staff
- MSU and 6 non-profits offering TA

3. Education

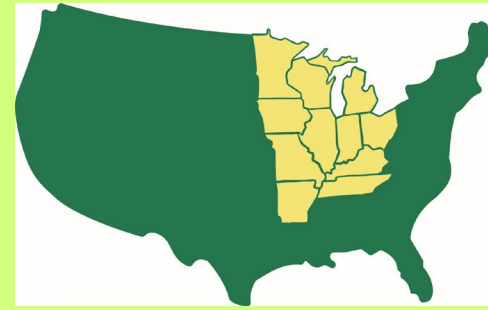
- Workshops, field days and webinars

4. Community Development

- 6 non-profits will each offer several networking events per year

5. Workforce Development

- Jobs listings



MIDWEST
TRANSITION TO ORGANIC
PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Extension



Grand Traverse
Conservation District
Boardman River Nature Center



OBJECTIVES: Michigan Sustainable Farm Mentors 2021 – 2023

Met or Exceeded 10 out of 12 Objectives	Actual	Goal
✓ 124 Mentees applied for mentorships	124	42
✓ 46 Mentorship Pairs connected	46	42
✓ 11 Mentors trained & paired	12	7
✓ 24 Beginning Farmers connected with mentors for financial, environmental and social sustainability discussions	24	21
✓ 22 Aspiring Farmers connected with mentors to discuss land/credit access and business/production skill-building	22	21
✓ Paired 43 mentees for peer discussions	43	42
✓ 12+ document reviews ; positive, actionable feedback for 5 shared online	12+	NA
✓ 1 document review training for farmer mentors	1	1
✓ 20 Interactive webinars invited mentors/mentees to lead project decisions	20	18
• Documented success for most goals for beginning & aspiring farmers through pre/post surveys & infographic reports	See next slide	
✓ Created a toolkit & curriculum for farm mentorship organizers	2	2
• Did not meet 1 goal to compare impact of farmer mentors to peer mentors	NA	NA

OUTCOMES: Michigan Sustainable Farm Mentors 2021 - 2023

Met or Exceeded 11 out of 14 Outcomes	Actual	Goal
✓ 24 beginning farmers paired with a mentor to access mentor/peer input	24	21
✓ All 15 who completed pre/post surveys reported increased knowledge, attitudes, skills or awareness (KASA) of farm FES sustainability	15+	15
✓ 12 beginning farmers reported adopting new practices	12+	10
✓ 10 reported improvements to farm, soil, well-being, community connection, financials etc.	10+	5
✓ 22 aspiring farmers paired with a mentor to access mentor/peer input	22	21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All 7 who completed pre/post surveys reported increased KASA about land, credit or business/farm training 	7+	15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 attempted to access land, credit or business/farm training 	3+	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 reported accessing land/credit/training (1 land, 2 credit) 	3+	5
✓ 43 mentees paired with a peer mentee	43	42
✓ 2 Peer mentee Trainings offered	2	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several report farm/leadership KASA, but survey poorly tracked peer mentees 	Several	20
✓ 12 farmers mentored mentees	12	7
✓ 9 farmers received mentor training	9	7
✓ 7 farmer mentors reported increased farm/leadership KASA (4 in surveys and 3 verbally)	7	5

THANK YOU SARE!



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