



Supporting Relationships for Farm Success

Begun in the fall of 2016, this project focuses on farmers and social sustainability. The project started with a survey to service providers designed to *better understand* the needs of beginning farmers (in their first 10 years) with respect to the social, emotional, and relational issues that arise.



For the purposes of this project, “interpersonal skills” will include:

- **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:** Utilizing existing tools to prioritize tasks and plan in advance
- **Goal-setting:** Developing tools for assisting farmers in prioritization of farm, business and family goals.
- **Time Management:** Utilizing existing resources to assist farmers in optimizing farm roles and responsibilities.

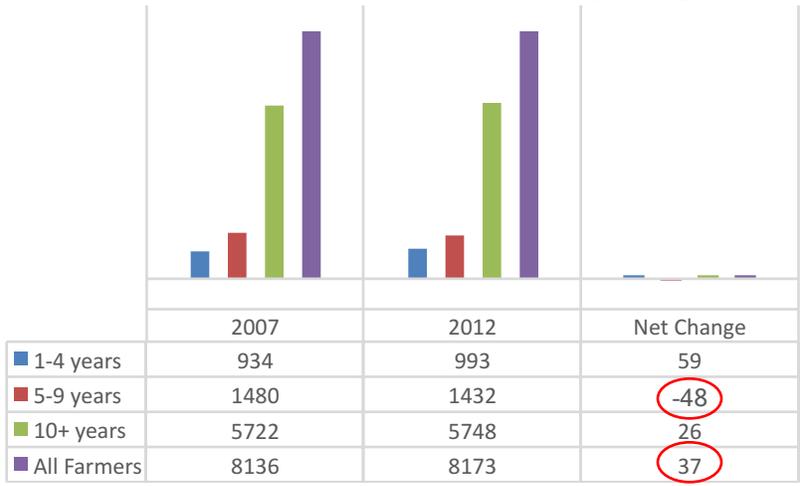


Project Timeline

2017	Project Activities
January – March	Focus Groups & Interviews with Farmers
May	Half-Day Training
June – September	Working Group Meetings
September	Optional In-Person Group Meeting to Review Draft Materials
October	Day-Long Training
	Webinar
November – December	Using the Tools & Feedback to Project Coordinators
2018	Project Activities
March	Digital Resources Available on Website

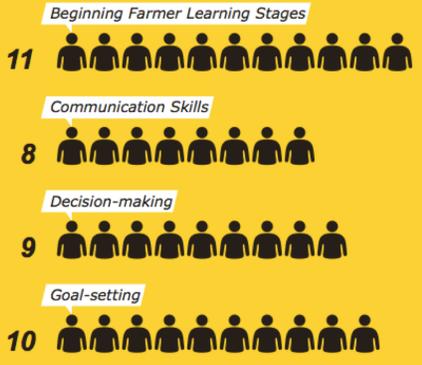


Decline in Farm Operators Farming 5-9 years

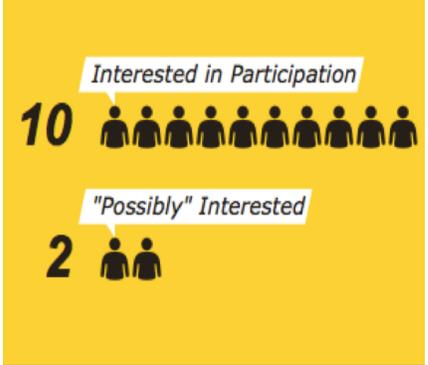


Level of Interest Survey (n=12)

Interest by Topic Area



Interest in Participation





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



Agenda

9:00 – 9:30	Overview & Introductions
9:30 - 9:40	Ag Service Provider Survey Data & Activity
9:40 - 10:10	Summary Report from Farmer Demographics & Activity
10:20 - 10:35	Develop a Curriculum for Maine Farmers
10:35 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 11:00	Develop a Curriculum Activity
11:00 - 11:20	Case Study & Activity
11:20 - 11:35	Brainstorm
11:35 – 12:00	Next Steps & Closing



Introductions

- Name
- Role
- Agency/organization
- How do you work with new farmers?
- What do you hope to gain from today?



What do you hope to gain from today?

- Connection with each other
- Multi-generational spectrum of communication, decision making and relationships
- “Tune up” skills for working in the 4 project areas
- See how this group can be a multiplier in increasing these skills
- Increase knowledge of the soft skills
- Communication skills to help farms in transition move forward
- Gain knowledge of the new farmer learning stages & learning about needs
- Help develop tools to ensure they are relevant to diverse communities
- Ways to teach communication skills to students and demonstrate intentionality



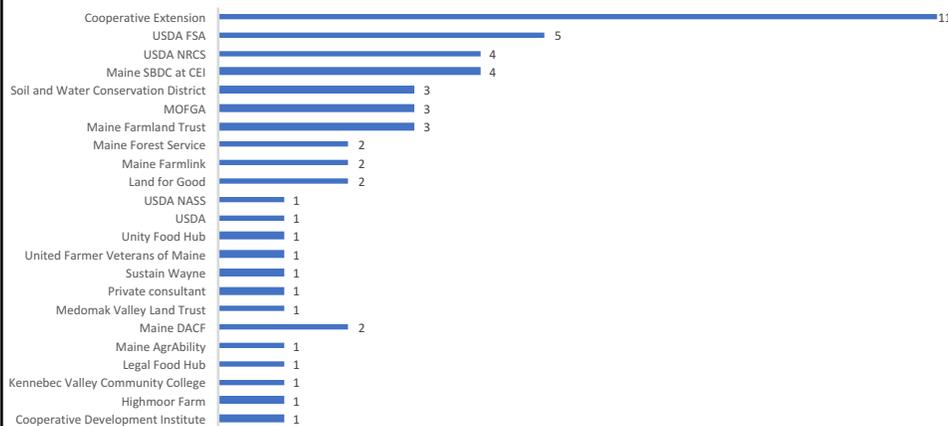
Issues that arise in our work with farmers

- Broad range of questions- being prepared
- Sharing knowledge of relational systems (ie communication and needed skill sets)
- Delivering technical information with information regarding business development, farm production- balancing and choosing what to address
- Getting beneath surface issues
- Helping people develop vision & how to communicate that to others
- Recognizing that project area skills affect farm sustainability
- Farmer to farmer versus technology
- Lack of knowledge of full range of options available to clients- what are their options
- Decisions made in conflict with values



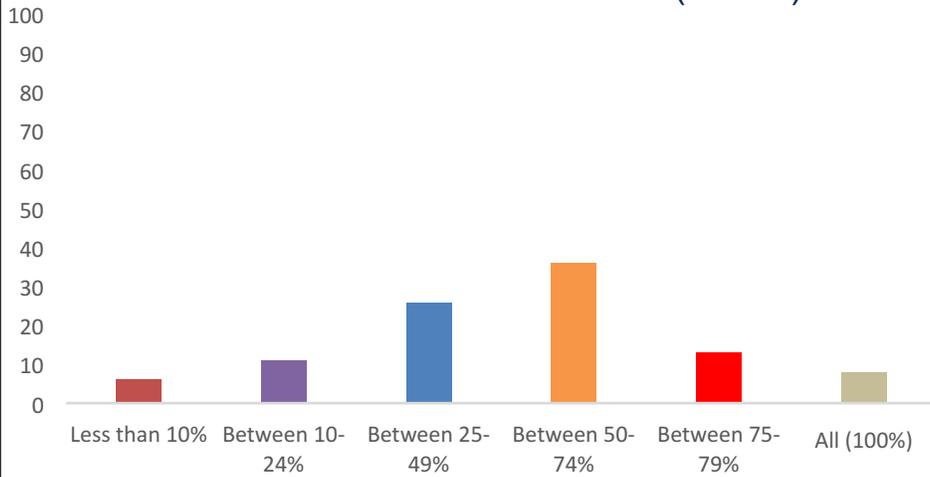
Agricultural Service Provider Places of Work (n = 53)

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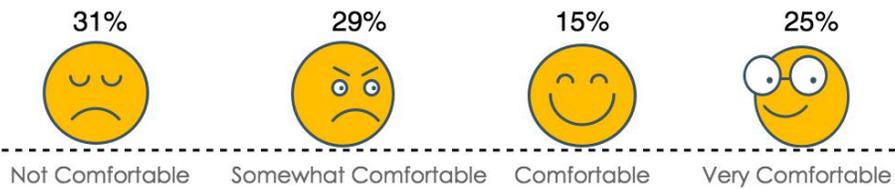




What Percentage of New Farmers Have you Worked with in the Last Three Years? (n = 53)

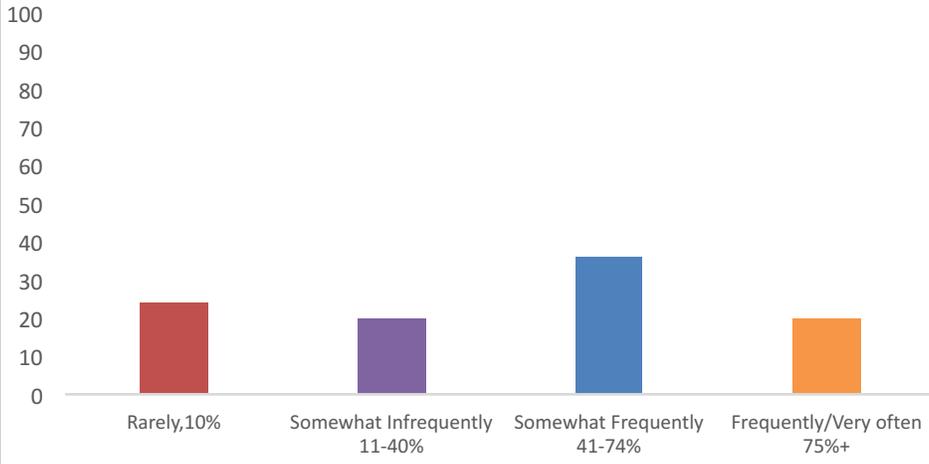


How comfortable are you in addressing interpersonal skills in 1-on-1 consultations with farmers? (n = 52)

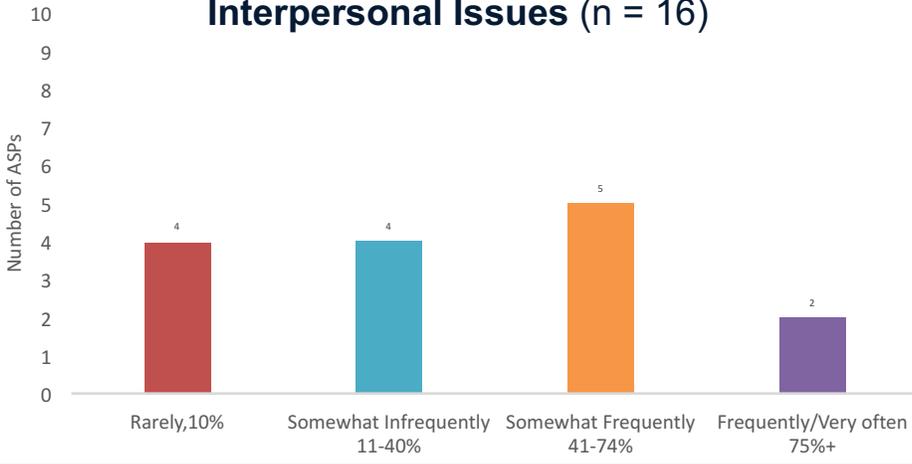




How Frequently Do You See Problems of Interpersonal Skills on Farms You Work With?



Frequency of Seeing Problems with Farmers Among ASPs Not Comfortable with Addressing Interpersonal Issues (n = 16)

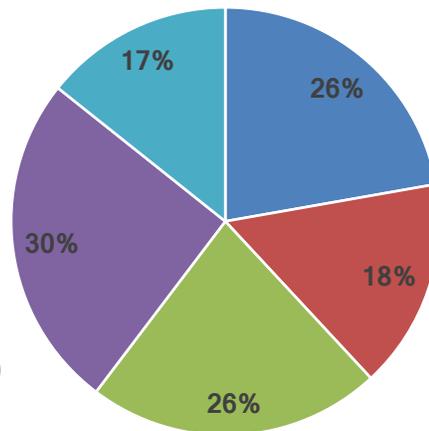




Familiarity with New Farmer Learning Stages

(n = 53)

- Very familiar (a lot of expertise), 26%
- Familiar, 18%
- Somewhat familiar 26%
- Somewhat unfamiliar 30%
- Not familiar at all (never heard of it) 17%



Can you recall a time where you were meeting with farmers and felt unprepared to deal with the interpersonal challenges demonstrated by the farmers?

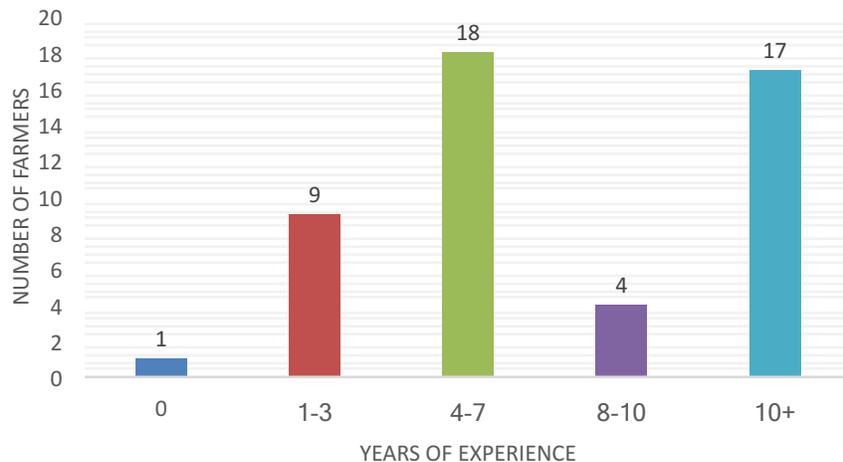


**What does this tell us about our role as service providers?
Can we think of ourselves as “guides” rather than experts?**

- Humility
- Presenting a menu of options
- Gaining trust of participants
- Flexibility / Change Plan
- How to steer production questions to management (ie time & communication)
- Dealing with doubt and uncertainty of new farmers
 - How to ask open-ended questions
 - Lead through vision, plan and career development
 - Supporting whether they go into farming or not
- How to bring up “issues” that farmers may not have asked or recognized
- Working with diversity
 - Language
 - Respecting culture while introducing new concepts (ie time mgmt)
 - Integrating culture with expected business practices
- Family Culture
 - How to recognize it and plan accordingly.

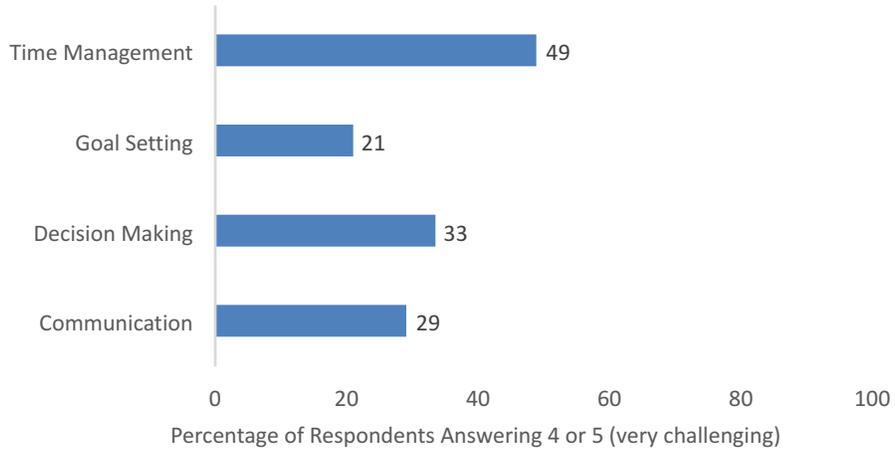


Farmer Years of Experience (n = 50)

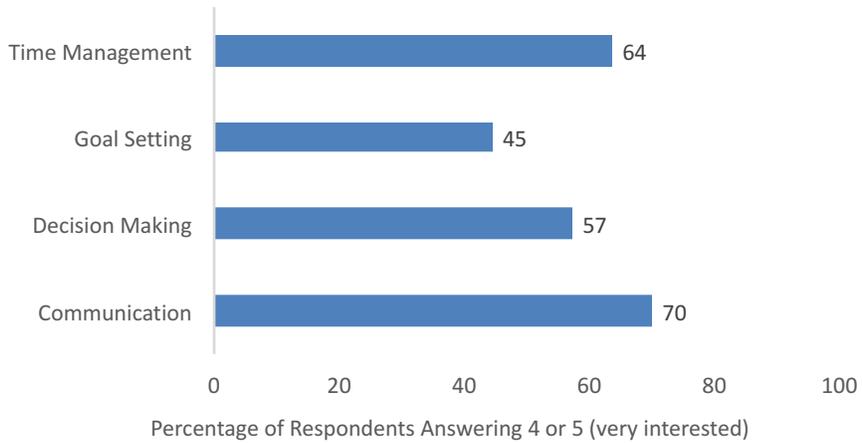




Present Challenges (n = 48)



Future Interest (n = 48)

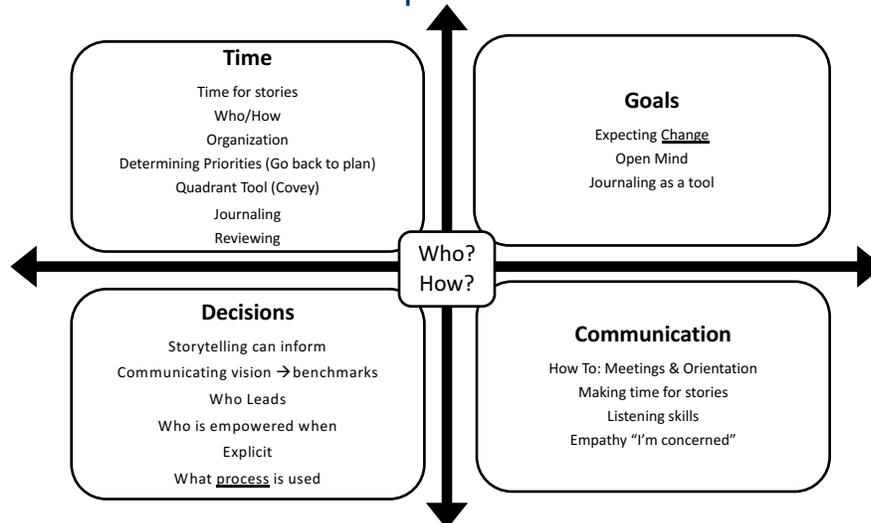




“What skills do you think successful farmers need?”



Responses





NESFI DACUM

Develop a Curriculum

Duties & Tasks

Qualities

- 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



Learning Stages

Dreyfus Model



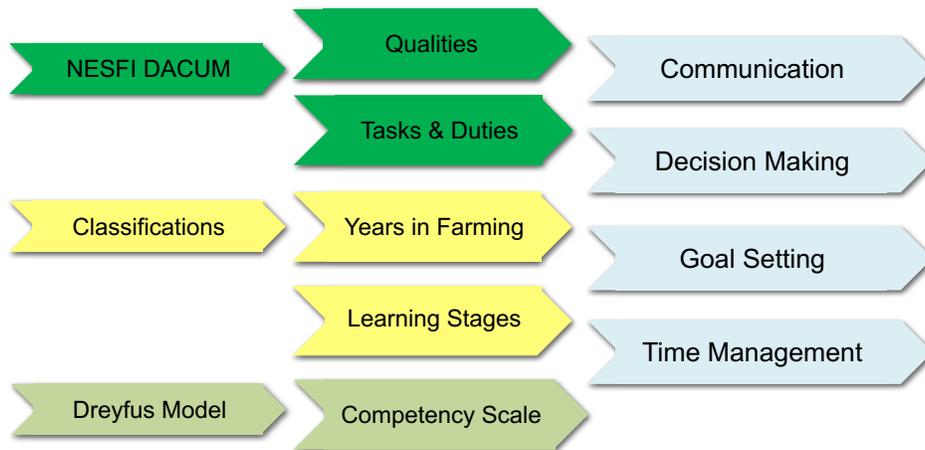


Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition

Novice	<i>Knows how to start a tractor, go forward and reverse</i>
Advanced Beginner	<i>Can run a tractor, but may need 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>



Design A Curriculum for MAINE Farmers





Develop A Curriculum Activity

Years in Farming	0 Years Farming			1-2	3-5	4-6	6-10
Learning Stages	<i>Recruits</i>	<i>Explorers</i>	<i>Aspiring</i>	<i>Start-Up Farmers</i>	<i>Enterprise / Establishing Farmers</i>	<i>Re-strategizers</i>	<i>Refining</i>
Dreyfus Model	Novice			Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert

Time Mgmt							
Decision Making							
Goal Setting							
Communication							

What skills do farmers need in each project area?

At what learning stage are the skills needed?



Time Mgmt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To-Do List Basic Records Time for Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritized To-Do List Basic Recordkeeping Recording how long things take 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refining & Tracking Records Work/Life Balance Basic Worker Mgmt How Long things take you (you know) Spreadsheets developed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organized & Maintaining Effective Systems Your routine seamlessly implemented Refining records in pre-existing systems and questioning adaptations/new systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time Off Set training for workers Streamlined systems Time for Innovation
Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realize How You make decisions is important to the success of the farm & happiness of the farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a prototype of a system and/or have explored several ways of making decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ID the ways that work for this farm and aspects that need revisions and realize there are questions to be asked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reimagine systems and delegate roles for systems Know which questions to ask 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refine chosen system Have Template & clarity about when, who & how
Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realistic self-assessment of skills and financial potential Do Research on yourself (skills), markets, financial needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop marketing, production skills Systems- identify resources or re-identify (labor needs, marketing, production, time efficiencies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate enterprises you want to pursue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-assess Set new goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with outside (off-farm) leadership Developing challenging goals
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize pre-set ID new communication tools ID relational system "Who am I communicating with?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practicing in close relationships Develop a communication template This is HOW we communicate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bridging lessons learned ID new tools needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Getting more confident w/ challenging situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full comfort with anything that comes up equanimity



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Case Study





Brainstorm

What skills & support might be needed?

Responses

- Getting on the same page
- Constructive steps for ASP to suggest a break in conversation
- Facts, Facts, Facts – how to restate what you heard and observed while remaining objective
- Resources to refer farmers to – either for more support or to tackle problem/challenge themselves

- Using focus questions
- Acknowledge importance of each



Next Steps

- Evaluation will be emailed to you
- Project team will contact you for feedback about the materials as they are developed
- Optional September 8th meeting
- Day-long Training October 24th

Email Abby, Leslie, or Tori with questions!