



Association for
Temperate Agroforestry



Center for Agroforestry
University of Missouri



18th North American Agroforestry Conference (NAAC) Sharing Research & Best Practices Between Temperate & Tropical Agroforestry

Establishing an Agroforestry Certification Program and Learning Network for Education and Exchange – A Case Study in Missouri

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Introduction

Demand for multifunctional farming practices such as agroforestry (AF) has increased in recent years as researchers, producers, and policymakers search for farming practices that provide resilience against climate variability without sacrificing productivity [1, 2, 5, 8, 9].

Technical assistance providers (TAPs) and AF producers have been identified as key influencers of agricultural innovations on the farm landscape, yet no standardized certification program currently exists to recognize and connect prospective AF producers with knowledgeable TAPs and trusted AF land managers [1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9].

In mid-2024, the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry **will launch an AF certification program and learning network** within the state of Missouri to address this need. Prior to launch, researchers will conduct an **intrinsic, bounded case study** of this pilot program to serve as a formative evaluation, identifying the following among participating TAPs and producers:

- ◇ What level and forms of **human capital** (AF knowledge, skills, involvement) are currently present?
- ◇ What **information sources** are utilized to gain knowledge?
- ◇ What forms of **social capital** (individuals/networks) are utilized?
- ◇ What specific forms of human and social capital need further development?



Two 2023 Agroforestry Academy participants walk through rows of elderberry plantings in Central Missouri

Methodology

- ◇ Interpersonal semi-structured interviews with prospective participants (*ongoing*)
- ◇ Observations of online interactions (2023 Agroforestry Academy)
- ◇ Document analysis (educational content and evaluations)

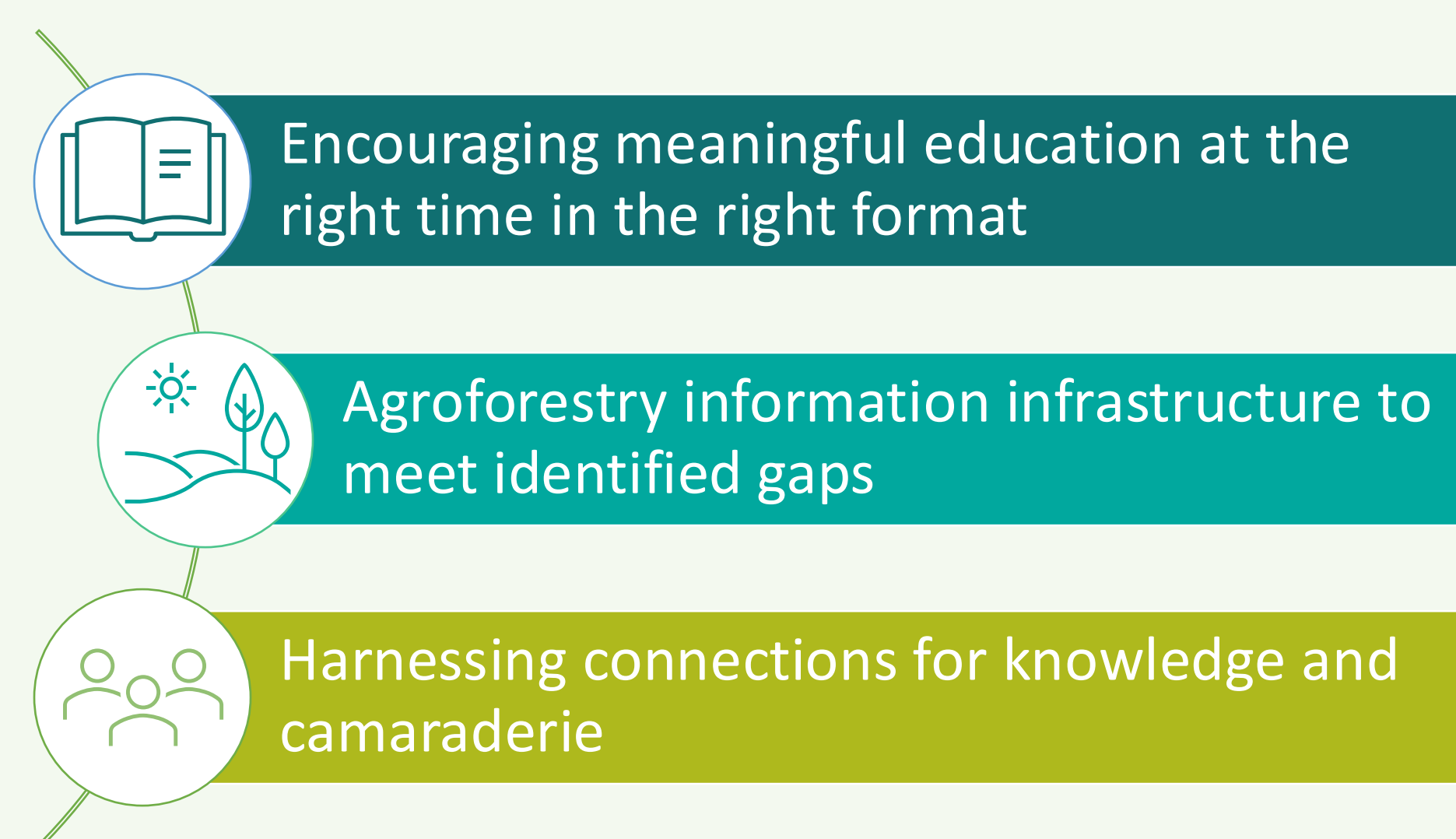
Five Capitals for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods Framework

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Results

Analysis of interview transcripts, observations, and documents revealed three emergent themes to guide program development. Categories are presented below each theme.



Encouraging Meaningful Education at the Right Time in the Right Format

1. Preference for in-person learning opportunities
2. Minimal engagement in asynchronous online spaces (limited time and capacity among participants)

Agroforestry Information Infrastructure to Meet Identified Gaps

1. Desire to learn more about a wide variety of AF topics (economics, marketing, others)
2. Use of information “piecemeal” strategies to answer questions
3. Need for a centralized hub of AF resources

Harnessing Connections for Knowledge and Camaraderie

1. Use of connections and networks to fill knowledge gaps
2. Desire to hear others’ experiences and opinions, develop further connections
3. Utilizing connections for encouragement and fellowship

Next Steps & Recommendations

Ongoing Data Collection

- ◇ Conduct further interviews, observations, document review in spring 2024
- ◇ Surveys and formative assessments of participant knowledge

Recommendations

- ◇ Emphasize in-person learning
- ◇ Continuing education credits focus on economics, marketing
- ◇ Develop centralized AF resource hub
- ◇ Further investigation may uncover more suggestions

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