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**Legal Issues Workshop Evaluation**

**The Land Connection**

**April 2015**

1. **Introduction and Objectives**

This project, *Developing and Disseminating Legal Issues Curricula to Educators Who Assist Sustainable Farmers*, was designed to research, create, and deliver legal issues curricula to agricultural educators and service providers in Illinois. The project was a collaboration between The Land Connection and Farm Commons. The core target audience was the organizers, presenters, and facilitators of farmer training programs aimed at: sustainable farmers, University of Illinois and Extension personnel, community college instructors, and nonprofit sustainable agriculture personnel.

The main outcomes of the project and their targets were:

1. 90% of the 120 (minimum) educators and service providers who attend the workshops will increase their knowledge of legal issues affecting sustainable farmers, and will be more motivated to seek opportunities to help farmers to proactively address legal issues.
2. At least 2500 unique visitors will access the online materials and resources in the first 6-9 months
3. At least 12 educators will integrate the legal curriculum or reference materials in their professional activities with colleagues and clients in training peers, advising clients, delivering presentations or when authoring articles, fact sheets and web pages.

Workshops were offered in September 2014 at five Illinois sites: Springfield, Champaign, Carbondale and Grayslake. Rachel Armstrong of Farm Commons presented the material. A total of 60 persons participated.

An online evaluation was conducted at the close of the last workshop, and an online follow-up evaluation was conducted in late March 2015. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess:

* The format and presentation of the workshop
* The curriculum
* The level of legal knowledge gained by participants (pre/post measurement)
* The effectiveness of online legal resources provided
* Application of knowledge acquired from the workshops

Fifteen participants (15) completed the post-course evaluation and 16 completed the follow-up evaluation. The results of the two evaluations are summarized below. Tabulations of individual question and responses to open-ended questions are included in the Appendices at the end of this report.

1. **Results**

***Immediate Post-Training Evaluation***

The workshop was well-received by the participants. Ninety-four percent (94%) felt the workshop was a “good use of my time” (rated 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale). Most respondents (94%) “learned things about farm law that I did not know,” and 67% anticipated using material from the workshop in their professional setting. The anticipated uses for the workshop content were:

* For personal interest (53%)
* For inclusion in a new farmer training program (33%)
* For inclusion in an existing farmer training program (27%)
* As a stand-alone farm law class/classes (27%)
* In advising farmer-clients from a legal perspective/as an attorney (20%)

**Presentation.** The presentation itself was highly rated by all of the participants (100%). One participant commented, “I thought the material was covered in a timely and engaging manner, and the presenter was extremely knowledgeable. . . .I feel there are few people who are able to keep the attention of the room for as long as our presenter did.“

**Class Activities.** Participants generally found the in-class activities (87%) to be useful. One comment read, “ . . . from a teaching perspective, the presenter used a variety of activities that kept the class lively while also using excellent methods for gathering class feedback to insure that everyone was learning and staying focused.”

**Course Materials.** The course materials were highly rated by 93% of the attendees. The binder included in the workshop was described as “interesting and impressive.” The homework sent out in advance of the class was rated less highly, with only 30% of the participants finding it useful. One attendee suggested the page numbering in the binder was difficult to follow.

**Farmer Panel Discussion.** A number of participants commented that they appreciated the farmer-panel discussion. One person said, “I really enjoyed the panel discussion with the farmers, and having farmers as part of the group. It helped a lot with my understanding of the issues and materials, since I am not a farmer. Even though I'm a lawyer, I found some of the issues difficult to grasp until I heard a farmer give an example.” One participant commented that the panel might have been moderated to be more focused on learning points.

***Follow-Up Evaluation/Outcomes***

**Pre/Post Knowledge Change**. Most of the professionals attending the training had at least some prior knowledge of farm-related legal issues. But, only 25% rated themselves as being “extremely knowledgeable” (5 points on a 5-point scale). The group reported an average 1.88 point gain in knowledge, progressing from a pre-course average of 2.00 to a final level of 3.88 on a 5-point scale.

**Incorporation of material in professional activities.** All (100%) of the participants reported incorporating at least some of the material from the workshop in their work. Sixty-three percent (63%) used “a lot” (rated 4 or 5 on a -point scale). The material was used in a wide variety of ways. A full list of comments on uses of the material is included in the Appendix.

**Use of website materials.** Thirteen percent (13%) of the participants accessed legal training material via the Land Connection website. Others had gone directly to the Farm Commons website and some had accessed the materials on the USB key/flash drive.

**Ratings of individual topics.** Attendees were asked to rate the “helpfulness” of each of the 6 workshop modules on a 5-point scale. The results were as follows:

1. On-farm events (4.31)
2. Workers and employees (4.25)
3. Organizing a farm business (business entities) (4.19)
4. Sales and taxes (4.0)
5. Land matters (zoning and leasing) (3.88)
6. Food safety (3.88)
7. **Recommendations and Conclusion**

A few suggestions for improving the workshop were offered:

* Video updates to the training (legal changes) could be uploaded to YouTube.
* The page numbering in the workbook/modules could be simplified.
* More information on GAP and FMSA is desired.
* A bit more direction to the farmer panel to focus their remarks would be helpful.
* Discontinue the use of the webinar materials in the workshop; the transition between in-class activities and the webinars is disjointed.

Overall all the training was very well received. One person commented, “This is one of the best continuing ed trainings I’ve attended.” Another characterized it as “very thorough, practical and easy to use.” In summary, the participants felt that presenter and the presentation was excellent, and the workshop content was useful for their work.

**Appendices: Tabulations and Verbatim Comments**

***Appendix 1: Immediate Post-Training Evaluation***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *1.* ***Which workshop did you attend?*** | | | | |  | | |  |
|  |  | | | **No** | **%** | |  | |
|  | Springfield | | | 4 | 27 | |  | |
|  | Champaign | | | 4 | 27 | |  | |
|  | Carbondale | | | 2 | 13 | |  | |
|  | Grayslake | | | 5 | 33 | |  | |
|  |  | | | 15 | 100 | |  | |
|  |  | | |  |  | |  | |
| ***2. I feel like the Legal Issues Workshop was a good use of my time.*** | | | | | | | | |
|  | 5 = Strongly Agree | |  | | |  | | |
|  | 1 = Strongly Disagree | |  | | |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |  | | |
|  |  | **No** | **%** | | |  | | |
|  | 5 | 13 | 87 | | |  | | |
|  | 4 | 1 | 7 | | |  | | |
|  | 3 | 1 | 7 | | |  | | |
|  | 2 | 0 | 0 | | |  | | |
|  | 1 | 0 | 0 | | |  | | |
|  |  | 15 | 100 | | |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |  | | |
| ***3. I learned things about farm law that I did not know.*** | | | | | | | | |
|  | 5 = Strongly Agree | |  | | |  | | |
|  | 1 = Strongly Disagree | |  | | |  | | |
|  |  |  |  | | |  | | |
|  |  | **No** | **%** | | |  | | |
|  | 5 | 13 | 87 | | |  | | |
|  | 4 | 1 | 7 | | |  | | |
|  | 3 | 1 | 7 | | |  | | |
|  | 2 | 0 | 0 | | |  | | |
|  | 1 | 0 | 0 | | |  | | |
|  |  | 15 | 100 | | |  | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  | |
| ***4. I will use material from the workshop with my farmer constituents.*** | | | | | | | | |
|  | 5 = Strongly Agree | | | |  | |  | |
|  | 1 = Strongly Disagree | | | |  | |  | |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  | |
|  |  | | **No** | | **%** | |  | |
|  | 5 | | 6 | | 40 | |  | |
|  | 4 | | 4 | | 27 | |  | |
|  | 3 | | 5 | | 33 | |  | |
|  | 2 | | 0 | | 0 | |  | |
|  | 1 | | 0 | | 0 | |  | |
|  |  | | 15 | | 100 | |  | |
|  |  | |  | |  | |  | |
| ***5. I expect that I will use this material to:*** | | | | | | |  | |
|  |  | | |  | |  | |  |
|  | **No** | | | **%** | |  | |  |
|  | 8 | | | 53 | | For personal interest | |  |
|  | 5 | | | 33 | | Inclusion in a still-to-be created farmer training program | |  |
|  | 4 | | | 27 | | Include in an existing farmer training program | |  |
|  | 4 | | | 27 | | Offer a stand-alone farm law class/classes | |  |
|  | 3 | | | 20 | | To advise farmer-clients from a legal perspective/as an attorney | |  |
|  | 3 | | | 20 | | Other | |  |
|  | 27 | | |  | |  | |  |
|  |  | | |  | |  | |  |
| ***6. The presentation was engaging and helped me learn.*** | | | | | | | | |
|  | | 5 = Strongly Agree | | |  | |  | |
|  | | 1 = Strongly Disagree | | |  | |  | |
|  | |  |  | |  | |  | |
|  | |  | **No** | | **%** | |  | |
|  | | 5 | 13 | | 87 | |  | |
|  | | 4 | 2 | | 13 | |  | |
|  | | 3 | 0 | | 0 | |  | |
|  | | 2 | 0 | | 0 | |  | |
|  | | 1 | 0 | | 0 | |  | |
|  | |  | 15 | | 100 | |  | |
|  | |  |  | |  | |  | |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***7. The activities in class were useful in helping my understanding of the material.*** | | | | |
|  | 5 = Strongly Agree | |  |  |
|  | 1 = Strongly Disagree | |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | **No** | **%** |  |
|  | 5 | 9 | 60 |  |
|  | 4 | 4 | 27 |  |
|  | 3 | 2 | 13 |  |
|  | 2 | 0 | 0 |  |
|  | 1 | 0 | 0 |  |
|  |  | 15 | 100 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| ***8. The materials I received were useful in class.*** | | | |  |
|  | 5 = Strongly Agree | |  |  |
|  | 1 = Strongly Disagree | |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | No | % |  |
|  | 5 | 11 | 85 |  |
|  | 4 | 1 | 8 |  |
|  | 3 | 1 | 8 |  |
|  | 2 | 0 | 0 |  |
|  | 1 | 0 | 0 |  |
|  |  | 13 | 100 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
| ***9. The homework I received in my e-mail ahead of time as useful as a preparation activity.*** | | | | |
|  | 5 = Strongly Agree | |  |  |
|  | 1 = Strongly Disagree | |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | **No** | **%** |  |
|  | 5 | 2 | 15 |  |
|  | 4 | 2 | 15 |  |
|  | 3 | 4 | 31 |  |
|  | 2 | 4 | 31 |  |
|  | 1 | 1 | 8 |  |
|  |  | 13 | 100 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Comments on improving the workshop (as written):**

* I got to ask someone with knowledge on the subject questions about grey areas of the law, interpretations of the law and aspects that were unclear to me without having to pay an attorney. The discussions about liability and contract law were very educational. Overall I learned a lot and enjoyed it! I thought the online videos of previous webinars were not very effective I would suggest not including those and just presenting the info in person or using them less, it was a bit weird and disjointed to jump back and forth between webinar and in-person.
* I really enjoyed the panel discussion with the farmers, and having farmers as part of the group. It helped a lot with my understanding of the issues and materials, since I am not a farmer. Even though I'm a lawyer, I found some of the issues difficult to grasp until I heard a farmer give an example.
* I thought the material was covered in a timely and engaging manner and the presenter was extremely knowledgeable. Also, from a teaching perspective, the presenter used a variety of activities that kept the class lively while also using excellent methods for gathering class feedback to insure that everyone was learning and staying focused. This was a very long class, and I feel there are very few people who are able to keep the attention of the room for as long as our presenter did. She was excellent.
* Appreciated the practical approach.
* More information on FSMA and GAP
* I thought it was very useful information and was vital to small scale growers I work with who are interested in things like farm to table, CSAs, etc. One improvement could be to know ahead of time if a location has wifi capability so that the videos could have also been shown. Overall, I appreciate the Land Connection putting these on with Farm Commons and it was a great use of my time.
* I thought everything that we talked about was important and meaningful. The only negative aspect was that the page numbers in the workbook were extremely hard to follow. I know others struggled to figure out what page we were on because the modules were numbered as separate units. It would be helpful if the whole book was numbered sequentially from 1-100, for example instead of each module starting over. Very confusing.
* The only thing I was disappointed in was that we couldn't view the video. Other than that I thought it was great. Excellent, well-organized teacher. I came really interested in learning more about lease arrangements but left knowing a lot more about topics I knew little to nothing about.
* Outstanding speakers, and, although few in number, the workshop attracted audience members with excellent knowledge of farm law - the discussions were very useful and interesting impressive handbook given out for free
* The guest panel of farmers was a good idea (they were nice to take time to come), but their panel should have been moderated and the learning points should have been more well-formed. Having them confess, for example, that they were not complying with law (violating zoning in their operations, not understanding fully or following other legal or risk management compliance requirements or good practices) was probably not a good idea for them and not the modeling that you want for the audience/students.
* I liked getting the data. Rachel was a good presenter.
* I received a lot of new information which was very useful. I appreciated very much the take home materials. The group discussions were helpful.

***Appendix 2: Follow-Up Evaluation***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. ***In which location did you attend the Legal Issues Training?*** | | |
|  |  |  |
|  | **No.** | **%** |
| Carbondale | 1 | 6 |
| Champaign | 5 | 31 |
| Grayslake | 3 | 19 |
| Springfield | 7 | 44 |
|  | **16** | **100** |

1. ***How would you rate your overall knowledge of farm-related legal issues BEFORE taking the training?***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 5 = Extremely knowledgeable | |  |
| 1 = No knowledge at all | |  |
|  |  |  |
|  | **No.** | **%** |
| 5 | 4 | 25 |
| 4 | 8 | 50 |
| 3 | 4 | 25 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
|  | 16 | 100 |
| **Ave. rating** | 2.00 |  |

1. ***How would you rate your overall knowledge of farm-related legal issues AFTER taking the training?***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 5 = Extremely knowledgeable | |  |
| 1 = No knowledge at all | |  |
|  |  |  |
|  | **No.** | **%** |
| 5 | 4 | 25 |
| 4 | 10 | 50 |
| 3 | 2 | 25 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
|  | 16 | 100 |
| **Ave. rating** | 3.88 |  |

**Pre/Post Change in Knowledge = 1.88/5 pt. scale**

1. **How helpful did you find each of training topics?**

5 = Extremely helpful

1 = No help at all

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic** | **1** | **2** | **3** | **3** | **5** | **Ave. Rating** | **No.** |
| Organizing a farm business (business entities) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 9 | 5 | 4.19 | 16 |
| Land Matters (zoning and leasing) | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 3.88 | 16 |
| Workers and employees | 0 | 0 | 2 | 8 | 6 | 4.25 | 16 |
| On-farm events | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 4.31 | 16 |
| Sales and taxes | 0 | 1 | 2 | 9 | 4 | 4.00 | 16 |
| Food safety | 0 | 1 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 3.88 | 16 |

**Comments:**

* For the kind of training we do and what people are often asking us about, on-farm events and labor issues are both very important.
* It was so long ago I really can't assess these well.
* I felt all aspects of the training were very helpful. Although, I retained knowledge in some areas better than others. I marked those training topics as "Extremely Helpful" for that arbitrary reason.
* It was organized very well and the topics flowed nicely and formed a very cohesive training. It was also extremely interesting and the presenter was very engaging.

1. **Have you used anything from the legal training in your professional activities? (advising clients, presentations, trainings, web pages, fact sheets, newsletters, etc.)**

1 = Haven’t used anything

5 = Used a lot

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **No.** | **%** |
| 5 | 4 | 25 |
| 4 | 6 | 38 |
| 3 | 3 | 19 |
| 2 | 3 | 19 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |
|  | 16 | 100 |
| **Ave. rating** | 3.69 |  |

**Comments:**

* These issues come up in a number of our training programs and I can both speak more effectively and share better resources than I could prior to the workshop.
* Making farmers aware of legal issues and directing them to resources
* Information is not a direct tie to my work, but on the periphery and helpful to understand on a big picture level.
* The only thing that I have done is to promote the Farm Commons Webinar Series through our newsletter. I’m not generally in a position to provide legal advice/presentations/training myself. If I had a pre-made fact sheet, I would maybe link it to our webpage somewhere, but I haven't seen one....
* Advising my dad on employee hiring; also, planning stages of my own, very small farm
* Advising clients. Held Farm Commons webinars at my office (December and February programs)."
* Incorporated topics generally now and then into teaching my Public Health Law class. Am developing an online Rural Health Law class at SIU School of Law which will take place this summer and would love to have the presenter serve as a guest (remotely) if available. The topics she covered will be particularly to the law students in this course. It will be co-taught by me and Prof. Carolyn Pointer at SIU School of Medicine.
* I have used a lot of the lease information in drafting my own ag leases.
* In new farmer training
* Launched a solo legal practice; advising clients; presentations
* I've used recommendations for documentation of agreements between the farm and restaurants. I also used the lease questions in helping to draft a lease agreement for germination space.
* I've utilized the information when consulting with growers I work with. It has also helped me to know of other resources that Farm Commons provides.

1. ***Have you accessed any of the legal training material via The Land Connection website?***

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **No.** | **%** |
| Yes | 2 | 13 |
| No | 13 | 87 |
|  | 15 | 100 |

***If yes, what?***

* I can't remember, but I watched a few of the webinars and will watch more in the future and continue to refer people to these excellent resources
* Went directly to the Farm Commons website.
* Not yet
* Accessed them on the USB key and in the binder

1. ***How would you rate the usefulness of the materials you received as part of the training?***

**1 = Not useful at all**

**5 = Not useful at all**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **No.** | **%** |
| 5 | 8 | 53 |
| 4 | 5 | 33 |
| 3 | 1 | 7 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 | 7 |
|  | 15 | 100 |
| **Ave. rating** | **4.27** |  |

**Comments:**

* Rachel makes excellent presentations and materials.
* Very thorough, practical, and easy to use
* I don't remember what materials I received. If I need anything, I just go to the Farm Commons website.
* It saved a lot of time in developing my own presentation and gave me great ideas about how to present the material

1. ***What suggestions do you have for improving the Legal Issues Training?***

* Honestly, I thought it was great and Rachel did an awesome job of making it interactive and using real-life scenarios. I'm not sure what suggestions I would give for improvement
* Even with ever-changing laws, upload a video to YouTube of a real training session perhaps
* The training was well-organized. Don't have any suggestions to improve it.
* One of the best continuing ed trainings I've ever attended.
* Having it geared more towards small organic farms and nonprofits since that is what most of the attendees were.

1. **Do you have any other comments?**

* Appreciated the opportunity to attend the Legal Issues workshop. Thanks for organizing it.
* If you have an interest in collaborating with SIU Law my contact is jbrobst@siu.edu (Prof. Jennifer Brobst, Director of the Center for Health Law and Policy)
* This is a very practical, educational set of resources. Thank you.