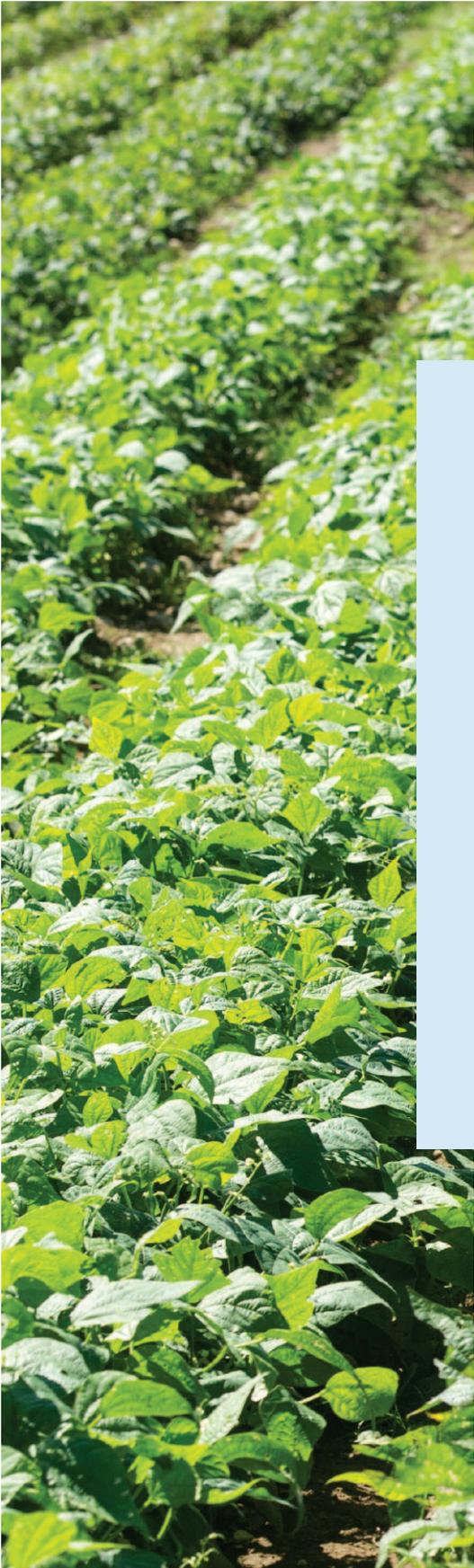


Supporting Relationships for Farm Success:

A Toolkit for Agricultural Service Providers



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MAINE
Cooperative Extension



Contents

Introduction	1
Farmer Typology	2
Stage of Farming.....	2
Stage of Personal Development	4
State of Business.....	4
Learning Stage	5
Tips for Acting as a Guide	8
Resources	11
One-on-One Consultation Checklist	14

Introduction

As a service provider, you are often called upon to provide technical expertise to farmers. In some cases, there may be issues related to non-technical, interpersonal skills that pose challenges to implementing the technical advice you give. The specific interpersonal skills considered here are communication, decision making, goal setting, and time management.

Each of these skills matter for farm success:

- Decision-making skills that are involved in integration of a new crop or enterprise;
- Goal-setting skills that are needed before applying for a loan;
- Time management skills that are required to plan multiple growing seasons;
- Communication skills that are necessary to plan for and operate a successful agricultural operation.

These are skills that are important for a farm's success, and are skills that can be learned. When a farmer looks to you to improve their technical skills, you may not feel familiar enough with these non-technical skills to make recommendations or ask for the farmer's perspective. These skills may not be part of the typical conversation in one of your farm consultations.

 **You can use the Toolkit to guide you from the starting point of effective inquiry to the end point of making an action plan.**

The Toolkit is designed to help you, the service provider, better understand farmer development and ways to respond to farmer concerns related to non-technical skills. The reason for this is because it is not uncommon that the barriers to implementing changes on the farm are not related to the information or ideas you've presented based on your expertise. Instead, the barriers may be these non-technical skills. The Toolkit It is intended to support you in building confidence to be a "guide," rather than an expert in these areas.

Organizationally, the Toolkit is divided into four parts: 1) a farmer typology, 2) tips for acting as a guide, 3) a resource list, and 4) a consultation checklist. The typology and tips provide helpful ways to think about where individual farmers are personally and professionally. The resources are designed to help you assist farmers in self-directed skill development with information that can be found online. The checklist is for your use in one-on-one consultations and includes prompts and spaces for notes. How do communication, decision making, goal setting, and time management play a role in the types of questions and concerns the farmer is bringing to their meeting with you?

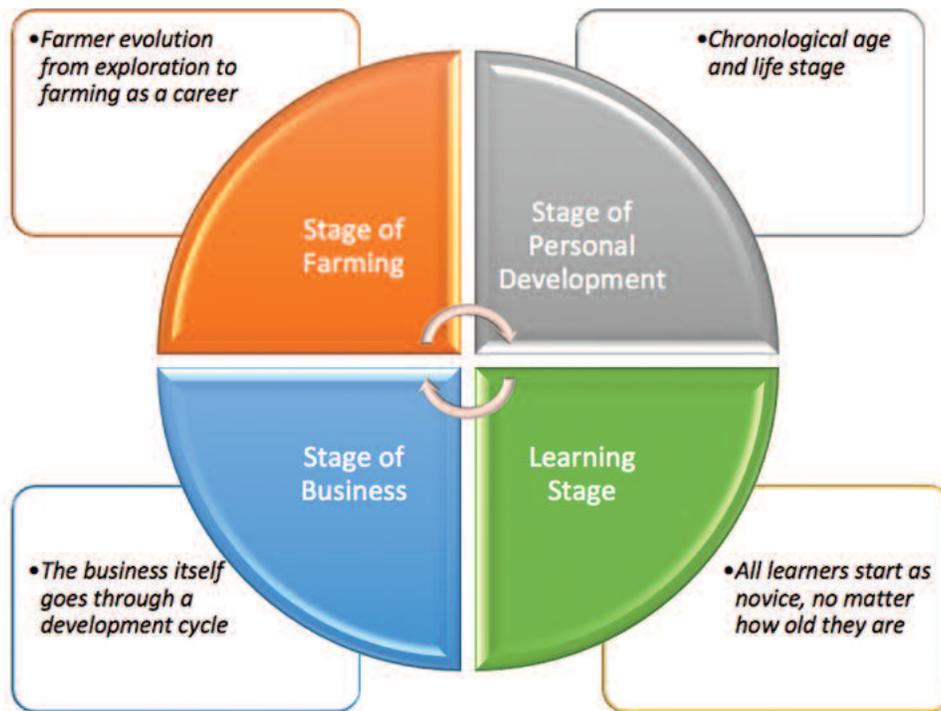
ask good questions → make an action plan

You can use the Toolkit to guide you from the starting point of effective inquiry to the end point of making an action plan. Use it to work with farmers to assess their challenges, guide them through a process of inquiry, and develop a strategy to best meet their needs.

Farmer Typology

Typologies can be useful to help better understand farmers, and here we consider a farmer's development by sharing four different stage models: stage of farming, stage of personal development, stage of business, and learning stage. Each of these is described below, followed by examples of how they can be applied.

Integrated Stages of Farmers and Farm Business



Stage of Farming

The stages of farming describe an approximate trajectory for farmers as they start with a formal interest in agriculture to having full-fledged careers that undergo refinement. These stages are adapted from the Northeast New Farmer Network typology for new farmers that was created in 2001.¹

Prospective Farmers have not begun to farm independently.

- **Recruits** might consider a career in production agriculture, for example, students in

vocational or agricultural programs in high school or college.

- **Explorers** are investigating a farming future, and may be gathering information, for example, first-year apprentices or farm workers.
- **Aspiring** are actively committed to becoming a farmer through engagement in training and planning. These may be folks who grew up on a family farm and are planning to take it over, or those with enough farm experience to be looking to lease land.

Once farmers begin to farm independently, they are formally “beginning farmers,” as described by the

¹ Northeast New Farmer Network. (2001). Gaps in new farmer programs and services. NESFI: Northeast New Farmer Reports. Available at http://www.smallfarm.org/uploads/uploads/Files/GAPS_IN_NEW_FARMER_PROGRAMS.pdf.

Prospective	Start-up	Establishing	Strategizing	Refining
<p>“Prospective” farmers have not begun to farm independently.</p>	<p>“Start-up” farmers have been farming for three years or less. Their land access may not be fixed and their markets and enterprises are still in development.</p>	<p>“Establishing” farmers are investing in infrastructure and have chosen markets and enterprises.</p>	<p>“Strategizing” farmers are making adjustments to their business. These farmers are accessing advanced mentorship, financial analysis and strategic advising.</p>	<p>“Refining” farmers have likely gone through at least one “strategizer” phase. Their business is established and stable. They may or may not be in their first 10 years of farming.</p>

USDA definition, “has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years.” Beginning farmers fall into several categories based on their stage of commitment and competency in various aspects of farm management.

The stages of beginning farming, as outlined in the figure, are:

- **Start-Up**, usually on the land for three years or less
- **Establishing**, varies from four to ten years
- **Strategizing**, usually within four to ten years
- **Refining**, can be beyond year ten, and include farmers who are established, who may be exiting, re-strategizing, and potentially retiring.

Understanding the stage of farmer development is helpful to guide the farmer to the appropriate resources for their chosen farming path. Below are some questions to consider in talking with a farmer about the stage they are in. See the “Tips” section of this Toolkit for recommendations about open-ended questions.

Considerations for Prospective Farmers

- Has the farmer identified their readiness for a farming career? In what ways?

- What experience(s) do they bring to farming?
- Has the farmer done any type of self-evaluation? This might include a farming aptitude test, a skills assessment, personality tests or other tools.
- Has the farmer participated in a business planning or training program?
- How does the farmer’s intended enterprise draw on their existing skills?
- Does the farmer bring transferable skills to farming?

Considerations for Start-Up Farmers

- How does the farmer describe their goals for the farm?
- How has the farmer used their business plan?
- How is the farmer integrating the demands of work, personal health, and family life?
- How much time is dedicated to farm start-up, outside interests, off-farm work, family or other activities?
- Is the farmer employing transferable skills?

Considerations for Establishing Farmers

- How has the farmer approached growth, debt management, commitments to family, community, and off-farm job?

- Does the farmer have employees, apprentices, or others that they supervise?
- Has the farmer determined ways to make decisions and manage their time that they view as efficient and effective?
- Does this farm have an annual evaluation and planning process?

Considerations for Strategizing Farmers

- How is the farmer approaching the challenges associated with changes to the business?
- Are these changes calling for new skills or support?
- Does the farmer need help to change the ways they make decisions or manage their time?
- How has the farmer evaluated their goals?
- Is the farmer finding tools and resources to help with their specific challenges?

Considerations for Refining Farmers

- How is the farmer being supported?
- Are there skills or knowledge that the farmer still needs?
- Is the farmer interested in sharing their best practices with others?

Stage of Personal Development

Stages of personal development are important to consider when working with farmers. In the human life cycle, the ages 0-18 are a time for personal development for the individual within the context of a larger system (immediate family, friends, systems like schools and playgrounds, the family farm if applicable, and the larger society as a whole). From 18 onward is a growth phase as the person becomes more independent, with a greater sense of self and personal preferences, still within societal contexts. In the middle years (21-50), there is team building as romantic partnerships may lead to commitments like marriage, farm purchases, and possibly children. In maturity (ages 50-70), the individual sustains, having reached a level of productivity built on a

foundation from earlier years. In maturity, focus is on quality of life. After 60, there may be a drive to change oneself and/or change the current trajectory. This might mean transitioning the farm to successors, retiring, or working alongside children. One of the largest demographics entering farming are second career farmers, so a farmer's personal "maturity" may align with the beginning stages of farmer development.

“Your primary goal is to hear what brings this farmer to the situation, letting them know they are heard.”

Business Stage

The stages of business are outlined below. When taken hand in hand with the farming stage, and the personal stage of the farmer's development, it can be helpful to ask clarifying questions to get a better sense of where a farmer can use assistance. How do existing skills (or needed skills) related to communication, decision making, goal setting, or time management play into the functioning of the business?

Consider these points across the business stages:

- How do formative experiences in a farmer's personal development influence the farmer's perspective about farming? How might formative experiences influence communication, decision making, goal setting, and time management in relationship to the stage of the business?
- Does the farm have a business plan or other document to guide their launch and growth? Is there a plan to revisit this plan annually?
- Is the farmer bringing skills acquired in other jobs to the farm (i.e. extensive human resources experience, marketing, etc.)?



- How has this farm grown through stages of life as well as business? How is the evolution of the business timed with marriages, partnerships, children, etc.?
- How have the personal goals of the farmer developed alongside the goals for the farm?
- What is the farmer’s vision for the legacy of the farm? Has a succession plan been developed?

Learning Stage

What is the farmer’s learning stage?

Farmer learning stages describe the level of skill and competence in relationship to a task or enterprise. Based on the Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition², the learning stages range from “novice” to “expert.”

After the farmer states their area of focus for the meeting, use some of the “tips to encourage sharing” to learn more. How do you and (more importantly) the farmer perceive the farmer’s learning stage with respect to the area of focus?

Using the Learning Stages

Now that you are familiar with the five farmer learning stages, this section will provide examples of how knowing the learning stage might influence your approach to a consultation with farmers in each of the learning stages.

In each of the learning stages, skills build upon each other. What a novice knows is the core upon which skills are built through experience and learning. Expertise is a combination of experience, practice, and learning. Like rings of a tree, a farmer builds skills as a novice move outward through the learning stages to advanced beginner, competence, proficiency, and expertise.

Novice –These farmers may need specific examples of how each skill area can impact the viability of their business. These farmers don’t know “what they don’t know.” Therefore, you might want to simplify the jargon you use, ask questions to better understand their farming experience, and provide context for your comments related to their area of focus. For instance, communication can impact marketing choices. A shy farmer may use their weekly farmer’s market to test out how to engage with customers to sell their products. This may help

² Dreyfus, S. E. (1981). Four models v. human situational understanding: Inherent limitations on the modelling of business expertise. USAF Office of Scientific Research, ref F49620-79-C-0063.

Learning Stages

Novice	Advanced Beginner	Competent	Proficient	Expert
<p>A novice has limited exposure to the strategies related to communication, decision making, goal setting, or time management in the context of farming.</p>	<p>An advanced beginner has developed some skills in communication, decision making, goal setting, or time management in the context of farming.</p>	<p>Someone who is competent has gained experience in communication, decision making, goal setting, or time management in the context of farming.</p>	<p>Someone who is proficient has gained experience with, implemented and evaluated tools in communication, decision making, goal setting, or time management.</p>	<p>An expert has tried and true techniques in communication, decision making, goal setting, or time management.</p>
<hr/> <p><i>This group may include both farmers and farm workers in the first 5 years of farming.</i></p> <p><i>This group may also include new farmers who have had other career experience that did not draw deeply on the four skill areas.</i></p>	<hr/> <p><i>This group may include farmers, farm workers and farm managers. It may also include new farmers who had other employment experience that required them to develop in one or more of the skill areas.</i></p>	<hr/> <p><i>This group may have explored various approaches to the skill areas and is beginning to find what works for them.</i></p> <p><i>This group may include farmers, workers and managers. It may also include new farmers who had previous experience that helped them to develop strengths in the four skill areas.</i></p>	<hr/> <p><i>This group is ready to share this information with others, and hone their skills further.</i></p> <p><i>This group may include farmers, farm workers and farm managers who have developed strengths in the four skill areas within the course of their farming career.</i></p>	<hr/> <p><i>This group models good behavior for their employees and integrates teaching these skills into their day-to-day operations.</i></p> <p><i>In general, this group will not include beginning farmers in their first 10 years.</i></p>

them improve their communication skills in a low-risk manner and be prepared to be skilled enough to make a successful pitch to a wholesale market and be better able to maintain that relationship.

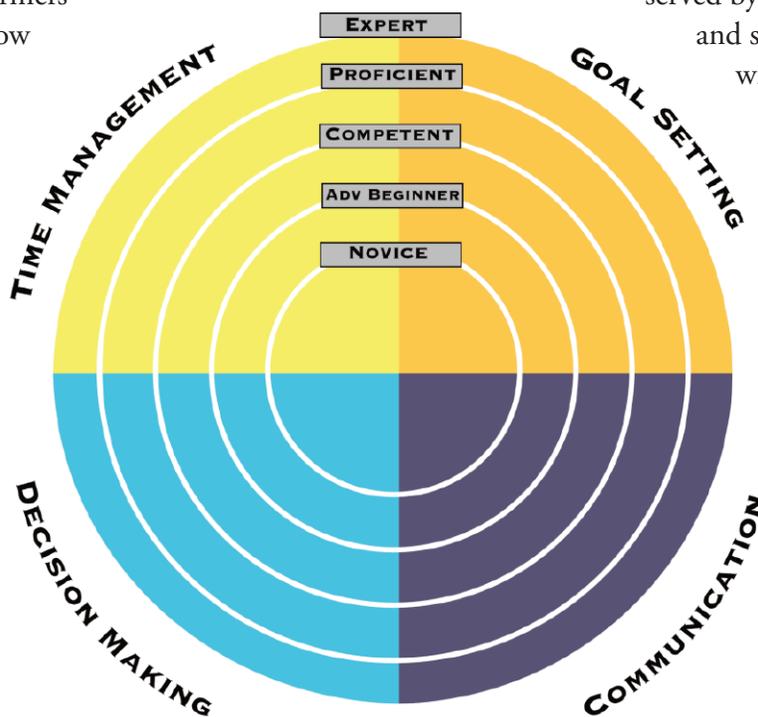
Advanced Beginner – These farmers may have a sense of how the four skill areas can impact their success and have a better understanding of how the skills fit into the production and marketing aspects of their farm. A self-assessment may be helpful to this group in identifying what aspects of the four skill areas are challenging for them and the existing resources available for improvement. These farmers may be poised to add employees or may be finding that managing aspects of the farm are pulling them away from production. Working with farmers to understand how their goals and time management can improve their ability to manage diverse tasks could be helpful.

Competent – These farmers likely have a sense of how the four skill areas can impact their success. A self-assessment may be helpful to this group to identify which aspects of the four skill areas are weak

links for them and the existing resources available for improvement. For instance, time management may be an increasing concern as the demands of their farm change. This could be due to their farm team expanding or their market channels changing. In conversation, it might help to ask the farmer to identify how their area of focus has challenged them on aspects of the farm they thought were running well.

Proficient – These farmers are ready to take the tools and skills they have developed and begin to actively model and teach them. They may need resources to help them improve their teaching techniques, such as a better understanding of adult learners. They may also need help to understand the strengths of their own decision making process and how to use that process to address the area of focus that is the subject of your meeting.

Expert – These farmers may be best served by opportunities to teach and share their experiences with other farmers. You might consider asking them to mentor other farmers or be a speaker at an event where their expertise can be highlighted.



Tips for Acting as a Guide

Your Role as a Guide

An effective guide is an active listener. In an active listening situation, the guide gives their full attention to the speaker. Your primary goal is to hear what brings this person to the situation, letting them know they are heard, understood, and safe. How can you help the farmer frame the central question(s) they need to ask?

For you to consider this time well spent, what do you need to leave here with?

Expectations

At the start of your consultation, it is helpful to discuss shared expectations for the meeting. These may include the duration of the meeting, agreements about taking calls during the meeting, what you anticipate can be accomplished, who will take notes, and whether you anticipate a follow up visit. An effective conversation opener is: “For you to consider this time well spent, what do you need to leave here with?”

Words and Phrases to Avoid

“Why”

Asking why something happened or why a particular decision was made can be tempting. This approach can trigger a defensive answer which may distract from assessing the situation. Try one of the other Effective Listening Techniques from the table on page 13.

“I know what you mean” Or “I’ve heard that before” Or “That happened to me once...” Or “In my experience...”

These phrases are barriers to communication and convey assumptions that the farmer might take as a cue(s) to stop talking.

“But” or “However” or “Should” or “Could” or “Would”

These are phrases which can often draw attention back to you (the listener). As an active listener, your goal is to have the attention remain with the speaker. It may be helpful to try using “And” in places where you feel like you want to say “But.” For example, “This business plan is so helpful in giving me an idea of your farm goals and I’ll need additional information to assess whether our programs are the right fit for your funding needs.”

Next Steps: What are you Trying to Accomplish?

As a guide, you can help the farmer find solutions. One strategy is brainstorming. Brainstorming is a group creativity technique to generate a large number of ideas to solve a problem. This technique can be useful in helping a farmer or farm team explore new approaches.

Brainstorming Guidelines

1. Generate 10-20 ideas. No idea is crazy; say anything (the craziest idea can become the root of a valuable strategy).
2. Don’t discuss or critique ideas during brainstorming.
3. Every idea should be met with the response, “Yes or...” or “Yes and...”
4. Include all stakeholders – encourage participation and engagement.
5. Suspend assumptions and disbelief.

Effective Listening Techniques

Active Listening Skills

Ask Open-Ended Questions — see Tips to Encourage Sharing (at right)

Restate — “Let me see if I’m clear about this, ---”
I heard you say, “_____” Is that accurate?

Summarize — “So it sounds to me as if...”

Minimal Encouragers — Prompts such as “umm-hmm,” “Oh,” “I understand,” “Then?”

Reflect — Instead of just repeating, reflect the feelings of the speaker, “This seems really important to you.”

Emotion Labeling — “Are you feeling frustrated...worried...anxious...”

Validate — Acknowledge the feelings, problems & issues the speaker is facing. “I appreciate your willingness to talk about such a difficult issue.” “I’m sorry that happened to you.”

Clarify — “Am I understanding you correctly?” “Could you tell me more about the sequence of events?”

Silence — Allow for comfortable silences to slow down the exchange or diffuse difficult interactions.

Examples

I’d like to hear your thoughts on this topic

It would be helpful to hear your perspective

How will _____ change your farm?

What have you been thinking about while waiting for this conversation to take place?

What do you think would happen if you...?”

What do you want to see happening differently?

If you could change anything, what would it be?

Tell me more about...

You said, “_____” Can you say more or explain?

When you use the word “_____” what do you mean?

What matters to you most?

Can you say more about your concern with “_____”

What is it that concerns you about this?

What leads you to say that?

What information might you need that would help you understand my concerns?

Analyze the Possible Options

1. How big is this decision? The bigger the decision, the more time, tools, and discussion may be needed.
2. How could these strategies play out? As the farmer to pick five strategies. For additional tools, see the Decision-Making section of the Resources in this Toolkit.
3. For this strategy to be successful, what does it have to accomplish or serve?
5. As a follow-up question at the next meeting: How did the decision hold up?

Provide Guidance through Feedback

As a guide, your role is to help the farmer clarify their thoughts and in doing so, identify possible solutions. Feedback can be helpful. However, it might redirect the conversation away from the speaker finding a direction that fits them best. Before offering feedback, clarify whether your feedback is meant to offer insight or add context to the speaker's point of view. Clarifying questions can include:

- What ideas do you have to address this?
- Is there a specific way you would like my help?
- Have you seen someone else facing this? How did they approach it?

Ask before you share information, observations, or insights: "I have some information that might help with that, would you like to hear it?"

If the answer is yes, then keep the following in mind so that the feedback loop stays open. This will allow the farmer to correct you if there is something you may have heard incorrectly.

- **Limit your focus**—Pick two or three points of improvement or change to discuss.
- **Prepare your thoughts**—Reflect on what has been said and what you have heard. Using the Consultation Checklist in this Toolkit, jot down some themes. Check for accuracy. Because I heard you say _____, I might suggest _____ tool.

- **Keep it positive**—start off your feedback with a positive comment about their effort, progress, or ideas. "That sounds like a really effective strategy, and I'd like to add..."
- **Focus on improvement**—What concrete things can the farmer do to change the situation in a positive way? "If you spend 20 minutes each day record keeping, this will help us figure out your yields."
- Use "I" statements - "Our time for today's meeting is almost over and I'd like to hear what you have to say. When can we schedule additional time to talk?"

Make a Referral

To ensure that you have a good sense of the existing supports the farmer has, it can be helpful to ask, "who else have you been in touch with?" It may be appropriate to make a referral to another agricultural service provider, local counselor, or other resource.

- **Verify the need**—Restate what need you hear the farmer stay and ask, "Is this accurate?" Ensuring that you understand the needs of the farmer is key to providing an effective referral.
- **Ask for permission**—"Would it be okay if I call _____ and give them your contact information?" "Would you like me to introduce you to _____ through email so you two can discuss the situation?"
- **Explain the referral**—What the agency/organization does, why or how calling them will be helpful. Suggest the farmer write down some notes prior to making the contact.
- **Know your limits**—There may be no referral to make. Consider the best use of your time and the farmer's time in addressing the area of focus and the desired outcome.
- **Get to know the network**—The Beginning Farmer Resource Network (BFRN) of Maine's website is a great place to start so you can avoid making a "dead-end" referral. extension.umaine.edu/beginning-farmer-resource-network

Types of Referrals

- **Individual**— In this case, you are aware of a resource that will be helpful to a farmer. You can give the farmer the organization’s website as well as a contact name and information for the appropriate staff person. Note: consider the farmer’s level of skill and/or personality. If the farmer is a novice or you feel they could use the support, consider bridging the referral with an email of introduction.
- **Provider**— in this case the service provider makes contact with an agency representative and explains the nature of the farmer’s situation. The service provider then asks the agency to make contact with the farmer.
- **Research**— in other cases you may need to do more research prior to making referral. If this is the case, be sure to clearly explain the timeline in which you’ll do the research, how you’ll communicate what you find, and your time frame to get the information.

Following Up

- You told me you’d like to have _____ done. By when would you like to have it done? What resources do you need to make it happen? Should you “do” it or “delegate” it? Ask the farmer how they prioritize tasks. If appropriate considering introducing the Action Plan tool in the Resources Section of this Toolkit. You can provide the farmer with a copy so it can be filled out during the follow-up consultation.
- If the farmer was unable to complete an action item:
 - Set a deadline or timeframe. Work with them on setting realistic deadline.
 - Consider whether something else needs to be done or learned first that is preventing completion or progress.
 - Ask, “what motivates you?” Consider whether a follow-up meeting is a motivator to complete the task.

Resources

Communication

- Ladder of Inference
- Passive, Aggressive & Assertive Communication
- Using “I” Statements
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension bulletin #6103, *Effective Communication* extension.umaine.edu/publications/6103e
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension bulletin #6102, *The Art of Great Meetings* extension.umaine.edu/publications/6102e
- *Non-Violent Communication Tips & Tools* mainencvnetwork.org
- Community Mediation: voanne.org/mediatell *Communicating with Your Elders about Farmland Transfer* landforgood.org/communicating-elders-farm-transfer
- *Free Personality Tests* mindtools.com/pages/article/newCDV_51.htm
- *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D.
- *Thanks for the Feedback ... How to Have Difficult Conversations* by Sheila Heen and Douglas Stone
- *Taking the War Out of Our Words: The Art of Powerful Non-Defensive Communication* by Sharon Strand Ellison
- *Words that Change Minds: Mastering the Language of Influence* by Shelle Rose Charvet
- *Opening Minds: Using Language to Change Lives* by Peter H. Johnston (How to Engage Children With More Productive Talk And to Create More Supportive Learning Environments)
- *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen & Listen So Kids Will Talk* by Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension bulletin #4802 *Running Successful Farm-Family Meetings* extension.umaine.edu/publications/4802e

- University of Maine Cooperative Extension bulletin #4804, *Understanding Roles in the Farm Family*
extension.umaine.edu/publications/4804e
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension bulletin #1161, *Communicating with Markets: A Producer's Guide*
extension.umaine.edu/publications/1161e

Decision Making

- University of Maine Cooperative Extension bulletin #3010, *Record Keeping for Profit*
extension.umaine.edu/publications/3010e
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension bulletin #6105, *Thinking Better Together: Making Better Decisions in Groups*
extension.umaine.edu/publications/6105e
- *Developing a Criteria Screen*
atinadiffley.com/criteria-screen
- **Identifying Weak Links on Your Farm**
atinadiffley.com/weakest-link
- *Roles and Responsibilities: "Who" Is Responsible for "What"*
atinadiffley.com/roles-responsibilities-responsible

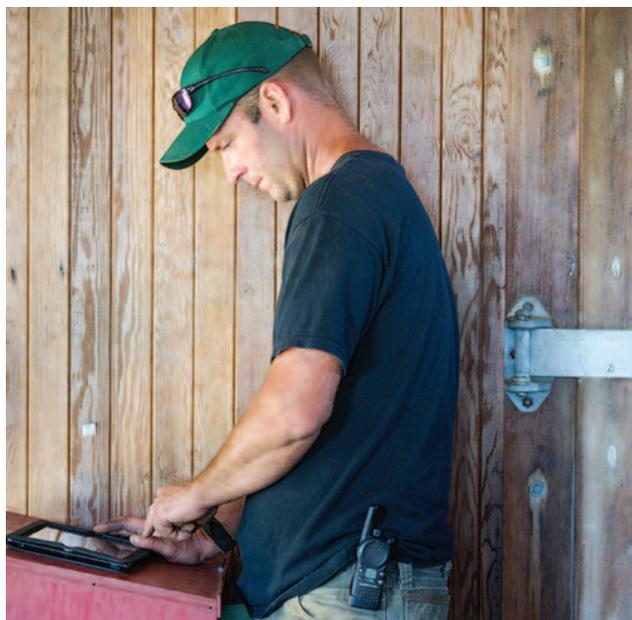
Goal Setting

- *Create a Holistic Goal*
https://atinadiffley.com/create-holistic-goal
- *Plan Ahead to Meet Personal Needs*
https://atinadiffley.com/plan-ahead-meet-personal-needs/
- *How to Establish Goals: A Group Project for Farmers and Their Families*
misadocuments.info/WholeFarmPlanning_complete.pdf
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension bulletin #6107 *Vision, Mission, Goals & Objectives*
extension.umaine.edu/publications/6107e
- *Maine Farms for the Future* (competitive grant program for which farmers become eligible after 3 years of farm ownership)
maine.gov/dacf/ard/business_and_market_development/farms_for_future/index.shtml

- *MOFGA Farm Beginnings*
mofga.org/Programs/MOFGAFarmBeginningsstabid/2873/Default.aspx
- *Introduction to Whole Farm Planning*
misadocuments.info/WholeFarmPlanning_complete.pdf
- *Whole Farm Planning* by Elizabeth Henderson and Karl North
- *Organic Farmer's Business Handbook* by Richard Wiswall
- *Agricultural Apprenticeship Learning Network*, Published by the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project
nesfp.org/resources/ag-apprenticeship-toolkit

Time Management

- *Time Management & The Eisenhower Box*
atinadiffley.com/time-management-the-eisenhower-box
- *Communication Management* basecamp.com
- *Action Plan* atinadiffley.com/action-plan
- *TickTicK* ticktick.com
- *To do app* en.todoist.com
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension bulletin #4803, *Farm and Family – Finding Balance*
extension.umaine.edu/publications/4803e

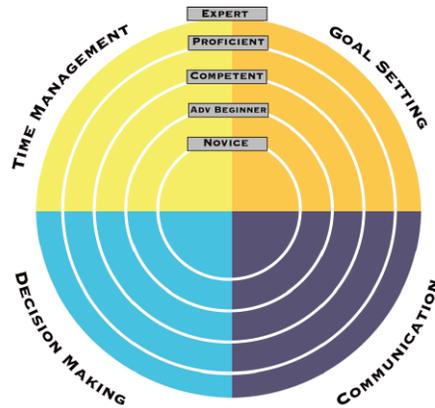


One-on-One Consultation Checklist

What is the farmer's stage of farm development?

After a discussion about stages of development, select the stage that best represents this farmer:

- Prospective
- Start-up
- Establishing
- Strategizing
- Refining



Conversation Openers

What would you like to focus on today? What would you like to accomplish with our discussion?

Farmer States their Area of Focus:

- 1 What are some key phrases or words that the farmer uses to describe the area of focus?
- 2 How has the farmer tried to address the stated focus? What have they done or who else have they talked to help improve the area of focus?
- 3 Do you believe there is a more critical area of improvement that the farmer would be best served to identify and address first? Can you guide them to identifying this critical area with a question such as, How are things going with _____?
- 4 Are there aspects of communication, decision making, goal setting, or time management in the farmer's area of focus?

→ If **yes**, "how would you rate your ability in each of the skill areas in relation to the problem or need?"

	Self-rating (1-5) 1-novice, 2-adv beg, 3-competent, 4-proficient, 5-expert	Skill Areas
Communication		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communication: Identify 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: Utilize existing tools to prioritize tasks and plan in advance. Have a clear understanding of management roles and responsibilities, and criteria on what decisions can be made by the person in charge and which require all stakeholders' input. ● Goal-setting: Develop farm goals that integrate quality of life values and relationship goal criteria into farm decision making. ● Time Management: Utilize existing resources to assist farmers in optimizing farm roles and responsibilities.
Decision Making		
Goal Setting		
Time Management		

After completing the self rating, the nested model on the reverse page may be used. Ask the farmer to place a dot where they feel their skill level is in each of the four areas. This can be a useful discussion tool.

<p>Brainstorm what aspects of the skills would help to address the area of focus: (Use the active listening tips; reference the Farmer Typology to inquire about specific challenges in the skill area, etc.)</p>
<p>Feedback: (referrals made; handouts recommended; further planning suggested, etc.)</p>
<p>Next Steps: (follow-up call; action plan, etc.)</p>

Information in this publication is provided purely for educational purposes. No responsibility is assumed for any problems associated with the use of products or services mentioned. No endorsement of products or companies is intended, nor is criticism of unnamed products or companies implied.

Illustrations by Abby Sadauckas and Leslie Forstadt

© 2019

Call 800.287.0274 (in Maine), or 207.581.3188, for information on publications and program offerings from University of Maine Cooperative Extension, or visit extension.umaine.edu.

The University of Maine is an EEO/AA employer, and does not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, transgender status, gender expression, national origin, citizenship status, age, disability, genetic information or veteran's status in employment, education, and all other programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding nondiscrimination policies: Sarah E. Harebo, Director of Equal Opportunity, 101 North Stevens Hall, University of Maine, Orono, ME 04469-5754, 207.581.1226, TTY 711 (Maine Relay System).

Developed by:

Leslie Forstadt, University of Maine Cooperative Extension,
Child and Family Development Specialist and
Abby Sadauckas, Apple Creek Farm

Additional Contribution and Reviews by:

Atina Diffley, Organic Farming Works

This Toolkit was developed as part of a Northeast SARE Professional Development Program Grant. Its contents are the result of focus groups and interviews involving more than 60 farmers and a series of working groups with more than 30 farmers and agricultural service providers.

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under subaward number ENE16-142.

