

GREW Gaining Results through Evaluation Work

A project supporting trainers of beginning farmers and ranchers

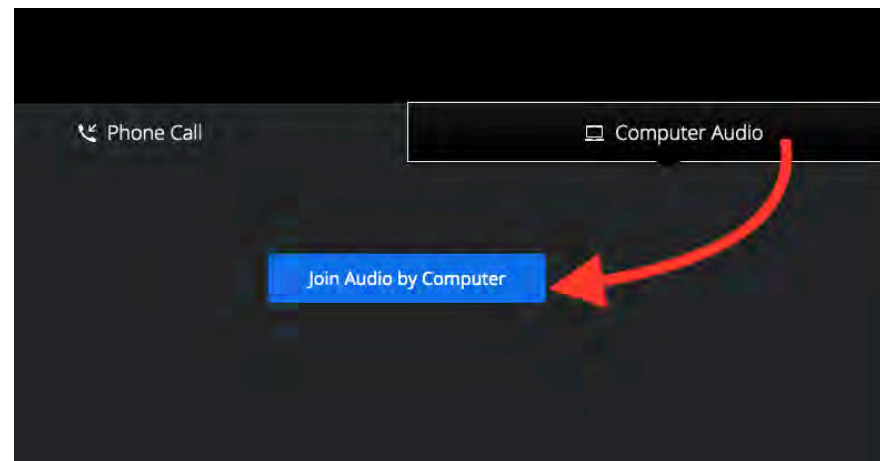
Webinar #4

Documenting Past Participant Outcomes: Beginning Farmer and Rancher Training Organizations Share Their Experience


June 25, 2020



The session will begin shortly.
Please connect your audio.



On your screen, click the “Join Audio by Computer” button

If you are having trouble, you can join by phone –
click on the  Phone Call tab

Agenda

1. Introductions
2. Technology overview
3. Intro to GREW Project – and context
4. Presentation – New Agrarian Program
5. Presentation - Farm Beginnings
6. Question & Answers

Presenters



Amy Bacigalupo

*Land Stewardship Project Co-Managing Director
and Co-Director of Farm Beginnings*
Land Stewardship Project, Montevideo, MN



Leah Ricci

New Agrarian Program Director
Quivira Coalition; Santa Fe, NM

Technical Info & Process

1. Contact **Vanessa Ackermann** with technical issues (vschlege@ucsc.edu)
2. Everyone has been placed on mute to reduce noise
3. Please put questions in the chat box
4. This session is being recorded

GREW Project

Gaining Results
through
Evaluation Work



Purpose: Support evaluation of
beginning farmer training efforts



Desired
Outcomes:

Accessible,
efficient and
useful;
Do more
evaluation and
improve efforts



Activities: Tools, webinars,
learning community

Purpose of GREW Webinars

Introduce Basics of Evaluation

- *Provide overview*
- *Direct to useful resources*

Provide Examples from BFR Programs

- *What it looks like in practice*
- *How it was useful – benefitted program or organization*
- *Resources used/needed*

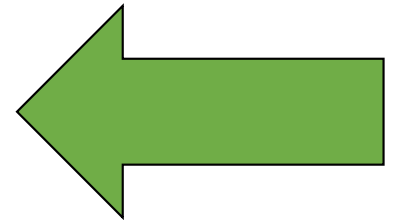
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Purpose of GREW Webinars

GREW Participant Survey - January 2019

Evaluation in Action	
How to...	
	Learning Priority
Assess skills and competencies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Improve teaching and learning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Document impact over time	<input type="checkbox"/>
Continually improve your programming and respond to farmer and rancher needs	<input type="checkbox"/>

Top Learning Priority

83% Document impact over time

Desired Outcomes

1. Inspiration
2. Strategies to address challenges
3. Ideas for next steps

Context

✓ = What has been address so far

Methods

- Surveys ✓
- Interviews ✓
- Focus groups
- Etc.

Approaches

- Photovoice ✓
- Most Significant Change ✓
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Etc.

Frames

- Participatory ✓
- Equity Focus
- Systems Thinking
- Etc.

See Sara Vaca's "The Periodic Table for Evaluation" for more ideas about conceptualizing different aspects of program evaluation: <https://www.saravaca.com/project/my-ees2018-poster/>

We want your feedback!

Please take our survey – see the link in the chat box

Coming Next:

Learning Community

Thursday – July 16 – 10am PT / 1pm ET

Tell us more!

Project Partners



Jan Perez, Lead, Evaluator

Damian Parr

Vanessa Ackermann



Kim Niewolny, Co-lead

Tom Archibald, Evaluator

Katie Trozzo



Jennifer Hashley, Co-lead

Project Advisors



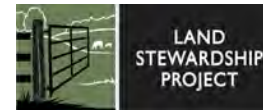
Chris Brown



Gary Matteson



Jim Hafner



Amy Bacigalupo



Beth Holtzman



Pam Mavrolas, Evaluator

New Agrarian Program 2019 Evaluation





Santa Fe, New Mexico
www.quiviracoalition.org

The Quivira Coalition builds soil, biodiversity, and resilience on western working lands.

We foster ecological, economic, and social health through education, innovation, and collaboration.

At the foundation of all our work is the concept that well managed working rangelands and forests are two of the most effective, efficient, and immediately viable paths to remedy the devastating impacts of climate change.



Our **Land and Water** program helps ranchers develop plans and management strategies for restoring and building resilience on slope wetlands, grasslands, and other working landscapes.



Our **Education** program, including our annual conference and open source publications, creates a space for our coalition to share ideas and resources, and for the general public to learn about the critical role working lands play in the health of our food systems, communities, and our planet.



Our **Carbon Ranch Initiative** is working to build the capacity of producers, land managers, and technical service providers to implement land management practices focused on mitigation of and adaptation to climate change.



Our **New Agrarian** program helps to ensure that living and working knowledge of these practices, and the landscape itself, is stewarded into the future.



Program History

- Founded in 2008, initially 3 mentor sites
- 2017: 6 mentor sites
- 2019: funding from Cedar Tree Foundation to expand in Northern Plains, 13 sites
- 2020: 20 sites in NM, CO, MT and CA

Evaluation Partner

University of Arizona, School of
Agricultural Education,
Innovation, and Technology

Matthew Mars, Ph.D.

Tyler Thorpe (Ph.D. candidate)



Evaluation Design

- Formative - intended to foster development and improvement within an ongoing activity, to refine goals and evolve strategies
- Participatory - involves stakeholders in the evaluation process

Stakeholders:

- Current apprentices
- Alumni
- Current & past mentors



Data Collection

- NAP staff conducted 35 interviews (in person and by phone)
- Each interview took about an hour
- ~30 questions
 - Targeted, open-ended response questions

Pros

- High response rate
- Program staff planned to collect feedback from current participants anyway

Cons

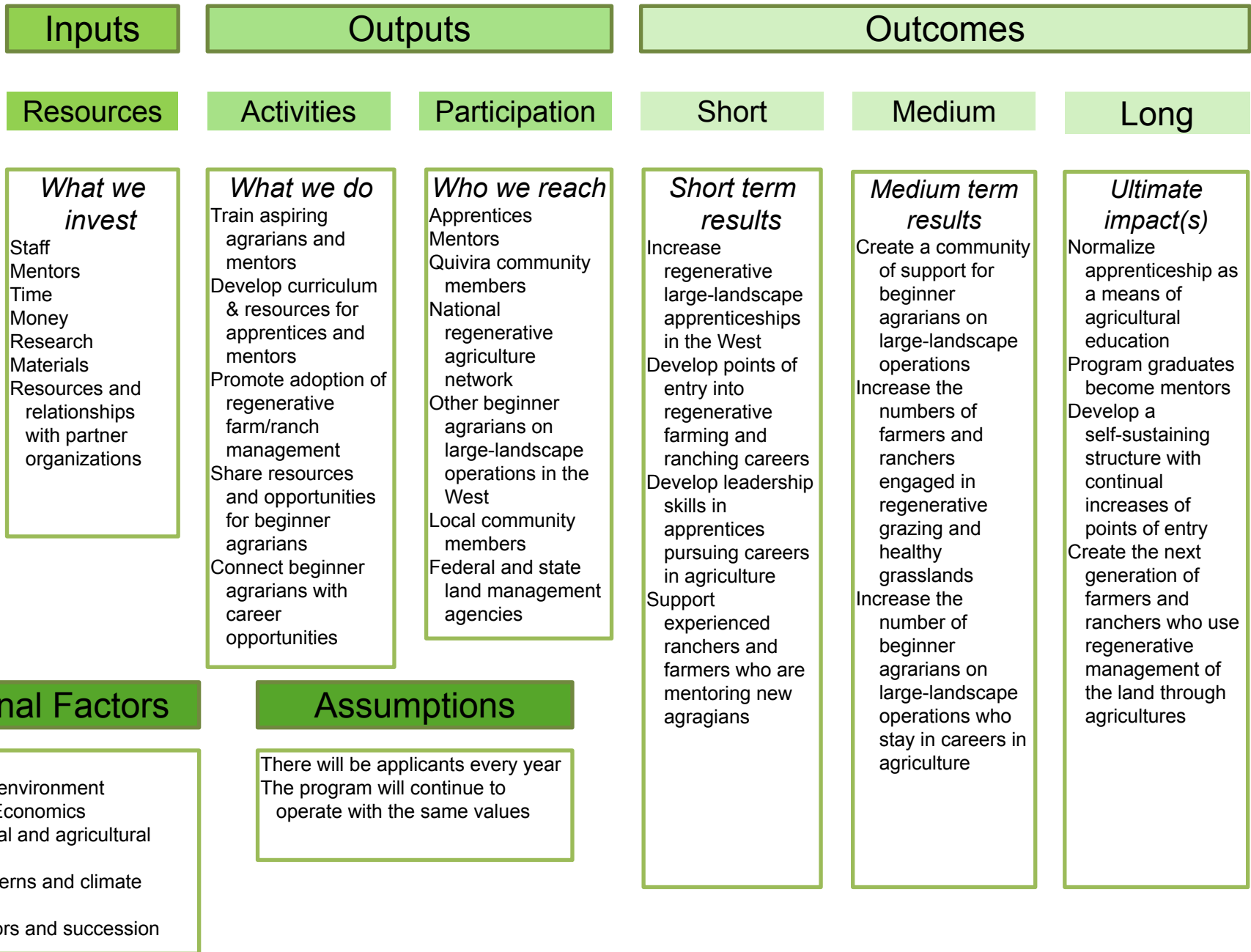
- Potential for bias - incomplete or filtered feedback
- Open ended responses are richer, but have potential to be misinterpreted by evaluator

Cost

- Staff time
 - Scheduling and conducting 45 interviews (90 hours)
 - Getting the evaluator up to speed (10 hours)
 - Developing and refining logic model and interview questions (8 hours)
 - Reviewing initial draft report and providing feedback (4 hours)

= 112 hours staff time

The New Agrarian Program: Agrarian Apprenticeship Logic Model



Thresholds for Evaluation

- Based off short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes
- What can we measure (indicators) for each outcome?

Outcome # 2 - Increase points of entry into regenerative ranching/farming careers for agrarian beginners

What we can measure:

- Percentage of NAP graduates continuing in agrarian careers
- Number of NAP apprenticeships offered
- Number of qualified applications to apprenticeships
- Number of apprentices/graduates engaged in leadership activities such as soil conservation district, Farmers Union, consumer educators / advocates for regenerative ag etc.

Outcome # 2 - Increase points of entry into regenerative ranching/farming careers for agrarian beginners

- 84% of current and former apprentices are continuing in agrarian careers
- 13 apprenticeships offered in 2019, 10 in 2018, 8 in 2017, ...
- 64 applicants for 20 apprenticeships in 2020
- 17% of the current apprentices engaged in leadership activities such as the Soil Conservation District, Farmers Union or in educator/advocate roles

Notable Results

- 100% of respondents still working in ag are using regenerative practices
- Isolation was mentioned as one of the main challenges for apprentices
- Mentors valued the mentor training calls, and would like to see more in-person training or events

- Why aren't more alumni owner-operators? Land is expensive, and they want to spend more time building their skills.
- All apprentices who completed two years stressed the additional learning that happened in year 2.

Full report:

<https://quiviracoalition.org/nap-evaluation-report/>



How did we use the results?



BFRDP proposal: demonstrated
input from ranchers and farmers!

A herd of black cows is grazing in a vast, golden-brown field. In the background, a range of mountains with snow-capped peaks stretches across the horizon under a sky filled with soft, grey clouds. The scene is captured in a wide-angle shot, emphasizing the expanse of the landscape.

Programmatically: Justification for mentor training & in-person support for mentors and apprentices (activities that are expensive and harder to justify with funders)

Redefining “success” ...?



Challenges/what would we do differently?

- Working with an evaluator requires trust and collaboration
- Test your survey before going live with it!
- Everyone wanted to talk at 7pm - expect to have to accommodate their schedules



@QuiviraCoalition



@QuiviraAgRanch



@QuiviraCoalition



<https://quiviracoalition.org/downtoearth/>



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505.820.2544

[www.quiviracoalition.org](http://wwwquiviracoalition.org)

Thank you!

MEASURING THE IMPACTS OF FARM BEGINNINGS

- Farmer-led
- Community Based
- Rooted in Sustainable Agriculture
- Working for Racial Justice



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

<https://landstewardshipproject.org/>

**FARM
BEGINNINGS
COLLABORATIVE**

WORKING FOR RACIAL EQUITY



What we are doing -

- Adapting Farm Beginnings curriculum (DE&I committee)
- Learning from BIPOC farmers and organizations
- Educating ourselves
- Providing tools and resources for each organization use in their community to educate others



<https://www.learnrowconnect.org/>

AGENDA: DOCUMENTING LONG TERM OUTCOMES

Outcomes:

Deciding what to measure and how to get the data you want.

Results:

Collecting, organizing and using data.



WHAT IS FARM BEGINNINGS

Primary Goals of Farm Beginnings Course:

- Connect to a support network
- improve decision-making
- develop a farm plan

Activities: 12 month program, 55 hours in classroom focused on whole farm planning, optional field based training, advising with an established farmer.

Audience: Beginning farmers who some experience on their own farm or someone else's. Also, some already have access to land and resources.

OUTCOMES TO MEASURE



Decision:

Graduates will be engaged in **farming**

Graduates will use sustainable practices

The numbers of acres in sustainable production will increase

Amount of sustainably produced food available locally will increase

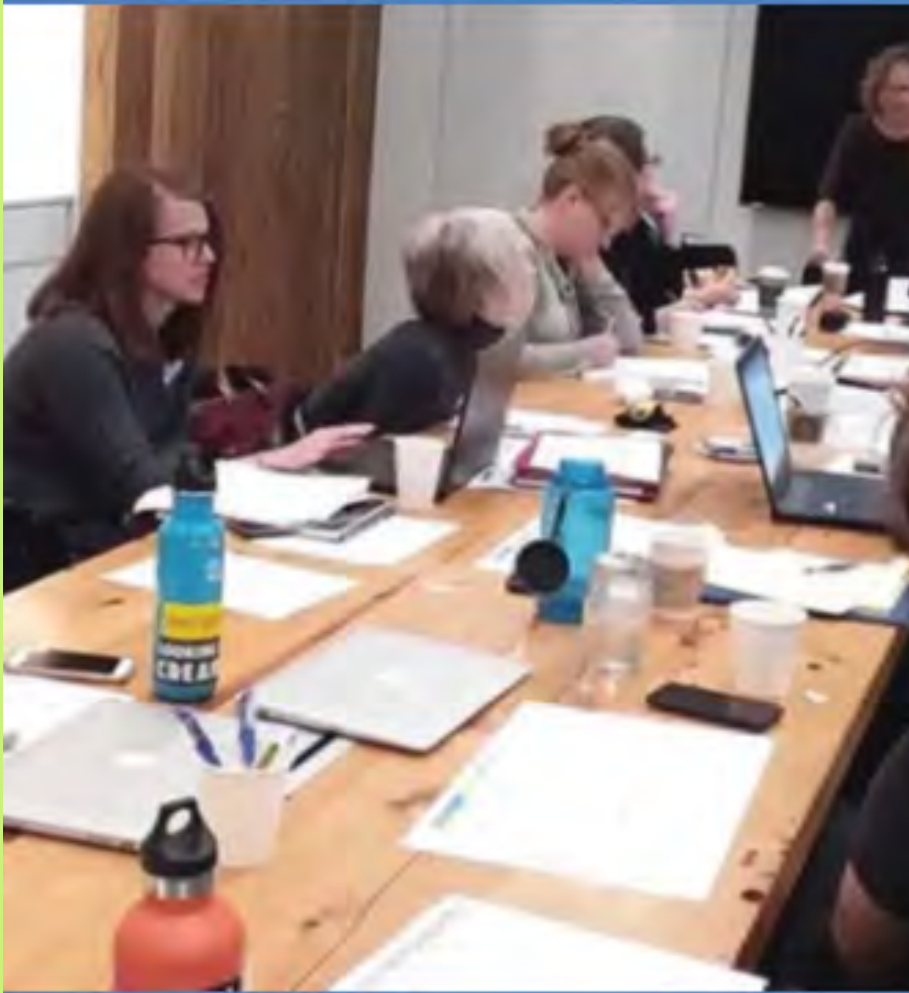
Graduates will **meet their goals** for family income from agricultural production.

Demographics and DE&I



LAND
STEWARDSHIP
PROJECT

WHAT IT TOOK TO PLAN EVALUATION



Process:

- shared values, goals and approach
- Formed committee to work with evaluator
- consensus process.
- Re-plan; DE&I

Time: FBC committee met 3 times (phone calls) and presented evaluation plan at annual meeting (in-person) for final decision (approx. 6 months)

Cost:

Upfront - \$4850

- 60 hours evaluation expertise
- 50 hours of staff time paid through BFRDP EET grant

Survey Monkey account

Annually - \$2400

- 40 hrs/year to administer survey and develop report of findings for each organization.

2019 SURVEY METHODS

- Same survey to all FB graduates approx. 18 months after enrolling in FB
- **149 household** from 10 member organizations. (approx. response rate of 14%, sent to 1000 households)
- Graduates from 1996-97 through the current year (2018-19) responded to the survey
- 59% (88/149) of the respondents had completed Farm Beginnings within **the last 5 years** (2015-19)
- Survey questions are framed in reference to the growing season that has just ended (last season)



2019 RESULTS OF GRADUATE SURVEY



- 78% involved in farming
- 70% managing or owning farms
- 11% plan to start
- 10% started during the last year
- 100% used sustainable practices
- 78% increased their use of sustainable practices since taking Farm Beginnings
- 50% met or exceeded their income goals
- 51% expected their gross revenue from farming to be higher (2019 compared to 2018)

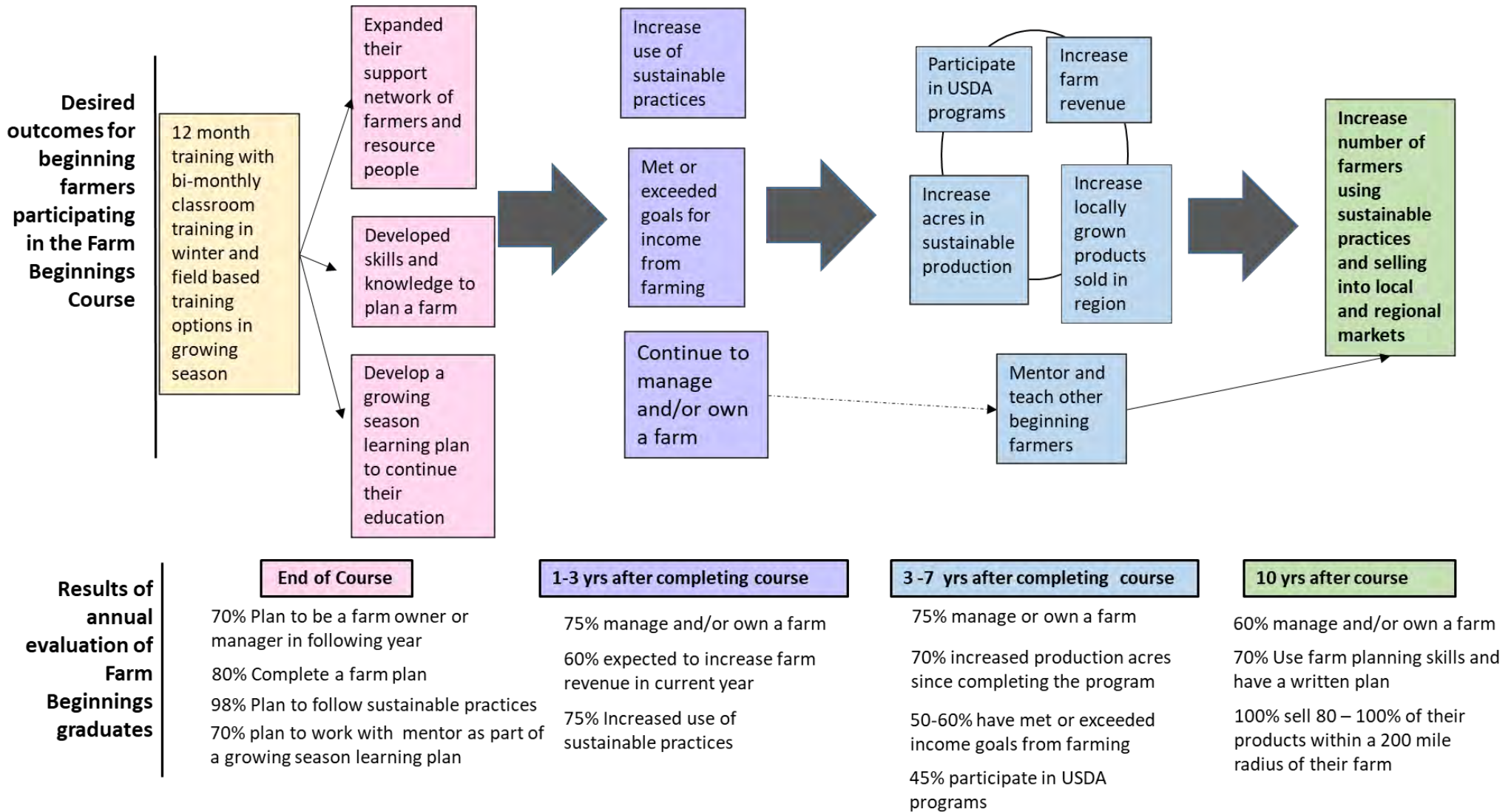
COMPARISON OF LONG TERM TRENDS

Figure 1. Percent of Farm Beginnings Graduate-Households Farming by Year



Evaluation Overview

Farm Beginnings Course - Land Stewardship Project <https://landstewardshipproject.org/morefarmers/farmbeginningsclass>

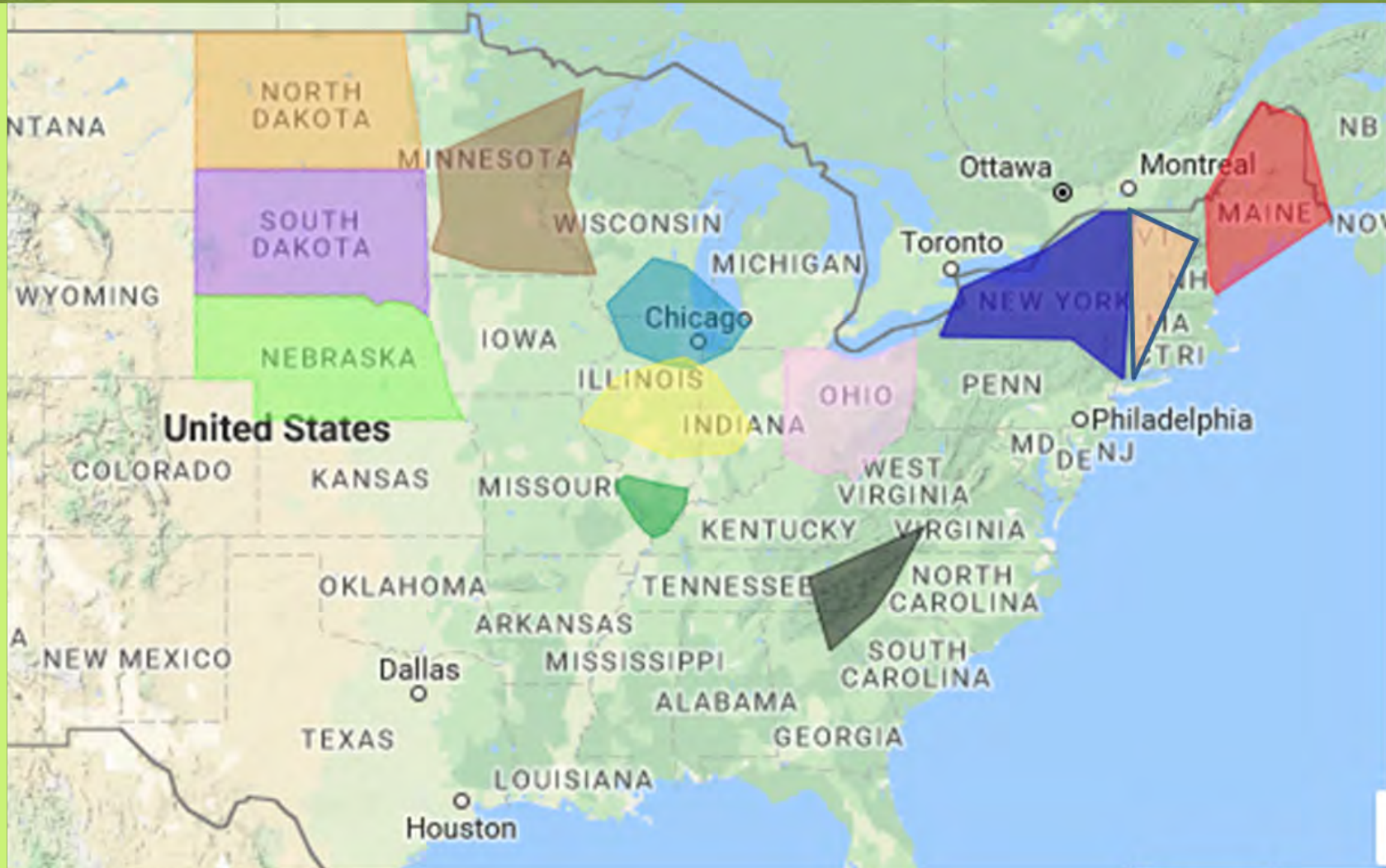


TIPS FOR COLLECTING MEDIUM TO LONG TERM DATA

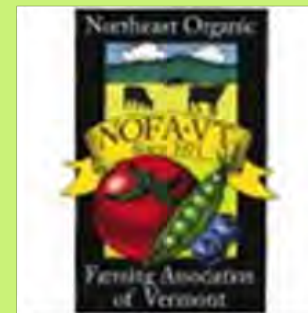
- Make sure you know why you are making the effort to collect the data. What change are you trying to see as a result of your work. (Values and Mission)
- Prioritize evaluation resources on those you work with most intensively.
- Maintain Connection with participants over time
- Create a consistent evaluation procedure. (working with an evaluator can really help especially in the beginning)

Where is Farm Beginnings?

12 FB programs... 13 organizations... serving 13 states



FBC Member Organizations



<http://farmbeginningscollaborative.org/>



Amy Bacigalupo

**Farm Beginnings Director
Land Stewardship Project**

amyb@landstewardshipproject.org



The Farm Beginnings Collaborative is:



Angelic Organics Learning Center
 Address: 1547 Rockton Rd., Caltonia, IL 61011
 Programs: Statewide Farm Beginnings
 State(s): Illinois, Wisconsin
 Website: farmgrowconnect.org

The Angelic Organics Learning Center helps urban and rural people build local food systems.

[Read More >](#)



Dakota Rural Action
 Address: 910 Fourth Street Ste. A PO Box 549 Brookings, SD 57006
 Programs: DRA Farm Beginnings
 State(s): South Dakota
 Website: dakotarural.org

Eat, Grow, Energize & Organize

[Read More >](#)



FARRMS
 Address: 301 5th Avenue SE, Madisa, ND
 Programs: FARRMS Farm Beginnings
 State(s): North Dakota
 Website: farms.org

We Grow Farmers

[Read More >](#)



Food Works
 Address: P.O. Box 3855, Carbonate, IL 61902
 Programs: Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings
 State(s): Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri
 Website: foodworks.org



Hawthorne Valley Farm Place Based Learning Center
 Address: 127 Route 21C, Ghent, NY 12075
 Programs: Hudson Valley Farm Beginnings Program
 State(s): Massachusetts, New York
 Website: hawthornevalleyfarm.org



Land Stewardship Project
 Address: 301 State Road, Montevideo, MN 56245
 Programs: Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program
 State(s): Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin
 Website: landstewardshipproject.org