



Supporting Mentors to Teach Next Generation Agrarians

A Farm/Ranch Mentor Training Toolkit

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
Purpose of this Mentor Training Toolkit	7
How to Use this Toolkit	9
Background of the Ag Apprenticeship Learning Network	11
Acknowledgements	13
Toolkit Feedback and Ongoing Mentor Resource-Sharing	14
PROLOGUE	15
Definitions	15
Network Training Programs & Acronyms	20
Gender Pronouns	20
CHAPTER 1: Building Mentor Networks	21
1.1 Determine your program mission and focus	22
1.2 Identifying Potential Mentors, Outreach and Recruiting	24
1.3 Vetting Mentors for your Program	28
1.4 Onboarding Strategies for New Mentors	34
CHAPTER 2: Training Topics for Mentors	36
2.1 Mentoring Principles for Experiential Education	38
2.2 Mentor Skills and Attributes	42
2.3 Communication Between Trainees and Mentors	45
2.4 Conflict: Normal and Useful	52
2.5 Learning Styles, Multiple Intelligences, and Personality as it Affects Learning	54
2.6 Feedback and Assessment	56
2.7 Balancing Education and Getting Work Done	65
2.8 Tools to Help	68
2.9 Setting Expectations	83
2.10 Working Across Intergenerational Difference	86
CHAPTER 3: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	93
3.1 Definitions	97
3.2 Getting Started	101
3.3 Working with a Consultant	107
3.4 Defining your Organization’s DEI Values	112
3.5 Resources and Final Thoughts	119
CHAPTER 4: Continuing Education and Peer-to-Peer Support for Mentors	122
4.1 Getting Started	125
4.2 Network Components	132
4.3 Sustaining the Network	143

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 5: Mentoring a Potential Successor	146
5.1 Farm Entry and Exit	147
5.2 What is Farm Succession?	147
5.3 Recruiting a Successor	150
5.4 Trainee or Successor?	151
5.5 Family Apprenticeships	152
5.6 Preparing the On-Farm Mentor	153
5.7 Preparing the Trainee	155
5.8 Roles and Expectations	156
5.9 The Offer	157
5.10 The Process	158
5.11 Training On-Farm Mentors	160
CHAPTER 6: Resources for Mentors	163
6.1 Farmer Training Resources by Organization	164
Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems from the University of Santa Cruz	164
Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training	165
Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship	165
Institute of Applied Agriculture at the University of Maryland	165
Land Stewardship Project	165
Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association	167
Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service	167
New Agrarian Program from Quivira Coalition	167
New England Small Farm Institute	168
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project	168
Northeast Organic Farming Association	168
Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture	168
Rogue Farm Corps	170
Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture	170
The University of Wisconsin-Madison	170
6.2 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Resources	171
Racial Justice Resources	171
Ableism	175
Ageism	175
Classism	175
Gender and Sexism	176
Intersectionality	176
Inclusivity	176
Sexual Orientation and Heterosexism	177

TABLE OF CONTENTS

6.3 Farmer Training Resources by Topic	178
Adult Learners	178
Communication and Feedback	178
Conflict Resolution	178
Emotional Intelligence	179
Equity Statements	179
Farm Succession	179
Generational Differences	180
Goal Setting & Expectations For Mentors and Mentees	180
Learning, Working, and Personality Styles	180
Legal Resources for Agricultural Employment	181
Mentoring and Leadership	181
Templates, Sample Documents and Models	181
CONCLUSION	182
Next Steps for the Use of this Toolkit	182
Toolkit Feedback and Ongoing Mentor Resource-Sharing	183

Introduction



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Mentoring programs that match experienced agricultural practitioners with new agrarians strengthen the local foods movement by providing experiential education on farms and ranches and bringing new, diverse producers into agriculture. As fewer Americans grow up on farms or ranches, land-based experiential training programs build skills for aspiring, beginning, or first-generation farmers and create pathways to agricultural careers, opportunities in the broader food system, and farm or ranch ownership. Work-learning opportunities often include apprenticeships or internships, incubator farm programs, student on-campus farms, or other land-based skills programs. Work-learning exchanges in the sustainable agriculture sector are often provided by farmers or ranchers with decades of production experience who play a significant training or mentoring role. These skilled mentors are optimistic about the future of agriculture—they believe the industry holds opportunities for people who have the desire to succeed and live

an agrarian lifestyle—and they consider themselves knowledgeable practitioners willing to pass on their knowledge. They invest the time in [coaching, training, and mentoring](#) potential future successors and share their values around land stewardship, food production, and community building.

Yet, mentors face unique challenges in successfully providing support to aspiring and beginning farmers. Mentors must frequently assess the knowledge and skill level and deal with a trainee's inexperience. They are often not compensated for their expertise and knowledge transfer. Balancing the demands of work and facilitating education and learning on the farm can also create strains on farm productivity and profitability. Mentoring inexperienced labor on the farm or ranch can have economic impacts. Mentors must consistently set reasonable goals and expectations and effectively communicate, provide feedback, and nurture their trainees. Mentors also provide more

than just skills training or coaching to improve a specific task, but help aspiring agrarians develop and clarify their career and life goals, strengths, and potential; facilitate understanding of their values and aspirations; and connect them to other resources and social networks. Many mentors may have limited formal educational or pedagogical training and may lack peer support systems, access to educational resources, or professional development opportunities to build their capacity as educators that would create more effective relationships between themselves and their trainees.

including: communication strategies and setting expectations; a lack of resources for ongoing mentorship support and curriculum development; HR-related questions (hiring, payroll, liability, legal); teaching strategies that support adult learning; and balancing work and learning on the farm. There is so much to consider and balance to be an effective mentor on a farm or ranch, and this toolkit offers a variety of strategies, tools, and resources for apprenticeship training programs and mentors to improve their skills and develop their craft. The toolkit was developed through peer-reviewed guidance by experienced programs—we hope you and your mentors will benefit from this collective wisdom.



The New Entry Sustainable Farming Project (New Entry) launched the National Ag Apprenticeship Learning Network (AgALN) in 2016 to create a [community of practice](#) for agricultural service providers facilitating apprenticeship training programs that include a strong mentoring component. Organizations that coordinate agricultural mentoring programs and foster experiential learning opportunities value the role that quality mentorship relationships play in preparing future agrarians for agricultural careers. These programs coordinate networks of experienced farm and ranch mentors and support placement of aspiring agrarian learners (often called interns, apprentices, or trainees) on vetted “mentor farms” to provide experiential learning opportunities (see background of AgALN and core partners below).

New Entry conducts an annual survey of mentors operating agricultural apprenticeship training programs and data from 2017-2019 reveal common challenges farm and ranch mentors experience,

Purpose of this Mentor Training Toolkit

This Mentor Training Toolkit is designed to provide agricultural service providers with:

- agriculture-specific mentor training resources
- mentor training tools and curricula
- mentor training strategies
- support to build mentor learning networks and mentor-to-mentor peer learning circles
- tools to strengthen ongoing learning within and among mentor training programs

As your apprenticeship training program gains experience providing professional development to farm and ranch mentors, your program has the potential to support more effective training for aspiring and beginning farmers and ranchers and increase knowledge transfer of agricultural skills. For your mentors, improving their mentoring skills can increase their employee retention, improve their farm or ranch work culture, enhance the mentor’s own job satisfaction, build their interpersonal skills, and provide opportunities to reflect on their

own motivations and values toward farming. Each season, your mentors must continually revisit their agricultural practices and innovations as they train new agrarians. Mentors may often be questioned and challenged to make improvements to their farm operations by their trainees, or by broader social forces. This is an area where regular mentor training, professional development opportunities, and peer networks can be invaluable to support your mentors in making adjustments to how they adapt and integrate new learning throughout their mentoring practice.

For example, the current spotlight on fair wages and working conditions on farms are questioning how work-labor exchanges are structured and compensated. Climate change can mean that mentors are continually adapting, reacting, and changing their production approaches to farming. The current Black Lives Matter movement and issues of racial equity, diversity, and inclusion have implications for how the farming and ranching community (which is predominantly white) are supporting more equal access to and opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) to enter farming. For mentors who are supporting individuals from marginalized communities on their farms—or for mentors who have vastly different life experiences from their trainees—how can these mentors create safe or “brave” spaces both on their farms or ranches and in their broader agricultural communities? Many new agrarians are keenly interested in addressing social justice through agriculture and the food system. Farming and mentoring in the midst of constant change and uncertainty can be challenging. This continual reflection and learning on the part of your mentors can be supported through a strong peer-to-peer mentor network and a regular continuing education and mentor professional development program.

As a result of gaining new knowledge and skills, your mentors will improve their mentoring and teaching skills, engage in more effective communications, and facilitate an environment more conducive to learning. For agricultural service providers and apprenticeship training programs, enhancing the capacity of your mentors provides the best learning experiences for future agrarians and can improve the long-term outcomes of your programs.

Additionally, this toolkit aims to facilitate a learning network across many regions of the country. Through this network of partners and collaborators, we hope that ongoing sharing of best practices, resources, and outcomes for mentor training will continue to be shared as this community expands. We hope this toolkit provides your organization with resources to support your mentors with

“Mentor training, professional development, and peer networks can be invaluable to support your mentors to integrate new learning throughout their mentoring practice.”



PHOTO CREDIT: Feeding Laramie

professional development and lifelong learning and with insights and knowledge that allows for successful growth and development. We also encourage you to share your mentor training resources with us as you develop your program [see feedback and resource section below]!

To find other organizations supporting mentor training opportunities and to stay informed about this work, visit the [National Ag Apprenticeship Learning Network](#).

How to Use this Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to introduce your apprenticeship training program to the topics and frameworks that mentors have identified as challenges and that are important for mentors to address to offer a successful learning experience for their trainees. While your mentors are likely experts in their field with many years of experience running an agricultural business, they still benefit from improving their skills and capacities as mentors, educators, and life-long learners. Your program is in an excellent position to introduce new tools and resources to your mentors. Mentors will benefit from new resources and skills to address the many and nuanced aspects of running an agricultural business while providing a quality educational experience for their trainees. No one is better qualified to grow a new agrarian than an experienced mentor with many years on the land, but not every rancher or farmer is cut out for the job and some mentors will be better or more skilled than others. Being a mentor is not the same as just being an employer—although the ‘employer hat’ is one of many your mentors wear—but often the “soft skills” are the areas that are hardest for mentors to navigate. In the [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit: A Guide to Developing or Improving an Ag Apprenticeship Training Program on Your Farm or Ranch](#) published in 2018, we discuss considerations and the implications

of becoming a mentor; there are several resources referenced throughout this guide that cover mentor decision tools. We encourage programs to read through the material in the Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit in addition to the resources provided in this Mentor Training Toolkit to make sure you are selecting mentors for your program who truly want to serve as a mentor.

We recognize there is no specific set of rules for how to be a good mentor, but the commitment to the mentor’s continuing education and to the trainees’ learning is an essential part of the experience. As such, we have organized this toolkit into several sections that programs can use to navigate the professional development resources to build your ideal mentor training program.

After we clarify some critical definitions, pronouns, and organizational acronyms we will use throughout the toolkit, we first introduce how to build and recruit a robust mentor network in Chapter 1. If the majority of your program is carried out by the mentors you select and engage as educators, mentor selection is a critical first step toward operating a quality program. This involves clarifying your program’s mission and focus, identifying mentors who are compatible with your program’s values and expectations, assessing their commitment to mentorship and their teaching styles, and onboarding them to make sure they have the skills needed to provide the best experience for your trainees.

Second, we dive into the heart of the toolkit: Chapter 2—Training Topics for Mentors. This chapter covers all of the “soft skills” around communicating, setting expectations, providing feedback, understanding learning styles, generational differences, as well as “how to get it all done” by balancing work with education. We share tools, frameworks, and resources to support these topics throughout this Chapter. We imagine that this content-focused chapter will be the

place you will turn to develop much of the training resources you will use to develop your mentor training program.

In Chapter 3, we dive into issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). It is critical that programs and their mentors are in tune with issues of diversity and equity, and understand—or learn—how to foster a sense of inclusion for agrarian trainees. The current Black Lives Matter movement is shining a stark spotlight on issues of racial equity in the food system that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities have been raising for decades [if not longer]. Food system practitioners are reckoning with the United States' long history of land theft, genocide, forced slavery, and well-planned policies that have marginalized and excluded BIPOC communities from full participation in agriculture. This long-standing systemic discrimination and targeted policies have extended well beyond the Jim Crow era, and into the predominantly white-benefitting Farm Bill policies and programs that continue to this day. Issues of race, racial discrimination, white privilege, and white supremacy culture are introduced in this Chapter and an abundance of racial equity training resources are provided in Chapter 6 to launch practitioners on a path toward adopting anti-racist practices and building more just, equitable programs.

In addition to race and culture, diversity on the farm or ranch can also show up across gender, class or socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, age, or physical ability. Individuals often comprise multiple identities that show up in different ways and may affect their learning experience on a farm or ranch, particularly in a tight-knit, close learning environment where the trainee is living on the farm or ranch or in a community that they may not necessarily come from. There are inherent power dynamics of trainees being dependent on their host farm or ranch for their education, housing, employment, and connection to broader community

resources. A person's identity can affect the daily lived reality if they are a member of marginalized groups who experience recurring systemic oppression. Mentors who have lived in communities their whole lives may take for granted what it means to an “outsider” or “other” in their community, particularly if aspects of a trainee's identity are highly visible [such as gender or race]. As mentors work to build personal relationships with their trainees, if they are a member of a dominant group, they can benefit from advancing their learning and “unlearning” around addressing implicit bias, internalizing racism, and negotiating power dynamics. These topics require a commitment to lifelong learning and awareness. As we support mentors to bring their whole selves to their mentorship relationships, mentors may benefit from guidance navigating the intersectionality across multiple dimensions of diversity.

We recognize we are just scratching the surface and have a long way to go to build a solid DEI training approach or suggested curriculum for mentors. Our approach to Chapter 3 is to provide as many references to existing resources as possible and to suggest including experienced facilitators or consultants who specialize in particular training approaches to support mentors in deepening their understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We encourage all programs to incorporate an equity lens and framework throughout the development of your apprenticeship and mentor training programs.

Chapter 4 describes how to build peer-to-peer mentor networks and facilitate peer learning and sharing among mentors. We draw examples from existing networks in terms of approach, strategies, and tools. The goal is to encourage mentors to learn from and support one another both through connections to your program, but also in their communities and regions.

In Chapter 5, our colleagues from [Land For Good](#) offer information and resources on farm succession. They have a whole

host of resources on farmland tenure, transfer, and succession that are worth sharing with your mentors. We will not duplicate those resources in this Toolkit but strongly encourage programs to connect your mentors to [Land For Good's Farm Succession Planning Toolbox](#). Here, we drill down into the difference between mentoring a trainee (who might be part of an annual rotating cycle of trainees), and identifying and mentoring a potential future successor, whether within the family or a non-family member. We address the different types of support a mentor needs in mentoring their future successor, as well as how to best prepare the trainee for the experience. Clarifying roles and expectations for all parties (the program, the trainee, and the mentor) and how to provide additional support, resources, and structured training opportunities during the process are discussed.

Throughout the toolkit, we offer case studies, examples, and resource links, and highlight lessons learned from experienced apprenticeship and mentor training programs. Each of these resources referenced in the document are also annotated in Chapter 6, Resources for Mentors. Case studies of different apprenticeship and beginning farmer training programs throughout the toolkit will illustrate different approaches that organizations have used to support their mentors. Where applicable, we have shared sample training agendas, application forms, interview questions, resource handouts, checklists, or other programmatic material shared by existing programs either in the Resource section (Chapter 6) or if unavailable online, content was posted in the [AgALN Resource Library](#) and links to those were referenced. We strongly encourage readers to visit the [AgALN Resource Library](#) on the [New Entry website](#) for additional Apprenticeship Training and Mentor Resources. This is an ongoing, living resource library that will continue to be updated as programs share their content with the network.

Background of the Ag Apprenticeship Learning Network

New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, alongside partner organizations, works to coordinate the [Agricultural Apprenticeship Learning Network \(AgALN\)](#) to support the professional development of agricultural apprentice training programs across the country. AgALN began in 2016 as the result of a national-scale planning process centered on the best way to transfer knowledge from an aging farmer population to the next generation of farmers and ranchers. Recognizing the knowledge, skills, and experience of farm and ranch mentors to train aspiring agrarians, dozens of organizations across the country had developed structured programs to support farm and ranch mentors and actively recruit trainees to provide aspiring agrarians with access to quality on-farm experiential learning opportunities. These programs were interested in learning from one another, sharing best practices, creating new resources, accessing professional development opportunities, better supporting their mentors, and engaging in a community of practice to elevate the standards of agricultural apprenticeship across the country.

AgALN formed with the support of a 2016 USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program Educational Enhancement Team grant. The collaboration includes several partner organizations, including the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA), Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA), Quivira Coalition, Rogue Farm Corps (RFC), and Vilicus Training Institute, alongside over two dozen other advisors and beginning farmer training programs. These partners have decades of combined experience leading land-based and experiential training programs and mentor training programs across the country and help to shape and lead AgALN.

The goal of this network is to support, improve, and professionalize new or existing agricultural trainee programs through a national community of practice. This community works to share resources and best practices related to hosting and supporting trainees on farms and ranches.

AgALN's services include:

- A dedicated [online resource center](#) for agricultural apprentice operations.
- An [archived and on-going webinar series](#) on topics related to ag apprenticeships.
- [One-on-one technical assistance](#) to support programs to start or improve an apprentice training program.
- An [Annual Gathering](#) to meet and collaborate with other apprenticeship program staff and agricultural service providers.
- A national [Apprentice Listserv](#) to connect and engage with other apprentice programs and learn about upcoming events related to AgALN.
- A [National apprentice map](#) which highlights professional agricultural apprentices.
- A [Mentor training network](#) to support on-farm mentors in improving their skills.
- A [yearly survey](#) to be included in national data collection around apprentice training programs.

To stay up to date with this work and to connect with more organizations involved with land-based experiential learning opportunities, visit the [National Ag Apprenticeship Learning Network](#).

Acknowledgements

This Toolkit is the product of many dedicated professionals in the field of beginning farmer training and apprenticeship learning. New Entry, alongside its core partners—Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA), Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA), Quivira Coalition, Rogue Farm Corps (RFC), and Vilicus Training Institute, and many other programs—have collaborated to create this toolkit. All partners have experience running successful apprenticeship and beginning farmer and rancher development programs. Their continued commitment to quality experiential learning and to preparing the next generation of agrarians for successful careers in agriculture is evident throughout these chapters and the resources they shared for this toolkit.

Additionally, over 20 expert advisors contributed by providing consultation and expertise on specific topics. Project advisors also helped with photography, case studies, and content review. Leading authors were responsible for research and resource cataloging, identifying and filling gaps in knowledge, toolkit development, case studies, and compiling educational materials.

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- Chapter 5: Kathy Ruhf, Senior Advisor, Land For Good.
- Chapter 6 and Case Studies: Alessandra Cancalosi and Sarah Laves, Friedman School of Nutrition, Agriculture, Food and Environment [AFE] Students, Tufts University.

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Toolkit Feedback and Ongoing Mentor Resource-Sharing

Please provide your feedback on the Mentor Training Toolkit, created by the Ag Apprenticeship Learning Network. Your feedback will help us improve the toolkit and make it as useful and as relevant to programs and mentor networks across the country as possible. We envision the toolkit as a “living document” that will continue to be improved and expanded as more programs develop mentor training and support resources.

Please complete the [Toolkit Feedback/Evaluation form here](#).

If you have a mentor training resource you found useful, have developed your own mentor outreach, recruitment, and mentor professional development training program, or if you have lessons learned implementing recommendations from this Toolkit to share, please be in touch! We would be happy to include your information in our next Toolkit update or add it to our Apprenticeship Resource Library on the [New Entry website](#). Email: nesfp@tufts.edu to share helpful mentor training resources.

Prologue

Definitions

While there are finite legal categories for on-farm labor and learning, many farms work outside of these definitions in order to meet the needs of their operation and the goals of their on-farm learners. We will begin this toolkit by suggesting definitions for commonly used terms. As a community of practice evolves in this work, we hope to continue to modify and refine these definitions. For further discussion, we encourage you to learn more by visiting the employment resources available on the [Farm Commons](#) website:

- Explore the legal aspects of internship, apprenticeship, and volunteer programs, read through Farm Commons' [Guide to Managing the Risks of Interns and Volunteers](#).
- Sort through how to classify a worker as an independent contractor, an intern, or an apprenticeship position through this guide that clarifies the legal definitions behind various worker classifications: [Classifying Your Workers: Employees, Interns, Volunteers or Independent Contractors](#).

Ag apprenticeship

A colloquial term referring to an array of comprehensive on-farm/ranch educational and professional training opportunities where training includes hands-on experience in a real-life work setting alongside a dedicated mentor who is an experienced practitioner in the relevant areas of agricultural production. While often informal, most programs and individual farmers who offer non-registered apprenticeships provide more advanced and/or comprehensive training than is provided through internships. Ag apprenticeships are often longer than internships and attract more experienced learners. Many ag apprentices could be legally classified as unpaid interns, registered apprentices, or employees. Some opportunities may take place on farms where exemptions allow for training and compensation to be managed in the manner that the farmer sees fit.

Coaching

Involves providing structured support to help a learner improve a skill they have already “learned” or to help them unlock their own potential to perform better. Coaching is usually provided in the “present moment” and might help the learner to understand how to apply a skill better, where to apply it, or identify where there might be obstacles to using the skill. A trainee may have already received training on how to trellis tomatoes or sort calves, but they might need some additional coaching to improve their speed or efficiency, correct an ergonomic posture to avoid injury, or address a deficit they identify in their own application of the skill.

Community of Practice (CoP)

A group of people who come together with a common interest or shared passion about a particular topic, subject, or goal and they desire to gain knowledge related to the topic, share best practices, and learn from each other professionally and personally. The Ag Apprenticeship Learning Network is a CoP where leaders and staff of agricultural apprenticeship training programs come together to learn about best practices among organizations and develop professional development resources to better design and deliver apprenticeship training and mentoring programs.

Employee

A legal category of on-farm labor that describes anyone who performs services for a farm business at the discretion of the farm employer. An employee expects the employer to provide compensation for their services.

Legal internship

A legal category of on-farm labor which resembles training given in an educational environment, is for the benefit of the intern, and does not displace regular employees or confer immediate advantages to the employer. Internships are supervised by existing staff and the employer, and interns understand that they are not entitled to wages. If an intern is paid, they then fall under the category of “employee.”

Mentor

Likewise, many terms are commonly used to refer to the farmer or rancher who trains and mentors trainees on their operation: mentor, host farmer or rancher, supervisor, trainer, etc. For consistency and clarity, we will use the term “**mentor**” throughout the toolkit, again with the exception of when we are referring to a specific program that uses a different term intentionally and purposefully. For example, the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship refers to their mentors as “Master Graziers,” so anytime the text references DGA mentors, we will refer to them as Master Graziers. The definition of a mentor for the purposes of this Toolkit is a practitioner [in this case a farmer or rancher] who delivers hands-on education to trainees in a work setting. Generally, mentors are not trained educators, they may not follow a standard curriculum, and they aim to provide both a practical work experience and share a deeper knowledge of their craft, whether that is their agricultural philosophy or the business and entrepreneurial aspects of operating a farm or ranch.

Mentoring

The process that happens between an accomplished individual who shares knowledge, experience and wisdom with another individual who is ready and willing to benefit from this exchange. A mentoring relationship often helps learners gain skills faster than they might otherwise learn on their own. Mentoring tends to be very relational between the mentor and trainee and often involves a more holistic approach by focusing on the learners’ future and broader skills for personal or career development.

Mentoring program (or agricultural mentoring program)

A structured program whereby an organization (in this case, an agricultural service provider) formally supports or organizes connections to and relationships between a mentor and trainee. Often these agricultural apprenticeship training programs are highly networked with multiple farms or ranches in their region or within their agricultural specialty and offer experiential training opportunities through apprenticeship, internships, or other forms of skill-based learning or employment. Mentoring programs often conduct outreach, seek volunteers, or recruit experienced mentor candidates (farmers or ranchers with experience running a viable operation) they trust to commit to an educational approach to skill development and then they support connections to interested learners (aspiring agrarians). Mentoring programs vary in their level of formality, requirements, supports, and involvement in the relationship between the mentor and the trainee. Examples of various apprenticeship training programs and the level of support provided to mentors and trainees are provided throughout this toolkit.

Registered Apprenticeship

A formally registered category of on-farm labor involving a standards-based Federal and State Department of Labor (DOL)-regulated system that ensures quality instruction by combining paid on-the-job training with theoretical and practical classroom instruction. The apprenticeship curriculum is based on an agreed-upon set of skills and standards and fosters a tradition of mentorship and professionalism in the field. Registration is designed to ensure that training is standardized across participating employers and based on a Developing A Curriculum (DACUM) protocol, and that working apprentices, program sponsors, and the general public gain a clear understanding of the training

content and the measures that are in place. Registered apprentice positions are typically paid prevailing minimum wages during their apprenticeship program and receive regular pay increases reflecting increasing skill levels.

Trainee

Because so many different categories exist even beyond the definitions provided above, for the purposes of this toolkit, we will use the term **“trainee”** to refer to beginning farm or ranch workers in learning positions commonly referred to as interns, apprentices, mentees, trainees, etc., with the exception of when we are referring to a specific program that uses a different term intentionally and purposefully.

Training

The practice of teaching or instructing someone on how to approach or perform a new skill or learn a new behavior (e.g., farm or ranch tractor or equipment safety training); it is then up to the trainee to later practice and apply the skill or behaviour. Often the trainer is considered the “expert” and is imparting new knowledge to the learner. This is often the first stage in providing instruction to new agrarians who need to learn a basic set of skills to function in their role on the farm or ranch.

Volunteer

Someone who performs services for a public agency and is motivated by civic, charitable or humanitarian reasons without promise, expectation, or receipt of compensation for their services. For-profit farm businesses cannot legally engage volunteers in their operations. Volunteers who engage in work for a for-profit farm are considered employees so that all applicable federal and state employment laws apply—including minimum wage, workers’ compensation, and payroll tax requirements.

The difference between Training, Mentoring, and Coaching.

Sometimes a farm or ranch mentor may do all three with their trainees.

Training

Emphasis/Focus

- Development of new skills
- Short term focus and input
- Refreshing old skills
- Technical or 'soft' focus

Relationship

- Highly transactional
- Short term few days
- 'Teacher and pupils' scenario
- Ownership is with trainer to impart skills

Approaches

- Trainer as expert
- Expert knowledge
- Trainer led
- Activities, discussions, role play, exercises
- Support primarily at time
- Goals identified as start of session and coaching intervention

Outcomes

- Increased skill set
- Increased confidence in using skills
- Not always a plan of how to apply skills

Coaching

Emphasis/Focus

- Develops existing skills
- Develop confidence
- Longer term focus and input
- Considers 'how' to achieve something
- Developing person not skill

Relationship

- Longer term, more transformational
- 4-6 sessions for 1-2 hours
- Ownership of actions is with learner

Approaches

- Learner as expert
- Learner with expert knowledge
- Questions and exploration by coach
- Experience, scenario, options and metaphor based

Outcomes

- Increased application of skills
- Increased awareness of behaviours and impact
- Increased options of approaches
- Plan of approach often present
- Increased confidence

Mentoring

Emphasis/Focus

- Mentor sharing their experience with learner
- Longer term development focus

Relationship

- Long term relationship
- Can be lifetime relationship
- Transformational
- Ownership with learner

Approaches

- Mentor as expert
- Mentor led
- Questions and exploration by mentor
- Experience based
- Evolving agenda over time

Outcomes

- Increased clarity on direction, career, role or life
- Increased awareness
- Mentee led plan
- Increased confidence

Source: [Training, Coaching and Mentoring - What's The Difference?](#)

Network Training Programs & Acronyms

Acronym	Organizatiton
AgALN	Ag Apprenticeship Learning Network
CASFS	University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC)–Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems
CRAFT	Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training
DGA	Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship
IAA	University of Maryland Institute of Applied Agriculture
LFG	Land For Good
MOFGA	Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association
NAP	Quivira Coalition New Agrarian Program
New Entry	New Entry Sustainable Farming Project
NESFI	New England Small Farm Institute
NOFA	Northeast Organic Farming Association
PASA	Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture
RFC	Rogue Farm Corps

Gender Pronouns

To help ensure content and specific text that is inclusive of gender-nonbinary, gender fluid, and transgender individuals throughout this toolkit, we have elected to use the gender-neutral pronouns they, them, theirs in instances where we are referring to a single, non-specific and unidentified individual.

CHAPTER 1

Building Mentor Networks



PHOTO CREDIT: Glynwood Center New York

Mentors are at the heart of your program: they set the tone and create the “container” for their trainees’ experience, wield a lot of influence over the trainees’ next steps, and play a central role in shaping the program’s culture and reputation, and determining its success. A high-quality, well-respected program relies on its ability to recruit and retain a team of talented and dedicated host farmers and ranchers whose approach to mentoring the next generation is aligned with your organization’s mission and values.

The first step to ensuring a successful program, even before mentors enter the scene, is to establish a solid foundation. Having clarity on who you are as an organization or program and what you’re trying to achieve—your mission, vision, and values—sets the stage for who can best carry out this work. This chapter walks you through those initial steps, from setting the stage and recruiting the right mentors,

to then onboarding those mentors and ensuring they have the support and training they need to provide a quality experience for your program trainees.

CASE STUDY

National Young Farmers’ Coalition

Most of the farmers that are members of the National Young Farmers’ Coalition have learned to farm by working on other farms. Their 2017 national survey of young farmers says, “While 18% of survey respondents reported learning to farm through a college or university program, 68% learned by working on a farm. Forty-four percent of farmers cited working on a farm as the most valuable training experience.”

“A high-quality, well-respected program relies on its ability to recruit and retain talented and dedicated host farmers and ranchers who are aligned with your organization’s mission and values.”

1.1 Determine your program mission and focus

Efforts to locate partners, mentors, and participants all follow from the purpose of your program, so this is the place to start. Ask these questions:

- Who do we want to serve?
- What are our desired outcomes for participants?
- What are our desired outcomes for the program?
- And what do we hope mentors and staff gain from being a part of this program?

If your program is affiliated with a larger organization, the mission and/or vision statement of that entity could be a great catalyst for determining the scope and focus of your program. Consider creating a mission, vision, or holistic goal for your program.

Many programs start with these questions and then create a Logic Model to guide program formation and curriculum, target funding, and then generate evaluation tools that will help gauge whether they are achieving what they intended, or discover that a different set of needs, participants, or outcomes are a better fit for their program. You may want to adapt your own Logic Model based on an example from [Quivira Coalition’s NAP Logic Model](#).

As an example, the Quivira Coalition New Agrarian Program (NAP) chooses mentor sites that are, for the most part, large landscape ranches committed to regenerative land management practices. This largely excludes smaller farms, as well as large ranches that are more conventional in their management, even though many such operations have inquired into participating in NAP.

The following mission statements, from both the Quivira Coalition as a whole and its New Agrarian Program, Rogue Farm Corps, Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship, and Groundswell, serve as a guide to help each organization’s program staff determine which operations are the right fit for their program.

Mission Statements

Quivira Coalition Mission Statement:

The Quivira Coalition builds soil, biodiversity, and resilience on western working landscapes. 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 [New Agrarian program](#) helps to ensure that living and working knowledge of these practices, and the landscape itself, is stewarded into the future.
- 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.

Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program Mission:

The New Agrarian Program (NAP) partners with skilled ranchers and farmers to offer annual apprenticeships in regenerative agriculture. Our apprentices learn from expert practitioners in full-immersion professional settings.

- This program specifically targets first-career professionals with a sincere commitment to life at the intersection of conservation and regenerative agriculture.
- We also seek mentors who are dedicated stewards of the land; practice intentional, regenerative methods of food or fiber production; provide excellent animal care; and are skilled and enthusiastic teachers.

[Rogue Farm Corps:](#) RFC trains and equips the next generation of farmers and ranchers through hands-on educational programs and the preservation of farmland. We support our local agricultural economy and serve as a model for other communities.

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship:

DGA is dedicated to providing a guided pathway to dairy farm business ownership, developing grazing careers, and strengthening the economic and environmental well-being of rural communities and the dairy industry. We accomplish this mission by:

- Linking current and aspiring graziers in the transfer of farms and graziers skills and knowledge.
- Developing alliances with agricultural, environmental, and consumer groups.
- Providing opportunities for farmers and their customers to invest in the next generation of grazing farmers.

Groundswell Center for Local Food

[& Farming:](#) Groundswell is training the next generation of sustainable farmers in the Finger Lakes. We support individuals to develop agricultural skills and grow profitable, equitable, and ecologically sound farm businesses. We work to dismantle racism in the food system by addressing inequalities in access to land and resources and prioritizing support for underrepresented producers including people of color, refugees, women, and individuals with limited resources. Guided by our commitment to a just and sustainable food system, our programming is led by farmers and mentors active in food, farming, or social justice. By empowering people with skills, knowledge, and access to resources, together we can build a more diverse, equitable food system that enriches the environment and increases biodiversity.



1.2 Identifying Potential Mentors, Outreach and Recruiting

Identify Your Ideal Mentor

Once you are clear on the purpose of your program, your intended outcomes, and the kind of participants you want it to serve, you will have greater clarity on the agricultural operations, land practices, and mentor qualifications and personality traits that will serve these educational goals.

In preparation for any outreach and recruitment efforts, determine what qualifications you want your mentors to already possess, such as years of farming or ranching, prior experience teaching or coaching, type of operation (e.g. crops or livestock), location and your ability to serve as support for that location, land philosophy, etc. You will also want to determine the requirements or obligations mentors will need to uphold, such as contact hours with trainees, housing, and other compensation and teaching parameters.

The following list provides examples of mentor qualifications and requirements taken from a variety of programs:

- The farm or ranch is in commercial production, providing specialty crops, meat, poultry, dairy, seeds, grain, or forage crops to the local and regional food system.
- The farm or ranch is sufficiently contributing to local and regional economies and employing efficient and effective techniques and methods to achieve farm profitability.
- The agricultural practices performed on the land are humane and ecologically sound, providing animals with a high quality of life while enhancing soil, air, and water quality, as well as wildlife habitat.
- The farm or ranch prioritizes healthy soil, food, communities, and ecosystems.
- Mentors are required to be farming full-time or have a full-time, on-site farm manager to serve as primary mentor.
- Mentors have five years in operation and previous experience directly supervising ranch or farm staff and trainees.
- Mentors schedule time to work alongside their trainees on a regular and consistent basis, train as a team with trainees and employees (if applicable), and have trainees learn independently.
- Trainees are given a diversity of tasks over the course of the farming season to gain exposure to all aspects of running an agricultural operation.
- Mentors regularly seek out and take advantage of teachable moments on the farm.
- Mentors maintain a culture, rhythm, and agricultural practice that provides a high quality of life for both people and animals.
- Mentors actively want to teach and to be a trainee's full-time employer, teacher, and life coach.
- Mentors have time and capacity to instruct a trainee and give them meaningful feedback.
- The farm or ranch has a payroll system compliant with the requirements of the IRS and state taxation division.
- The farm or ranch has adequate, safe trainee housing that is independent of mentor housing.
- The farm or ranch provides a work contract including an employment period, work description and expectations, compensation, and termination policy.
- Mentors balance work-intensive days or weeks due to seasonal fluctuation with adequate rest and time off.
- Mentors conduct weekly planning meetings with trainees to outline workload expectations and answer questions.
- Mentors spend several hours per day with trainees in a work-learn environment.
- Mentors conduct four formal evaluations with the trainee, using a skills checklist.
- Mentors conduct entry and exit interviews.



Outreach and Recruiting

Some programs seek to identify and recruit mentors using a broad approach, such as advertising in regional trade publications, attending farm and ranch conferences and workshops that align with their program focus or purpose, and using word-of-mouth or referrals. Other programs target specific individuals or partner organizations, receive referrals for potential mentors via word of mouth or through staff referrals, or use advertising selectively in magazines or at conferences. To some extent, your approach is determined by the specific expertise or caliber of mentor that your program requires. A program that has a commitment to teaching organic production wouldn't advertise in a conventional trade magazine, but would focus on organic publications and conferences. If your program requires bilingual mentors, you would want to identify places, publications, and events where people go for their own information and support systems.

The following list includes examples of actions you can take as part of your outreach and recruiting efforts (and remember: word of mouth and your own partner and producer networks are often your most valuable resources for finding and recruiting the right mentors):

- Placing social media posts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) through the accounts of specific partner organizations, farms, or ranches.
- Publishing articles and/or case studies in local publications, specialty publications targeting a specific type of producer, or conventional industry publications, both online and in print.
- Hosting tables or booths at conferences that are tailored to your program. For example, NAP goes to pasture, range, and grass fed conferences like Society for Range Management, EcoFarm, Grassfed Exchange, and Regenerate, while RFC attends the Oregon Small Farm Conference, and DGA attends Farmer Veteran Coalition’s annual Conference, the Grassworks Grazing Conference, among others.
- Giving presentations at meetings such as for the Farmers Union, Farm Bureau, or similar.
- Marketing materials at FSA, USDA, NRCS, and other agency offices that provide technical assistance, financing, or other direct assistance to farmers and ranchers.
- Working with mentors to host recruiting events and farm or ranch tours in their area. As an example, DGA and other programs use regional coordinators to organize and host farms tours in regions where apprenticeships occur or are wanted.
- Posting a “Do you want to host an apprentice?” page on your program website, and linking to the page via social media, email newsletters, and other means. As an example, New Entry has an [online map](#) of apprenticeship and farm incubator locations that link to programs–this is a good place to see how other programs describe themselves.
- Hosting one-day “Mentor 101” workshops in specific locations where a number of potential mentors live; present details on the program including mentor requirements and skills, and offer skill development as part of the event. See example [Mentor 101 training agenda from the NAP program](#) in the AgALN Resource Library.
- Posting opportunities in the electronic newsletters of other organizations: a number of programs or their host organizations have newsletters that post mentor opportunities for their own program as well as other programs.

1.3 Vetting Mentors for your Program

Why Vet?

At the core of a successful internship or apprenticeship is the relationship between the mentor and the trainee (intern, apprentice, mentee, etc.). Mentors are more than employers, they are also teachers and life coaches. They introduce trainees to professional contacts and networks and offer appropriate and challenging feedback, while also being cheerleaders and advocates for the trainee. The goals you have for your program participants will guide the kind of mentors you seek and the personal qualities and professional experience you want them to bring to their mentoring. This will help you determine what level of vetting you think best for your program.

Some programs do significant vetting prior to taking on a mentor or host operation, while others opt for minimal vetting. In addition, some programs require that new mentors attend either in-person or virtual training sessions prior to hosting their first trainee [see “On-Boarding” section below].

The following list provides a few reasons for the variety of approaches to vetting:

1. Legal counsel for some programs has determined that, since the trainee is actually hired by the host farmer or mentor and is an employee of the farm or ranch, the program itself should not bear any legal liability for how the mentor functions as an educator or employer. From this perspective, vetting would potentially open a program to a level of legal liability. Programs with this line of thought may simply list potential host farms or mentor sites on their website and leave it to the mentor and trainees to do their own vetting.
2. Other programs do significant vetting, including but not limited to: a mentor application, a site visit to the mentor farm or ranch, and signed MOUs or agreements between the program and a mentor outlining mentor obligations as educator and employer, among other items. See the information for [RFC](#), [DGA](#) and [NAP](#) for examples.
3. Apprentice programs that are formally registered with their state or with the U.S. Department of Labor (DGA, PASA, and Center for Land-Based Learning are several examples) have strict labor and wage requirements, so these programs do substantial vetting to verify that mentors understand and meet these requirements. For example, DGA has the farm assessment of a master grazer applicant presented to a committee of farmers (National Apprenticeship Training Committee) representing a number of the regions in their network who will approve or not approve the farm.
4. As a “middle ground” between zero vetting and extreme vetting processes for onboarding mentors, some programs are exploring the concept of a “badge” program that would offer mentors an opportunity to attend professional development training and receive a “badge” or certification that mentors could use to display on their website that would demonstrate to a potential trainee that the farm has been involved in professional development and takes seriously their commitment to ongoing learning and mentorship.

Vetting Strategies and Processes

A number of programs utilize a multi-step process, starting with an application, followed by an interview and/or site visit, then calling references, and finally a formal agreement that delineates the commitments a mentor makes and the requirements of the program.

Critically important is to make clear any program-wide requirement of your program. These criteria will need to be determined by your organization, its program mission and reach, and may include a focus on any production or operational methodology or approach that your program requires as part of the trainee experience. Some examples might include:

- The mentor has at least 5 years experience.
- The host farm or ranch must be in commercial production.
- The host farm or ranch must use regenerative practices.
- The host farm or ranch must have direct marketing.
- The host farm or ranch must have an active soil management program.
- The host farm or ranch must provide safety training approved or offered by a third party.

Having a webpage on your website dedicated to mentors, where you can post clear guidelines and expectations for host farmers and ranchers, can save you significant time assessing unqualified applicants by helping potential mentors gauge whether or not they might be a good fit for your program before deciding to apply. For example, RFC has an entire section of their website dedicated to this specifically: their [Hosting Students](#) section provides the following information to help would-be mentors decide if this is the right program for them:

- [Hosting Basics](#)
- [Programs at a Glance](#)
- [Are You a Good Fit?](#)
- [Standards and Guidelines](#)
- [Farm Training Programs](#)
- [Participating Farms](#)
- [Farmer Testimonials](#)

You can also download all of these [RFC documents in one document](#) directly from the AgALN Resource Library.

Applications

Programs that vet mentors usually start with an application which is available either online or by request. These applications ask a variety of questions regarding the operation focus, mentor experience, and motivation for becoming a mentor, among other questions, and also provide a basic outline of requirements, such as housing, compensation, or other details required of mentor sites. DGA, RFC, MOFGA, NAP all have detailed applications tailored to the needs of their programs [see links below]. The New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) has [several worksheets](#) that, while primarily created as self-evaluation tools for prospective or current mentors, are useful in determining questions you might ask in an application. You may want to refer to these application templates as you create your own mentor application.

- [Quivira Coalition New Agrarian Program Application](#).
- [Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Application](#); DGA also has a [tip sheet](#) on how to complete their Application.
- Rogue Farm Corps Application: Their program [Information is online](#), and here is a link to their [Mentor application](#).

Some programs require an application fee from mentors to be considered part of the program. These fees help offset the cost of the program's due diligence to assess the mentor and their fit or qualifications for the program. Application fees are determined by individual programs and can vary widely.

Interviews

A common second step, a phone, video, or in-person interview is conducted as follow-up to a strong application. Some programs will do this interview as a site visit, others may do a distance interview prior to, or in place of, a site visit. Mentor requirements, as well as motivations for why the person wants to be a mentor, are typically part of the interview process. Consider having a set series of questions you always ask, and expect additional questions to emerge from reading their application. Ask for specific examples of situations or events they mention, and consider discussing conflict resolution and communication styles in particular.

Site Visits

A number of programs—e.g., DGA, NAP, RFC—require a site visit to the operation. Program staff discuss the requirements regarding education, contact hours, and compensation with the candidate mentor, among other topics. The housing and safety of the work environment is examined, as is the land management or other operation practices that form the core of the experiential education program offered to trainees. You may want to develop a site visit checklist to take with you on the visit to meet the mentor and tour the farm. Issues to cover on your site visit checklist might include:

- Does the trainee housing meet your standards and guidelines [see RFC standards and guidelines as an example]?
- Has the farmer given a general farm tour to provide an overview of the operation and its enterprises, including how they imagine a trainee would be involved with various tasks/systems?
- Have you addressed any of the follow-up questions you may have from the mentor's application?
- Have you reiterated or clarified the expectations of being a host farm in person to ensure shared understanding?
- Have you answered any additional questions the applicant has about being a host farm?



PHOTO CREDIT: Rogue Farm Corps

References

Rogue Farm Corps asks potential host farmers to list as references three people who have been mentored or supervised by the potential host. These references are called before a host farmer is approved and brought onboard. Some example questions your program may want to ask of a potential new mentor include:

- How long and in what context have you known or worked with the applicant [potential mentor]?
- How would you describe their communication and/or teaching style?
- How do you think the applicant would perform as a mentor farmer for a beginning farming internship/apprenticeship?
- Do you have any concerns or hesitations about the applicant being a mentor or a host farmer?

Final Decision

The final decision to accept a new mentor may be made by a program director alone, by a director and field coordinator, or by a team, depending on the structure of the program.

“Mentor requirements, as well as motivations for why the person wants to be a mentor, are typically part of the interview and selection process.”

Resources for Vetting

If you determine some measure of vetting is best for your program, asking pointed and specific questions in your application is a good start. NESFI, RFC, and NAP have a number of documents designed for potential or new mentors to assess their motivations and related experience. These resources can be used to inform your application and interview questions, or as part of your application process and completed by potential mentors. There are additional resources like this on many program websites. A few examples are listed.



PHOTO CREDIT: Glynwood Center New York

Additional Resources

- New England Small Farm Institute worksheets
 - » [#1: Motivations for becoming an on-farm mentor](#)
 - » [#3: Prior Teaching, Training & Coaching Experience](#)
 - » [On-Farm Mentor Self-Evaluation Questionnaire](#)
- A compilation of [Motivations worksheets](#) from various sources
- [University of Wisconsin-Madison Mentoring Competency Assessment](#)
- [Nature's Guide for Mentors | Nature](#)
- [Rogue Farm Corps Mentor Decision Questionnaire - Are you a Good Fit?](#)
- [Rogue Farm Corps Mentor Self-Assessment Checklist](#)
- [Resources from the National Mentoring Resource Center](#)

Examples

[Quivira Coalition's Agrarian Apprenticeship Guide, 'Are you a Good Fit?' Page 88](#)

Mentoring the next generation of ranchers and farmers can be extremely rewarding. From building fence or caring for a sick animal to fixing the farm truck, developing a marketing strategy, or making important financial decisions, no one is better qualified to grow a new agrarian than an experienced mentor with many years on the land. Yet not every rancher or farmer is cut out for the job. As a mentor, you not only teach skills and supervise an employee's work and performance; you work with a whole human, every day. You are your apprentice's teacher, employer, and direct supervisor, and at times his/her personal life coach. Your apprentice will work alongside you through long and short days, winter storms and heat waves. This is clearly not a nine-to-five-Monday-through-Friday-job kind of relationship. As a mentor, you have to consider the needs of your business and what tasks need to be accomplished on a daily basis in order to meet your bottom line, you also have to consider your apprentice's educational goals and how these can be incorporated into your operation. The education you provide is part of the compensation that an apprentice receives and your commitment to his/her learning is the greatest gift you can provide and an essential part of the apprenticeship experience. This brings us back to the original question. You may be an excellent land manager and an astute business person. But will you be a good mentor? Taking the time to work through these questions will help you understand your motivations for becoming a mentor.

START WITH WHY

- Why do you want to start an apprenticeship on your ranch or farm?
- What is appealing to you personally about being a mentor?
- What are the long term goals for your ranch or farm? (Think "mission statement.")
- How might an apprenticeship assist you in reaching your long-term goals?

SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

- What are you most proud of or excited about in regards to your farm or ranch?
- Who were the mentors who helped you throughout your life? How and why were they mentors to you?
- What personal qualities will best serve you as a mentor? What aspects of your personality will be challenged by the role of mentor?
- Realistically, how much time, energy, and patience do you have to share with an apprentice? In what ways are you prepared to be a trainer, employer, counselor, teacher, mediator, and life coach as circumstances require? And what might be hard?
- How will you check in with the apprentice to assess his/her learning?
- How flexible are you? How easily will you adapt your daily routines, work schedule, and operations to include an apprentice?
- How comfortable will you be accepting critiques, criticism, or suggestions from an apprentice?

NUTS AND BOLTS

- Do you have adequate apprentice housing on your property? Is it separate from your own? Does it provide private space for each apprentice, adequate heating and cooling, and easy access to a bathroom, clean running water, and cooking and bathing facilities?
- Has your operation supported employees in the past? Are the appropriate systems in place [payroll, workers' comp, etc.]?
- While an apprentice's primary compensation is the education and professional development you will provide in order to help her pursue the next steps in her career, she will also need to support herself financially while she is learning. Are you prepared to offer fair compensation in exchange for her labor?
- What additional compensation are you able to offer beyond education, housing, and a monthly stipend? Examples might include: regular meals; food from the ranch or farm; additional educational opportunities, such as workshops and conferences; tools and equipment, etc.
- Are you prepared to develop a structure around your apprenticeship? Examples might include: a seasonal operations calendar and work schedule accessible to all, regularly scheduled planning meetings, etc.

1.4 Onboarding Strategies for New Mentors

Across the board—be it in medicine, factories, or diverse business or industry fields—success for mentors, trainees, and organizations increases when mentors receive training prior to starting their mentoring work.

Training can take many forms, including in-person workshops at a conference or a day-long to several day training, short webinars, guidebooks or other handouts, and on-site support from program coordinators, to name a few. Some programs require attendance, others make this optional. Programs that host apprentices for 6-12 month positions tend to have a structured, multi-faceted training program which usually includes some in-person components. RFC and NAP both take this route. DGA has no in-person training but instead offers a series of [Tip Sheets and webinars online](#), accessible to their Master Graziers. MOFGA started a webinar series on specific topics for mentors and plans to increase those.

Some programs are moving more to online mentor training, recognizing that mentors often find it hard to leave their operations for a day or longer. Those with online training options have experienced increased attendance overall. As an example, NAP offers a series of monthly mentor training calls every fall-winter for

new mentors. You can access the [NAP Mentor Training call series](#) recordings from the 2019-2020 series directly on the Quivira Coalition website, or by emailing newagrarian@quiviracoalition.org. The calls are free and open to anyone. You can also sign up for next season's call series at the same email. Covered NAP mentor training topics include:

- Recruiting the Apprentice You Want
- Evaluating Written Applications
- Effective Interviews
- Setting Expectations
- Balancing Work and Education
- Mentoring to Create a Self-Starter Apprentice
- Feedback

Similarly, RFC offers small-group online calls, with each call focused on a specific issue, for example: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); Sexual Harassment; On-Farm Mentoring; and On-Farm Employee Management, to name a few. RFC also makes notes and handouts from past trainings available to new mentors. DGA offers a [“train-the-trainer” mentor webinar series](#) and [tipsheets](#) for their mentors on their website. MOFGA also hosts webinars and trainings for their mentors, two examples include:

- [Communication Styles for Positive Farm Apprenticeships](#)
- [Supporting Beginning Farmer Learning](#)

See Chapter 2 for additional details on training topics that would be useful in helping mentors improve their skills and participate in ongoing professional development.

CASE STUDY

Practical Farmers of Iowa

The Practical Farmers of Iowa provides a 2 year program that mixes group and mentor education. Farmer participants meet a variety of established mentor farmers, and are also paired with a mentor. The hope with this setup is that farmers are exposed to a variety of mentors and will not only learn hard skills, but will also be empowered to seek mentorship from other farmers throughout their careers. The Practical Farmers of Iowa enables farmers to connect for peer to peer education, sustainable support, and community.

- **Basic Structure:** In the first year, the farmer participants are able to meet 2-12 mentor farmers through farm visits, and then in year two they are paired up with one of these established farmers for a one on one mentorship. This pairing is focused on overcoming a specific problem that the mentee faces, from pasture to business development.
- **In-person Events:** Farmer-led programming events and visits provide in person networking. Farm site visits allow farmers to meet potential mentors and to connect with other beginning farmers.
- **Online Platforms:** Quarterly reviews, feedback, and resources are ways in which the program and the farmers communicate, but more recently farm visits have been online as well. Farm visits are either pre-recorded for easier distribution, or shown through Zoom or Facebook Live for folks to join in and interact with the related topic.
- **Major Take-away:**
 - » “Connecting farmers to each other through our farmer-led model has proved the most successful. We have found that the strongest mentor relationships are those that form naturally through trust and relationship building.”
 - » The Practical Farmers of Iowa realize that some mentorships thrive, others don't. To create that perfect mentorship connection is difficult, but by exposing farmers to various mentoring styles, the organization gives farmers the tools to seek out and create their own mentoring connections.

CHAPTER 2

Training Topics for Mentors



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This chapter contains the “heart” of the Mentor Training Toolkit. We aim to address many of the common issues that mentors face while engaging adult learners as trainees on their farm or ranch. Once a successful mentor-trainee match is made, then the more challenging aspect becomes building and maintaining a positive learning relationship together over a period of time in an often fast-paced and demanding work environment. We queried support organizations that facilitate mentor-mentee relationships about the questions, challenges, and issues that many of their mentors struggle with when working with trainees. Not surprisingly, the majority of the challenges center around interpersonal

relationships as well as balancing work and learning. Therefore, this chapter covers many of the “soft skills” around mentoring principles, communications, setting expectations, providing feedback, understanding learning styles, working with generational differences, as well as “how to get it all done” by balancing work with education. We share tools, frameworks, and resources to support these topics throughout this Chapter. We imagine that this content-focused chapter will be the place you will reference most to develop the training resources to best support your mentors with ongoing professional development to hone their skills as mentors.



CASE STUDY

Quivira Coalition New Agrarian Program (NAP)

The Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program partners with skilled ranchers and farmers to offer annual apprenticeships in regenerative agriculture. Apprentices learn from expert practitioners in full-immersion, in-residence professional settings. The program specifically targets first-career professionals with a sincere commitment to life at the intersection of conservation and regenerative agriculture. The program partners with mentors who are dedicated stewards of the land; practice intentional, regenerative methods of food or fiber production; provide excellent animal care; and are skilled and enthusiastic teachers.

- **Basic Structure:** NAP's mentor peer-to-peer learning network is initiated and managed by both program staff and a senior program mentor designated as the program's mentor trainer. The learning network includes both in-person events and online communication platforms. Mentors are encouraged to share their experiences during events and are occasionally asked to present on a topic in which they have specific expertise that might be helpful for other mentors. Regular mentor touch-points are facilitated by the designated mentor trainer [also a mentor in the apprentice program].
- **In-Person Events:** The Quivira Coalition's large, annual conference provides a natural opportunity to convene mentors in person. Immediately preceding the conference, the organization hosts a "New Agrarian Program Day" for both mentors and apprentices, with half the day set aside for separate mentor and apprentice work sessions. The mentor session is co-facilitated by the NAP Director and the mentor trainer.
- **Online Platforms:** Because the New Agrarian Program spans across four large western states, regular in-person convenings are not feasible. However, NAP organizes a 7-session conference call series during the winter months, with monthly calls focused on specific topics. The calls are hosted by the mentor trainer, whose experience as a rancher and as a program mentor makes her a valuable resource for other, newer mentors. Beyond these structured, scheduled calls, mentors are encouraged to reach out to the mentor trainer directly or to other mentors in the network throughout the season, anytime they need help or input on a specific topic.
- **Major Takeaways:** "During the season, there's a lot less directly organized peer-to-peer mentoring. But having a program person who is a mentor herself makes it a whole lot easier when there's a mentor who is struggling. Because she's a peer, mentors feel much more comfortable reaching out to her." [Leah Ricci, NAP Director].



2.1 Mentoring Principles for Experiential Education

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”

– Benjamin Franklin, adapted from a Chinese proverb

On-farm, hands-on learning is by its nature experiential, but the sole action of doing is not inherently education. We each have experiences all day, every day, but don't notice what we learn from them, if anything. Many experiences are limited in time and impact—brushing teeth, driving to the next pasture, even ordering seed or sorting livestock can be merely an experience, lacking in any educational merit. To transform doing into learning requires intention, and a farmer or rancher becomes a mentor when they begin taking what may seem to them ordinary, every-day tasks above and beyond the mere act of doing and into the realm of learning. To do so requires a keen awareness of their trainee's learning journey and a willingness to acknowledge the very specific, necessary steps between doing and learning—and also helps create a richer, more meaningful experience for the trainee.

Philosopher, educator, and social thinker John Dewey, considered one of the progenitors of experiential education, summed it up this way; an experience is educational if:

- The individual grows intellectually and morally.
- The larger community benefits from the learning over time.
- For both, the experience results in further growth, arouses curiosity, and strengthens initiative, desire, and purpose.

In short, apprenticeship is whole-person education, offering professional training for a livelihood that requires someone to become a Renaissance person: adept at many things. A rancher needs to know how to pull a calf as well as how to resolve conflict with a neighbor. A farmer needs to be able to advocate for right-to-farm legislation as well as what seed varieties will thrive in their location. Agricultural training and hands-on learning must foster development of the practical technical skills that are essential to a life working the land, as well as cultivate the interpersonal skills that are equally necessary for success.

According to the [Association for Experiential Education](#), experiential learning is “challenge and experience followed by reflection and application leading to learning and growth.” Key to experiential education are that it:

- Provides practical experience and applications of knowledge for better understanding.
- Fosters an interest in lifelong learning.
- Develops critical and abstract thinking skills for better problem solving and relationship building.
- Offers an opportunity for deep reflection and feedback as well as the ability to process, learn, and benefit from constructive criticism.
- Helps the learner learn how to meet new challenges and “think on their feet” through navigating unfamiliar and unexpected situations on a physical, intellectual, and emotional level.

A more digestible and interesting way to think about it is called the “What → So What → Now What” cycle or spiral.

- **What: Action.** The experience or the doing of an activity.
- **So What: Reflection.** Why does this matter to me, to my mentor, to this operation, to my future goals? How does this add to or change what I know, believe, and understand?
- **Now What: Next Steps.** How can I apply this learning to my next day, to the next work event, to my life and what I think I want? What can I take on as my next learning challenge and skill now that I know this?

What most mentors and trainees overlook is the necessity of reflection, review, and analysis that illuminates what was learned and why it matters. This reflection will make clear to both mentors and their trainees what is the next best step, be that more practice and learning of that specific skill, applying that skill to a new endeavor, backing up and reviewing an earlier step, or moving on to something altogether new.

Here are some tools for your mentors to use to create educational experiences as part of their workday and training program:

1. Do a quick debrief after your trainee does something that teaches or uses a skill they are learning (transplanting seedlings, harrowing a field, bringing livestock into a corral, etc). Look at the Debrief section in the [Balancing Work and Education section](#) of this toolkit for a few easy questions you can ask the apprentice and also answer yourself. Debriefs are a communal “So What” reflection and analysis that can lead to great ideas for next steps in skill development and clarify where more teaching or practice will be useful.
2. Choose a handful of default questions you ask your trainee to consider on their own after they do a task for which they are developing capacity. Then ask them to summarize their thoughts and tell you what they think their “Now What” step should be. Here are a few to consider, below—or you can take a look at a longer list in [“What? So What? Now What? Model.”](#) posted by the University of Connecticut’s Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

What?

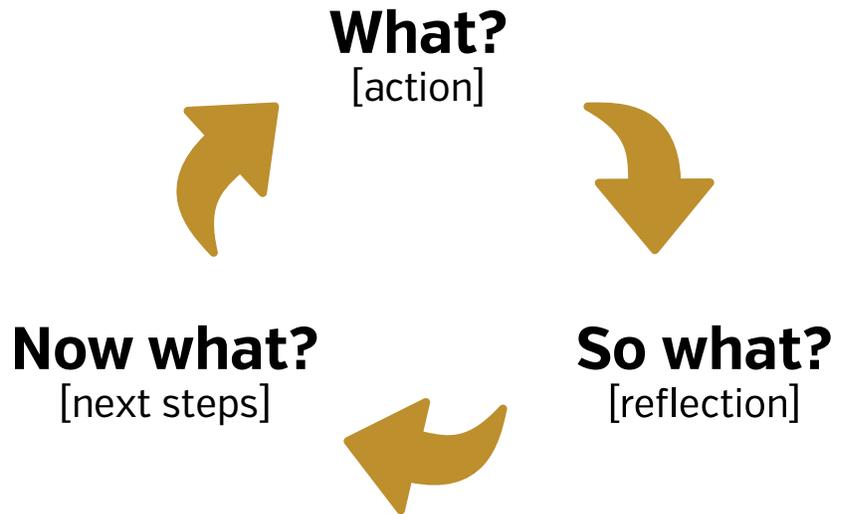
- » What happened? What did you observe about it?
- » What was your role?
- » What was good and/or bad about the experience?
- » What part of it was most challenging for you?
- » What did you realize you already know or can do?
- » What was surprising?
- » Who did you work with? Who did you work with well and who was more challenging?

So What?

- » Did you hear, smell, feel, see anything that surprised you?
- » What did you like and/or dislike about the experience? What contributed to that?
- » What did you learn about yourself?
- » What did you learn about someone else?
- » What did you learn about in-built challenges, issues or details about the experience?
- » What about the event stuck out to you/made an impact on you?
- » What new skill did you learn or increase?
- » How did this event clarify, expand or create an interest?
- » Talk about any disappointments or success you experienced or thought were a part of the event for others? What ideas, conclusions or questions arise from this?

Now What?

- » What follow-up will be useful to address any challenges or difficulties that arose, either with your skill or with other people?
- » What do you know now that you didn’t know before the event?
- » What do you wish you had known and what is an action step you could take?
- » The next time you do this, what would you like to do differently?
- » What would you like to learn more about, related to this event and the skills and knowledge used or needed for it?
- » How will these steps contribute to your career?
- » What’s the next best step you can take?



A NOTE

While experiential education concepts apply across the board to just about any career path, it is particularly well-suited to agriculture, simply because of the intensive, hands-on nature of farming and ranching. However, as we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the act of doing something first-hand does not necessarily imply a process of learning. It is up to the mentor to put intention into connecting the dots between doing and learning for their trainees, and we hope the basic principles of experiential learning provided in this section will help foster a greater sense of awareness of, and focus on, the learning process.

Pasture plans and assessment

What: What am I doing?

- Do the pasture plan with the mentor for the next 2 weeks of moves; have them explain key concepts: animal days, forage value, forage needs of that class of animal (lactating cow, pregnant cow, yearlings, finishing herd, etc).
- Read the pasture planning section in the Holistic Management Handbook and in Kirk Gadzia and Nathan Sayre books.
- Monitor utilization and animal condition at the end of a graze location with the mentor and ask questions about what they see as far as targets on both.

So What: What did I learn and why is it important?

- Did we overgraze, severely graze, get it just right, achieve the intended utilization?
- If not, what could we do differently? Shorter or longer grazing period, closer assessment sooner than we did, make an error in calculating forage value and amount?
- Did the animal thrive? What do I look for to indicate this?

Now What: What can I do next to build on this learning?

- On my own, recalculate next 2 weeks of pasture plan with this new information about whether or not we hit our targets for animal performance and pasture health.
- Present this to mentor and get their input.
- Read more on understanding forage value assessment and how that factors into pasture plans.
- Do my own assessment halfway through a pasture time period for the next paddock and gauge whether we are meeting our targets or need to change, then talk to the mentor about this while standing in the pasture.

Treating scours in calves during calving season

What

- Calves with scours—learning to spot symptoms early.
- Learn treatments for both early intervention and severe illness.

So What

- Lessen animal suffering.
- Catch illness early when it is still treatable.
- Stop contagion.
- Can administer treatments successfully.

Now What

- Can be trusted to see symptoms and treat, thereby supporting the mentor and herd.
- Learn what contributes to scours—high protein feed, weather conditions, genetics, etc.
- Talk with the mentor about management options to lessen opportunity for issues.

This section is meant to create context and serve as a foundation for all other sections of this chapter, each of which drills a little deeper into a specific aspect of the mentor/trainee relationship and how to optimize the trainee's experience.

2.2 Mentor Skills and Attributes

Anyone called to mentoring will have some aptitude and ability for it, but anyone in that role could also improve some part of their mentoring toolkit, for their own benefit and for that of their trainees. As we implied in the previous section, the range of skills a mentor uses is as wide as those skills they use as a farmer or rancher.

Ask any group of apprentices, interns, mentors, or experts in this field, and you'll come up with a list of skills and attributes that looks pretty much the same. The main skill everyone says they want in a mentor may surprise you: it isn't knowledge or expertise in their field. It's **Listening**.

Other skills and attributes commonly noted by trainees:

- Asks good questions of me.
- Challenges me when I need a 'kick in the pants.'
- Supports me when I make mistakes.
- Has patience.
- Gives advice that is professional and personal.
- Is open and trustworthy.
- Shares their own questions, mistakes, and learnings.
- Coaches me on skills I need to learn.
- Cares about me as a person, not just as a worker.
- Is knowledgeable about their business and all that goes into it.

Another way to think of this is that a mentor is someone who has the ability to:

- Listen and hear what is said.
- Question and challenge their own thinking and the thinking of others.
- Summarize and reflect back.
- Give and receive constructive feedback.
- Point out connections and contradictions.
- Display empathy and understanding.
- Encourage problem-solving and seek solutions.
- Recognize and acknowledge emotions.
- Trust others and be trusted by others.
- Be open and honest with self and others.

One of the best things your mentors can do is honestly rate themselves on these skills, using one of the worksheets provided, or in their own way. Challenge your mentors to ask someone they've mentored or supervised, or someone they work with, to also rate their experience with them. Then identify 1-3 skills they think they need to improve, based on the results.

To flesh out what is meant by some of these ideas, here's a list of some of the basic skills or activities of a mentor, adapted for this toolkit from [The Mentor's Guide](#) by Lois J. Zachary:

Building and Maintaining Relationships

We often focus attention on the initial stages of a relationship and then assume the rest will take care of itself. Mentors continuously monitor and invest in building strong relationships with their trainees.

Coaching

Coaching that occurs within a mentoring relationship refers to the mentor training a mentee on a specific skill or filling a gap in their knowledge.

Communication

This is key to a good mentoring experience for both parties. Communication is more than sharing knowledge or information; it is asking prompting questions to find out how the trainee is doing, listening without judgment to their concerns and needs, and communicating expectations and teaching clearly and in a manner that the trainee can understand.

Encouragement

This takes many forms. Mentors get to know their trainee well enough to know when they need to talk through a problem or get a push to try harder, and cheer when they try something new or hard even if they don't succeed.

Facilitating Learning

Mentors look for ways to teach in the moment, involve the trainee in planning learning, and create positive environments where mistakes are seen as part of learning, and where questions are welcome. If a trainee likes podcasts, their mentor may try to find some that are pertinent to their operation. If a trainee needs to have several sessions to learn a skill thoroughly, a good mentor will make time for that to happen and be patient about it.

Conflict Management

Conflict will happen, and yet most of us come to adulthood with limited comfort or ability to engage in conflict constructively. Most mentors find this is an area where they need support and growth themselves.

Providing and Receiving Feedback

Feedback is crucial for trainees to know if they are on track, if they aren't meeting expectations, are making critical errors, or are doing very well. Many people in agriculture grew up in families where they only received feedback when they did poorly, so they aren't very skilled at saying "thanks for a good day today," or "you are really improving with your cattle handling." It is essential that mentors offer both constructive criticism that is timely and specific, and encouragement when effort is made by their trainee [even if the end result isn't always great].

Reflection

Some people are naturally reflective; they tend to review how a day went, what went well and why, what they could have done or said to make it better. Others don't do this very often, or may even think it is a waste of time. But reflection is part of learning, both for your program mentors and their trainees. This is when a mentor may take a moment to consider how they might approach a problem differently, or ask different questions, or listen first and then offer their ideas. Some activities to help with this are listed below.

Resources

- New England Small Farm Institute: On-Farm Mentor Self-Evaluation Questionnaire
- [University of Wisconsin-Madison Mentoring Competency Assessment](#)
- [Rogue Farm Corps Mentor Self Assessment](#)

The following worksheet, adapted from selected sections of [The Mentor's Guide](#), by Lois J. Zachary, may also be a helpful resource:

1. Consider each skill in Column 1.
2. In Column 2, indicate how comfortable you are with using this skill.
3. In Column 3, list an example of a situation that illustrates why you ranked your comfort level as you did for that skill.
4. Look over your ranking and determine which skill you most want or need to improve to get the most traction in the coming season. Check that in Column 4.
5. Come up with some action you can practice to improve that skill and make note of it in Column 5.
6. Ask someone you work with to rank you as well, and see how your sense of your skill level aligns (or doesn't) with how they experience this skill. This can be uncomfortable but it can reveal valuable things to think or talk about.

Column 1	Column 2			Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
Skill	Very comfortable	Moderate comfort	Low comfort	Examples	Needs work	Action step
Building relationships						
Coaching						
Communication						
Encouraging						
Facilitating						
Conflict						
Giving feedback						
Getting feedback						
Reflection						
Other						

2.3 Communication Between Trainees and Mentors

Everything mentors do involves communication. No matter the kind of farm or ranch they operate, their business structure, or their personality, they have to communicate with others to achieve their goals. Be it a customer, a government agency or extension personnel, their lender or their trainee, effective speaking, listening, and responding is the glue that holds relationships together. Work-related communication happens in obvious ways every day and includes:

- Giving instructions when teaching a skill.
- Making sure daily and weekly schedules and priorities are confirmed and understood.
- Discussing changes in plans in the moment or in advance, as needed.

Less obvious are the conversations that build trust and share stories. Robust relation-building communication is the foundation for constructive feedback, successful resolution of problems, and a harmonious work environment for everyone. This includes:

- Asking how their trainee's learning is coming along.
- Asking how their trainee's day went.
- Letting their trainee know when they did a job well.
- Giving constructive feedback in a timely and specific way.
- Addressing conflicts and misunderstandings inclusively, fairly, and with the intention to improve the relationship and keep communication lines open.
- Telling stories about their own learning curve and operation.
- Sharing meals together with trainees.
- Getting to know each other as people.

Work communication happens routinely, but not always clearly. Relational communication is hard to fit into a busy agrarian workplace; there's always more work to do and it's often easier to talk about the next fence to mend or row to hoe than it is to talk about the conflict that's brewing. No one communicates as effectively, all the time, as is optimal. There is always room for improvement, and it is the most important mentor skill to practice. Everything else they do as a mentor relies on this skill.

Resources for Communicaton

- For a quick overview of basic elements of communication, the [Communication Tip Sheet from Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship](#) is a good place to start.
- The webinar, "[Communication Styles for Positive Farm Apprenticeships](#)" from MOFGA provides useful overview and activities for communication.

The business world has been the leader in discovering how essential communication skills are to a healthy, productive workplace, and these insights and tools are easily adapted into your mentors' toolboxes. Here are a few brief overviews of communication tools to explore.



Communication Tools

Radical Candor–Kim Scott: Radical Candor™ “is Caring Personally while Challenging Directly.” [The Radical Candor](#) process involves short, focused, daily moments of interaction that offer timely, specific feedback on both positives and places for improvement. The focus on short (1-3 minute) interactions immediately after an event helps overcome the time restraints experienced by mentors and demonstrates that they care about their trainee’s growth, while giving actionable instructions for improvement. The [Radical Candor website](#) is full of great blog entries and a series of podcasts–well worth the time.

Dare to Lead–Brené Brown: Social researcher Brené Brown has written a number of books, hosts a podcast, and has an informative website. Her book, [Dare to Lead](#), and its [companion videos and blog posts](#) provide solid support for building effective team dynamics. One tool she offers is the following list of useful prompts that mentors can use to solicit sufficient information in their conversations to understand what is occurring, and how to address issues:

“The story I make up ...” (this is when you share what you guess is going on in the interaction, inside the head or heart of the person with whom you are interacting, etc.).

1. “I’m curious about...”
2. “Tell me more about...”
3. “That’s not my experience” (use this instead of saying “you are wrong about this”).
4. “I’m wondering...”
5. “Help me understand...”
6. “Walk me through...”
7. “We are both dug in. Tell me about your passion around this.”
8. “Tell me why this doesn’t work for you.”
9. “I’m working from these assumptions. What about you?”
10. “What problem are we trying to solve? I’m confused/ unclear.”

The blog post [“Courage Over Comfort: Rumbling with Shame, Accountability, and Failure at Work,”](#) adapted from the book *Dare to Lead*, demonstrates the topics and solutions Dr. Brown explores in her work.

Emotional Intelligence

Intellectual intelligence is highly prized in our society, yet research in business, sociology, psychology, education, and medicine has discovered that our [Emotional Intelligence \(EI\) may be even more necessary](#) to high-functioning teams, businesses, leaders, and personal wellbeing. Quoting the article noted below, Emotional Intelligence “forms the juncture at which cognition and emotion meet, it facilitates our capacity for resilience, motivation, empathy, reasoning, stress management, communication, and our ability to read and navigate a plethora of social situations and conflicts. EI matters and if cultivated affords one the opportunity to realize a more fulfilled and happy life.”

Resources for Emotional Intelligence

The following list includes an article covering the basics of EI—with links to TED Talks and YouTube videos, as well as to three quizzes to identify your EI strengths—together with additional resources from Harvard Business Review:

- [Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter More than IQ](#). by Daniel Goleman. 2005 Bantam Press.
- [“What Makes A Leader?” by Daniel Goleman, Harvard Business Review](#) [This is a subscriber-only article, but it is a really great resource if you have a subscription].
- [Why aren’t we more compassionate?](#) TED Talk by Daniel Goleman.
- [What is Emotional Intelligence?](#) YouTube video with Daniel Goleman.
- [The Power of Emotional Intelligence](#), TEDxUCIrvine Talk by Travis Bradberry.
- [Six Steps to Improve Emotional Intelligence](#), TEDxTUM Talk by Ramona Hacker.
- [How Emotionally Intelligent Are You?](#) An online quiz and YouTube video describing characteristics of EI.
- [Emotional Intelligence at Work](#) from the HelpGuide.org website.
- [Test your Emotional Intelligence](#), free online quiz by Greater Good Science Center at University of California Berkeley.
- [Emotional Intelligence Online Test](#) [free] by the Global Leadership Foundation.

Nonviolent/Compassionate Communication

Don't be put off by the term "non-violent"; the common guidance to use "I" statements when talking with someone is a basic tenant of non-violent communication. None of us intentionally use words in a violent way, but how we phrase a question or comment can inadvertently shut down communication rather than build it.

Here's an example, quoted from the [First Round Review](#) article: "[Power Up Your Team with Nonviolent Communication Principles.](#)"

Say you're an early employee at a startup. You're probably working 12 to 14 hours a day doing the work of three people. So which question would you prefer to hear from a teammate?

A: "Will you get your work done this week?"

B: "What do you need to hit your deadline this week?"

The first is an example of a closed question. It requires a 'yes' or 'no' response and does nothing to acknowledge your dedication or address your feelings about it. You know there's a right answer and wrong answer, and just knowing that is likely to make you tense, agitated and defiant.

The second is an open question. It does acknowledge the level of effort you're already putting in and offers to help. It asks for more than a one-word reply—it seeks valuable input. You may still be accountable for getting that chunk of work done on time, but now you feel respected and appreciated as a colleague.

Active Listening

Communication is both listening and speaking, but we often tend to focus on the impact of our speaking rather than on the quality of our listening. Active Listening skills help us pay attention to the speaker, ask clarifying questions to aid our comprehension, and quiet the inner voice that is preparing our reply rather than listening. Key elements include:

- Eye contact.
- Asking questions for clarification and examples.
- Saying back/reiterating what you heard them say.
- Summarizing the key points.
- Patience and non-judgment even if you don't agree with what is being said.

Unhelpful listening habits include:

- Interrupting.
- Pretending to listen but being in your own thoughts instead.
- Ignoring what isn't clear to you.
- Changing the topic to something you want to talk about, or a story of your own that is related to the topic which the speaker is discussing.

It can be hard for a mentor to listen closely and calmly when their day is full or crops or animals need attention. If a trainee wants or needs to talk with their mentor at an inopportune time, the mentor may suggest that they schedule a time to follow up when all parties can listen with full focus—and then actually follow up. The time it takes to listen will save time later due to conflicts, confusion, or a lack of information.

Resources for Active Listening

- [TED Talk: 5 Ways to Listen Better](#)
- [6 Effective Ways Listening Can Make You a Better Leader](#) from Forbes Magazine
- [How to Practice Active Listening](#)

Communication Colors Activity

Many conflicts and misunderstandings are simply the result of a difference in communication rather than bad intentions, and can be avoided through intentional work on communication. For this reason, it can be really useful to do an activity with mentors and trainees that helps them understand their own communication styles and that gives them a common language for talking about it with others.

One activity used by NAP is the True Colors system, which uses four primary colors to designate personality types and behavioral styles. Participants complete a short quiz, which helps them understand their primary communication style and how it is sometimes perceived by others. It's important to state upfront that there are no right or wrong answers—the point is to use the activity as a tool to self-reflect, learn about the different ways that people communicate, and have a better understanding of how awareness of different communication styles can lead to better working relationships. For more information on the [True Colors communication activity](#) visit the website.

Another related communication activity used by New Entry periodically or when a new staff member joins the team is called “What It’s Like Working with Me.” Each staff member writes out responses to three main questions about what it’s like to work with them to share with other staff.

1. My work preferences.
2. Things that others do that might irritate [or bother] me.
3. Things that I do that might irritate [or bother] others.

A collection of staff documents is accessible to each team in a shared online folder and can be used as a conversation tool and pulled out if any conflicts or interpersonal issues arise to open up the conversation and facilitate discovery and discussion among the team. It helps provide insight to one another’s behaviors and preferences that might not otherwise surface in regular interactions.

Additional personality, communication and learning style resources are listed at the end of section [2.5: Learning Styles, Multiple Intelligences, and Personality](#) as it Affects Learning.



Example: Working with Jane Doe

Work Preferences:

- I am a morning person but enjoy quiet time to check emails and prepare for the day.
- I make a daily task list.
- I drink coffee throughout the day.
- I like to listen to music when I am writing, managing emails, planning, and thinking.
- I like to complete a task well before a deadline, but know that is not always possible and can get frustrated by rushed deadlines.
- I like hard deadlines to be set if you need something from me.
- I prefer face to face conversations to email and e-mail to the telephone; I may come find you in response to an email if I feel it requires discussion.
- I have slight hearing loss and can sometimes miss human voices when other noises interfere, thus my preference for face-to-face and e-mail versus the phone. When I am using the phone I need silence to hear the other individual well.
- I do not mind interruptions and will not lose track of what I was doing. If I do not want to be interrupted I will tell you it is not a good time. If I stop by to speak with you and you do not have time or do not wish to be interrupted, I do not mind being told that you do not have time and a more convenient time can be arranged..
- I like a good joke.
- I believe work and personal life should be balanced; that family is the most important thing in my life.
- I like discussion and disagreement if it is respectful, professional, and leads to better decision-making.
- I do not mind critique; I think it is a valuable tool for improving your work.
- I prefer to work on a team, but am comfortable working alone.
- I like to edit and like when others edit my writing as well.
- I prefer succinct emails.

Things that may irritate me at work:

- I am generally on time or early for meetings and can be flustered by my own lateness and frustrated and judgmental of others' lateness.
- I do not like office drama or gossip.
- I do not like to be touched if I do not know you well (a handshake is fine and preferable to a hug or cheek kiss).
- I do not like when people miss deadlines without notice.
- I do not like unnecessary emails or unnecessary responses to emails.
- I hate having to change meetings that are already scheduled to accommodate other meetings.

Things I do that may irritate others:

- I can be very sarcastic.
- I can be stubborn.
- I am dyslexic and will sometimes jumble letters and numbers and not notice they are jumbled.
- I sometimes do not use a greeting or farewell in email responses.
- I may not respond to an email if it does to appear to me to need a response.
- I can be a loud speaker.
- I enjoy conversation but have a tendency to talk too much at times; please tell me to stop if you are busy and I will not be offended.
- During meetings I may appear to be bored or not paying attention when in fact I am just concentrating on what is being discussed.
- I can be abrupt or brusque if I am working on an upcoming deadline.
- I may shush you if I am on the phone (due to slight hearing loss).
- I have a toddler who I think is the smartest, cutest, and most wonderful child in the world and like to talk about him.

CASE STUDY

Pasa Sustainable Agriculture (Pasa)

Previously called the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Pasa helps create a just food system through their emphasis on environmental and economic sustainability, farmer peer-to-peer networks, and education. The organization has two training opportunities for aspiring farmers: the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) and the Diversified Vegetable Apprenticeship (DVA). These programs target both mentors and apprentices for training: While apprentices learn farm skills and gain valuable work experience from highly qualified mentors, Pasa also focuses on the importance of mentor communication and delegation. Through this multifaceted experience and community development, Pasa hopes to create a more equitable farmer training culture and to foster peer to peer knowledge transfer and support.

- **Basic Structure:** The DVA program apprentices must log 3000 hours of work and instructional time. Working full time, this amounts to about 18 months, but it's fairly common for apprentices to work shorter hours or to take a gap during the winter months. More hours across a 24 month span are required to complete the DGA program. Application, admission, and mentor matching work on a rolling clock, but typically these occur between October and April.
- **In-person Events:** Pasa staff do on farm monthly check ins with apprentices and mentors to help facilitate communication. To promote farmer to farmer exchanges and create community, Pasa has an annual conference, and hosts events throughout the year (mainly in the offseason).
- **Online Platforms:** All list emails and an online web portal provide space for information exchange, including hour, wage, and skill tracking, as well as apprentice and farmer matching.
- **Major Take-away:** Peer to peer exchange is best - Pasa highlights the accomplishments and methods of farmers' successes, and aims to create space so that mentors and apprentices can share and cross pollinate these ideas.



2.4 Conflict: Normal and Useful

Conflict is natural and normal, and yet many of us arrive at adulthood having few skills with which to handle it and find resolution that works for all involved parties. Most of us get stuck in venting and griping to friends, partners, and co-workers, while unclear or hesitant as to how to speak directly to the person with whom we are struggling. Mentors in your program owe it to themselves and to their trainees to develop the tools to help them navigate the inevitable irritations or problems that will arise on site. Conflict resolution is a professional skill your mentors' trainees will need, so naming conflict resolution (and all communication) as part of their education, and treating it this way, will benefit both mentors and trainees.

Resources for Conflict

- [To Resolve a Conflict, First Decide: Is it Hot or Cold?](#)
- [TED Talk by Adar Cohen: 3 Ways to Lead Tough, Unavoidable Conversations](#)

The Thomas Kilman conflict styles assessment tool is a great resource which includes a questionnaire that assists you in determining which conflict style is most dominant for you (competing, collaborating, avoiding, accommodating, or compromising) and how this might affect those with whom you work. This tool is not reductionist; each style has benefits and is useful in some circumstances. While everyone has a little of each style in their character, we all have default modes when in conflict. Some programs have had mentors and trainees use this tool to identify potential areas of conflict and determine effective strategies for when these arise.

Each of us is capable of using all five conflict-handling modes. None of us can be characterized as having a single style of dealing with conflict. But certain people use some modes better than others and, therefore, tend to rely on those modes more heavily than others—whether because of temperament or practice.

Your conflict behavior in the workplace is therefore a result of both your personal predispositions and the requirements of the situation in which you find yourself. The Thomas-Kilmann Instrument is designed to measure your use of conflict-handling modes across a wide variety of group and organizational settings.

More information on this can be found on the [Kilmann Diagnostics website](#), including a few free videos, links to purchase the assessment tools, and other information. The official Thomas Kilmann assessment tool must be purchased, but a number of entities have created free versions of it available on the internet, including the following two:

- [Thomas Kilmann assessment videos](#)
- Free versions of Thomas Kilmann assessment tool:
 - » [Self-Assessment 11.4: What Is Your Preferred Conflict Handling Style?](#)
 - » [Practice Exam for Conflict Resolution](#)
 - » [Chapter 9: Conflict and Negotiation: PowerPoint](#)

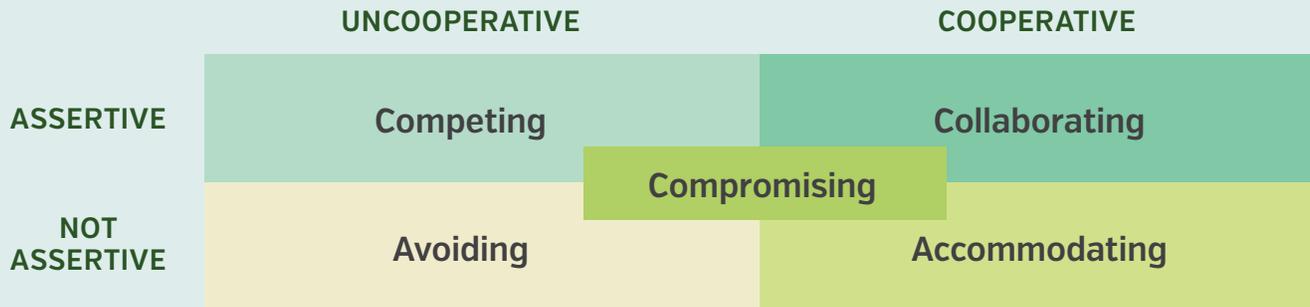
Several programs have clear protocols for addressing conflicts that persist. See [RFC's Conflict Resolution Policy](#) on their website which outlines procedures for handling complaints, conflict resolution protocols, disciplinary review and corrective action policy, and reasons for dismissal from a program. NAP also maintains a [grievance policy](#) and a [grievance report form](#) that trainees can complete if issues arise that need intervention from program staff.

Conflict Situations: The Five Styles

The Thomas-Kilmann Instrument is designed to measure a person's behavior in conflict situations. "Conflict situations" are those in which the concerns of two people appear to be incompatible.

In such conflict situations, we can describe an individual's behavior along two dimensions:

1. **Assertiveness**, the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy his own concerns.
2. **Cooperativeness**, the extent to which the person attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.



These two underlying dimensions of human behavior (assertiveness and cooperativeness) can then be used to define five different modes for responding to conflict situations:

1. **Competing** is assertive and uncooperative—an individual pursues his own concerns at the other person's expense. This is a power-oriented mode in which you use whatever power seems appropriate to win your own position—your ability to argue, your rank, or economic sanctions. Competing means "standing up for your rights," defending a position which you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.
2. **Accommodating** is unassertive and cooperative—the complete opposite of competing. When accommodating, the individual neglects his own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person; there is an element of self-sacrifice in this mode. Accommodating might take the form of selfless generosity or charity, obeying another person's order when you would prefer not to, or yielding to another's point of view.
3. **Avoiding** is unassertive and uncooperative—the person neither pursues his own concerns nor those of the other individual. Thus he does not deal with the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation.
4. **Collaborating** is both assertive and cooperative—the complete opposite of avoiding. Collaborating involves an attempt to work with others to find some solution that fully satisfies their concerns. It means digging into an issue to pinpoint the underlying needs and wants of the two individuals. Collaborating between two persons might take the form of exploring a disagreement to learn from each other's insights or trying to find a creative solution to an interpersonal problem.
5. **Compromising** is moderate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution that partially satisfies both parties. It falls intermediate between competing and accommodating. Compromising gives up more than competing but less than accommodating. Likewise, it addresses an issue more directly than avoiding, but does not explore it in as much depth as collaborating. In some situations, compromising might mean splitting the difference between the two positions, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground solution.

2.5 Learning Styles, Multiple Intelligences, and Personality as it Affects Learning

Learning Styles

The concept that we each have a dominant learning style, regardless of the content or situation, is popular and useful, though current research clearly states that we may have preferred ways of learning, but ultimately the best way to learn or teach something is rooted in the skill, idea, or activity you are learning. You can read about changing the oil in a truck to help you understand the ‘guts’ under the vehicle, but until you get under there with an oil pan and wrench, you won’t really know how to do it.

Knowing a trainee’s preferred way of learning can still be useful to a mentor: it reveals what sorts of skills may be easier for them to learn and which will require more focused teaching time and repetition. It will give mentors common terms to talk about how their teaching is effective (or not), and help them recommend useful resources to their trainees. For example, if someone is a slow reader, a mentor might recommend a few videos of Whit Hibbard demonstrating low stress stockmanship rather than give them an article or book to read.

What can often be very useful for a mentor is knowing whether their trainee is an Extroverted Learner or Introverted Learner. How extroverted or introverted a person is has to do with how they interact with the external world. Extroverted learners like to work with others, bounce ideas back and forth, and don’t hesitate to jump in and try things even when they don’t know anything about it. Introverted learners learn best when there is a balance between working solo and working with others, will want to understand the issue or skill before jumping in, and may be hesitant to ask questions. But an extrovert is also more likely to break machinery because they jump in before they understand. Each type has strengths and challenges that mentors will likely experience. Here are some details:

Extroverted learners are approximately 60 percent of the US population and:

- Learn best by direct experience.
- Can be impatient with instructions and details.
- Like to offer opinions and ideas even when they are novices.
- Dive in without always thinking things through.
- Can get worn down if they work alone more often than not.
- Are often first to volunteer.

Introverted learners make up about 40 percent of learners in the US and:

- Work well alone and need a balance of solo and group learning and working.
- Can appear reserved, shy, or thoughtful.
- Like to listen to or observe others do a task before they try to do it themselves.
- Can be slow to take action or try something new.
- Get tired if they don’t have quiet time regularly.
- May be more comfortable thinking about something than taking action.

Both kinds of learners can be an asset to your mentors’ operations, and someone they will enjoy teaching and working with. But if they are used to people jumping in, they may be puzzled by a trainee who needs to watch or study a skill repeatedly (an introverted learner), and judge them as being less interested or motivated, when that isn’t the case. Similarly, if a mentor likes working alone and has a trainee who is an extroverted learner, they may get tired of their trainee’s desire to always work with them or their tendency to ask questions all day.

“Knowing a trainee’s preferred way of learning can be useful to a mentor.”

Multiple Intelligences

Another useful tool for your mentors to understand how their trainee learns—and how this could be different than how they learn and teach—is Multiple Intelligences (MI). MI refers to the thesis that we each have an inherent set of intellectual abilities, and these distinctions are often where we offer the most capacity to our work. More conventional education systems are typically based on the first two in the following list, while agriculture utilizes all of these:

- **Logical/Mathematical:** Associated with what we call scientific thinking. Capacity to recognize patterns, work with abstract symbols, and see connections between separate and distinct pieces of information.
- **Verbal/Linguistic:** Responsible for production of language and all that follows: thinking metaphorically, story-telling, humor, symbolic thinking, conceptual patterning.
- **Musical/Rhythmic:** Recognition of tone and rhythmic patterns, sensitive to sounds.
- **Kinesthetic/Body:** Knowing where one's body is in space, agile, adept with tools.
- **Interpersonal:** Ability to work cooperatively; ability to communicate verbally and nonverbally with others; ability to notice differences between people and adapt; good at noticing moods, motivations, and intentions in others.
- **Intrapersonal:** Knowing oneself. Aware of one's feelings, thoughts, how one thinks and decides, self-reflective, intuitive.
- **Spatial:** The ability to conceptualize and use large-scale spatial arrays (think of the skills used by pilots or sailors) as well as smaller forms of space, like a chessboard.
- **Naturalistic:** The ability to note consequential distinctions in nature between plants, clouds [taxonomic knowing].

For more information on MI and how it can help your mentors better utilize their trainees' innate capacities while also pushing them to learn things that come less naturally to them:

- [MI Oasis Website](#)
- [Multiple Intelligences | Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D.](#)

Resources for Learning Styles

It's relatively easy to find out what kind of learner your mentors and their trainees are. The following resources will help with this:

- [Learning Styles of Introverts and Extroverts](#)
- [Learning Styles Based on Jung's Theory of Personality](#)
- [5 Personality Test to Understand Yourself and Your Staff](#)
- [Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship's "Care and Feeding of Your Adult Learner" tip sheet](#)
- [Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship "Care and Feeding of your Adult Learner" webinar](#)
- [Clifton Strengths Finder](#) (a fee-based assessment) is an online quiz that can identify an individual's and team's key strengths and can be paired with coaching services
- [16 Personalities](#)



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2.6 Feedback and Assessment

“A good evaluation is one from which students can learn.”

– Stephen Brookfield, *The Skillful Teacher*

When delivered in a timely, thoughtful, and skillful manner, evaluation can be one of the most effective tools for both professional development and trust building between trainee and mentor. Feedback is criticism in its truest sense; not solely negative or punitive, but an analysis of both positive elements and places in need of corrective actions. Well-timed, detailed praise can catapult a learner to a bolder commitment to both their education and their mentor’s operation or program. And specific corrective feedback can redirect their energy towards better skill development and judgment.

Your program mentors set the tone for any kind of feedback or assessment process with their trainee. The best way to be sure both mentors and trainees commit to regular and effective feedback is for mentors to affirm the trainee’s efforts and accomplishments, no matter how small, and to provide concrete

suggestions for improvement when they bring up problem areas.

Effective evaluations, be they informal or formal, are built from a combination of tools, skill, and commitment on the part of the mentor. It is easy to focus on tools. Rubrics in particular have become commonplace for good reason: they make concrete and measurable the specific skills the trainee must acquire for successful employment after their training period. But tools alone can be, in the words of educator Stephen Brookfield, a “scoundrel’s refuge”—a hollow exercise of quickly filling in boxes with little conversation. Rubrics and other tools are best used as springboards for interactive conversation regarding where the learner is progressing well and where they are stuck. Some tools that can be effective catalysts are offered in the Tools section of this chapter.

Types and Frequency

Types of feedback

Many programs find that a mix of feedback types are the best way to make sure that evaluation is useful and results in improved performance and renewed enthusiasm for learning. Evaluation and feedback can be offered informally and formally, and depending on the nature of your program, a blend of these two is likely. Regardless of whether all trainee feedback sessions are informal and spontaneous or scheduled, focused meetings, the following list of feedback modes offers something that can work in your program framework.

- Overall well-being.
- Skills Assessment, both technical skills (e.g. tractor use or bookkeeping) and interpersonal/leadership skills (e.g. communication, conflict resolution, time management).
- Learning process.
- Self-assessment by the trainee.
- Self-assessment by the mentor on their mentoring.

For helpful tools for each of these types of feedback, please reference the “Tools” section of New Entry’s [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#). Another useful tool for clarifying expectations and mutual responsibilities is offered in [Skills for Successful Mentoring: Competencies of Outstanding Mentors and Mentee](#), by Linda Phillips-Jones.

Frequency

While this is often determined by work schedule and personal preference, it is essential that feedback happen in a timely manner. If a problem is starting to manifest, the sooner it is handled the better for all involved. Timeliness also reminds both mentor and trainee of the educational nature of the commitment made to one another, which can get buried under the crammed workload on a busy farm or ranch. Some operations schedule a weekly “Team Pulse” check-in, to find out how each person is doing overall

and to determine if a longer time slot is needed to discuss a learning challenge, misunderstanding, or conflict. Scheduling informal, daily or weekly conversations as part of your host farms’ or ranches’ work culture will help everyone become more comfortable with giving and receiving feedback, and help build the trust necessary for harder conversations that might need to happen down the road.

Many programs find a mix of informal and formal sessions are most likely to: 1) actually fit into the schedule, and 2) build trust and commitment into the feedback process, which is often unfamiliar or stressful for both trainee and mentor. First, informal conversations can provide useful insights for both. As mentors have time for conversation on the job, or in a daily debrief session, they may ask trainees what they found most interesting in the day’s tasks. Timeliness reminds both mentor and trainee of the educational nature of the commitment made to one another, which can get buried under the crammed workload on a busy farm or ranch.

If mentors have some specific comments on a job well done or on how trainees can improve the skills they used that day, this is a great time to share them. Likewise, mentors might invite them to offer observations in return. Were the mentor’s instructions clear and easy to understand? Did the mentor spend enough time working next to the trainee to make sure they took them in?

Secondly, more focused conversations offer opportunities for mentors or trainees to cover specific issues or topics. For example, mentors might want to highlight major improvement in two skills over the past two weeks, and also bring up a time when the trainee lost their temper with a coworker.

The third type of feedback session is a skills assessment, often scheduled at regular intervals, say every two months during an eight-month training period. The mentor and trainee pull out the skill sheet and discuss what they have learned, together with what next steps they can

take to further their learning. If a specific skill, say welding, requires a special time set aside, the mentor may consider scheduling it when they discuss it. This is also a great time to talk about where the trainee has stalled in developing a particular skill and brainstorm ways for them to kick-start learning or get additional instruction from their mentor.

While these sessions offer the perfect opportunity to discuss the trainee's skill progression in detail, mentors must be sure to leave some time for trainees to let them know how they're doing as a mentor. Are they adjusting teaching styles to the trainee's learning needs? Do they take the time to answer questions? Do they take the trainee's professional goals into account as they schedule daily tasks on the ranch or farm?

Whether it is a spontaneous conversation or a formal meeting, mentors should approach feedback and assessment with these questions lodged in their minds and hearts: "What can this person learn from my comment? What can I learn from theirs?" If they approach feedback with the trainee's growth and goals at the forefront, their conversations will be more likely to be thoughtful, engaged, and productive for both.

Regardless of the tools mentors use or the frequency with which they have feedback sessions, specificity is key. Vague, unspecific complaints, especially if blurted out in frustration or impatience, risk shutting down the learning process. Whether they offer praise or suggestions for improvement, including specific examples is essential if they want the trainee to fully grasp feedback and use it to improve:

- **Not Helpful:** "You did great this week. I saw some real growth in lots of areas this month. Keep it up."
- **Helpful:** "I've seen you take on some new tasks this month as well as solidify your ability to troubleshoot electric fence. Last week, you found that elusive short in the long fence, and fixed it by replacing the offset and tightening the wire. And you

inventoried fencing supplies and gave me a list of what we needed to order. I've also seen real improvement with your pasture planning and analysis. You checked the grazing patterns last week, saw where we'd grazed pasture too short, and made adjustments in the size and timing of the next paddock. Then you came to me and we revised the pasture plan to account for the resized paddocks. This is excellent work. Keep it up."

- **Not Helpful:** "I'm really frustrated by the sloppy work you've done lately, not finishing chores, leaving tools laying around. You don't seem interested in what I'm trying to teach you and this needs to change."
- **Helpful:** "You seem a little off lately and I'm not sure why. You were late three mornings this week with no explanation. Yesterday, you didn't finish the fence job and I don't know why. Also, at Monday's team meeting you were looking at your phone quite a lot. I'm concerned about how this is affecting your work. Could you offer me some insight on what might be causing these things?"

Evaluation Tools

The evaluation tools you use for your program will likely be the ones you or your mentors were exposed to in school, or the ones that come most naturally to your mentors. This is all well and good, unless program trainees have a very different learning style, personality, or history with evaluations. In these cases, you may find the familiar tools just don't work. Given that feedback is one of the best ways for mentors to help their trainees grow beyond their current level of skill and understanding, nothing can sour a good trainee like feedback sessions that don't take into account what they need in order to receive and act upon their mentor's feedback. A range of tools is offered below, along with sample skill sheet rubrics, self-evaluation forms for both mentor and trainee, and other examples.

Tips for Providing Feedback

The Table below was included on [page 72 in the Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#), and adapted from [The Mentor's Guide by Lois Zachery, 2000](#).

What to Do	How to Do It	Example
Align feedback with the learners professional goal.	Provide concrete steps towards the goal that are practical given the time schedule and learner's current skills.	"I have a few ideas that might help you move forward and they are..." "When I'm learning something new I try ..."
Provide feedback on behaviors the learner can do something about.	Talk about the specific behavior that is causing problems, rather than evaluating the behavior.	"Tell me how you think your late nights might be affecting your learning?"
Remember that your perspective is not the same as your learner's.	When you use an example from your life, set the context so the learner can make a connection between your example and their experience.	"I know this may be different for you, but when I was having trouble learning tractor mechanics, here's what helped me.
Make sure you understand what is being said.	Listen carefully. Ask questions to clarify and summarize what the learner said.	"If I understand what you are saying..." "Help me understand what you mean by explaining.
Be respectful in your tone of voice.	Don't undermine the learner's self esteem.	"I liked the way you ..." "I am curious about ..." "Have you ever considered trying ..."
Watch your own communication style and how that affects the learner.	Talk about the challenges everyone feels in a feedback situation and how important it is to be aware of each other's communication habits.	"I find I get defensive when ..." "I react positively when someone ..."
If you aren't sure, get more information rather than give feedback.	Ask for the information you need.	"To be honest, I don't know enough about that right now and need more time."
Keep a future-focus.	Link your feedback in this moment to the overall learning curve and learner's goals.	"When you started here I saw _____, and now I see _____."

Rubrics

Most agrarian training programs use a rubric—usually a skill assessment sheet—as a significant, if not the sole, evaluation tool. The reasons for this are clear: they are specific, make clear the goals and step-by-step objectives needed to achieve those goals, and provide a map for both trainee and mentor to be sure that all elements of the curriculum are addressed during the training period. As stated earlier, the risk with a rubric is that it becomes an end in itself: e.g., mentor and trainee each fills in the boxes, shows them to one another, and that’s the end of it. Using the rubric as a prompt for a fuller conversation about specific accomplishments or learning challenges, or as a record of such discussion, will ensure that the clear pluses and minuses the rubric reveals will be actively embraced and implemented. Going over the rubric or skills sheet with their trainee at the outset will help mentors establish clear expectations for the trainee’s learning, and will create buy-in for using the rubric as a means of evaluating progress toward the agreed upon learning goals. Using the other tools listed in this section to flesh out the rubric’s information will help mentors create an action plan to jump-start learning.

A strong rubric does the following:

- Matches the stated purpose of the training program.
- Identifies the overall goal or skill and breaks it down into small steps.
- Makes clear what criteria is used to gauge successful accomplishment.
- Easily prompts the trainee and mentor to create strategies to learn a skill which is being neglected, is proving harder to learn than expected, or doesn’t have lessons built into the regular work the learner is asked to do.

Many current agrarian training programs have extremely effective skill sheet rubrics. The following links provide a few examples.

Learning audit

Mentors may ask their trainees to reflect on these four questions prior to a feedback session of any kind:

- “What do I know now that I didn’t know a week ago?”
- “What can I do now that I couldn’t do a week ago?”
- “What difference does this make for me?”
- “What can I teach someone else or know that I couldn’t teach them last week?”

These are powerful prompts for a feedback conversation or for skill sheet/rubric review.

3 accomplishments, 3 challenges

Mentors may have both themselves and their trainee come up with a list of three things they accomplished since their last feedback session, and three challenges they either didn’t take on or are next steps, given what they did accomplish. This helps the mentor balance positive appreciation of small efforts and learnings, while also giving some ‘hard truth’ feedback on areas that need improvement or more focused attention.

The next four tools all come from [The Skillful Teacher, by Stephen Brookfield](#), and are adapted as needed for agrarian training programs.

Additional Resources

- [Apprentice Skills Checklist](#)
- [Apprentice Host Evaluation](#)
- [Apprentice Skills Assessment](#)
- [On-Farm Assessment](#)
- [Farming and Business Skills Assessment](#)
- [On-Farm Skills Development Guide](#)

The Muddiest Point

A great feedback tool for mentors to use when they have multiple trainees and need to get a sense of how they are each doing with a new set of skills or information. At the end of a training session or discussion/reading of a new concept, mentors may ask trainees to write down or respond in that moment their answer to one or more of the following questions:

- “What was the muddiest point for you in what we covered today?”
- “What was the most confusing idea or element of what we did today?”
- “What was the most poorly explained idea or procedure today?”
- “What is least clear to you about the skill we practiced today?”

This will help mentors determine where they need to review the lesson with either the entire group or a few individuals, and helps mentors improve their own teaching.

One minute paper

This is a good one for mentors to use when they’ve had a busy day with lots of potential learning packed into it. For example, a big cattle move on open range or planning the planting map for a new greenhouse. At the end of the day, mentors give learners one minute to write down “What was the most important thing I learned or did today?” To this, they can add a second question: “What can I do next to reinforce or further what I learned or did today?” This helps the trainees identify learning that is buried in busy times, as well as how they can self-motivate to hone that skill or knowledge. It also helps mentors understand how effective the learning opportunity was and what they might do next to solidify that skill. It can also help mentors determine if a trainee is ready to be autonomous with a particular task.

Critical Incident Questionnaire

This tool is equally useful with one trainee or a large cohort. It is a quick way to gauge how well trainees are learning, as well as what might be getting in their way. It does

double duty, since it also gives them a way to give mentors feedback regarding their teaching and mentoring.

At the end of a week or a particular stretch of days, for example, at the end of the first two weeks of planting or lambing, mentors ask trainees to write answers to the following:

- “At what moment during this week/stretch of days did you feel most engaged with what was happening?”
- “At what moment were you least engaged?”
- “What action did your mentor or someone else take this week that was most helpful or affirming for you?”
- “What action did they take that was most confusing or challenging for you?”

If a mentor has more than one trainee, this will help them see how effectively they are mentoring overall, as well as who is in need of some extra tutoring with a specific concept or skill. This tool and many others can be downloaded for free from [Stephen D. Brookfield’s website](#).

Significant learnings

A significant learning is anything that deeply impacts the trainee’s understanding or appreciation of some aspect of farming, ranching, or their own role in these professions. Mentors may ask their trainees to reflect on one or two things they learned since the last assessment session. These can be anything from learning how to drive or maintain the tractor, to handling a conflict proactively and effectively, to reading about a new seeding technique. Mentors ask trainees to tell them about what they did, what they learned about themselves or the work/task/ideas, and how that might alter something about their work, study, or future. Mentors might have to tease this out of their trainees at first, and should be prepared to keep asking questions to get them to think more fully about what they learned and why it matters to them. This tool is especially effective after the trainee has been on-site for a month or more.

The following list offers prompts for reflection and discussion:

- “What’s going well in our mentor-learner relationship lately?”
- “What has been our biggest challenge in this relationship so far?”
- “What are we each learning that can help us work together better?”
- “Is there a particular skill that we never seem to get to?”



PHOTO CREDIT: Rogue Farm Corps

Evaluating the mentor

The best and surest way to improve the feedback mentors offer to others is for mentors to ask for and receive feedback from others. Mentors may hesitate to put themselves in this position; after all, asking for constructive criticism regarding their teaching makes them vulnerable. This is exactly why it is the best way for mentors to learn how to give helpful feedback. It puts them in the position of receiving input regarding what they do well, as well as where they are lacking, in spite of their best efforts to do a good job as a mentor.

A mentor's ability to ask for feedback, and to listen without becoming defensive, models how they want trainees to listen to and receive the feedback offered to them. One of the most valuable lessons novices learn from mentors is how to be in agriculture, with all the uncertainties, hard work, and risks that come with life on the land. Consciously or subconsciously, they see what it takes to make a life in agriculture, and they model their own behavior on that of an elder whose opinion and life they respect. The same principle holds true when it comes to decisions and behaviors. By watching how their mentor examines choices, recognizes errors of judgment, and moves past mistakes by strategizing different actions, trainees learn how to do this with their own choices and actions.

Asking for the trainee's feedback lets mentors model how to receive feedback and builds the trust that makes it possible for trainees to listen to and accept constructive criticism. Mentors may ask their trainee to tell them how they're doing. Have they been clear about expectations,

daily schedules, and outcomes they need from the trainee? Do they clarify work priorities or is the trainee left guessing what their mentor thinks is most important? Is the mentor over-scheduled and subsequently short on time or patience when trying to teach a new method of forage assessment or seed propagation?

Encourage mentors to consider the questions they want their trainees to ask themselves in preparation for a feedback session, and then ask trainees in relation to their own performance as mentor. A few such questions are:

- "What have I done recently that was most helpful for you?"
- "Is there something that's not working for you in how your education is going?"
- "Are you having enough one-on-one learning time with me?"
- "Tell me what's been useful and not useful in our interactions lately."

Creating a mentoring rubric can be helpful for the mentor to track their own progress, and also models how to use this tool. A few such rubrics can be found at:

- [University of Wisconsin-Madison Mentoring Evaluations: Mentoring Competency Assessment \(MCA\)](#)
- [Nature's Guide for Mentors](#)



Resistance to feedback

Trainees may be resistant to criticism. Defensiveness in the face of criticism is human nature, and most of us attempt to deflect criticism, blame someone or something else, or become demoralized in the face of constructive criticism. This is one reason why asking for feedback themselves helps mentors defuse any potential defensiveness and create a receptive environment for feedback. When mentors balance praise for effort and small accomplishments with corrective feedback, most trainees will realize that their mentor's comments are in their best interests and are meant to help them achieve their goals.

Should a trainee continue to resist feedback, a few things can help. First, mentors might think of a time when they were resistant to something someone else thought they should do or learn. Why were they resistant? What triggered the resistance and was there anything they or the other person did to help them get past it? Second, mentors might reflect on something they find hard to do or learn. For many middle aged farmers and ranchers, keeping up with new technology can be mind-boggling no matter how hard they try to learn ever-changing computer programs and online navigation, yet these things likely come more easily to younger trainees. Now have mentors flip the situation and think about how something they find easy to do—managing complicated and aging equipment, a feisty

cow, or spider's-web of electric net fencing. They may come to realize that it may be very hard for a trainee to master these things on the spot, no matter how hard they try.

The realizations that come to mentors upon this reflection will help them defuse the trainee's resistance with compassion and even humor. They might relay a story about a learning challenge of their own. They might ask the trainee to tell them about a time in their past when they had to work harder than everyone else in order to learn something seemingly "simple."

Teaching conflict management

One of the most valuable management skills for trainees to learn is how to approach and resolve conflict. Conflict is human, inevitable, and will pop up during the training period; it will also occur throughout the trainee's professional life. Most conflicts emerge out of simple miscommunication or misunderstanding; mentors and trainees should not assume ill-will. A willingness to discuss conflict with patience, curiosity, and compassion will help both mentors and trainees build the honest communication and trust that will serve them both through the duration of the training period. Mentors should model the listening behavior they wish to see in their trainee and give clear examples when offering constructive criticism so that the trainee knows exactly what they are doing [or not doing] that is causing difficulty for the mentor.



Collaborative farmer/rancher education programs

Some readers may be working on starting up a collaborative farm education program, facilitating and supporting learning opportunities on many farms and ranches. There are several additional services that collaborative farmer training programs often provide:

- **Mentor Evaluations:** this can be awkward for mentors to seek out, particularly when the trainees are their employees. A benefit that some programs offer is conducting anonymous surveys of both trainees and mentors each year.
- **Education Coordinators:** who facilitate the mentor/trainee relationship and provide a safety valve if or when there are relationship issues between them.
- **Published expectations:** For an apprentice applying to such a program, there are certain expectations that are consistent across all mentor operations. These may include stipulations about housing, stipend, hours worked, curriculum offered, frequency of feedback sessions, and more.
- **Additional structured education:** Some collaborative programs offer additional educational opportunities, ranging from conference attendance, farm visits, classroom based workshops, or online courses.

2.7 Balancing Education and Getting Work Done

One of the biggest challenges for mentors is finding ways to fit the teaching and learning into what is often a more than full time occupation running their farm or ranch. Dedicating time and effort and being proactive and front-loading good systems for communicating expectations, the work schedule, finding out what an apprentice is already capable of, and determining which skills the mentor needs them to be solid with as soon as possible will make a huge difference down the line.

The absolute best way to make sure that both learning happens and the necessary work required by the host farm or ranch is done well and on time is for the mentor to help their trainee be a self-starting, thorough team member who is aware of the priority tasks and how to keep themselves busy and well occupied when their mentor isn't able to work with them.

“The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill; the willingness to learn is a choice.”

- Brian Herbert

Effective agrarian training opportunities are co-created by the mentor and the trainee. It's often said that the more a trainee invests in their learning, the more they get out of it. But most young adults are used to education systems that deliver pre-made courses and requirements. High school and college classes usually have predetermined syllabi, with assignments and due dates clearly identified. Farms and ranches don't deliver education this way. Trainees learn by watching, doing, being shown yet again how to do something, trying it themselves, making mistakes, and trying again. The learning doesn't happen on a tight schedule. One trainee might be a fast learner when it comes to truck maintenance or another skill, and another will need a lot more of their mentor's time.

Co-creating the education/work balance is made easier when mentors remember that trainees are adults, with dreams and personal goals that brought them to that operation. To that end, it's useful to consider key elements of working with Adult Learners. Briefly, Adult Learners:

- Need to be involved in planning their learning.
- Need their learning to be relevant to their personal goals.
- Need their learning to be immediately actionable—something they can do or use right away, not just theory.
- Must be internally motivated to learn.
- Want to be able to assess their progress or lack of progress—they want to be able to determine whether they did a task well or if they could do better.

A more in-depth consideration of Adult Learners:

Autonomous and self-directed

- Adult learners prefer to be free to direct themselves. Actively involve them in the learning process and serve as a facilitator for them.
- Get learners' perspectives on how to cover topics and design learning objectives; let them work on projects that match their interests with your curriculum.
- Allow learners to assume responsibility for creating and completing work assignments.
- Act as a facilitator and guide learners to their own knowledge rather than supply them with the facts.
- Show learners how the lessons will help them reach their goals.

Foundation of life experiences and knowledge

- Learners need to connect learning to their knowledge and experience base (family relationships, professional life, previous academic experience).
- Draw out participants' experience and knowledge relevant to the topic.
- Relate theories and concepts to the learners' lives; acknowledge the value of their experiences as they relate to the current learning situation.

Goal-oriented

- Learners usually know what they want to attain; good organization and clearly defined elements on your part will help them accomplish their goals and yours.
- Show learners how your program will help them attain their goals.
- Clear goals and course objectives should be presented early.

Relevancy-oriented

- Learners must see the reason for learning something new – it must be readily applicable to their work or other responsibilities and goals in order for them to see its value.
- Try to relate theories and concepts to a setting that is familiar to learners.
- Allow learners opportunities to choose projects that reflect their interests.

Practical

- Learners may not be interested in knowledge for its own sake. Let them know explicitly how the lesson will be useful to them on the job.

Respect

- Acknowledge the wealth of experiences that learners bring to the apprenticeship. Learners should be treated as equals as persons with experience and knowledge, even when you are far more experienced in agriculture than they are.



CASE STUDY

Rogue Farm Corps (RFC)

Based in Oregon, the RFC partners with farmers in the region to offer on-farm training for both beginning and advanced students of agriculture. RFC's program provides a combination of on-farm, hands-on training and classroom learning.

www.roguefarmcorps.com

- **Basic Structure:** RFC's mentor peer-to-peer network is initiated and managed entirely by RFC staff and includes both in-person and virtual events. Mentors are not held responsible for initiating or facilitating networking events, but do have access to a group email list as a way to stay connected or ask for input or help from their peers.
- **In-Person Events:** RFC's main mentor get-together is their end-of-season debrief, usually in November after all interns and apprentices have completed their season. RFC organizes a dinner for mentors and facilitates the season debrief. According to Matt Gordon, RFC's Education Director, "The most valuable part is the time for them to just share with each other the successes and challenges of the season. People share stories. And sometimes they'll share stories of things that were challenging, and someone else will offer up solutions or ideas for things they're tried." Additionally, RFC offers a mid-winter training that is accessible to mentors both in-person and virtually. Because RFC spans a large geographical area, they are organized into smaller, regional hubs. For the winter training, mentors who are not able to attend in person have the option of traveling a much shorter distance to a location in their local hub, where RFC facilitates virtual attendance to the training.
- **Online Platforms:** RFC uses a group email list to get important information and announcements out to mentors. Mentors are encouraged to use that list as a way to stay connected to other mentors during the season and reach out with questions or issues as they come up.



PHOTO CREDIT: Rogue Farm Corps

2.8 Tools to Help

Trainees generally want to be useful and to learn what their mentors have to teach and need them to know. Mentors also want them to be useful. But how does one start? How do mentors determine their trainees' incoming skill level—what do they really know how to do, and can they do it the way their mentor needs it done? How do mentors integrate their capacity and education into their already overly full day? And how can trainees initiate and follow-through with their own learning in a way that augments the time mentors have to teach? Here are some tools.

Calendars

Master Calendar: Most farmers and ranchers have an internal calendar. They know what to expect in a given month as far as changeable weather, the top priorities for that month, and what needs to be done now because it'll be needed in three weeks. But trainees don't have that lifetime of experience, and they will only be able to grasp all the things their mentor is thinking about, planning, and doing if they have some way of seeing the whole and how the component parts change with the

seasons. For this reason, having a ranch or farm calendar, on paper or in electronic form, that offers a broad stroke picture of the host operation is a great place for a mentor to start planning what to teach first and how they'll fit each component part into the season.

Writing down their seasonal calendar can help mentors to:

- Identify what learning opportunities are built into each season because of the priorities and tasks associated with that season.
- Find the 'sweet spots' where education can happen as part of the daily work.
- Identify the skills a trainee needs to be up to speed on right away.
- Determine what chores a trainee will need to take over from the mentor so the mentor can move on to the next set of preparations and tasks.

These things will help mentors create a job duties list or skill sheet which then serves as the road map to get a trainee from beginner to competency and autonomy—which is how you get the work done and the education to happen.

Here's a partial example for a cattle ranch that has trainees from mid-March to mid-November:

March	Calving	Pasture planning growing season	Tractor maintenance, drag meadows	Sprinkler maint., run ditches
April	Calving	Pasture planning; inventory and replace tools/ supplies for range water lines	Drag meadows	Irrigation season starts; sprinkler and flood
May	Calving, branding	Range readiness meeting; range water system prepared; fences repaired	Prep haying equip	Irrigation: flood, set tarps. Sprinkler: maint and use
June	Bulls in	Move onto range, daily water and cattle checks, herding	Hay?	Irrigation
July	Breeding	Checks, herding, Monitor utilization	Hay	Irrigation
August	Breeding Bulls out	Monitor, herding; dormant season pasture planning	Hay; Tractor maintenance.	Irrigation, hay at end of month
September	Home from Range	Drain water system on range		Winterize sprinklers, gather tarps,
October	Pregnancy check	Assess forage for winter - buy hay?		

Weekly Calendar and Team Meetings

Some farms and ranches are used to small staffs, or just one or two people doing all the work. These tight, long-term teams often know intuitively what is most important to do each week, and how to organize days and delegate tasks to get things done effectively and efficiently.

Bringing any new person into a team makes it necessary to verbalize the week's priorities, who is doing what and when it needs to be done, and what tasks need multiple people, equipment to be serviced, tools gathered, or supplies purchased. And it's critical to do this when the new person is a relative novice—a trainee.

Mentors complain that trainees don't know how to be useful or don't know what to do when one task is complete, so they get on their phones with social media or just stand around looking perplexed. This isn't because they are lazy; they just don't have the lifelong experience to know what task is next—or the magical ability to read their mentor's mind.

And so, the simple weekly calendar comes to the rescue. Operations use weekly calendars in a variety of ways:

- A shared Google Calendar that everyone can see and add tasks to.
- A wall calendar you can write on.
- A large white board with a calendar noting a few weeks at a time so people can see how one week's tasks set up the work the following week demands.
- Workplace apps like [Asana](#), [Zoho Forms](#), [Google Tasks](#), or other programs that list tasks, deadlines, and who is assigned to the task.

Many older mentors find a white board or wall calendar to be the most useful, or combine that with an online Google calendar. Younger people or larger farms

find smartphone apps like Asana to be a valuable tool. Whatever mentors in your program choose, find something that each individual mentor will use, and help them develop the habit to use it weekly. The extra effort it takes to do this will help their trainees learn how the mentor prioritizes work, how they can be most useful with what they already know how to do, and when they can learn new skills to take more work off their mentor's shoulders.

Team meetings are another tool that can make a big difference for trainees. This is a once-a-week, sit down meeting, usually an hour in length, where the week's priorities are described, work is assigned, and training on new tools or skills can be scheduled. Here's a sample agenda of items for mentors to consider covering each week in a team meeting:

Additional Resources

- See pages 29-30 in the [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#) for more information on seasonal and weekly calendars as tools to help plan educational opportunities while getting the work done.
- [Quivira Coalition Agrarian Apprenticeship guidebook](#), "[Typical Weekly Schedule](#)" and "[Detailed Monthly Calendar](#)".

Team Meeting Agenda (Courtesy of the San Juan Ranch, CO)

Personnel

- Schedule days off for apprentices.
- Mentor dentist appt on Thursday; gone half day.
- Cattle moves this week and prep for next week moves:
- Today: Haul dry cows to Green Ranch [GR]. Apprentice builds fence in railcar pasture for them.
- Tomorrow: Bulls trich test and move to South Country pasture.
- May 8th or 9th??: Cows move to GR on the 8th or 9th.
- May 16th: Yearling Steers - to Razor Creek. Yearling Heifers - to GR require three trailer loads. Apprentice practice driving trailer and truck as prep.
- May 18th Branding: Where will cows be going after branding [same pasture, but soon need a new pasture?...] Lets revisit GR grazing plan.

Cattle health:

- new calves? calfs? bloat, scours? Are we up to date with tagging?

Fencing

- Apprentice walk barbed wire fence on west side of next part of range, fix any problems.

Water

- Cattle water: Is the well in #3 still flowing?
- Irrigating: Sprinkler ran all day! Have the apprentice review operating and maintenance on this. Teach apprentice how to set tarp for flood irrigation at Company Ranch.

Mechanical

- Backhoe: order fuel pump.
- 4-wheeler needs maintenance.

Administrative/ Bookkeeping

- Apprentice works with the mentor to prep paperwork for Sunday's load, trucking affidavits, health certificates.
- Apprentice continues work analyzing fuel usage budget.

BRR Meat Sales/ Processing

- Morgan- checks to deposit.
- Make 60# GB order for Salida and email Laurie.
- Income to input into QB; Teach basics to apprentice.

Apprentice Market Report and Branding prep/organizing update

- Market report.
- Branding Prep: update on what is left to do; do we have vaccines, needles, etc, meal plan, have we heard back from people invited to come help?

Supplies to order/ pick up

- Batteries: for fence and for the pump at farm.
- Fuel pump for backhoe.
- Wing nut for the air filter on the pump at the farm.
- Color pencils.
- Do you feel good about the number of branding irons; do we need to make another set?

Heads up for next week

- Range Monitoring Monday. Any prep needed? Lunches? books, maps, grazing plans?
- Ft. Lewis College visits Tuesday. Any prep?
- Steers to Razor Creek, Wednesday. Any prep? Bill handling trucking.
- We need our trailers ready to haul heifers to GR.
- Branding: figure out who is staying where, home place or the farm. How to work meals, where to put horses, etc.

Skills Sheets

Creating a Skills Sheet, Skills List or Job Book: Many agrarian training programs have a written Skills List or Job Book—a relatively exhaustive list of the variety of skills and abilities a farmer or rancher needs in order to run the type of operations at the core of their program. If you run an agrarian training program with multiple mentor sites (or if you're a dairy farmer hoping to provide animal handling skills to a trainee, or a vegetable producer aiming to instill crop planning and business skills), mentors in your program will benefit from having a written list of the skills they want to pass on to their trainees. Remember to structure this list as a template, such that it is customizable by each of the mentors in your program, whose individual needs may vary between operations. Consider this list template the foundation of your program curriculum.

There are at least three reasons to create and regularly use a Skills List on host operations:

1. This list establishes clear goals and expectations for your trainee—this is their syllabus, their curriculum, and all the things they can potentially learn at least a little about during their training period.
2. It serves the function of a checklist so mentors and trainees know where they are improving and can talk about next steps for developing a specific skill.
3. It serves as legal proof that your program is offering an education program and not just working young people to the bone and not paying them much.

This last point is worth underscoring: there are programs that have been penalized or closed due to the lack of proof that a developed, legitimate education program exists. The Skills List is the most useful, least onerous way for your program to meet this requirement and have something that helps your program mentors and trainees stay on course with making education happen inside the busy schedule of the host farm or ranch.

The following list offers a selection of tools to help you develop a Skills List, Skills Sheet, or Job Book for your organization and host mentors:

- Section 4 of the [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#) reviews the value and use of Skills Sheets.
- Pgs 60-68 of the [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#) offers lists of specific skills needed and potentially taught by different kinds of operations, from vegetable farms to cattle ranches. These lists will help you generate a list template and provide examples for your mentors to develop a list customized to their own operation and based on what they are able to teach their trainees.
- The [DACUM \(Developing a Curriculum\)](#) process developed by Ohio State University has been used by several programs to help develop their Skills List or Job Book. See excerpts from the [Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Job Book](#) and [Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Job Books](#) for examples of DACUM processes and how this has been applied to their Job Books.
- Also, see Sample DACUM Occupational Profile for Northeast Small Scale “Sustainable” Farmer, page 54 of New Entry’s [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#).
- [Quivira Coalition Agrarian Apprenticeship Guidebook](#), “Evaluation” section.
- Here are a few samples of [San Juan Ranch skills sheet](#) from a Quivira Coalition NAP apprenticeship site.
- [New Entry’s Sustainable Agriculture Skills Workbook](#).

Using a Skills List to Track and Strategize

Learning: Skills lists are most useful when used at strategic points in the training, as well as informally and with regularity. Skills Lists perform many functions, among them:

- Trainees can reference them to see what might be the next skill to learn.
- They can serve as prompts for planning and debriefing training and work tasks.
- They are a great prompt for both formal and informal assessment conversations. The meetings serve several purposes:
 - » Mentors and trainees discuss where skills and abilities are growing and where they aren't.
 - » Mentors and trainees jointly determine what is helping or inhibiting learning.
 - » Mentors create strategies to move the trainee's learning forward in appropriate ways.
 - » Mentors determine if they and their trainee have differing opinions on how their learning is progressing.
 - » It helps mentors get to know their trainees better, where they are naturally adept and what elements of farming or ranching are harder for them to learn.
 - » Mentors become better by learning where and how their teaching is effective and where it isn't so they can stretch their own mentoring capacities.

Informally, the list prompts touching base with a specific skill when mentors are in a stretch of days or weeks when that skill is uppermost in the work. For example, skills related to calving, lambing, field preparations, or seeding are built into the spring months, so mentors should consider checking in with their trainees weekly, or even daily, to see how they feel their knowledge base and capacity is being stretched—and where they might need their mentor to set aside additional time or focus to review, debrief, or move to the next level with that skill.

Formal check-ins happen at strategic points throughout the trainee's time on the host operation. These check-ins usually include an overview of the baseline or incoming inventory of the apprentice's skill level with each item on the skills list, followed by either monthly, bi-monthly, or midseason check-ins to gauge where growth is occurring, as well as where learning is stagnant. Another assessment is completed towards the end of the training period to review the entire season's learning and to assist the trainee with determining what type of learning opportunity or job is a good next step for them.



PHOTO CREDIT: Rogue Farm Corps

The baseline/incoming skills assessment meeting is extremely valuable:

- It helps mentors gauge what their trainee already knows (or thinks they know).
- It provides a tool for mentor and trainee to determine what skills they need to focus on first, in order for the trainee to become quickly useful and autonomous with some work.
- Jointly, mentor and trainee can use this process to strategize what skills will require focused training time on the part of the mentor in order to get the trainee up to speed effectively and safely with equipment, animal handling, vehicles, and procedures.

Some programs require that these meetings be scheduled immediately upon the trainee's arrival on site. Sometimes a program coordinator will participate in these meetings with the mentor and trainee (e.g., Rogue Farm Corps), while others have the mentor/trainee pair submit their skills sheets and assessments to the program coordinator or director each time a meeting occurs. The extent to which a 3rd party is involved in the skills assessments often depends on the amount of programmatic oversight or support a program believes is needed.

These meetings can serve as a reset for mentor and trainee; as a mentor determines where the learning is occurring, they also get insight into the effectiveness of their mentoring and educational focus, as well as where they need to commit additional time to assist their trainee in learning a skill.

Additional Resources

- Here's the [Quivira Coalition NAP skill sheet](#), filled in with baseline assessment and a follow-up assessment later in the season.
- NAP's mentor training sessions cover how to set up a skills checklist in training #4, and how to use it in training #6, both trainings can be accessed on the [NAP Mentor Resources website](#).
- [UVM Skills Assessment Wheel and Learning Plan Template](#).



PHOTO CREDIT: New Entry Sustainable Farming Project

The following lists provides a series of prompts that can help mentors and trainees prepare for skills meetings:

Prompts for Skills Sheet Meetings (courtesy of San Juan Ranch)

What's going well, what needs a boost

1. Decide in advance which skill sheets are most relevant for the recent experiences happening on your operation. For each skill sheet you choose as a focus, do the following:
2. Individually, have both mentor and apprentice choose the elements where they believe the most growth has occurred, and come up with a specific example that demonstrates that growth.
3. Pick an element on that sheet that has been available to learn but hasn't grown as much. Come up with ideas on how that element can have more focus in the coming weeks.
4. Pick something that is a good 'next step' – either because the apprentice is ready for that skill or because your operation will need them to become adept at that skill soon.
5. Come to the meeting and share these thoughts with each other.

What's coming up that can focus learning

6. Talk with the apprentice about what major events/tasks are coming up in the next few weeks, [e.g: branding, transplanting seedlings, harvesting].
7. Have the apprentice look over the skill sheets and ask, "Which skills do I most need to know or work on to be ready for the upcoming events?"
8. Apprentice comes to the meeting ready to talk about their readiness with these skills – no exposure, a novice, needs some hands-on review, ready to do it on their own, etc.
9. Together, come up with a plan that helps the apprentice use the upcoming opportunity to really grow with those skills. Do they need some extra training or review beforehand [e.g.: if haying or field work is coming up, schedule time to review basic tractor and implement function, maintenance, and safety]? Is there something they can be in charge of?

Short prompts

10. "What's been fun or exciting for you to do and learn in the past few weeks?"
11. "What's been harder to do or learn than you thought it might be? Why do you think that is?"
12. "What's something you really want to learn that we aren't getting to?" [At our ranch it tends to be welding.] Then schedule a specific time to help them learn that.

Learning audit

Ask your apprentice to reflect on these three questions prior to a feedback session of any kind. With a Skill Sheet meeting, they could ask them for each sheet:

13. "What do I know now I didn't know a month ago?"
14. "What can I do now I couldn't do a month ago?"
15. "What can I now teach someone else to do or know that I couldn't teach them a month ago?"

3 accomplishments; 3 challenges

Have both you and your apprentice come up with a list of three things they accomplished since your last feedback session, and three challenges they either didn't take on or are next steps, given what they did accomplish. This helps you balance positive appreciation of small efforts and learnings, while also giving some 'hard truth' feedback on areas that need improvement or more focused attention.

Significant Learnings

A significant learning is anything that deeply impacts the apprentice's understanding or appreciation of some aspect of farming, ranching, or their own role in these professions. Ask your apprentice to reflect on one or two significant things learned since your last assessment session. These can be anything from learning how to drive or maintain the tractor to handling a conflict proactively and effectively, to reading about a new seeding technique. Ask them to tell you about what it was they did, what they learned about themselves or the work/task/ideas, and how that might alter something about their work, study, or future. You might have to tease this out of your apprentice at first, so be prepared to keep asking questions to get them to think more fully about what they learned and why it matters to them.

Learning Plans and SMARTER Goals

Mentor farmers and ranchers have goals for crop yields or cattle weight gains. They choose specific seed or forage, make plans, and take specific actions with the water and fertilizer regime or their pasture and animal health management. At a later point in the season, they take the time to review how well they are reaching those goals and revise their plans as needed—right then and there, or for the next season.

Mentors and trainees go through a very similar process to help them reach their educational goals. Learning plans and S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals are strategies your program can implement and help mentors build into their workday to help set them up for success.

Encourage your mentors to consider spending a little time helping their trainees brainstorm a Learning Plan or S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goal for a specific skill they want to learn—including what they can expect to learn from their mentor as well as other resources they can use. After they do this a few times with their mentor's help, during a check-in or skills assessment meeting, they will be able to create these on their own. It's one of the best time investments a mentor can make when it comes to helping their trainee become a self-initiating learner. Mentors can sometimes feel overwhelmed when they think they have to teach everything to their trainee. The truth is, there is a lot of learning trainees can do on their own to support the hands-on time mentors spend with them. To start, trainees can:

- Read articles or books, listen to podcasts, or watch videos on topics—seeding, compost, castration, pest management, animal handling. You name it, there's a resource out there that either you can mention or they can find.
- Contact a local expert in soils, crops, agronomy, horses, grass finishing, or genetics—give them the names of people they might reach out to, or send an introductory email to these folks letting them know your apprentice may contact them.
- Practice some skills on their own—roping dummies, plant identification, etc.

S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals: Education and business literature is full of references to S.M.A.R.T. or S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals. This is a great strategy for making education happen in the context of a working farm or ranch. S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals can derive from exactly the skills your mentors most need their trainees to learn, and break these skills into clearly defined action steps that optimize mentor teaching time and trainee solitary study.

S.M.A.R.T. stands for: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ction Oriented, **R**ealistic and **T**imely. Alternate words used are **S**pecific, **M**eaningful, **A**chievable, **R**elevant and **T**ime-Bound. The added letters E and R in S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals are powerful additions and may be of significant value to mentors. These are **E**valuate and **R**eflect. Regardless of which S.M.A.R.T.E.R. words your mentors decide to use, you can see how they provide a guide for creating a ladder of specific steps that move the trainee from incoming skill level to autonomy.

Let's take a quick dive into **S.M.A.R.T.E.R.** goals and then list some resources.

Here's one way to consider the 7 words as prompts:

S	Specific	What specific task do I want to do? Is anyone else involved? What challenges might I face and how will I address them?
M	Measurable	What is my timeline? How will I know when I have reached this goal?
A	Action-Oriented	What is my step-by-step plan?
R	Relevant	Why is this important to me? How does it align with my job/ apprenticeship?
T	Time-Bound	What is my timeline--should I have a timeline? Do I have smaller goals inside this goal?
E	Evaluate	How am I doing as I go through these actions? Do I need to make a change? At the end, what is my assessment and my mentor's assessment of my skill?
R	Reflect/Review	What am I learning about how I learn, where I procrastinate, where I need help? Do I need to adjust my expectations up or down as far as how fast I learn new things? What are the next steps I can take? What does my mentor think about these things?

PHOTO CREDIT: Glywood Center New York



Here's a sample goal for trainee on a cattle ranch who wants to develop their livestock handling skills:

GOAL STEP	WHAT	HOW
Specific	Learn to 'work off the shoulder' of cattle to move them through corral, sort, etc	Watch Whit Hibbard videos Monday-ask mentor for recommendations Review drawings and notes in Stockmanship book; read 3 articles in On Pasture Ask mentor to practice this during this week's cattle sort
Measurable	Ask mentor after each sort where I improved and what is my next step	Be proactive asking for feedback each day
Action-Oriented	Do the study and speak up to ask to do some of the sorting	Practice each day we work cattle, at least for a portion of the session
Relevant	Basic skill for rancher	Needed on the job
Time-Bound	Improve my basic understanding of this and my ability to do it well by the end of the month	
Evaluate	Review for myself how I did each session, ask mentor for feedback each day	Come up with 3 specific questions to ask mentor regarding my skill improvement or lack thereof
Reflect/Review	Ask myself: Am I getting better at anticipating the cattle movements? Is there something I'm missing when it comes to cattle behavior? Are the video and reading learning supports effective for me--can I transfer that to action when we are working cattle?	Take notes at the end of the week and then talk to mentor about other ways I can learn this

Learning Plans: Very similar to S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals, a learning plan designates specific actions the trainee will take to develop a skill. The main difference is that there isn't an acronym to guide the process.

Personalized learning plans help mentors monitor their trainee's regular engagement with both built-in learning opportunities and self-study, which will help mentors gauge whether or not their trainee is fulfilling their responsibilities as an adult learner. These learning plans can easily grow out of regular check-in meetings and can be altered, refined, and updated as the trainee acquires competency.

Additional Resources

Most of the examples in the following list are not specific to agriculture or training programs, but they offer good guidance on how to create goals and plans that are transferable to any program:

- [Mentor's Worksheet for Evaluating Mentee Goals](#), adapted from Lois Zachary [The Mentor's Guide](#)
- [Setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals: 7 Steps to Achieving Any Goal](#)
- [Is it Time for S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goal setting](#)
- [SMART Goals: The Essential Guide](#)
- [Writing Smart Learning Objectives](#)
- [Writing SMART Goals](#)

Here's an example of a Learning Plan for someone who wants to develop plant identification skills for range forage and other native plants:

Skill objective: learn forage plants on range	Task or Action	Resource to Use	Timeline
Intro to range	Field day with mentor	Field guides, mentor, take notes	May 1
What grows there and why	Make list from mentor and NRCS range ecologist info	Take field guides with me to range,	April 15 on
Learn key plants	Learn at least 2 plants each week - know them on site	Pick plants, plant journal, keep field guides on table to look at during meals	May 31 know 8 main cool season plants
Nutritional value	Learn for each plant	Forage and plant field guides, mentor, websites	Ongoing as In learn each plant name, location, etc.



PHOTO CREDIT: Glynwood Center New York

Debriefs and Check-ins

Both debriefs and check-ins create open communication channels that serve both mentors and trainees. They can be completed quickly or more deliberately, depending on the needs and circumstances, but the more frequently mentors can do either or both, the more likely they will be to clear up confusion or clear the air after a long hard day of work before tensions develop. Both are described briefly below. More prompts for starting conversations can be found in the [Feedback section](#) of this Toolkit.

Debriefs: Debriefs are a great tool to use frequently. Immediately after a work session or event, mentors would do well to take a few minutes to talk about what went well and what could have gone better, and discuss takeaways to consider for the next time either mentor or trainee engages in the same activity. For example, after vaccinating cattle, the mentor could share how well they felt they and the trainee worked together to move cattle through the corral, reflect on what tasks the trainee completed (vaccinating, using squeeze chute, etc), and discuss how they improved during the session or what they could try next time. The mentor should consider also sharing what they thought they (the mentor) did well or could do better next time. If there were any tense moments, the mentor and trainee can discuss what was happening and suggest ways to avoid that in the future, acknowledge where the mentor might have lost their temper, or where the trainee wasn't listening to instructions, etc.

The habit of conducting debriefs will help clear tensions and help the mentor better understand how their trainee learns. The process of debriefing can also help create strong, clear communication between mentor and trainee. Debriefing when things go well will help build rapport that, in turn, will help make difficult or constructive conversations easier when the day doesn't go so well.

The following list provides a few simple prompts for a mentor/trainee debrief:

- Discuss what elements of the day or activity went well and what the apprentice did to help.
- Mention what could have gone better, how you could improve yourself, as well as a few 'next step' pointers for the trainee to improve their skill.
- Ask the trainee what they felt went well in their own work and in the mentor's instruction.

Check-ins: Check-ins can be short conversations at the end of a long day, at the end of the week, or as needed. Check-ins are more personal in tone and content. This is when the mentor and trainee find out how things are really going, beneath the surface. More critically, a check-in is a meeting to discuss challenges or problems. As with debriefs, it's best to have check-ins often at the start of the training period, to get in the habit of talking about how things are going. Then, when problems arise, as they almost always will, you have a strong foundation in your relationship to talk constructively, bypass defensiveness, and move through the challenges. More on check-ins and how to discuss issues can be found in the [Feedback section](#) of this Toolkit.

An often overlooked topic to discuss is how the mentoring relationship and teaching is going. A mentor may be showing their trainee how to complete tasks, but how does the mentor know whether or not their descriptions and demonstrations are working? Here are a few questions for mentors to ask their trainees periodically, especially on a weekly basis at the beginning of their season with their mentor:

- How are we doing?
- Do you feel like the overall quality of our interactions is working for you?
- Am I explaining things in a way that makes sense for you or do I sometimes confuse you with too much/too little information?
- Where do you feel like your learning is going well?
- What has been your biggest frustration thus far?
- What's giving you the most satisfaction right now, when it comes to your work and learning?
- How is my teaching effective for you and what could I do differently to be more effective?
- More prompts in both the [Feedback and Communication sections](#) of this toolkit.
- [Quivira Coalition NAP Mentor Training call recording on Feedback.](#)

The “I don't know what to do” List

A common complaint of mentors is that, once a trainee has completed a task, they don't know what to do next—and there is always something productive to do on a farm or ranch. But a trainee doesn't know what tasks their mentor is ok to have them do without oversight unless the mentor tells them. Many mentors create a separate white board or list of chores and tasks a trainee can tackle when they aren't sure what they should be doing. These are often easy tasks that require little advance training, or can be quickly added to the trainee's skills. Here are some examples:

- Inventory fencing, plumbing, or other supplies, and make a list of what to purchase.
- Inventory fuel filters, air filters, and other basic vehicle maintenance supplies, and list what needs to be purchased.
- Sharpen shovels.
- Clean tack shed.
- Prep beds for seedlings.
- Do a soil moisture check in various beds/fields.
- Walk fences and make repairs as needed.
- Weed whack fence lines.

Lastly: Check out [these notes from a Mentor Training call](#) that focused on balancing education and work on farms and ranches with apprentice programs. These notes provide suggestions for providing a proper orientation for the trainee (from the place, time, work, and you as mentor); understanding the “big picture” as well as the daily priorities; understanding how you, the mentor, work and work styles; checking in an providing feedback in the first week and after they've been them awhile; and tips for maintaining motivation and addressing monotony.

CASE STUDY

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA)

MOFGA consists of a broad-based community that educates about, and advocates for, organic agriculture, with a focus on the connections between organic agriculture and a healthy environment, local food production, and thriving communities. The farm apprenticeship is one of many MOFGA programs, and serves to connect those seeking to learn organic farming practices with experienced farmers willing to share their knowledge and experience. In 2020, MOFGA has over 50 host farmers for their farmer training program. www.mofga.org

MOFGA's mentor network is built on the premise that farmers are the best co-learners and co-teachers for other farmers, with farmer-to-farmer interactions designed to be the backbone of their educational programming. All farmer conferences and workshops are set up with this in mind, with time set aside specifically for farmer-to-farmer learning and roundtable discussions. Host farmers commit to participating annually in continuing education from a range of offerings provided by MOFGA to learn how to better support their apprentices.

- **Basic Structure:** MOFGA's mentor peer-to-peer network is initiated and managed entirely by MOFGA staff and includes both in-person events and online communication platforms. Mentors are not held responsible for initiating or facilitating networking events, but do have open access to online platforms through which they can freely communicate with one another.
- **In-person Events:** MOFGA organizes conferences and workshops to meet the needs of all their programming, including some events designed specifically for host farmers [mentors]. These latter include conferences and workshops held at the MOFGA headquarters.
- **Online Platforms:** MOFGA offers host farmers several different options for communicating with one another, including an online listserv, a Google Group [functions via email], and social media. It is then up to host farmers to engage as much or as little as they wish.
- **Major Take-away:** Creating a variety of options for host farmer engagement that meet the varied needs of different personalities and communication preferences, including both in-person and online, formal and informal, facilitated and freeform, will help ensure maximum participation. It is critical for host farmers to connect with other host farmers and feel a sense of peer camaraderie and support.



PHOTO CREDIT: Windy City Chicago

2.9 Setting Expectations

Expectations are far-ranging and come from both the mentor and the trainee. They range from smoking or visitor policies to standard work hours, direct hands-on contact hours the trainee expects and needs from their mentor, and the mentor's expectations as to how quickly a trainee will learn and retain knowledge and skill. You name it, there's an expectation attached to it.

Ideally, in the written materials to advertise a mentor's training position, and your program's general application, make clear basic expectations regarding policies, work schedule, etc. These expectations are best noted in any written information related to your program and verbalized as well during interviews, so the applicant clearly understands basic requirements and rules for a given position. Check out the [Mentor Descriptions on the Quivira Coalition New Agrarian page](#) to see how different sites discuss these items. More than likely someone else's description will provide a template for your own.

It is highly recommended that important expectations are put in writing and that both parties (mentor and trainee) sign the document. Here's an [example of an employment contract](#) that clearly states expectations regarding housing, cell phone use, safety, visitors, and recreation on the property.

Ultimately, the best way for mentors to communicate expectations about anything—policies, schedules, or the right way to set up portable electric fences, to name a few—is to explain why. If a trainee understands why early mornings are necessary in August, why their friend can't bring a pet poodle to visit, or why they need to have a safety check prior to driving a tractor, they will more than likely have 'buy-in'—they will realize why it is important to do things the way their mentor has outlined them, at least at the start of their training period. And they'll know when and how to suggest a new idea, ask for feedback, and become a useful and effective member of the host farm or ranch team.

General Policies and Work Schedule

Here is a list of topics that are best considered thoroughly before you hire someone, to be sure you clearly communicate any rules or expectations to your applicants and new hire:

- Smoking, drug use (some states have legal recreational marijuana), and alcohol use on site, in provided housing, in vehicles, etc.
- Work schedule, including start and end times: do these change seasonally and if so what is the range or hours a person might work at different times of the year?
- Cleanliness of workplace, housing, vehicles.
- Pets allowed or not.
- Working animals allowed or not.
- Visitor policy.
- Group meal expectations, if pertinent.
- Cell phone use during work hours.
- Live-in partner or regular visitation by a partner.

Even if you have reviewed basic expectations with candidates during the interview process, be sure to touch base on them again when you make the hire.

- Talk about these points when you make your job offer; ask directly if any of these are an issue or concern for your apprentice.
- Some operations or programs ask new hires to sign a contract prior to arrival on site, which clearly notes these expectations and rules, so there is no possibility of someone showing up for an apprenticeship unclear on these parameters. An example of such a contract is listed below.
- Some programs or farms/ranches have an employee or apprentice handbook they send in advance to a new hire, that clearly lines out these issues.
- You can create a separate Code of Conduct for your ranch, farm, or program that apprentices are asked to sign.

Additional Resources

- [Recorded Mentor Training Call focusing on Setting Expectations](#) (see recording #4)
- [Top 10 Ways to Set Clear Expectations](#)

Education Expectations: Depending on age, educational background, and work experiences, trainees may have different expectations than their mentors do as to how learning occurs, how it is measured and monitored, and what types of support they will receive from their mentors. Employers give employees a work schedule, list of responsibilities, and compensation details. Mentors provide these as well, but need to go a step further. Mentors need to explain the way lessons will be offered (e.g., if there are separate days or sessions for lessons and others for work, or if lessons are rolled into the workday). Mentors also need to discover what expectations the trainee has regarding how much time they will have with their mentor and whether self-study or other non-work-hour research or classroom training is expected of them. Both parties need to know how feedback will be offered and who initiates a check-in or feedback session.

Education on a working farm or ranch is co-created by the mentor and trainee, so a shared

understanding and agreement of how work and education occur is the foundation for shared expectations. Some learning is built into each day's chores, some learning is season-specific, and some learning will require intentional, proactively scheduled teaching time. The sooner mentors discuss their calendars and workflow with their trainees, and get a read on their trainees' incoming skill levels and learning aptitudes, the sooner individual mentors will be able to co-create a system for learning to happen.

Refer to the section on Work and Education Balance for tips on creating S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goals, Learning Plans, skill sheet use, and other ways to create clear goals, measure success, and determine how and when focused learning can occur.

A few additional tools to help mentors create sound accountability for themselves and their trainees are listed here.

The table below, adapted from [The Mentor's Guide](#), by Lois J. Zachary, provides a sample list of questions to discuss to help clarify expectations.

Outcomes	Questions to Ask
Well-defined goals	What are the specific learning outcomes desired by mentee and mentor during this time?
Measuring Success	What criteria will we use and how often will we evaluate progress?
Mutual Responsibility	Who is responsible for which elements of our meetings, accomplishing goals, etc?
Accountability	How do we make sure we follow through with our responsibilities? How will we remind each other when we are not following through with scheduled meetings, trainings, etc?
Stumbling Blocks	What kinds of challenges might we encounter due to time, learning curve, etc? How do we want to address these when they arise?
Mentoring Agreement	What do we want to write down as our agreement on the above points?
Work plan for learning goals	How will we identify the next most relevant learning goal, and what is our plan to make sure we take advantage of it?

Mentoring Agreements: Some programs choose to clarify expectations regarding the educational process and responsibilities in a written mentoring agreement. While it may feel overly formal for a ranch or farm setting, it can be useful for mentors to write down basic agreements regarding how often check-ins will happen regarding the progress of learning goals, whether or not the mentor’s teaching is clear, and then strategize with their trainee how to keep the learning going during busy times of the season. An example can be found in the [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#), page 57.

Accountability

Levels of Ongoing Accountability [adapted from [The Mentor’s Guide](#), by Lois J. Zachary]

- The mentoring relationship
 - » How are we doing?
 - » Are we satisfied with how our interactions are going?
 - » What might we try to strengthen our relationship and communication?
- The learning process
 - » Are the lessons, on-the-spot teaching and other educational processes working for you?
 - » How are your learning goals moving forward?
 - » What can we try that could make your learning stronger/better for you?
 - » What are you learning about yourself as a learner in this environment?
- Progress towards learning goals
 - » Which of your goals are moving ahead well?
 - » What’s been a success for you thus far?
 - » What’s your biggest frustration?
 - » What’s giving you the most satisfaction about what you are learning?

From [Common Sense Mentoring](#), by Larry Ambrose:

- “If you are not hearing from your mentee, don’t wait.” Be proactive and set up a time to talk, and talk only about what is going on in your partnership, not about the current topic being learned. Your objective is to find out if your mentoring is effective or not, and if not, what you can do to make it better.
- Mentees have lots of feedback for you, but they will seldom tell you about it. Mentees will “assign authority” to you, and have been taught to avoid giving feedback to an authority figure. Solicit feedback from them! Ask:
 - » “Tell me one thing I can do more of or begin doing that would help you.”
 - » “Tell me something that I do that isn’t helpful.”
 - » “The other day I gave you lots of details when describing how the engine works—was that useful or was it confusing? What would have been more helpful for you?”

[This Mentoring Partner Check in Accountability Tool](#)

from the Center for Mentoring Excellence provides a way to “grade” various activities or actions relevant to the mentor-mentee relationship. You can either download and use it as-is, or use it as a guide to create your own form. Visit the [Center for Mentoring Excellence](#) website to explore the many other available resources.

2.10 Working Across Intergenerational Difference

“The generation we belong to is one of the many differences we may have with our co-workers. These differences can cause stress, discomfort, conflict and frustration. They can also become a source for creativity and productivity.”

– Claire Raines, author of *Generations at Work*, *Connecting Generations*, *The Art of Connecting*, and other works

Have you ever found yourself saying in exasperation, “These young kids are so entitled!” or “You don’t get a gold star for showing up!” Have you seen trainees roll their eyes when their mentor gets flustered over their smart phone updating itself or asking if you want to send a text message using “Slam”? Welcome to the intergenerational workplace.

Anyone engaged in agriculture knows that the average age of a farmer or rancher is 65 and getting older every year. It’s also true that the majority of newcomers to agriculture are young adults, often pursuing a first career, with little to no experience in agriculture, rural living, or working closely with people older than their parents. The potential for misunderstanding and miscommunication looms large, exacerbated by simplified caricatures of Boomers, Millennials, Gen X’ers, and Gen Y’ers that circulate in popular media, social networks, and even business publications. While generationalizations about different generations can be informative, we are each an individual and no such generalization will be entirely accurate, and may even be insulting, whether we are 22 or 67 years of age.

People are marked by the historical, economical, social, and political events of their childhood and adolescence, and these

events do shape generations of people, but how an individual is shaped can differ significantly. Those who grew up during the Vietnam War in the United States may have become fervent anti-war activists or may have served in the military. Both were shaped by the times, but how they responded and how this plays out in their values and personality now might be vastly different from one another. All this to say that generalizations can be as much of a trap as they can be useful. And, to quote the article [“Why Generational Differences Are a Workplace Myth”](#): “The truth is that what motivates your employees at work has nothing to do with their generation.”

What is most critical is that mentors and trainees approach each other first and foremost as individuals, not as members of a generational cohort. Rather than assume a Gen Z trainee never reads books and only listens to podcasts, urge their mentor to ask them their preferred method of learning new information. And if a trainee thinks their mentor is closed to new ideas, encourage the mentor to share stories about their youth or times they made risky choices in life or business, that demonstrate a willingness to grow and change, even if they may not agree with their trainee’s idea about how the host ranch Instagram page should function.

With this in mind, reviewing the most common Generational Generalizations can reveal some of the potential misperceptions mentors and trainees may have about one another. The internet abounds with such tables, but here are two that capture some major themes, adapted from [Instructor Guide Generations](#).

Profile	WW II	Baby Boomer	Generation X	Millennial
Outlook	Practical	Optimistic	Skeptical	Hopeful
Work Ethic	Dedicated	Driven	Balanced	Ambitious
View of Authority	Respectful	Love/Hate	Unimpressed	Relaxed/polite
Leadership happens by	Hierarchy	Consensus	Competence	Achievers
Relationships	Personal sacrifice	Personal gratification	Reluctant to commit	Loyal
Perspective	Civic	Team	Self	Civic
Technology	Adapts to	Acquires skill	Assimilated	Integral

Here’s another view of this information, in the form of the compelling messages and motivations of different generations:

- WW II
 - » Make do or do without
 - » Stay in line
 - » Sacrifice
 - » Be Heroic
 - » Consider the common good
- Baby Boomers
 - » Be anything you want to be
 - » Change the world
 - » Work well with others
 - » Live up to expectations
 - » Duck and cover -- nuclear war drills
- Generation X
 - » Don’t count on anything
 - » Remember, heroes aren’t necessarily heroes
 - » Get real
 - » Survive
 - » Ask “Why?”
- Millennials
 - » Be smart - you are special
 - » Leave no one behind
 - » Connect with others 24/7
 - » Achieve now!
 - » Serve your community



PHOTO CREDIT: University of Maryland Institute of Applied Agriculture

There are a few key things to realize about such charts:

1. They leave out the youngest generation coming into the workforce, alternately referred to as “iGen” (as in internet generation) or Gen Z. These are people born between 1994 and 2013. Many trainees are of this generation.
2. Mentors who grew up in agriculture and on family farms or ranches likely share many characteristics with the WWII generation, as opposed to the classic Baby Boomer. For example, many Boomer ranchers who mentor would say they believe in self-sacrifice and ‘make do or do without’ rather than the items listed in the Boomer category.
3. Here’s a TED Talk [“How generational stereotypes hold us back at work”](#) speaks to the problems that can occur when we don’t examine the stereotypes we may have regarding generations different than our own.

To augment these charts, here are a few generalizations about Gen Z from various business publications:

- While they are “digital natives” and at ease with social media and technological communication, they want and crave in-person human connections in the workplace.
- Almost 40 percent of Gen Z’ers say that the work-life balance is the most important factor they consider when it comes to where and how they work.
- They need feedback, and they want and need it to be specific, measurable, with tangible action points they can work on right away. Daily touch-ins with a few basic feedback points can make the difference between a happy and a miserable Gen Z employee or apprentice.
- 80 percent of Gen Z’ers see failure as a chance to grow and improve, not as a reason to believe they are incapable of learning how to do the task well.

Additional Resources

A few resources that discuss the iGen/Gen Z person in the workplace are listed here:

- [“How Generation Z will revolutionize the workplace”](#) Forbes Magazine
- [“Generation Z says they work the hardest”](#)

So now that we know that generalizations are both useful and potentially harmful, how can we use the differences and gifts of each generation as the sources of “creativity and productivity” noted in the opening quote? The simplest thing to do is to have mentors and trainees find times to talk to one another as individuals. Urge them to ask questions of each other that illuminate the cultural, historical, political, and personal events that shaped them. Here are a few ideas:

- What sort of haircut did you have as a kid, or as a teenager? Did your mom ever cut your hair? Did you ever have a terrible haircut that made you self-conscious at school?
- What music did your parents listen to? Did they play an instrument? Did you listen to the radio?
- Did your family eat any meals sitting around a table? What was that like, how often did it happen, was it tense or did you have fun?
- What games did you play as a kid, with friends, with your family—board games, cards, sports?
- Was there an event in your childhood or adolescence that really affected you? For example, for Boomers, the Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. assassinations may have been critical events in their lives, for Millennials, 9/11 or school shootings may deeply shape their views.

Asking questions like these while driving to a pasture or the parts store, while putting away tools, etc., will help mentors and trainees get to know one another as people and provide insights into how growing up when each did, and current age, have shaped how each work, communicate, and think. This, more than any chart, will help mentors and trainees navigate any differences due to age or background—and they may discover that they share some childhood experiences, favorite musicians, or a love of baseball.

Here are an array of activities that can assist in uncovering the ways mentors and trainees are shaped by their generation—or not—and the misconceptions they may have about one another that interfere with building a strong and enjoyable relationship. The first four activities are from an instructor guide on the [West Virginia transportation department website](#).



Using the above charts, identify for yourself:

1. What were the defining historic and social events of the era in which you grew up?
2. What messaging did you get from your parents, school, media, etc that shaped you?
3. How do you think these things impact your choice of agriculture as your life and work, and how do they shape the way you approach your work?

Think of a situation where you experienced a disconnect with someone from another generation -- where no matter how hard you tried, things simply didn't click. How did you respond -- Level 1, 2 or 3? And how might you try to respond in the future, using one of these levels?

- Level 1: Acknowledge it and let it go
- Level 2: Change your behavior to achieve better communication
- Level 3: Use a generational template to talk over what is going on

Work Culture

- What words would you use to describe your work culture?
- If you were to personify your work culture, what generation would it be a member of?
- How does your workplace culture enhance or inhibit participation of everyone who works there?

Work Culture Generalizations:

Generation	Work Culture
WW II	Stable, secure, respectful, clearly defined roles, clear directions
Baby Boomer	Advancement, recognition, team orientation, vision, mission, non-hierarchical
Generation X	Flexible, results-oriented, efficient, informal, fun, with opportunities for development
Millennial	Positive, collaborative, flexible, respectful, achievement oriented

Have a conversation that covers some or all of these questions:

- When it comes to having a satisfying, balanced life, what, besides your job, is important to you?
- Are there important parts of your life that you feel are neglected because of your job? If yes, what are they?
- What, specifically, could we do to help us achieve a better balanced life?
- What can you do to create more balance yourself?

“What is most critical is that mentors and trainees approach each other first and foremost as individuals, not as members of a generational cohort - no one wants to be reduced to a caricature of their generation.”

The following two activities are more lighthearted and can be informative and help break the ice when it comes to talking about stereotypes and misperceptions about each other's generation. These come from the [Intergenerational Activities Sourcebook](#) compiled by Pennsylvania State University Extension:

Confronting the Stereotypes

1. Write out the statements listed below for every participant
2. Read aloud each statement, one at a time, and then say whether you each think it describes young people, old people, people of a certain generation
3. Note which statements seem to stereotype which age or generation, and how you think these may be things you think or say sometimes
4. Here are the statements -- or come up with your own:
 - » “They always stick together and keep their distance from other age groups.”
 - » “I hate the way they drive. They are a menace on the road.”
 - » “They’re always taking and never giving. They think the world owes them a living.”
 - » “They’re so opinionated. They think they know everything.”
 - » They’re never satisfied, always complaining about something.”
 - » “Don’t hire them, you can’t depend on them.”
 - » “Don’t they have anything better to do than hang around the (fill in the blank) _____ (coffee shop, mall, Apple Store, etc.)?”
 - » “Why are they so forgetful?”
 - » “I wish I had as much freedom as they have.”
 - » “Why don’t they act their age?”

Slang Chart

1. Have everyone say what they think about slang words -- do they use slang, what are some favorite slang words, and acknowledge that some slang words can be offensive, intentionally or unintentionally
2. Identify the slang words you each use for these terms.

Word	Young people	Young/middle age people	Older Adults
Good/nice			
Police officer			
Money			
House			
Friend			
Hello			
Goodbye			
Food			
Talk			

The most important thing to remember is that, no matter how old the trainee, the age gap between mentor and trainee, or how frequently they both are confused by one another's words, cultural references, or learning challenges, everyone wants to feel valued, everyone wants to be useful, and everyone wants to be treated as the individual that they are. No one wants to be reduced to a caricature of their generation, including trainees. The tips in the chapter on Communication will help mentors create a work environment that does all of the above, for mentors and those who work for them.

Additional Resources

Here is another excellent resource to help navigate the real differences in life experience and the events that shaped you, while avoiding stereotypes:

- Harvard Business Review has a whole category of articles on Generational Issues, well worth looking over. [“The Key to Preventing Generational Tension Is Remembering That Everyone Wants to Feel Valued,”](#) by Liane Davey [July 16, 2018] is quite pertinent.

CHAPTER 3

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



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The importance of addressing issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and structural and systemic racism as a prominent part of your mentor training program cannot be overstated. Ensuring that DEI and racial equity work are fully incorporated on the ground level through your mentors is essential. The United States was founded on a tragic history of indigenous land theft, genocide, and slavery. Systemic discrimination continues today and permeates every sector and community, including—and in many ways especially in—agriculture. People face barriers and unequal access to resources based on prejudices of race and culture, gender, class or socioeconomic status,

“You have to get over the fear of facing the worst in yourself. You should instead fear unexamined racism. Fear the thought that right now, you could be contributing to the oppression of others and you don’t know it. But do not fear those who bring that oppression to light. Do not fear the opportunity to do better.”

– Ijeoma Oluo, [So You Want to Talk About Race](#)



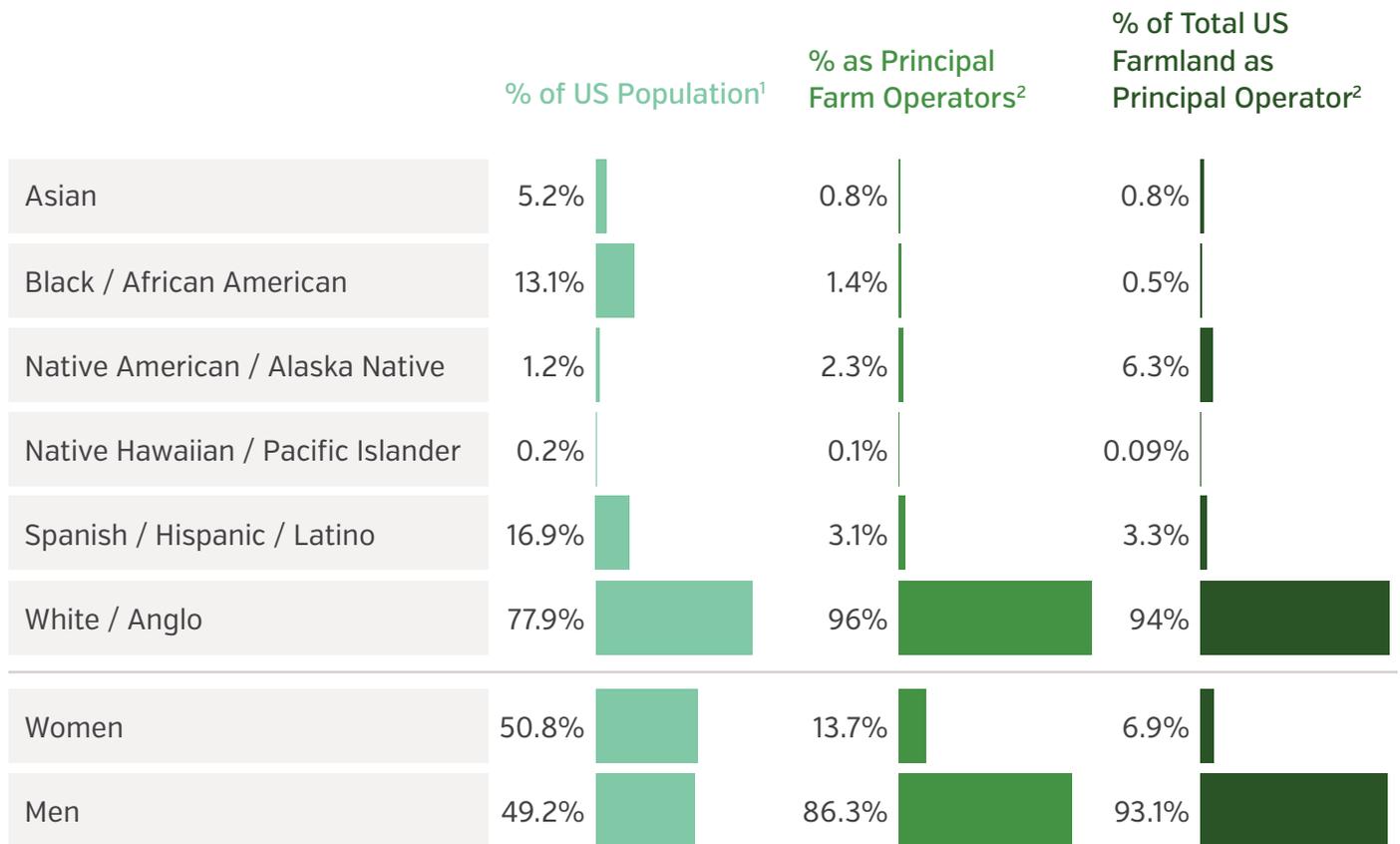
PHOTO CREDIT: Windy City Chicago

sexual orientation, religion, age, and physical ability. In particular, the history of agriculture in this country includes blatant discrimination and denial of government programs which prevented land access and ownership among Black and Hispanic/Latino farmers and other racial minorities, and facilitated the exploitation of countless groups of agricultural workers. This legacy extends throughout our food system today and without addressing it directly and working to dismantle these systems of oppression in ourselves, through our organizations and programs, and in our communities, we are all complicit in perpetuating continued injustice.

A quick look at 2012 Census data reveals that People of Color (POC) and women are greatly underrepresented both in the percentage of principal operators within their racial (or gender) group as well as in the percentage of U.S. farmland they operate, compared to U.S. totals and taking into account what percentage of the total U.S. population they represent. A 2002 USDA report titled [Who Owns the Land](#), showed that Black people own less than 1 percent of the rural land in the United States and the total value of all of that land is only 14 billion dollars, out of a total land value of more than 1.2 trillion dollars, while the total land that white people owned is 96 percent of rural land, whites own 97 percent of the value, and 98 percent of the acres. This was not always the case. After the Civil War, Black ownership of

land increased and was primarily used for farming. In 1910, the year many consider the peak of Black land ownership in the US, African Americans had gained ownership over 16-19 million acres, which meant that they were also in control of 14 percent of the farms located in the United States. Today, Blacks represent just [1.4 percent of the farming community](#), owning 4.7 million acres of land, a 90 percent loss.

Many factors contributed to the [loss of Black-owned land](#) during the 20th century, including systemic discrimination in lending by the US Department of Agriculture, the industrialization that lured workers into factories, and the Great Migration. [Heirs' property](#), which involves inherited co-ownership by two or more individuals and can result in increasingly fractionated divisions of land—often without clear titles of ownership due to the lack of wills and deeds—also allowed thousands of acres to be forcibly bought out from under Black rural families—often second-, third-, or fourth-generation landowners whose ancestors were enslaved—by real-estate developers and speculators. There is an incredibly [long and deliberate history](#) of policies, practices, and continued disenfranchisement of land and wealth building opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Understanding systemic discrimination in land ownership is critical to understanding why our agricultural communities are predominantly white



1. United States Census Bureau: [National Population by Characteristics: 2010-2019](#)

2. [2012 Census of Agriculture: Race / Ethnicity / Gender Profile](#)

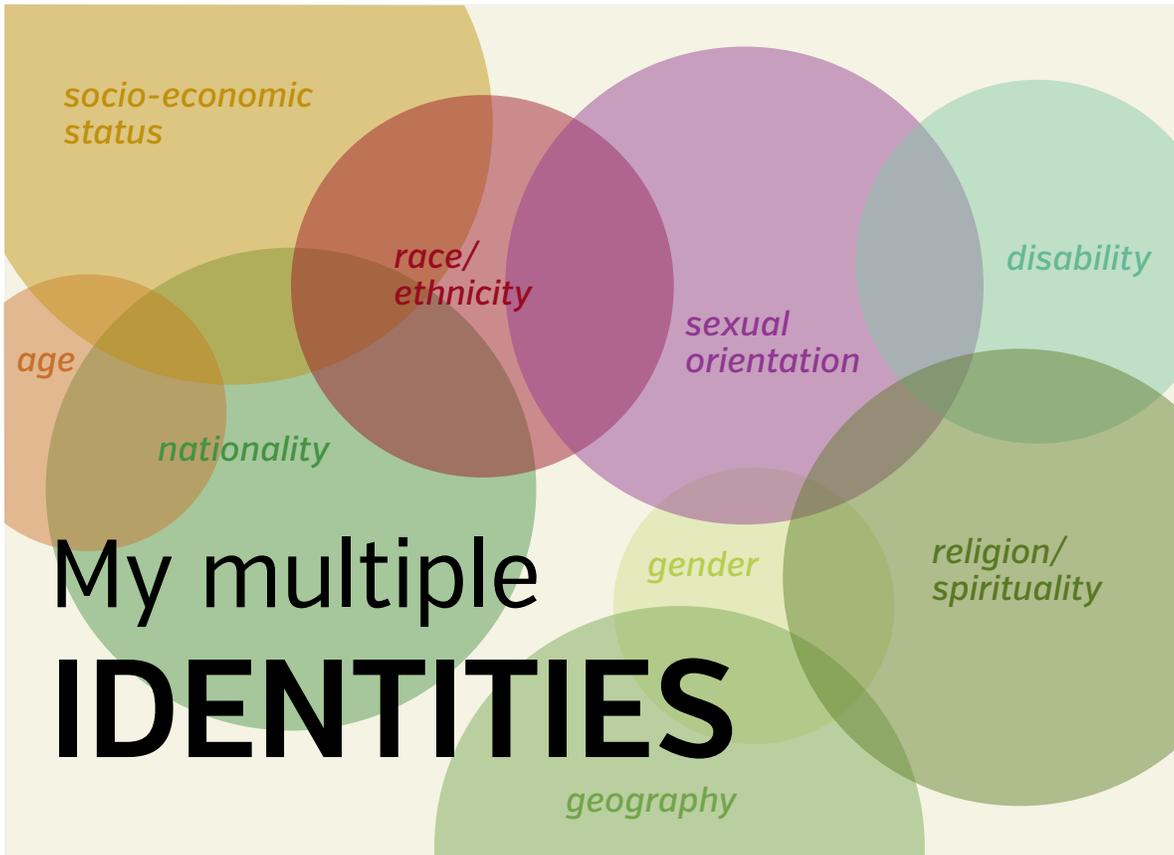
and why it is imperative for white people involved in agriculture to support [reparations](#): a truthful reckoning with history and a commitment to never repeating or perpetuating the injustices.

The fact that statistics on farm and land ownership by LGBTQ individuals is extremely difficult to find or is not tracked at all tells you that they are likely even more underrepresented in agriculture. Even more difficult to track down are statistics that explore the intersectionality between categories of diversity, and how individuals who express multiple dimensions of diversity are [under]represented in agriculture.

Organizations and programs whose mission it is to grow the next generation of farmers, ranchers, and land stewards, or to help shepherd land transfer from one generation to the next, have a responsibility to ensure inclusive and equitable learning environments that draw and retain a cadre of trainees

fully representative of all dimensions of diversity present in our country. Supporting mentors to bring their “whole selves” to their mentorship relationships, helping them recognize their privilege and power relationships, and acknowledging they have a responsibility to set aside their prejudices and biases to support trainees constitutes an important part of this journey.

Our aim with this chapter is not to develop our own, comprehensive guide for how to prioritize DEI or dismantle racism in your program design or mentor development. Others who are much better qualified to address these important topics have done excellent work in this arena, with much more depth of experience and knowledge than we can claim, and many valuable resources already exist as a result, both online and in print. Rather, we will use this chapter primarily to introduce and define terms and concepts important to DEI and racial equity; to suggest a few, initial



steps you can take in your own program and with your mentors; and to present you with existing resources to help guide and inform your work.

Although we understand that our readers will inevitably come from different backgrounds and levels of familiarity, direct experience, and knowledge with regards to DEI, this chapter may be most helpful to those who are just beginning this journey, both for themselves as individuals and for their organizations. With that in mind, we begin each section with suggestions for the readers to apply to their own lives, both personal and professional, with the understanding that until you gain personal experience and context in a given field of work, you may not be necessarily well-equipped to guide others on the same journey. We hope you'll take the time to explore the various tools, resources, and exercises below yourself, then work with your staff, your organizational leadership, and ultimately with your mentors to do the same.

That said, we also believe that whatever

your personal or professional experience or level of comfort with DEI and anti-racism work, it is critical to take the first [or thousandth] step and continue putting in the hard work. If we are serious about dismantling systemic racism and prejudices that have been deeply entrenched in our culture and institutions for generations, we have to challenge ourselves at all levels to do better. Take action now and overcome any fears of not knowing what to say, what to do, and don't let a lack of experience keep you from diving into this lifelong work.

Remember, you are not alone in undertaking this important work—you don't have to do this in isolation or in the dark—there are experienced, qualified people out there who can help you. Unless you already have experience building or incorporating DEI principles and racial equity work into an organization and staff, consider hiring a consultant, specialized trainer, or facilitator to help guide your staff, organization, and mentors on this journey (see Section 3.3).

3.1 Definitions

Let's start by breaking down key concepts that encompass DEI that you may need to become more familiar with and that are commonly referred to as you or your organization starts your journey. We'll begin with one version of definitions for the terms "Diversity," "Equity," and "Inclusion," courtesy of the [eXtension Organizing Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, eXtension Foundation](#):

- **Diversity** is the presence of differences that may include race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, language, [dis]ability, age, religious commitment, or political perspective. Populations that have been—and remain—underrepresented among practitioners in the field and marginalized in the broader society.
- **Equity** is promoting justice, impartiality and fairness within the procedures, processes, and distribution of resources by institutions or systems. Tackling equity issues requires an understanding of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.
- **Inclusion** is an outcome to ensure those that are diverse actually feel and/or are welcomed. Inclusion outcomes are met when you, your institution, and your program are truly inviting to all. To the degree to which diverse individuals are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes and development opportunities within an organization or group.

[The National Young Farmers Coalition's Young Farmers Racial Equity Toolkit](#) also provides a glossary of terms for Racial Equity work, including the following:

- **Racial Equity** is a "set of social justice practices, rooted in a solid understanding and analysis of historical and present-day oppression, aiming towards a goal of fairness for all" ([Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance](#)).
- **Structural Racism** is a system of public policies, representations, institutional attitudes and practices, which reinforce and perpetuate racial inequity, exposing Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color disproportionately to various forms of disenfranchisement and violence.
- **White Privilege** is an advantage, or set of advantages, that people of European descent and/or people perceived as white benefit from, based upon their race in a society characterized by racial inequality and injustice. People can be beneficiaries of white privilege without consciousness of racism or forms of privilege; they often feel entitled to the benefits of this privilege even as it perpetuates structural oppressions.

Refer to the [NYFC Racial Equity Toolkit](#) directly for definitions of additional terms such as: allies and accomplices, cultural humility, decolonization, food apartheid, heteropatriarchy, rematriation/repatriation, reparations, and safer or liberated space [see page 4 of the Toolkit for more definitions]. NYFC developed their definitions through work with the [Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance \[AORTA\]](#).

- **Anti-Racist.** In [How to Be An Antiracist](#), author [Ibram X. Kendi](#) defines an anti-racist as “someone who is expressing an antiracist idea or supporting an antiracist policy with their actions.” He also defines an antiracist idea “as any idea that considers all racial groups are equal.” He further clarifies that “to be anti-racist is to think nothing is behaviorally wrong or right – inferior or superior – with any of the racial groups. Whenever the anti-racist sees individuals behaving positively or negatively, the anti-racist sees exactly that: individuals behaving positively or negatively, not representatives of whole races. To be anti-racist is to de-racialize behavior, to remove the tattooed stereotype from every racialized body. Behavior is something humans do, not races do.”
- **Colorism or shadeism** are other terms that deserve clarification. Distinct from racism, colorism is prejudice of one group against another based on the nuances or shades of color – how “light” or how “dark” – is a person’s skin. The term was coined by Alice Walker in her 1983 book, [In Search of our Mothers’ Gardens](#). Walker defined colorism as “prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-race people based solely on their color.” Colorism happens across the globe in all cultures and can happen within and among communities of color.
- **BIPOC** is an acronym frequently used to describe, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (POC). People of Color (POC) is also used as a collective term for men and women of Asian, African, Latin and Native American backgrounds; as opposed to the collective “White” for those of European ancestry.
- **Equality** is the state of affairs in which all people within a specific society or isolated group have the same status in certain respects, including civil rights, freedom of speech, property rights and equal access to certain social goods and services.
- **Equity** is often confused with equality, but building on the definition above, equity takes into consideration the fact that the social identifiers—race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.—do, in fact, affect equality. In an equitable environment, an individual or a group would be given what was needed to give them equal advantage. This would not necessarily be equal to what others were receiving. It could be more or different. Equity is an ideal and a goal, not a process. It ensures that everyone has the resources they need to succeed.
- **Intersectionality** is an approach largely advanced by women of color, arguing that classifications such as gender, race, class, and others cannot be examined in isolation from one another; they interact and intersect in individuals’ lives, in society, in social systems, and are mutually constitutive. Exposing [one’s] multiple identities can help clarify the ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege and oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a white woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life.

Other key definitions (taken from [Pacific University’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#); we encourage you to review their comprehensive A-Z glossary online) that will surface through this work include:

- **Ally** is a person of one social identity group who stands up in support of members of another group. This may be a member of a dominant group who stands beside a member[s] of a targeted or oppressed group; e.g., a male arguing for equal pay for women. [Amélie Lamont](#) created an excellent [Guide to Allyship](#).

- **Micro-Aggressions** are commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory racial slights. These messages may be sent verbally (“You speak good English”), non-verbally (clutching one’s purse more tightly around people from a certain race or ethnicity), or environmentally (symbols like the confederate flag or using Native American mascots). Such communications are usually outside the level of conscious awareness of perpetrators.
- **Oppression** results from the use of institutional power and privilege where one person or group benefits at the expense of another. Oppression is the use of power and the effects of domination. Systems of Oppression are conscious and unconscious, non random, and organized harassment, discrimination, exploitation, discrimination, prejudice and other forms of unequal treatment that impact different groups.
- **Prejudice** is prejudgment or preconceived opinion, feeling, or belief, usually negative, often based on stereotypes, that includes feelings such as dislike or contempt and is often enacted as discrimination or other negative behavior; OR, a set of negative personal beliefs about a social group that leads individuals to prejudge individuals from that group or the group in general, regardless of individual differences among members of that group.
- **Privilege** is unearned access to resources (social power) only readily available to some individuals as a result of their social group.
- **Race** is a social construct that artificially divides individuals into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly skin color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation or history, ethnic classification, and/or the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Scientists agree that there is no biological or genetic basis for racial categories.
- **Racism** is prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on a difference in race or ethnicity, usually by white/European descent groups against persons of color. Racism is racial prejudice plus power. It is the intentional or unintentional use of power to isolate, separate and exploit others. The use of power is based on a belief in superior origin, the identity of supposed racial characteristics. Racism confers certain privileges on and defends the dominant group, which in turn, sustains and perpetuates racism.
- **Racist** is a person who believes in racism or engages in racist behaviors; one who believes that a particular racial group is superior to another racial group.
- **Social Identity** involves the ways in which one characterizes oneself, the affinities one has with other people, the ways one has learned to behave in stereotyped social settings, the things one values in oneself and in the world, and the norms that one recognizes or accepts governing everyday behavior.
- **Social Justice** is a broad term for action intended to create genuine equality, fairness, and respect among peoples.
- **Token-ism** is hiring, inviting, or seeking to have representation such as a few women and/or racial or ethnic minority persons so as to appear inclusive while remaining mono-cultural.



PHOTO CREDIT: Glynwood Center New York

- **Unconscious Bias (Implicit Bias)** are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness. Everyone holds unconscious beliefs about various social and identity groups, and these biases stem from one's tendency to organize social worlds by categorizing.
- **Whiteness** encompasses a broad social construction that embraces the white culture, history, ideology, racialization, expressions, economic systems, experiences, and emotions and behaviors and nonetheless reaps material, political, economic, and structural benefits for those socially deemed "white."
- **White Fragility** is the discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice. Robin DiaAngelo's book, [White Fragility: Why it's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism](#), is an excellent primer.
- **White Privilege** is the spillover effect of racial prejudice and white institutional power. It means, for example, that a white person—or a person perceived as white—in the United States has privilege, simply because one is white. It means that as a member of the dominant group a white person has greater access or availability to resources because of being white. It means that white ways of thinking and living are seen as the norm against which all people of color are compared. Life is structured around those norms for the benefit of white people. White privilege is the ability to grow up thinking that race doesn't matter. It is not having to daily think about skin color and the questions, looks, and hurdles that need to be overcome because of one's color. White privilege may be less recognizable to some white people because of gender, age, sexual orientation, economic class or physical or mental ability, but it remains a reality because of one's membership in the white dominant group.
- **White Supremacy** is a historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of continents, nations and individuals of color by white individuals and nations of the European continent for the purpose of maintaining and defending a system of wealth, power and privilege.

There are far more terms and definitions pertinent to this chapter than could be included here, and terms are ever-expanding and changing, but this is a good place to start.

3.2 Getting Started

“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

– Lao Tzu

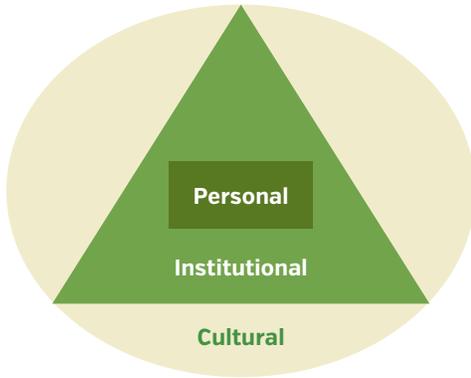
If you are new to this work, we recommend that you start your DEI and anti-racism journey by both familiarizing yourself with the context and history of racism and racist policies in the United States and the basic framework and language around DEI. Another important first step is to honestly assess your own level of awareness, knowledge, and comfort with this work. In particular, if you identify as white, start with assessing your own understanding of whiteness and white privilege. It doesn't really matter which comes first, and in reality the two processes overlap quite a bit. It is also important to keep in mind how your organization might approach its own DEI and racial equity journey while you may be supporting and guiding your farm mentors on their own process of learning and “unlearning” that needs to happen to make progress on these critical issues. This can feel overwhelming and frustrating to not feel like an “expert” or it may be uncomfortable to lack confidence in the skills and experience to navigate this space effectively.

This is where understanding where you are on your own journey along an [anti-racist continuum](#)—personally, professionally, and organizationally—may be a useful place to start. It is also helpful to be aware of the many expressions of racism that influence the way we perpetuate racist behaviors. The following models are explained in detail in the [Dismantling Racism Resource Book](#) described below. There is the **personal** (one's own biases, prejudices, or behaviors, e.g., using a racist expression or making a racist assumption), the **cultural** (the norms, values, or standards of the dominant society that perpetuate racism, e.g., beauty is being a thin, blonde, white woman), and the **institutional** (policies that perpetuate racism across housing, government, education, media, business, health care, criminal justice, religion, e.g., reliance on low-paying immigrant labor by farms and factories).

“Diversity training can ask white people to change their consciousness while leaving their dominance intact; a racial justice approach requires an organizational transformation of power relations.”

– Western States Center, Dismantling Racism Resource Book

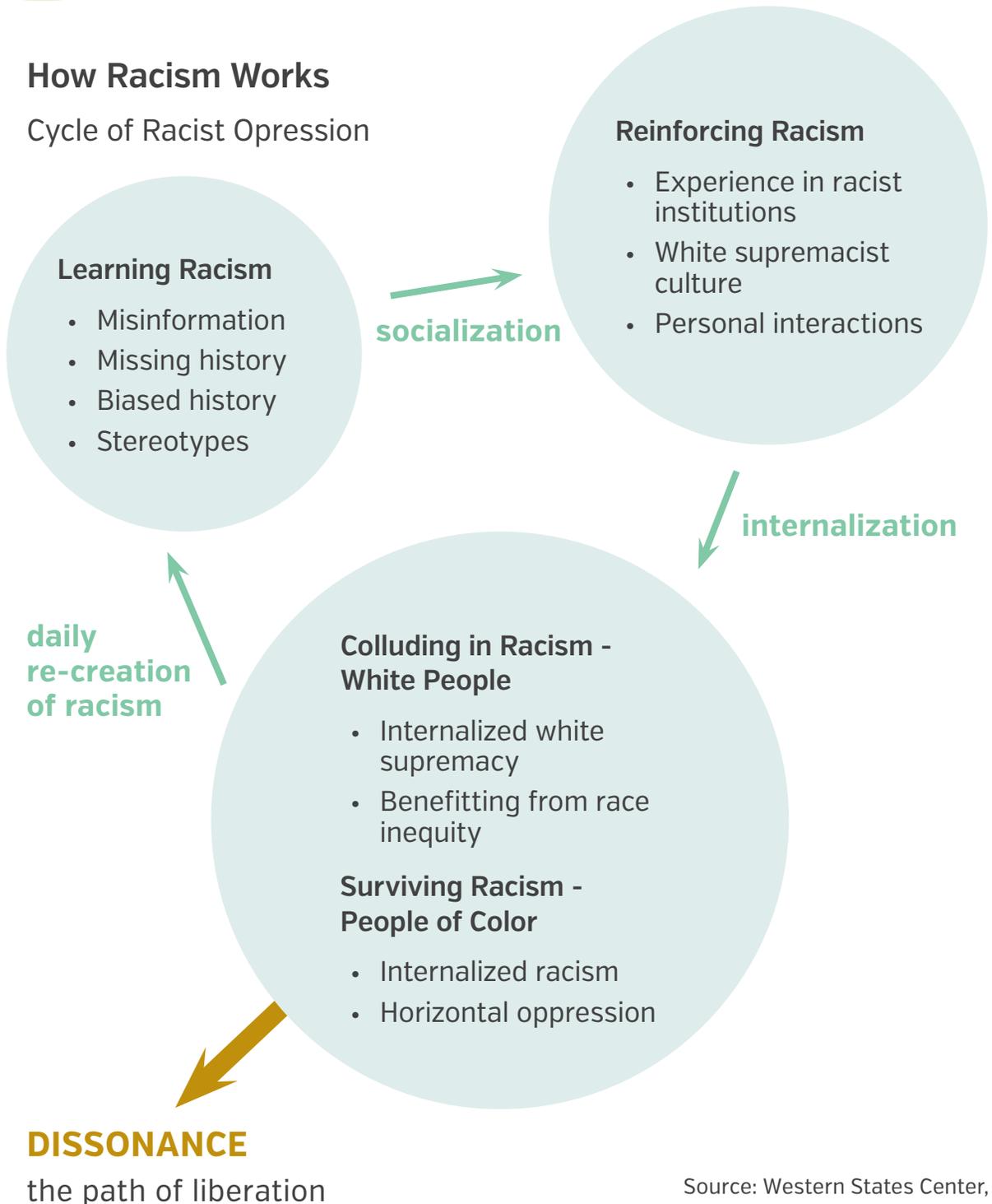
Three Expressions of Racism



These different expressions of racism at the individual/personal, cultural, and institutional levels all feed into the ongoing cycle of racist oppression. Recognizing that this is “forever work” is also important. Until we achieve collective liberation where everyone can be valued as fully human, we all must continue to be vigilant and take action to fight systems of oppression and work towards equality and equity across all dimensions of diversity.

How Racism Works

Cycle of Racist Oppression



Source: Western States Center, Dismantling Racism Resource Book

The self-assessment tools and suggestions we provide below will expose you to many helpful books, podcasts, webinars, videos, and other resources to help fill in the gaps.

Self-Assessment Resources

The [21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](#), developed by Dr. Eddie Moore, Jr., is a great place to start. This self-assessment tool asks you to commit to one action, every day for 21 consecutive days, that furthers your understanding of power, privilege, supremacy, oppression, and equity. The webpage dedicated to this exercise includes a list of resources for you to pick from each day, including books, podcasts, videos, reflections and other activities, organized by category. The plan includes a tracking chart that you can download and/or print, to help you stay on course. And while this tool is not specific to agriculture, food systems, or agrarian training programs, it succeeds in providing a “deep dive” experience that is easily transferable and adaptable to your work in agriculture.

[Food Solutions New England](#) took that same 21-day challenge created by Dr. Moore and adapted it to the food systems network needs, creating their very own [21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](#). They have organized and hosted their adapted version of the challenge as a participatory activity, open to anyone, each year since 2015. You can either use the resources on their website to create your own challenge, or you can sign up for their annual event. The next 21-day challenge will be hosted in April 2021, with [registration](#) available online. If you opt to go on this journey on your own or internally with your staff, organization, and eventually your mentors, their [“Tools for Groups”](#) page includes a downloadable Racial Equity Challenge Discussion Guide, a Racial Equity Challenge Facilitators Webinar, and a plethora of other useful resources.

Robin Di’Angelo’s book, [White Fragility](#),

Why It’s so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism, is another useful tool to discuss with your staff, organization, and your mentors. Robin defines White Fragility as “a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.” The book covers the many dynamics of White Fragility and [Robin’s website offers](#) a free reader’s guide that can be used for discussion. Dr. Di’Angelo has also authored several other resources, such as “What Does it Mean to be White? Developing Tools for White Racial Literacy” and “Is Everyone Really Equal? An Introduction to Key Concepts in Critical Social Justice Education.” Her website also provides links to other relevant published articles.

Ibram X. Kendi’s book, [So you Want to be Anti Racist](#) also provides critical self-assessment questions and homework that could be used individually and for team discussion. His website contains links to all of his [published essays on race in The Atlantic](#) and to resources available through the [Boston University Center for Antiracist Research](#) that Dr. Kendi founded and directs.

If you are unsure where you are in your own organization’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion practices, completing an internal assessment and rating your organization’s commitment to various practices on a scale of: 1 = Not started, 2 = Initial steps, 3 = Deeper work, 4 = Fully engaged can help develop priority areas where the organization or program can focus and take a deep dive at which areas need improvement. [Angela Park](#) offers an excellent [Organizational Self-Assessment Rubric and Questionnaire](#) to rate your organization’s engagement around DEI policies and procedures. This tool was created by Angela Park

in collaboration with Tiffany Chan, Curt Coffing, John Reuter, Hope Rippeon, and Ed Zuckerman of the State Capacity Building Department of the League of Conservation Voters who funded its creation. It was originally created for the Conservation Voter Movement and has been adapted by Angela. Your organization is invited and encouraged to use and adapt this tool; but please cite its origins when doing so.

The [Western States Center](#) published a free online [Dismantling Racism Resource Book](#) which provides the context of dismantling racism work, tools for developing shared language and analysis, and provides chapters on moving from internalized racist oppression to empowerment and internalized white supremacy to anti-racist white ally. The Resource Book also suggests additional videos and recommended readings. It is a great starting place for anti-racist organizational development. The Center also offers a free [21-day pledge to take action for inclusive democracy](#) with many articles and resources around systemic racism.

If you feel like having an experienced guide might be helpful to get you, your staff, and/or your organization started, consider reaching out to a consultant with expertise in DEI [see Section 3.3 for more on this topic].

Continuum on Becoming an Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization

MONOCULTURAL → MULTICULTURAL →
ANTI-RACIST → ANTI-RACIST MULTICULTURAL

Racial and Cultural Differences Seen as Deficits
→ *Tolerant of Racial and Cultural Differences* →
Racial and Cultural Differences Seen as Assets

1. Exclusive

An Exclusionary Institution

- Intentionally and publicly excludes or segregates African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans
- Intentionally and publicly enforces the racist status quo throughout institution
- Institutionalization of racism includes formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels
- Usually has similar intentional policies and practices toward other socially oppressed groups such as women, gays and lesbians, Third World citizens, etc.
- Openly maintains the dominant group's power and privilege

2. Passive

A "Club" Institution

- Tolerant of a limited number of "token" People of Color and members from other social identify groups allowed in with "proper" perspective and credentials.
- May still secretly limit or exclude People of Color in contradiction to public policies
- Continues to intentionally maintain white power and privilege through its formal policies and practices, teachings, and decision making on all levels of institutional life
- Often declares, "We don't have a problem."
- Monocultural norms, policies and procedures of dominant culture viewed as the "right" way" business as usual"
- Engages issues of diversity and social justice only on club member's terms and within their comfort zone.

3. Symbolic Change

A Compliance Organization

- Makes official policy pronouncements regarding multicultural diversity
- Sees itself as “non-racist” institution with open doors to People of Color
- Carries out intentional inclusiveness efforts, recruiting “someone of color” on committees or office staff
- Expanding view of diversity includes other socially oppressed groups

But...

- “Not those who make waves”
- Little or no contextual change in culture, policies, and decision making
- Is still relatively unaware of continuing patterns of privilege, paternalism and control
- Token placements in staff positions: must assimilate into organizational culture

4. Identity Change

An Affirming Institution

- Growing understanding of racism as barrier to effective diversity
- Develops analysis of systemic racism
- Sponsors programs of anti-racism training
- New consciousness of institutionalized white power and privilege
- Develops intentional identity as an “anti-racist” institution
- Begins to develop accountability to racially oppressed communities
- Increasing commitment to dismantle racism and eliminate inherent white advantage
- Actively recruits and promotes members of groups that or who have been historically denied access and opportunity

But...

- Institutional structures and culture that maintain white power and privilege still intact and relatively untouched

5. Structural Change

A Transforming Institution

- Commits to process of intentional institutional restructuring, based upon anti-racist analysis and identity
- Audits and restructures all aspects of institutional life to ensure full participation of People of Color, including their world-view, culture and lifestyles
- Implements structures, policies and practices with inclusive decision making and other forms of power sharing on all levels of the institutions life and work
- Commits to struggle to dismantle racism in the wider community, and builds clear lines of accountability to racially oppressed communities
- Anti-racist multicultural diversity becomes an institutionalized asset
- Redefines and rebuilds all relationships and activities in society, based on anti-racist commitments

6. Fully Inclusive Anti-Racist Multicultural Organization in a Transformed Society

- Future vision of an institution and wider community that has overcome systemic racism and all other forms of oppression.
- Institution’s life reflects full participation and shared power with diverse racial, cultural and economic groups in determining its mission, structure, constituency, policies and practices
- Members across all identity groups are full participants in decisions that shape the institution, and inclusion of diverse cultures, lifestyles, and interest
- A sense of restored community and mutual caring
- Allies with others in combating all forms of social oppression
- Actively works in larger communities (regional, national, global) to eliminate all forms of oppression and to create multicultural organizations.

National Young Farmers Coalition Racial Equity Toolkit

Regardless of what order you choose to explore the various resources in this section, we strongly urge you to take a deep dive into the [Young Farmers Racial Equity Toolkit](#) before going any further. This ag-specific toolkit was developed by the [National Young Farmers Coalition \(NYFC\)](#) in April 2020. NYFC is a “national advocacy network of young farmers fighting for the future of agriculture” (as stated on their website). Their work aims to change policy, build networks, and provide business services to ensure all young farmers have the chance to succeed. If you are not yet familiar with the work of NYFC, visit their website to learn more and encourage mentors and trainees in your program to do the same. Beyond providing excellent racial equity resources through their recently published toolkit linked above, the NYFC is an invaluable resource for both agrarian trainees planning a career in agriculture and established farmers.

The NYFC provides the following summary for their racial equity toolkit:

“This toolkit is a starting point. It aims to orient and incite members toward preliminary consciousness-raising and direct action. This toolkit does not detail a universally applicable pathway toward resolving pervasive racialized oppression; it is an initial resource for people who are overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of the problem, and need help determining how to start dismantling racism in their communities. We hope these resources help build foundations for broader organizing in our networks, and more concrete action toward dismantling racism and reckoning with histories of racialized dispossession and violence.”

While this Young Farmer Racial Equity Toolkit focuses primarily on DEI issues related to race and racism, the insights and resources it offers are applicable to many other categories of diversity.

The Denver Foundation’s Inclusiveness Project

[The Inclusiveness Project](#), a program of The Denver Foundation, also provides helpful guidance and resources. Their mission, as stated on their website, is to “engage with Metro Denver nonprofit organizations, including funders, to become more inclusive of people of color.” Through their work, they seek to build more inclusive nonprofit organizations, increase the number of people of color involved in the nonprofit sector, and spread the word about the benefits and importance of nonprofits becoming more inclusive.

The Inclusiveness Project provides resources and guiding questions to help you decide if hiring a consultant would be the best path forward for your organization. The [“Your Inclusiveness Guide”](#) page offers step-by-step guidance for bringing DEI into your organization, including the following sections:

- [Introduction](#)
- [Step 1: Creating Structure](#)
- [Step 2: Consultants/Training](#)
- [Step 3: Making the Case](#)
- [Step 4: Gathering Info](#)
- [Step 5: Creating a Blueprint](#)
- [Step 6: Implementing the Blueprint](#)
- [Sample Documents](#)
- [Next Steps for Your Organization](#)

Like the NYFC toolkit, the Inclusiveness Project’s expertise is in racial diversity, equity, and inclusion specifically. However, the discussion and guiding questions, and the many resources they offer on their website, will help you more successfully address the multiple dimensions of diversity.

3.3 Working with a Consultant

Whether your organization, staff, and board are personally or professionally experienced in, or entirely new to, addressing DEI issues, hiring a skilled consultant with lived experience and expertise in this arena will help ensure a successful process. However, if you or the organization are new to DEI work, while hiring somebody might seem like the best and easiest first step, we strongly recommend starting with the self education and assessment steps mentioned above. Developing a common understanding and shared language for DEI work among your team will be important to successfully working with any consultant. If your organization has not yet openly discussed or addressed DEI topics, a consultant can help you navigate potentially sensitive issues, challenging conversations, and discomfort that could otherwise negatively impact the culture, cohesiveness, or productivity of your staff and organization. Likewise, a skilled consultant can help your organization navigate any needed cultural or structural changes.

While hiring a consultant may be most critical to help facilitate your staff and board through conversations on DEI topics, and possibly guide your organization in developing a DEI strategic plan, you might also consider keeping the consultant on board to help you with a workshop or other focused DEI training for your program mentors, once you've completed foundational work with your board and staff. RFC hired a diversity consultant to provide training to their mentors, which included a history of Oregon's racial laws and events, definitions and terms, levels of racism, strategies to combat implicit bias, steps to cultural competency, cross-cultural communication tips, and cultural agility tools. Here is a link to the [RFC DEI training handouts](#).

[The Inclusiveness Project](#), mentioned in the previous section, suggests that skilled consultants can be extremely helpful in helping to guide your organization become more inclusive. As stated on their website, consultants can:

- Provide you with the wisdom that comes from their past experiences and help you avoid some mistakes.
- Offer valuable external perspectives that may help you when you feel that you aren't making as much progress as you would like. An outside party often supplies a perspective on an organization's dynamics that can be difficult to see or understand from the inside.
- Help negotiate differences of opinion between members of the board of directors and the staff and/or volunteers regarding directions the initiative could take.
- Help bring out the voices of people with less authority within the organization. These individuals may have valuable opinions that are not easily heard by the senior management and/or members of the board of directors.

The National Young Farmers Coalition's [Racial Equity Toolkit](#), also mentioned previously, includes a discussion dedicated to the question of whether or not to hire a DEI facilitator/consultant (their answer is an emphatic Yes!), followed by step-by-step recommendations for how to organize a one-day training for your staff or organization [see pages 24-27 of the toolkit]. This section begins with the following paragraph:

“Consciousness-raising is an ongoing, lifelong process. Developing awareness around systems of oppression can be difficult and uncomfortable; it can also be vitalizing and joyful. It includes both individual work and collective action. A study group helps in the process of building shared understandings and vocabularies around historical and contemporary articulations of racism. These shared vocabularies are instrumental in developing collective awareness, mobilizing around anti-racist work, and laying foundations for collective action. Bringing in an outside facilitator for a more formal anti-racism training can jump start this effort, or push an existing group toward community action and accountability.”

Some organizations also choose to start their work by creating a [caucus or affinity group](#). We recommend this approach for majority white-led organizations and can often be extremely helpful for white people who are first exploring issues of racial equity to come together to learn from each other and begin the process of confronting white privilege, white culture, and white supremacy. Forming a white caucus can also alleviate the emotional burden that People of Color (POC) often face as white people first come to terms with issues of racial injustice and their role in perpetuating patterns of oppression. For POC, a [caucus](#) can also provide a space to wrestle with internalized racism, disrupt patterns of white dominance, let guards down, and heal. The [Racial Equity Tools website](#) has a host of resources for forming identity caucuses and affinity groups, including discussion guides for getting started.

No matter how you approach these conversations, individual commitments to being uncomfortable and approaching difficult topics, combined with good facilitation skills are critical to designing and managing a group gathering and conversation. An invaluable resource for conducting any meeting, conference, or peer-to-peer dialogue is [The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why it Matters](#), by [Priya Parker](#), 2018. The book provides sage guidance on “how to treat every gathering as an opportunity to deepen our shared humanity.” Priya also has several TED talks and a new Podcast, [Together Apart](#). Listen to the June 17, 2020 Episode [“Centering Blackness: A World Re-imagined.”](#) with Alice Walker.

For more training on facilitating dialogue, [Essential Partners](#) is an excellent organization that “equips people to live and work better together in community by building trust and understanding across differences.” They offer [facilitation training](#) in a unique style that blends community engagement, conflict resolution, culture change, and dialogue. Their facilitation training focuses on the interpersonal dynamics and patterns of communication to help facilitators pay greater attention to the dynamics and patterns of communication that become self-perpetuating and stifle trust, relationships, understanding and collaboration.

“Gathering matters because it is through each other that we figure out what we believe.”

– Priya Parker



PHOTO CREDIT: Alexis Bonogofsky for Quivira Coalition

Virtual Training as an Alternative

If hiring a consultant to provide in-person training for your organization isn't possible right away, virtual training alternatives also exist. Keep in mind that both in-person and virtual trainings involve very specific professional expertise and skill on the part of the consultant or facilitator, and will require a financial investment.

As an example, [Soul Fire Farm](#) offers virtual workshops through their "[Uprooting Racism in the Food System](#)" program, described as follows on their website:

"The Uprooting Racism training is a theory and action workshop for environmental and food justice leaders to uproot systemic racism in our organizations and society. We delve deep into the history and structural realities of racial injustice and develop an understanding of the movement strategies of frontline communities struggling for food sovereignty. We will examine our personal and societal roles of complicity in and resistance to the system. Much of the time will be spent developing tangible action plans – to use our sphere of influence to uproot these oppressions. True to Soul Fire Farm's values and culture, this work will be rooted in fierce love, courageous self-reflection, and healing connection to land."

Workshop registration is available on a sliding scale for both organizations and individuals. The program link above provides a list of possible topics to be covered during the workshops.

[Groundswell Center for Local Food & Farming](#) also offers consulting services to food and farming-related organizations to support their organizational equity work and approach. They also have a [Farming for Justice Webinar series](#) and invite participation in their [Equity and Accountability Committee](#).

Although not specific to agriculture, [Awaken](#) is a BIPOC-founded and led organization that offers "modern, thought-provoking DEI workshops and facilitation services that enable today's workforce to address tough diversity and inclusion, leadership, and culture questions head-on." They offer a variety of [virtual workshops](#) on anti-racism and xenophobia that range in topic from Exploring Identities and Unconscious Bias to Thoughtful Allyship, to name a few.

The organization's founder, Michelle Kim, recently published a blog post titled "[Urgently Looking for Anti-Racism Training for your Company? Start Here](#)" [published online June 4, 2020, shortly after the murder of George Floyd]. The article addresses the topic of DEI training and guides the reader through a series of questions and discussion topics specific to the why-what-when-how of organizing a DEI training for your organization and staff.

Finding a Consultant

Once you've committed to hiring a DEI consultant, coach, or facilitator, finding the right person for your organization's staff, board, and mentors can be daunting, especially since, ideally, you will want to work with a DEI consultant or trainer who also has some background or knowledge in agriculture and/or agrarian training programs. There are *many* to choose from! **As a disclaimer**, New Entry is not intending to specifically endorse (or accidentally omit) any consultants or organizations that might be a good fit for the particular needs of your staff or organization in the resources we provide in this Chapter or in Chapter 6 Resources. As we mentioned before, our aim with this chapter is primarily to point you to the work of others whose experience and expertise goes much deeper than our own.

There are hundreds of highly qualified experts skilled in this work. We have compiled a list of Organizations, Websites, and Consultants for Anti-Racism and Racial Equity Training in the Racism and Racial Justice section of Chapter 6 Resources. In the meantime, here are just a few to help you get started:

- [Soul Fire Farm](#), a BIPOC-centered community farm in Petersburg, New York committed to ending racism and injustice in the food system, has compiled a list of BIPOC-, Accomplice-, and Multi-Racial-led [consultants and facilitators](#) they trust and recommend.
- Embedded in Michelle Kim's article mentioned above is the link to a spreadsheet of [POC DEI consultants](#).
- [Nikki Silvestri](#) is an entrepreneur and self-proclaimed "serial non-profit executive director." Silvestri is the Founder and CEO of [Soil and Shadow](#), "a coaching and consulting firm bringing social and environmental entrepreneurs more impact in their work and joy in their lives." She works at the intersection of ecology, economy, and social equity, with deep expertise in regenerative agriculture, organizational development, and diversity and inclusion. Her firm offers consulting services addressing the following three areas, as stated on her [Services](#) page:
 - » **Intrapersonal and Interpersonal:** The team's personal relationship to DEI, discomfort, power, trust and emotional intelligence.
 - » **Organizational Development/ Operations:** Generally and related to DEI, including meeting structure, hiring/onboarding.
 - » **External Strategy:** Historical, systemic and sector DEI analysis, relationships with partners and stakeholders, strategy for external engagement of DEI.

“Racism = racial prejudice + power.”



PHOTO CREDIT: New Entry Sustainable Farming Project

Nikki Silvestri, included in the list above, is an extremely talented speaker, writer, and thought leader who happens to work right at the heart of regenerative agriculture and social justice; her work will inspire your own journey in agriculture, social justice and equity. The following webinar and presentation links provide an introduction to Silvestri, her work, and her thought leadership:

- **Conference Presentation:** [“Thriving in Chaos: What Soil Teaches Us.”](#) Grassfed Exchange 2019. July 4, 2019.
- **Webinar:** [“Diverse and Inclusive Hiring”](#): What systems, structures and processes do you need in place to support hiring? How do you prioritize hiring as an experience, especially as related to diversity and inclusion? March 24, 2019.
- **Conference Presentation:** [“Soil and Your Inner Power.”](#) EcoFarm 2019 Keynote: “What can we learn from soil? How can we become more fertile and rich? By understanding relationship dynamics and changing the way we interact with others and the earth, we can become more fulfilled, connected, and better equipped to change ourselves and the world. Nikki will explore the complexities that exist in different approaches to farming, so we can find common ground and build from there. Farmers have an important connection to our ecosystems, and the power of that connection can’t be taken away. We must lean into it.” February 25, 2019.
- **TEDx Talk:** [“Building True Allies.”](#) TEDxManhattan: “How can we build strong, successful social movements – ones that have the power to change individuals, communities, societal attitudes, and politics? When it comes to movements like changing the way we eat, relationships are key. Here, Nikki Silvestri explains the ways in which we can build social movements for lasting, positive change on the path to good food for all.” March 11, 2014.

3.4 Defining your Organization's DEI Values

One of the next steps after assessing where you, your organization, or your mentors are in terms of the self-education process and the collective organizational assessment work to identify along the antiracist continuum, is to ensure DEI and racial equity principles become a transformative part of your work. This involves defining what your organization recognizes as a part of this work, what responsibilities it accepts in undertaking this work, and how it commits to weaving DEI and racial equity principles directly into the organization's core values.

Values statements make clear the guiding principles that inform your work. Not all organizations have values statements, but all organizations have values. Whether or not they are officially stated, values are an important part of an organization's culture. Values statements help define the principles and ethics by which an entity operates and can act as a guide to define what is right and wrong as well as the behaviors and perspectives that are valued within the organization. To be effective, values need to be developed across all levels of the organization—from the staff level to key leadership, and all the way to the board of directors. What is often most critical is the process of creating the values statement, getting your team aligned, and creating shared understanding and shared ownership of the critical DEI work as it relates to your mission. Values are often

called upon to help resolve conflicts or to negotiate ethical dilemmas. Values are the backbone to hold an individual, organization, or farm/ranch **accountable** to their racial equity principles and practices [e.g., are we actually living up to our values?]. Be clear on the definitions and terms you use and what it means to incorporate and “live” your values in your organization and programs—how will you know when you see it or feel it?

Equity Statement for your Organization

Once organizational values become clear and are embedded in the organization's DNA, they can be codified in an equity statement that may be more public facing. Start by drafting a statement that clarifies how your organization's mission and values align with these principles and states what your organization is committed to doing to ensure that diversity, racial equity, and inclusion have a central role in guiding your work, culture, and decisions. Be sure to include language that explicitly describes how you propose to hold yourselves and your organization accountable to these actions and values.

Many organizations' DEI or racial equity statements are now prominently posted on their websites, describing the organization's commitment to ensuring an equitable and inclusive culture and work environment.

As an example, Rogue Farm Corps recently added the following equity statement to the [homepage](#) of their website:

EQUITY STATEMENT - JUNE 2020

Throughout the US and in Oregon, where Rogue Farm Corps operates, there is a history of racial exclusion, violence, and land theft that has left a legacy of injustice that is still being felt today through disparities in our food system and beyond. The industrial food system has been, and continues to be, made possible in large part by liberally exploiting labor from Black, Indigenous, and people of color. At the same time, decision-makers have systematically passed policies that limit access to land and capital for these groups.

In our work to train and equip the next generation of farmers and ranchers, RFC holds a vision for a world in which land is deeply cared for, power is equitably shared, and farms, ranches, and the people who work them flourish. We know that this vision cannot be realized until we dismantle white supremacy, respect the rights of workers, and are willing to share power and resources.

Racial justice has not always been a stated priority for RFC. We recognize that our past inaction has reinforced systemic racism in our food system. Moving forward, RFC will strive to center racial justice in our work.

We are committed to engaging in an ongoing learning process around privilege, power, inequality and systems of oppression, and using our organizational power to be an agent of change. We acknowledge that this work is urgent, and that it also requires patience and dedication for the long haul. Some of the ways we have and will continue to engage in this work, are:

- Approaching all of our work through an equity lens.
- Providing ongoing Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training for our staff, board, partner farms, and program participants; as well as dedicating time to ongoing learning and reflection.
- Transforming our programs to make them accessible to and inclusive of communities who have historically been under-represented as farmers in Oregon, including people of color, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, low-income individuals and immigrants.
- Incorporating food justice, anti-racism, and Indigenous knowledge into the curriculum of our educational programs.
- Offering program scholarships to members of historically marginalized groups.
- Celebrating the many contributions to agriculture made by Indigenous people, immigrants, queer farmers and farmers of color.
- Developing strategies to make farmland more accessible.
- Conducting thorough program evaluations that center the experience of underserved communities.
- Lifting up and supporting partner organizations that primarily serve BIPOC and other underserved communities.
- Holding our staff, board, host farmers, and instructors accountable for putting DEI into practice throughout our organization and programs.

Rogue Farm Corps is working to build a staff and board that represent the communities we serve, including more farmers of color and farmers from all of the agricultural communities in which we operate.

As we strive to dismantle systems of oppression that exist in agriculture, in ourselves, and in society, we know that we will make mistakes, and we will count on our community to help us grow through them. Please reach out to us with any questions, ideas, or input.

Other examples of DEI statements posted by partner organizations include the following. We've only included partial statements below; please click on the link below each segment to read the full statement:

Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems, University of California Santa Cruz

The world is full of social injustices related to unequal distribution of resources, power, and knowledge. This manifests in poverty, violence, ill-health, and oppression. These inequities are associated with differences related (not exclusively) to race, class, socioeconomic status, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, education, participation in the uniformed services, age, geography, culture, mental and physical ability, and life experiences.

In the context of our food system, we find related injustice within labor, food security, availability of healthy food, and access to capital, land, technical assistance, and markets for those seeking to grow food. Farmers and farmworkers continue to struggle nationally and internationally, and the degradation of urban and rural communities continues. Sustainable agriculture demands more than ecological soundness. A truly sustainable food system requires economic viability for growers and workers, access to healthy food and social justice for all members of society.

[Read the full statement.](#)

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

MOFGA condemns race-based violence and stands in solidarity with black lives.

Systemic discrimination exists throughout the food system today. The agricultural system in our country is predicated on stolen land and labor. We must learn from and continue to work to address these injustices.

As a white-led organization with a primarily white membership base, MOFGA is at the beginning stages of understanding past harms and systems of racial oppression and we are committing to our own internal work of centering social justice. We hope to use the MOFGA platform to encourage others to engage in the work of racial justice.

[Read the full statement.](#)

“The voices of people of color and low-income people are too often excluded from the mainstream food movement.”

Groundswell Center for Local Food & Farming

We know that many of the current injustices that exist within our food system, such as [land theft](#), [lack of access to land](#), [food apartheid neighborhoods](#), [diet related health problems](#), and [farmworker exploitation](#) are rooted in race and class disparities, and that all too often [the voices of people of color and poor or low-income people are excluded](#) from the mainstream food movement.

The Groundswell staff and leadership are committed to listening to those most impacted by food injustice, to being honest about how [white supremacy](#) and exploitation have fundamentally shaped the agricultural history of the U.S., to furthering our own education on how to build a just and equitable food system and supporting our community to do the same, to honoring local knowledge, and to taking appropriate action to support, deepen or create local food justice.

We are committed to incorporating the needs, assets and perspectives of people and communities of color into the design and implementation of inclusive programming, organizational culture and policies.

[Read the full statement.](#)

Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture

The killing of George Floyd has spurred national and international protests demanding change in racially biased systems that do not do enough to prevent violence and to hold those who commit violence against Black people accountable. Pasa Sustainable Agriculture stands in solidarity.

We also acknowledge that the death of a human being is too high a bar for evoking mass empathy and outrage for racial injustice. As an organization with a mission to build a healthier food system, we know we cannot succeed in advancing human and environmental health without addressing the deleterious effects of structural racism in agriculture.

[Read the full statement.](#)

“We cannot succeed in advancing human and environmental health without addressing structural racism in agriculture.”

Equity Statements for your Mentors

Consider also talking with your mentors about developing their own equity statement for their farm or ranch, and posting it on their website. The process of developing and drafting a DEI statement will require them to do the hard work of assessing how their operation already creates a welcoming and inclusive environment for all, as well as what's in place that may be creating an unhealthy or potentially harmful environment for some people. The example on the right is posted on the website of the [Lazy R Ranch](#), a fourth-generation family ranch located near Spokane, Washington, specializing in grassfed and finished beef and lamb.

Diversity Statement

As an educational program, your mentors may also want to develop a personal statement about their commitment to diversity related to their teaching and mentoring style and how they approach their curriculum or materials they will make available for their trainees.

Lazy R Ranch: [Our Commitment to Equity](#)

- The Lazy R Ranch is a welcoming place for BIPOC. We can provide rustic accommodations for a place of respite for people of color. Contact us for details.
- We will collaborate with BIPOC-led organizations to advertise and recruit for our existing programming, and to design programming to specifically support and encourage BIPOC connecting to land based practices and regenerative agriculture. We will materially support organizations already doing this work.
- We have established a relationship with a funder to ensure that we are able to eliminate financial barriers for women of color who want to participate in New Cowgirl Camp and other future programs.
- We acknowledge that the ranch exists on Spokane ancestral land and the violent history that led to us “owning” it. We will materially support preservation of the culture of the Spokane tribe and the Salish language. Through the Tribal Liaison office at Eastern Washington University, we have initiated a partnership to engage with the Spokane tribe and other tribes who have historically sustained themselves on the Lazy R to understand what meaningful reparations would look like.
- We will push the white centered agriculture organizations we are affiliated with to examine and confront the history of white supremacy and colonialism and its continued impacts on our food system. We have already begun many of these conversations.
- We will document our process and work to develop a tool kit for other landowners to follow in the future.
- We will remain open to feedback, responsive to suggestions, and lead with open hearts.

Land or Territory Acknowledgements

Learning about land acknowledgment can also raise awareness about histories that are often suppressed or forgotten, though it is recommended they be done with intention and sincerity, to center ourselves in the history of colonialism and question ourselves about our own roles in its history and of undoing its legacy in the present day. Without reflecting, researching and forming authentic relationships with the indigenous groups whose land has been and is still colonized, and who still inhabit our communities, it may come across as a “token” gesture. An organization or mentor farm could also consider a [land or territory acknowledgement](#) to recognize and show respect for indigenous peoples and recognize their enduring relationship to the land. The [NYFC Racial Equity Toolkit](#) (pages 28-31) offers additional resources and suggestions from the [“Honor Native Land” guide of the US Department of Arts and Culture](#) on how to honor and cultivate the practice of land acknowledgments. Below is an example of a land acknowledgment from [Wellspring Forest Farm in NY](#):

“We acknowledge that Wellspring Forest Farm is located on Indigenous Lands of the Gayogo hó:nq’ (Cayuga Nation) and recognize the Indigenous peoples who have lived and continue to live on these lands. In so doing, we acknowledge Gayogo hó:nq’ sovereignty and their long-standing presence on this land, which precedes the establishment of New York State, and the United States of America. Today, this meeting place is still home to the Gayogo hó:nq’ and Indigenous people from across Turtle island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.” [See full statement here.](#)

While not specific to agriculture or farming, here is an example of a Tufts University instructor’s personal diversity statement for course participation that incorporates

both their approach to honoring diversity in their teaching practice and includes a land acknowledgement that the institution is located on colonized land:

“As an instructor, I am fully committed to ensuring that this space is accessible to people with disabilities and is an equitable and culturally inclusive space. I strive to create an affirming climate for all students, including underrepresented and marginalized individuals and groups. Diversity encompasses differences in age, color, ethnicity, national origin, gender expression, physical or mental ability, religion, socioeconomic background, veteran status, sexual orientation, and marginalized groups. I believe diversity is the synergy, connection, acceptance, and mutual learning fostered by the interaction of different human characteristics. Please let me know if there are ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups.

If you have religious holidays that are in conflict with any of the requirements of this class, please contact the instructor at least one week in advance so that we can make alternative arrangements.

I would also like to acknowledge Tufts University is located on the traditional territory of the Wôpanâak (Wampanoag) and Massachusetts Tribes. Tufts’ Walnut Hill was once one of the hills in a slave-holding estate called Ten Hills Plantation. Both Africans and Native Americans were enslaved in the colony of Massachusetts, and trade in Native American and African laborers made Massachusetts a driving force in the Atlantic slave trade.” [Source: [The Tufts Daily](#), October 10, 2019]

CASE STUDY

Groundswell Center for Local Food & Farming

The Groundswell Center for Local Food and Farming breaks down barriers to entering the local food system and empowers local growers at every stage. Through a food justice and racial equity lens, Groundswell educates beginning farmers and provides training and networking throughout a farmer's career, while partnering with other local organizations to strengthen the food justice community. This non-profit critically works to make land accessible, train farmers of color, and engage with the white community in promoting equity.

- **Basic Structure:** For growers starting off, the non-profit holds business classes, while the incubator farm provides available land. Participants are exposed to other farmers through informal on-farm tours, and also meet experienced farmers when they are brought on through a paid opportunity to teach specific classes. While many farmers have entered the program, many have stayed working on the incubator farm to continue utilizing the land and being a part of the community. Many of those that have left continue to stay connected by taking classes and participating in leadership.
- **In-person Events:** When in-person events are able to be held, farmers connected to the Groundswell community come together for a couple of potlucks a year.
- **Virtual Platforms:** Groundswell has a list of mentor farmers on the website – a group of folks that are supportive of education, come to events, and are generally available as wisdom resources.
- **Major Take-away:** By providing business classes and land, beginning farmers are able to develop a variety of skills. Mentor programs in Groundswell have gone through different stages as resources and leadership change, and the nonprofit is developing how mentors and beginning growers can be best connected in a sustainable way, and also how to best support farmers in land acquisition in the future. A new practicum is coming in the next growing season, specifically for hopeful growers that are Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC).



3.5 Resources and Final Thoughts

As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, a plethora of resources exist to help guide you and your organization on a lifetime journey toward disrupting patterns of systemic oppression so that you can use these tools to help guide your mentors on their own journey to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion are woven into the foundational fabric of your mentor training program from day one.

We compiled a list of [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resources](#) in Chapter 6—including books, online articles, weblinks, podcasts, webinars, and more—based on recommendations from partner organizations in our network and others with expertise in this work. But these lists are far from comprehensive; the resources we included are merely the tip of the iceberg. Again, New Entry or our partners do not assume to make any claims to either endorse or intentionally omit any individual, organization or reference listed in this Toolkit; we welcome this to be a starting place and invite you to continue to add to the resources presented as we update this document. Be sure to pursue your own research beyond this list (and [send us](#) resources you think we should include in this document!). As we mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it may be helpful to start your journey with the National Young Farmers Coalition’s [Young Farmers Racial Equity Toolkit](#) (published in April 2020) and unless you are already knowledgeable in doing this work, consider working with a consultant with expertise in DEI—especially as you get started.

The following topic areas are linked to matching resource lists in the Chapter 6 (section 6.2); we attempted to include reference and resources as they pertain to agriculture and the food system where possible. While we include an abundance of racial justice resources, we also include references to the many other “-isms” in which marginalized groups face systemic oppression. Click on the headers below to be directed to the resources listed in Chapter 6.

- **[Racism and Racial Justice Resources:](#)** this section begins with a list of general resources (books, articles, podcasts), and then lists organizations, consultants and racial equity training resources, and finally includes a list of black-led organizations working toward food sovereignty. These resources also includes articles on **Colorism**, which is the prejudice or discrimination within a racial or ethnic group favoring people with lighter skin over those with darker skin.
- **[Ableism:](#)** the discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities. It is also framed as [Abled, Enabled, or Nondisabled privilege](#) which refers to “the unearned benefits that American society and many other societies and cultures accord to enabled and/or nondisabled people. This privilege is rooted in two cultural beliefs: 1) that a “normal” human being is one who can see, walk, hear, talk, etc. and has no significant physical, cognitive, emotional, developmental, or intellectual divergence, and 2) that disability is “abnormal” and therefore a [social] disadvantage.” [Agrability](#) is a national program that provides support to farmers and ranchers with disabilities.

- **Ageism:** the prejudice and discrimination based on one's age. The prejudice is often directed at older people, old age and the aging process; though some aspects of ageism have been expanded to include negative bias against children and teenagers. This bias may come into play between mentors and trainees and is discussed in detail in Chapter 2.10: Working Across Intergenerational Differences.
- **Classism:** the prejudice or discrimination based on social class, which is the hierarchy of factors including wealth, income, education, occupation, and social networks. Classism is not just about income or wealth, but it also relates to factors such as status, social networks, lifestyles, cultural norms, control over one's life and access to power. Class conditioning from childhood can affect people throughout their lives. Classism often shows up in internships and apprenticeship programs in terms of who can afford to participate.
- **Gender and Sexism:** the prejudice or discrimination based on sex; especially discrimination against women. There are many [Women in Agriculture](#) programs to support the unique issues women face in the agriculture sector.
- **Intersectionality:** the multiple and often complex ways that multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, ageism and/or classism) compound, combine, overlap, or intersect. Popularized by UCLA professor [Kimberle Crenshaw](#), intersectionality helps us understand how the convergence of race and gender or other stereotypes emerge across multiple identities. She has a compelling TEDtalk on the [Urgency of Intersectionality](#).
- **Sexual Orientation and Heterosexism:** a person's sexual identity in relation to the gender to which they are attracted or engaged in patterns of sexual, emotional or romantic attraction; this is often described as heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual. Sexual orientation is different from gender identity which is the internal sense of self of being female, male or non-binary. Heterosexism is the prejudiced attitude or discriminatory practices against same-sex attractions and assumes heterosexuality is the only "norm." There are several articles available on how [heterosexism can deter queer people from engaging in sustainable agriculture](#).

“Until we are all free, we are none of us free.”

– Emma Lazarus

Final Thoughts

Every journey begins with taking the first step. To truly transform ourselves and our institutions toward more equitable and just practices and policies, that journey starts first with you, then your organization, and finally your mentors. Start with the recommended resources provided in this chapter, but also know that the websites, articles, webinars, books and other resources we included here represent a fraction of what exists and will hopefully lead you to many more avenues to learn and “unlearn.”

Making a few mistakes and flawed decisions along the way is much better than not doing anything for fear of doing or saying the wrong thing. If you are BIPOC or part of a marginalized or historically oppressed group, you have undoubtedly already experienced extreme discomfort and injustice in many different circumstances. If you are white or otherwise part of a historically privileged group, learn [how to be an ally](#), take on the struggle as your own, and share in the discomfort. We need all of us to advance this “forever work.” Lift up and look to BIPOC-led groups and organizations for leadership, guidance and mentorship.

“Do not get lost in a sea of despair. Be hopeful, be optimistic. Our struggle is not the struggle of a day, a week, a month, or a year, it is the struggle of a lifetime. Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in good trouble, necessary trouble.”

– Civil Rights icon, Representative John Lewis (1940-2020)



PHOTO CREDIT: New Entry Sustainable Farming Project

CHAPTER 4

Continuing Education and Peer-to-Peer Support for Mentors



PHOTO CREDIT: University of Maryland

Thus far many of the topics we have addressed have revolved around the connection between mentors and apprentices, apprentices and a central program hub, or mentors and the program headquarters. Equally important is ensuring consistent opportunities for mentors to connect with and learn from one another.

“You might be an inspiring, skilled teacher or a seasoned and conscientious employer with decades of experience in agriculture, but neither of these guarantees that you have what it takes to mentor. For mentoring is an odd duck of a calling, neither boss nor teacher but a mix of the two that springs as much from who you are as from what you choose to teach. Nor is mentorship a role you slip on at eight in the morning and take off with your jacket when you come in at night.”

– Julie Sullivan, New Agrarian Program mentor, San Juan Ranch, CO.

Taking on the education and hands-on training of a farm or ranch trainee is no small task in itself. Stepping beyond the educator or employer roles and into mentorship takes the experience to a whole new level. A mentor, by necessity, wears many hats, often at the same time—from teacher and employer to life coach, career or financial advisor, trusted friend and confidant, co-worker, and yes, sometimes being a mentor might feel just a little bit like being a parent. There is no clocking in or clocking out; mentoring is a constant process that often continues long after an intern or apprentice has left the mentor operation for other, next step opportunities. And while it can be and often is a deeply gratifying role, being a mentor is also often perplexing and at times exhausting. Apprentices expect the mentor to have the answers to all their questions and the solution to all their quandaries, and yet—mentors are humans too. The reality is that mentors don't have all the answers, all the time. They too are in a constant state of growth, assessing and learning from their environment through many long days working in the field. The sense of responsibility and the daily reality of being in charge, with at times little or no peer interaction on a daily basis, can make mentoring feel like a lonely role at times.

Farmer and rancher training programs, almost without fail, pour time and resources into ensuring regularly scheduled, in-depth education and training opportunities, as well as meaningful peer-to-peer connections for program trainees. These organized events and opportunities to connect, both in-person and through various online platforms, create a social peer network and supportive learning environment for trainees that is often critical to their success.

This type of supportive peer network can be just as important for mentors. If there's one thing we've heard consistently from programs across the country, it's that the people who are most qualified to provide advice and support for mentors, who can best understand and empathise with the challenges they face on a daily basis, and who are most likely to be helpful in times of need are their own peers: other mentors who participate in the program. Angie Sullivan, DGA Apprenticeship Director, said it best: "No matter how farmers learn, they learn best from each other. The more you can get them together, the more beneficial that's going to be for them. We can give them information, but we can't help them the way their fellow [mentors] can." Bo Dennis, the Beginning Farmer Program Specialist for MOFGA, shared a similar sentiment: "Farmer-to-farmer interactions are really the backbone of a lot of educational programming, which are set up with the belief that farmers are the best co-learners and co-teachers for other farmers. They really understand the experience and what they're going through on a daily basis. All workshops are set up with this in mind." And Jean-Paul Courtens, co-founder of the original Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) group in Massachusetts, noted that the most important experiences to come out of that first group of mentors were "in the personal connections they were making with one another."

Keep this premise—that farmers and ranchers learn best from one another—top of mind as you begin to design a peer-to-peer learning network in your own program.

CASE STUDY

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA)

First established as a state-level Apprenticeship program in Wisconsin in 2010, DGA is a nonprofit organization that partners with established grazing dairy farmers, universities, community based organizations, and other stakeholders to provide on-farm, work-based training in managed-grazing dairy production, for the federally recognized occupation of “Dairy Grazier.” DGA’s program is federally registered as a National Apprenticeship with the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. DGA currently has 185 approved Master Dairy Graziers in 15 states: Iowa, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, New Jersey, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and Wisconsin. As of 2020, The program has 45 active Master-Apprentice pairs, 36 Journey Dairy Graziers, and more than 100 Apprentice Candidates seeking to be hired. www.dga-national.org

- **In-Person Events:** DGA organizes a “Master Summit” each fall in one of the 13 states participating in the program, open to all participating Master Graziers. While the event includes an agenda with formal presentations, DGA is careful to leave a lot of open, unstructured time for participants to network and socialize. Master Graziers use this time to socialize, share stories on their experience mentoring apprentices, and seek advice and input from one another.
- **Online Platforms:** Master Graziers have an exclusive section of the DGA website that they access through a login and password. This section has many resources specifically for mentors. It also shows where all Master Graziers are located and makes it possible for them to contact each other directly through the site. Other resources include: [1] Monthly webinars addressing topics pertinent to other Master Graziers, originally launched by DGA and now hosted by a Master Grazier; [2] Pasture walks and other regular events organized by the Education Coordinator located in each state, giving Master Graziers the opportunity to spend time together and engage in peer-to-peer learning and socializing; and [3] Social media channels provide another way for mentors and apprentices to engage and interact with the program and with one another. DGA is in the process of revamping social media platforms to encourage more participation.
- **Major Takeaways:** “I have a long history of working in agriculture. No matter how farmers learn, they learn best from each other. The more you can get them together, the more beneficial that’s going to be for them. We can give them information, but we can’t help them the way their fellow Master Graziers can help them.” – Angie Sullivan DGA





PHOTO CREDIT: Alexis Bonogofsky

4.1 Getting Started

The hardest part of creating an effective, lasting mentor peer-to-peer learning network is taking that first step to bring mentors together to form a shared purpose for the network, clarify its goals and objectives, and define how the network will function. Most networks come together with participants that share common goals, with the desire to intentionally exchange information, inspire one another, help problem solve, and collaboratively engage in activities. So how do you design and launch your new network with these components in mind? Is the purpose of your [mentor support network clear to potential participants](#)? As Priya Parker in “The Art of Gathering” states, our job as a facilitator is to put the right people in the room to “collectively think, dream, argue, heal, envision, trust, and connect for a specific larger purpose.” What is that larger purpose for your mentors? Did they have a voice in setting the purpose, goals, and activities? How do you solicit that input and set up a network that can deliver on the types of connection mentors want? Parker encourages us to take the first step in convening people meaningfully: committing to a bold, sharp purpose.

Defining the Network’s Purpose

According to Sullivan, the best way to start is by asking the mentors what they most need and want out of a peer-to-peer learning network: “They know best what would be most helpful.” Many organizations who run farmer training programs often see patterns and common themes that mentors struggle with and assume bringing mentors together to learn and provide professional development or training is “the purpose,” yet there may be other ideas and goals that mentors could identify if only we ask them. Consider surveying program mentors to get a better understanding for what they most need out of a peer network and the types of activities or platforms that would foster the most participation. Be sure to dig a little deeper in your questions or follow up with individuals as you are defining your purpose to find what specific reasons mentors might have for participating in a mentor network.

Again, Parker has some additional practical advice for defining the purpose of your group:

- **Zoom out:** move from the what [to connect peer mentors to each other to learn] to the why [to value the wisdom and experience mentors bring that connects and inspires new agrarians with life-long relationships with the land and agriculture].
- **Drill baby drill:** this is similar to the practice of [“5 Why’s”](#) by asking why you are forming a mentor network and what you hope to accomplish; keep asking why until you hit a belief or value. Once you hit that core belief system, you can design the purpose of the network around that value. Perhaps it is the belief that we need to honor and celebrate those who work hard to steward the land and feed our communities [provide space to honor the hard work your mentors do every day]; perhaps we want to model a way of life for new agrarians that showcases how to run a successful business and pass on the knowledge by sharing wisdom and experience [the network brings people together to improve their teaching practice and balancing work/education]. Whatever it is, programs can build their mentor networks around elements of those shared values.
- **“Ask not what your country can do for your gathering, but what your gathering can do for your country”:** what does the larger world need that your mentor network can provide? The obvious answer may be “trained agrarians” or “potential successors,” and it may be that the world needs critical climate change innovators or a way to foster more community connections to land and the food system. Whatever the response, you can weave those outcomes into your shared purpose.

- **Reverse engineer an outcome:** What would be different in the field of apprenticeship or experiential training if this group of mentors came together? Think about the response and work backward toward your purpose.
- **When there really is no purpose....** well, then you should probably go back to the drawing board to learn more about what your mentors would value in a peer network – we are confident there is value in it or we wouldn’t have written this chapter!

Other approaches to assessing your mentor network’s purpose could involve combining questions on mentor development and training with a set of questions on mentors’ experience with their trainee and other general program topics into a single, annual survey. The Quivira Coalition included the following list of questions in a recent [2019 NAP mentor survey](#), with topics ranging from mentor training to mentor/trainee experience and working dynamics, and everything in between. A few select questions from their mentor survey around the value of peer mentor networks might be of use in your own mentor queries; comments noted in red brackets are questions behind why you might want to ask these types of questions and how they might get you closer to a shared purpose.

“Most networks form to address common goals, exchange information, inspire one another, help problem solve, and collaboratively engage in activities.”

Quivira Coalition New Agrarian Program: Mentor Survey

1. Why did you decide to become a NAP mentor?

- Pass on knowledge
- Find junior partners/employees
- Exposure to new ideas and skills due to younger generation presence
- Other

→ to establish common ground among mentors

2. What have been/are the biggest challenges you have faced as a mentor?

- Balancing work and education time
- Communication
- Conflicts/personality differences
- Incoming skill level of apprentices
- Finding a good apprentice
- Other

→ how could a mentor network be designed to help address these challenges?

3. What, if any, experience did you have that helped you with mentoring?

- Years teaching
- Years coaching sports or other
- FFA/4H with children other than my own
- Years mentoring

→ informing the existing expertise among network members; sharing knowledge to draw from

4. Did you participate in the Mentor Orientation phone calls? If so, what topics and elements were most useful? If not, why not?

- Time of day didn't work for me.
- Timing in the production season.
- Not interested.
- Not a high priority.
- Using technology was problematic due to internet quality, etc.

→ include open ended questions here on structure/function – would you participate in in-person meetings, calls, online sessions, etc.]

5. What would you like that isn't currently offered, or how could this support be offered in a more effective manner to help you continue being a mentor?

- In-person mentor training/events.
- Teaching techniques and tips.
- Mentor-to-mentor discussions.
- Communication and/or conflict skills.
- Skill sheet implementation suggestions.
- Online communication tool trainings (Slack, Zoom, Google Sheet, etc.).
- HMI short courses to prepare for using with apprentice.
- Other.

→ gather ideas about format, structure, resources, modes of communication

Quivira Coalition New Agrarian Program: Mentor Survey cont'd

6. What have been the biggest takeaways from your NAP mentorship to date? Where or how do you feel you have grown the most as a mentor? [how could a peer network build on these experiences?]

- Teaching/mentoring capacity.
- Professional network—local, regional, national.
- Introduction to new ideas, practices.
- Appreciation for learning from the younger generation.
- Other.

→ how could a peer network build on these experiences?

7. What would a colleague or neighbor of yours want or need in order to consider becoming a NAP mentor?

→ how can this network benefit others? How could mentors become ambassadors for your future mentor network?

8. As NAP expands, what is your hope for the future of the program? What niche do you think NAP currently fills, or should target in the future?

→ Should we or how should we intentionally expand our mentor network? Who gets invited to the table?

9. Do you know of other people participating in similar programs as either apprentices or mentors? If so, please list the program and provide any additional information.

→ Are there new/innovative ways the network could learn, model, evolve?

10. What is your level of agreement with the following statement: NAP [mentor network] met or exceeded my expectations.

- Strongly agree.
- Agree.
- Neutral.
- Disagree.
- Strongly disagree.

→ Do you have a process for soliciting feedback from network members about what worked well or doesn't work well? Do you need to renew or redefine your purpose?

11. Was anything unexpected?

However, don't let the pursuit of perfection hamper progress; a survey can be as simple as a set of 3-5 questions on a single topic, sent out via email. And sometimes picking up the phone is the easiest and quickest way to connect with your mentors; have your list of questions on hand and be ready to take a few quick notes. If you have the capacity for a more in-depth process, such as bringing your mentors together for a facilitated retreat to collectively define the purpose of the network, all the better. If that isn't possible, brainstorming a list of questions in the example from NAP, above, you can also create a more formal, electronic survey using tools such as SurveyMonkey or Google Form. Responses will be automatically compiled for you to analyze once all surveys are completed. If you opt to send out an electronic survey link to your mentors, consider a quick phone call to each of them to ask them to fill it out. Depending on the time of year, they may not be in front of their screen very much.

While it is helpful to gather as much input and information from your mentors about their expectations, hopes, and dreams for a peer mentor network and to arrive at a shared purpose, be careful to set realistic expectations about what your mentor network can offer. What is your staff capacity, budget, and skill level to support the network to achieve its desired purpose? You may need to balance the desires of the mentors with what is reasonable and feasible for your organization's capacity or be clear that the network will require strong leadership and contributions from the mentors themselves to hold everyone accountable to the network's shared purpose and goals.

Then, once a clear purpose for the network is defined, realistic, and resonates with your mentors, then communicate it broadly and often. Many times, it is easy to put a lot of intention, thought, and design behind the purpose of a network and without a clear communication plan to

share the purpose and underlying values with incoming or new members, it can be easy to lose sight of what brought you together in the first place. It is also helpful to revisit the purpose of the network periodically as needs and goals of the group may change and evolve. These same techniques around defining the purpose of a network can also be used to design and plan the individual meetings or gatherings of the network members, again, [Priya Parker's book](#) is a treasure trove of examples to transform all the meetings you might ever organize in the future.

Setting Expectations for Network Participation

Once you've reviewed mentor input and have a better idea of the purpose, needs, priorities, and goals for the network, developing ground rules for the network will help ensure expectations for participation are clear. Who gets invited to or excluded from participation in the mentor network? What size should the group be? What are the norms, rules, and expectations of the network? Are all network activities optional? What are the mentor obligations to participate? What will mentor members receive as part of network participation?

Depending on the goals of your training program, the answers to these questions will vary. It may be helpful to set expectations at the program level as you establish the initial network structure (such as who to invite or how many members), and once you gather the mentors together, it is wise to design network norms and expectations as a group so that mentors feel they have buy-in and can hold themselves and others accountable for their participation. Aside from traditional [meeting norms](#) (active listening, silence technology, be respectful of different views, etc.), your mentor network may include additional requirements (such as attending a certain number of network meetings, or specifically attending a

required racial equity training, for example] that should be clear and agreed to by the mentors in your network. It is helpful to build in a process for periodically reviewing the purpose, goals, expectations and accountability agreements for the network to keep everyone on the same page and actively participating in achieving the outcomes desired by the mentors (and your training program).

Mechanics of Gathering the Network

Once you've reviewed mentor input, have a better idea of needs and priorities, are clear on the purpose, objectives, and functions, and have laid some initial ground rules, then you can work to figure out how to gather the mentors (the mechanics, particularly if they are spread out geographically) for an event, either in-person or virtual:

1. What is the path of least resistance, with regards to creating an initial point of contact among mentors? Possibilities might include: an in-person social event; an in-person formal training or workshop; a conference call or video conference; or a group introductory email.
2. What are the seasonal and geographic limitations of your mentors? In other words, your mentors' seasonal work schedules as well as their location and ability to travel will help you determine where, when, how (in-person vs. virtual), and how often you meet.
3. Is the geographic footprint of your program conducive to regular in-person events? Is your program contained within a relatively small region, such that mentors can drive to a central location for a day-long training or social event and be home again that night? Or, if your program spans a larger area—whether across several states or across the entire country—is it structured geographically such that distinct, in-

person events could be organized by region?

4. Does your program have the resources to convene in-person events? If so, how often? And if hosting in-person events would require your mentors to travel long distances and stay overnight, does your program have the resources to provide lodging and meals?
5. Does your program have the staff capacity and skill to research, design, launch, and manage various online platforms to engage mentors and facilitate peer-to-peer networking?
6. Does your program include experienced mentors who would be willing and able to step into a peer leadership role in launching and sustaining the mentor network? For example, would one of your mentors be willing to host a monthly phone call or present a specific topic at an in-person training session?

If possible, involve one or more mentors in designing and launching the network. If your program has an experienced mentor willing to take on a peer leadership role, work with that mentor to define their role and responsibilities in the network. The Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program offered their most senior mentor a contracted role as a peer trainer, which includes facilitating a series of mentor training sessions by phone each winter (more details on these calls below) and facilitating occasional in-person workshops, among other responsibilities. According to Leah Ricci, NAP Director, "Having an experienced mentor in a peer trainer role really helps build trust and ensure that when mentors have challenges or problems, there's someone they trust, who understands their challenges, that they can reach out to." This is consistent with the central premise of this chapter: farmers and ranchers learn best from their own peers. It follows that your mentors are your greatest assets; put their experience to work through peer mentorship.

CASE STUDY

Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT)

[CRAFT is a farmer-led coalition](#) organized by sustainable agriculture farmers in a self-selected region. The original CRAFT group was initiated by farmers in upstate New York in 1994 as a cooperative effort to create educational opportunities for farm interns and apprentices, and has since been replicated by groups of farmers in many regions throughout the country. The core CRAFT program typically includes on-farm apprenticeships combined with a series of field days and farm visits on other farms participating in the collaborative, thereby exposing apprentices to a wide variety of farm and business models.

- **Basic Structure:** CRAFT has no formal or established structure of any kind for a peer-to-peer network. Rather, relationships are formed and maintained because proximity of participating mentors allow for regular social contact and interaction. A mentor peer network exists and persists purely through the friendships that result from regular contact.
- **In-Person Events:** CRAFT requires that participating mentors attend three established meetings per year, including the “Opening Meeting” at the start of each season, which provides an opportunity for everyone to meet; an “Evaluation” meeting during which apprentices and mentors participate in an open evaluation of each mentor farm; and an end-of-season meeting to set the following year’s agenda. Each meeting is organized around a potluck meal, with an emphasis on social connection.
- **Online Platforms:** CRAFT does not have any formal or established online platforms to connect mentors. Many CRAFT networks host listservs which help farmers communicate about production issues, share information, post job openings, offer equipment or surplus produce to sell, share updates, and other coordination. Some CRAFT networks also maintain websites to post annual programming calendars, events, or ways to connect with the network.
- **Frequency:** Many CRAFT networks meet bi-weekly or monthly throughout the season, some networks set up other informal farmer gatherings such as additional farm potlucks, “farm soccer groups,” or schedule meetups in the winter to discuss seed varieties, crop performance, record-keeping, and planning for the upcoming season.
- **Major Takeaways:** “The need for social connection brings farmers together” [Jean-Paul Courtens, CRAFT co-founder]. CRAFT is built around the premise of naturally-occurring social connection when farmers come together, and has opted not to offer any formal training to mentors.



4.2 Network Components

A mentor peer-to-peer learning network can range from extremely simple to highly complex, depending on your program needs, human resources—both on staff and among your mentor group—and financial capacity. The list below, followed by more in-depth discussion on each item, provides a few examples of components to consider as you start designing your mentor network:

- In-Person Social Events
- In-Person Formal Trainings or Workshops
- Training Webinars
- Monthly Phone or Video Calls
- Informal Mentor-Initiated Calls
- Ongoing Email Thread
- Google Groups
- Peer-to-Peer Check-in Pairs
- Social Media Platforms

In-Person Social Events

Many programs host an annual, in-person social event for their mentors. Because of the natural seasonal work flow of agriculture, which is typically very busy from early spring through the fall, these gatherings often take the form of an end-of-season debrief. These gatherings can range from less than a day in length (possibly even just a shared meal) to several days—especially when they are coupled with a more formal event, like a conference or workshop—and serve the purpose of fostering social connections among mentors that will make it easier for them to reach out to one another later, when challenges arise on their farms or ranches. For organizations that host an annual conference or summit, like the Quivira Coalition or MOFGA, a mentor event—social, formal, or a combination of both—is often scheduled at the same time as the conference. For example, the Quivira Coalition adds a New Agrarian Program day before their November conference, with half the day dedicated to mentors and trainees together, and the other half set aside for separate mentor and trainee work sessions. The latter creates an opportunity for mentors to spend time together, debrief the season, share stories, and explore needed discussion topics without their trainees in the room. Even if infrequent, opportunities for mentors to get together in person are invaluable. According to Ricci, mentor-focused events “make them feel like they are part of a bigger community and a bigger movement.” They create a sense of belonging.

Rogue Farm Corps (RFC) hosts an annual season debrief every November, over dinner. According to Matt Gordon, the RFC Education Director, the informal atmosphere over a shared meal helps mentors relax and get to know each other: “The most valuable part is the time for them to just share with each other the successes and challenges of the season. People share stories. And sometimes they’ll share stories of things that are challenging, and someone else will offer up solutions or ideas for things they’ve tried.”

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship’s main mentor event is their annual Master Summit, hosted specifically for mentors—referred to as “Master Graziers” in their program. The Master Summit is hosted in the fall and is moved to a new location each year, in one of the 13 states that participate in the program. While the summit includes an agenda of specific discussion topics and presentations—some given by Master Graziers with expertise in a given topic—as well as organized discussion roundtables, DGA is careful to allow ample downtime for socializing and networking. This unstructured time encourages Master Graziers to build connections and friendships that help ensure a lasting, supportive network.

In addition to their annual Master Summit, DGA also organizes “pasture walks,” during which Master Graziers tour a participating mentor farm to network and learn from one another. Because DGA spans across 13 states, these pasture walks are organized by the program’s education coordinators in each state. This helps foster smaller mentor networks at the state level.

In-Person Formal Trainings or Workshops

More formal, professional development events are often combined with social convenings described above. Sometimes it's hard to tease the two apart. For example, the annual DGA Master Summit, as described above, combines formal presentations with time for unstructured social networking. Likewise, RFC incorporates a formal season debrief into an otherwise social gathering over dinner.

One of the most challenging aspects of hosting an in-person workshop is getting good participation. Time away from the farm, combined with travel distance and associated travel expenses, present significant barriers to participation for many mentors. RFC has struggled with getting good mentor participation at their winter in-person training for these reasons. This past winter, they switched to a hybrid in-person/virtual training by welcoming anyone who could show up in person while simultaneously setting up video conferences at each RFC chapter location so those who were unable to travel far had the option of joining via video from a much closer location. Because of this accommodation, almost every mentor participated—which isn't to say the event was seamless. Virtual participation comes with its own challenges, as we'll discuss below.

In terms of creating effective learning environments for mentors through formal training events, we started this chapter by emphasizing that farmers and ranchers learn best from their own farmer and rancher peers. As much as possible, assign presentations to mentors with expertise

in the topic to be discussed or presented. For DGA's annual Master Summit described above, Master Graziers (i.e. mentors in that program) are asked to present to their peers. During the NAP day preceding the Quivira Coalition's annual conference, the NAP director and the senior mentor assigned the role of mentor trainer facilitate the mentor work session together.

New Entry co-hosted a mentor training with 40 participants from across the Northeast in collaboration with the [Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture](#) in New York State and brought in experienced farm mentors, Julie Sullivan (founding NAP mentor) and Polly Shyka (an experienced mentor in MOFGA's JourneyPerson program; Polly is also a graphic narrator and created beautiful visuals and notes throughout the meeting) for a day-long interactive training on teaching, mentoring, communication skills, and learning styles. The peer-to-peer learning and sharing between participants was equally as valuable as the content shared during the training session. The workshop also engaged participants to model their own mentoring style through the activities presented throughout the day. The [detailed Agenda for this Mentor Training](#) is posted in the AgALN Resource Library.

Refer back to [Chapter 2.2](#) of this toolkit for a list of mentor skills and attributes to consider as you design a mentor training event, whether in-person or virtual.

Virtual Events—Training Webinars or Video Calls

While no virtual training or event can truly replace meeting and socializing in-person, getting everyone together in-person isn't always feasible. Time away from the farm or ranch can be hard for mentors to schedule, and costs associated with travel can be prohibitive. For some programs like NAP, wherein mentor operations are spread out across several large western states, getting together for regular in-person events just isn't an option.

Webinars and video calls can be valuable tools for creating a sense of community and belonging for your mentors because they offer the ability to see one another, to relate to each other visually. For the presenter, video calls offer the ability to share their screen and thus incorporate visuals into their presentation. However, keep in mind that not all mentors will have strong enough internet connections to participate in the video, and while video calls generally include a simple “call-in” option by phone, the advantages—and the fun—of using this approach are diminished if some participants are only present by phone.

If you are considering this tool, either for a single, introductory session or possibly for a workshop series over a period of time, start by surveying your mentors:

- How many have the required technology to participate?
- Does this approach appeal to them? What do they see as pros and cons of video conferencing?
- What time of day, or which months of the year, are they available?
- How long are they willing to sit in a video call?

You may need to dedicate your first session to orienting participants to the video conference tool: share your screen to conduct a tour, point out various features, etc.

As mentioned above, meeting virtually is no match for meeting and socializing in-person. Keep in mind that most people have a threshold for how long they are willing to sit in a given video call, and adjust your schedule and expectations accordingly. Usually, anywhere from one to one and a half hours is about right; any longer than that, and you'll start losing people.

Be intentional and thoughtful in creating the video call agenda, and then be careful to manage your time and stick with the agenda. For example, introductions can easily take up half your time or more if you're not careful. Depending on how many people are on the call and how much time you have for introductions (or check-ins, etc.), ask people very specific questions and limit their responses to 1-2 minutes each.

For an example of how to set up a webinar or video call series that incorporates visual presentations, take a look at DGA's [Training the Trainer Webinar Series](#), available to all on their website as well as on their [YouTube channel](#). Posted training webinars are roughly half an hour each and include the following:

- [Finding the Right Apprentice](#)
- [Your Apprentice's First Week](#)
- [Care & Feeding of Your Adult Learner](#)
- [Good Communications for a Good Apprentice Experience](#)

For a sample call agenda from another program, refer to the following section on “Monthly Phone Calls.”

Monthly Phone Calls

A well-structured, regularly scheduled mentor phone call can be just as effective in engaging mentors, fostering a sense of camaraderie and belonging, and building a culture of open and honest communication within the program as video conferences or webinars. In many cases, phone calls can actually be more effective and inclusive, for the simple reality that some farm and ranch operations are without the rapid, reliable internet signal required for video calls.

For the Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program, an annual mentor training scheduled as a [NAP conference call series](#) (also listed below) has taken a central role in establishing and sustaining peer-learning for both new and returning mentors. The calls are scheduled monthly throughout the winter season, because that's when mentors have more time and it's also when mentors are interviewing, vetting, and hiring the following season's trainees. While the 7-session call series is required only for new mentors, returning mentors often participate in some or all scheduled calls. The calls are hosted and facilitated by a senior program mentor, whose experience is directly relatable to other mentors. Topics include everything from how to select the right trainee and vetting applications to setting expectations, balancing work and education, giving feedback effectively, and more. Word on this series has spread quickly across the agrarian apprenticeship community, and NAP has now started scheduling two mentor calls per week throughout the 7-session period: one call exclusively for NAP mentors, and the second open to both NAP mentors as well as to mentors from other programs.



PHOTO CREDIT: University of Maryland

The following list provides topic descriptions for NAP's 7-session mentor call series. Each discussion has been recorded, with a link to each topic discussion available on the Quivira Coalition's [mentor webpage](#). Mentors from other programs are welcome to join in these calls, and are invited to register on the link provided here.

1. Recruiting the Apprentice You

Want (Oct 10th, 7 pm): Writing an apprenticeship description that is both appealing and realistic about the ups and downs of ranching and farming can be challenging. As most mentors will be in the final stage of reviewing their descriptions, this session gives mentors the opportunity to hear how others are describing work schedules, location, isolation, and other factors, to be sure your description will appeal to the applicants you most want to attract.

2. Evaluating Written Applications (Nov 12th 7 am OR Nov 14th 7 pm): How do you sort through written applications? We will share strategies for tackling the pile of applications, and templates for responses to applicants who you would like to interview and those you will decline.

3. Effective Interviews (Dec 10th 7 am OR Dec 12th 7 pm): During an interview, what questions will reveal the skill level, motivation and personality of an applicant? What questions can't be asked, for legal reasons? How do you find out what you most need to know? And how do you evaluate interviewees? We'll discuss both phone/video and on-site interviews, as we find that having finalists come to see your operation is key to finding the best fit. Experienced mentors will discuss how they structure a working interview.

4. Setting Expectations (Jan. 28th, 7 am OR Jan. 30th, 7 pm): You've chosen your apprentice and are preparing for their arrival. Writing an apprenticeship agreement, creating a skills list, and setting clear boundaries at the beginning can support a successful apprenticeship.

5. Balancing Work and Education (Feb. 18th, 7 am OR Feb. 20th, 7 pm): How do you structure the workday, week, and month so that work is done and education happens? Mentors share strategies including weekly planning meetings, how to find those 'teachable moments' during a workday, and ways to do up-front training to get your apprentice going and maintain focus, communication and motivation in the busy season.

6. Mentoring to create a Self-Starter Apprentice (March 10th, 7 am OR March 14th 7 pm): A great mentor-apprentice experience depends on both parties co-creating relevant goals that take advantage of the built-in learning at your operation, and identify ways your apprentice can engage in solo study, find local resource people to learn from, and visit other operations. Skill sheets are great prompts for this so we'll discuss ways to make them truly effective and useful to you and your apprentice.

7. Feedback (May 12th 7 am OR May 14th 7 pm): Giving and receiving feedback is one of the most fraught challenges of being a mentor. We offer a variety of tried and true methods and tips to generate objective, honest, and open conversations in scheduled and impromptu feedback sessions.

Monthly calls offer a unique opportunity to put mentors in the driver's seat by having them lead the discussion on a topic in which they have specific expertise. It's a good idea to create a predictable flow or structure for the calls; when participants know what to expect each month, they are more likely to show up prepared with questions or comments, and generally more likely to engage. For example, if the call is one hour long, the call structure could be as follows:

- **10-minute go-around:** everyone on the call quickly says hello, maybe shares a highlight from their day (if there are more than 6-8 people on the call, either plan on allowing more time here, or skip altogether).
- **15-minute presentation:** on the scheduled topic, either by a program staff member or, ideally, by a program mentor.
- **30-minute open discussion:** mentors ask questions and share insights with one another.
- **5-minute closure:** thank everyone for showing up, make any needed announcements, remind everyone about the next call.
- **Follow up:** send any meeting notes or supplemental resources to mentors after the call.

Keep in mind that mentors are much less likely to have the time or the energy for conference calls during the growing season. While you may still get some participation throughout the spring and summer months, be considerate of your mentors' work schedule and needs when you create a call schedule. Keeping required calls to winter months only will help ensure better—and more cheerful!—engagement.

Informal Mentor-Initiated Calls

As discussed above, requiring mentors to participate in anything during the growing season is asking a lot. Carrying the responsibility of training and mentoring an intern or apprentice, in addition to running their own farm or ranch business, is already a lot to balance. That said, offering optional, informal ways for mentors to connect, especially early in the season when they're still getting to know their new trainee and potentially adjusting to a new role as mentors, can be a good way to offer additional support.

The senior mentor appointed as a peer trainer in the Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program schedules occasional, informal "Happy Hour" or "Coffee Hour" calls during the growing season, especially in the first couple months. She sends out a call invitation to all mentors, and participation is entirely voluntary. With no set agenda or discussion topic, these calls simply offer mentors the opportunity to connect with one another, ask questions, seek input or advice as needed, vent if they need to, share stories, and hopefully laugh a little.

This is a simple concept based on the value of human connection and human relationships. No strings attached, no obligations or pressures—just an opportunity to connect and relate with sympathetic peers.



PHOTO CREDIT: Glynwood Center New York

Ongoing Mentor Email Thread

One approach requiring very little “tech savvy” is simply to establish an email thread that includes all program mentors and involved staff members. The program staff starts it off by sending a welcome email to introduce mentors to the concept and provide basic guidelines for keeping the thread going. The rule of thumb for this concept is for participants to always hit “Reply All,” thereby keeping the thread inclusive. Mentors can use the group email for many reasons, ranging from simply sharing a highlight or photo from the day or a book recommendation, to asking for insight or help on how to handle a specific issue with their trainee. Mentors can also use the thread to share documents as attachments, introduce a discussion topic for all to participate in, or share online links as resources, among many other possibilities.

While this option is very inclusive, participation is entirely voluntary. But whatever level of engagement individuals opt for, they can always keep up with—and benefit from—the various topics of discussion, challenges and solutions, as well as the warmth and camaraderie of the group. Different groups will experience

different levels of success with this—it really depends entirely on the participants to turn this into a fun, engaging, and useful experience. Even groups that embrace this option will likely go through periods of radio silence between flurries of activity. That’s totally fine. The option to tap into the peer group is always there, it’s easy and low-tech.

Program staff may need to nudge participation every now and then, and especially in the beginning, by modeling various ways to use the email thread. For example, you might nudge participation by posing a discussion topic and asking the group to share their thoughts. Or, you might ask mentors to send a photo of themselves and their trainee as a way to introduce themselves and create community. Again, the beauty of this option is its simplicity; don’t over-complicate it or make it into something it isn’t meant to be. The simplest approach is to send out an initial group email, then keep it going by following the rule of “Reply All.”



PHOTO CREDIT: **Rogue Farm Corps**

Google Groups

If the ease and simplicity of email appeals to you, but you'd like a slightly more sophisticated discussion platform for your mentors, you can go one step further than the "Reply All" concept by setting up a [Google Group](#). A free service provided by Google, Google Groups essentially provides a forum for group discussion (a paid version also exists, available to organizations, with additional features). Group participants can share information through links; upload content; create web pages; and search archived content for specific discussion topics. Google Groups are accessible anywhere an internet connection exists. Group members receive updates or new discussion threads via email, and can also access group discussions via their Google Groups Dashboard, assuming they have a Google account.

Group members don't need to have a Google email address (gmail) to join the group, however they won't be able to upload files, create web pages, or access other Google Group features without a gmail account. This is probably the biggest limitation for this platform: mentors who don't already have a Google account would need to create one in order to take full advantage of Google Groups.

If you have a gmail account, creating a new Google Group is quick and easy. Simply go to the Google Apps menu and scroll down to "Group." Go to "My Groups" and click on "Create group," then follow the steps. You'll have to designate your group as one of three categories: public, announcements-only, or restricted:

- Public groups are accessible to anyone, although only members are able to post messages, create pages, and upload files.
- Announcements-only groups only allow the group managers to post content.
- Restricted groups only allow group members to view content and participate in the discussion.

There are tons of resources available online, including both articles and videos, to learn more about Google Groups, how to use them, and how to set them up. ["How Google Groups Work,"](#) an article by Jonathan Atteberry posted on How Stuff Works, can help get you started.

Peer-to-Peer Check-In Pairs

For some mentors, participating in large-group discussions—much less sharing challenges and asking for help in a group setting—simply won't work. Some people just don't feel comfortable opening up in large groups. Even those who do may feel frustrated by the lack of time or opportunity to dive deep into a topic or drill into a specific situation or challenge in a group environment. Similarly, if your program includes a high level of diversity in types of operations—dairies and orchards, for example, or ranches and small vegetable operations—mentors may struggle to relate to one another simply because circumstances on their farms or ranches are so different.

In any of these circumstances, one option for establishing peer-to-peer connections between mentors might be to assign mentor pairs within a check-in structure. For example, two mentors with similar operations are paired and assigned the task of scheduling a monthly check-in call with one another. Providing an opportunity for mentors to meet each other in person and ensuring a good connection and positive rapport between a potential pair may help ensure success.

To our knowledge, no program in our network has yet tried this method, and so no examples currently exist and this suggestion is purely theoretical. If your program tries this, please let us know how it works for you.

Social Media Platforms

Social media platforms are not necessarily designed to foster in-depth sharing or peer-to-peer learning, they do provide an avenue for connecting, peer-learning, and sharing resources. The right platform can also provide a fun way for mentors to get to know each other through shared stories and photos. An example might be a private Facebook group, where only mentors are allowed to participate. A Facebook group makes it possible for mentors to post articles they think might be helpful to their peers; start a discussion on a specific topic; solicit suggestions for how to handle an issue or conflict with their trainee; schedule video calls with one or more of their mentor peers; and build friendships and connections through shared photos and updates, to name a few.

The downside: not everyone wants to—or is able to—engage with social media platforms; depending on where their farm or ranch is located, some mentors may not have strong enough internet connections to participate on a regular basis.

“Human connections are deeply nurtured in the field of shared story.”

– Jean Houston

CASE STUDY

TomKat Ranch

TomKat Ranch supports various aspects of a sustainable food system through their wide array of programs. From a demonstration ranch, to livestock and fork to farm, to their internship and apprenticeship programs, TomKat focuses on building the demand and the market in sustainable food, while cultivating the food justice culture. Their dedication to the work, the people, and the overall mission is seen in their selection process: TomKat Ranch prioritizes self advocacy over farm skills for their interns and apprentices, so that each person can tap into their own unique network of skills. Through their respective programs, these interns and apprentices have the chance to work across multiple areas as they choose, with a goal of integrating people and learning opportunities across the ranch.

- **Basic Structure:** TomKat Ranch has 3-5 interns for summer long positions, to introduce and integrate the interns into farm skills and culture. Apprenticeship programs are 2 years long and provide a deeper dive to the sustainable food system, while Journeymen programs prepare participants for a career in the field.
- **In-person Events:** TomKat Ranch hosts convenings of various types at their Ranch including regenerative agriculture convergences, conservation training, and facilitated group gatherings across a range of topics.
- **Virtual Platforms:** Previous participants stay in contact through a facebook group, text threads, and email exchanges, although there is hope for more engagement to provide alumni job opportunities.
- **Major Take-away:** Creating culture together and developing the whole person is not only a side effect of the program, but a main goal.



4.3 Sustaining the Network

The tools and ideas included in this chapter offer a variety of options for starting a mentor peer-to-peer learning network for your program, but the list is far from comprehensive. However you decide to dive in, or whichever options seem best for your program, we cannot emphasize enough how important it is to involve your mentors in this process. A peer network that you established specifically for your mentors must work for your mentors first and foremost. Use the ideas in this chapter as a guide and a resource as you query mentors in your program to learn about what they want and need out of a peer network. Develop a simple program evaluation with questions to help you understand what your mentors thought about different program components or activities—what they would like to see more or less of, or what they would change or do differently—and send it out to your mentors annually, at the end of each mentoring season. Involving your mentors from the beginning and on a regular basis, and ensuring the various tools you develop fit their needs will, in turn, help ensure an effective and lasting enterprise.

Similarly, involving program mentors in the implementation and management of the peer network will increase the likelihood of success. If possible, assign leadership and decision-making roles to mentors. Such roles can be voluntary or, if your program has the resources and the role implies significant time and responsibility on the part of the mentor, consider creating a contracted position to compensate the mentor for their hard-earned knowledge and expertise.

While managing a peer mentor network has its upsides and its challenges, take notes as you go; keep careful records of everything you try, pros and cons. Consider developing your notes into more formal guidelines and structures as your mentor peer-to-peer network takes shape. Because the process of developing and maintaining a mentor peer-to-peer network can span years, keeping detailed records and putting time into developing written guidelines will help ensure a smooth transition in the event of staff turnover in your organization.

Lastly, don't expect everything to work perfectly out the gate. Setting up an active and effective network takes time—sometimes years. You'll make mistakes. Mentors and program staff will come and go. You will inevitably insist on pushing forward with something that your mentors just don't latch on to. But your success will grow over time. Don't get discouraged. Be creative. Be ready and willing to try different approaches, follow-up with individual mentors to solicit their feedback and ideas, then tweak your design and try again. Trust mentors taking on a leadership role to make decisions and try things on behalf of your program when possible. And use your own peer network—leaders from programs mentioned in this toolkit and so many others across the country—to help guide your efforts.

Lessons learned from establishing [Peer Networking and Community Change groups from the Annie E. Casey Foundation](#) offers some ideas for best practices around peer networking and offers and acknowledges some of the challenges of bringing a peer network together:

Ten Good Practices of Peer Networking

1. Provide a safe, trustful place for participants to interact on topics important to them
2. Encourage personal as well as professional interactions among participants
3. Customize the peer networking structure to meet specific participant needs
4. Promote opportunities for the participants to collaborate
5. Encourage participant feedback about the strengths and challenges of peer networking
6. Build the activity's initial success before broadening its range of participants
7. Offer resources for participants to translate ideas into action
8. Create sub-groups within the peer networking activity to focus on particular topics of interest
9. Shape the activity by analyzing the successes of other peer networking activities
10. Offer a dynamic balance between structure and informality—structure enough to promote continuity and follow-through, but be informal enough to encourage candid conversation and adaptability to whatever the participants think should be discussed.

Ten Challenges of Peer Networking

1. Peer networking is costly in both time and money
2. Participants in peer networking may find it difficult to take action on good ideas they've developed
3. The goals of peer networking may be difficult to identify and to share with others
4. Peer networking may be difficult to integrate with other activities of its sponsor [mentor training program]
5. It may be challenging to balance equality with expertise in selecting peer networking participants
6. Organizational complexity and culture of a peer networking sponsor [mentor training program] may limit chances for success
7. It may be challenging to develop a good exit strategy for a peer networking activity
8. Replicating peer networking activities may be difficult
9. Participant turnover may limit the success of peer networking
10. Individual and group psychological factors may limit the success of peer networking

CASE STUDY

UCSC Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems (CASFS)

Currently CASFS provides a 6-month residential Apprenticeship in Ecological Horticulture, and they are in the process of rolling out a new structure for the 2021 season. The Apprenticeship educates on ecological interactions regarding farming and gardening, and also provides critical analysis on the current food system, and how to make it sustainable. Thorough skills assessments and evaluations throughout the program help ensure that each part of the process is useful and beneficial. Overall, the apprenticeship creates a supportive, engaging, and active sustainable food systems community through education and farmer connections.

- **Basic Structure:** Through lectures, workshops, practical skill classes, field trips, and in-field time, the six month Apprenticeship provides about 300 hours of formal instruction and 700 hours of in field instruction. Apprentices work about 40 hours a week from April to October.
- **In-person Events:** “We have an alumni google group they can join, typically reunions every 10 years. Local alum often join the Friends Board, attend workshops, volunteer to cook for the new group of apprentices. We have an alumni group “Farmers of the Global Majority (FOGM)” (people who self-identify as People of Color) that often hold a reception to welcome new FOGM apprentices, and they typically have a reunion each summer. We usually have a Queer Farmer Field Day to introduce the farm to interested [folx](#), several alum volunteer for that. “
- **Major Take-away:** While no official mentorship program is provided through this apprenticeship, community is created and maintained through the connections. That said, “official mentorship opportunities would be very beneficial to the alum.”
- **Shared Resources:** [Apprenticeship Evaluation survey](#)



CHAPTER 5

Mentoring a Potential Successor



PHOTO CREDIT: Rogue Farm Corps

As an on-farm mentor trainer, why do you need to know about farm succession and transfer? One reason is that you can play a constructive role encouraging and supporting the on-farm mentors you work with to do timely succession planning. Knowing about the issues and process can make you more sensitive to what might be going on for them and their families.

Most important, however, is to understand the unique—and in some ways, quite different—dynamics when a farmer is mentoring a potential successor. In this chapter you'll learn about farm succession and transfer in general, the characteristics and challenges of successor mentoring, and how you can be most effective in supporting those apprenticeships.

“The future belongs to those who give the next generation a reason to hope”

– Pierre Tielhard de Chardin

5.1 Farm Entry and Exit

Farm trainees are at the beginning of their career path. While not all trainees go on to be farm operators, many pursue apprenticeships as a stepping stone to becoming a farmer or rancher. At the other end of the career path are farmers who have put in years of hard work. They are starting to think about winding down—what USDA refers to as “exiting from farming.” Our farmer population is aging. About 25 percent of U.S. producers say they will retire in the next few years.

How they think about and plan for retirement is of paramount concern, not only to the next generation of farmers, but to anyone concerned about the future of agriculture. If older farmers can’t easily exit, their land and farms may not be available to entering farmers.

Farm entry and exit are flip sides of the same coin, and two of the greatest challenges in agriculture today. Many apprenticeships, other farmer training programs, and farm link services prepare new farmers to enter. Succession planning workshops and advisors help senior farmers prepare to exit. But there are far too few farm succession services and many farmers avoid the topic altogether. Only 20 percent of family farms survive to the next generation. Ninety percent of farm owners don’t have an exit strategy or know how to develop one. To add to the challenge, fewer and fewer farms have family successors to take over. One study revealed that two-thirds of retiring Iowa farmers do not have an identified successor. When a farm is not successfully passed on to a family member or unrelated party, that farm is likely to be lost to consolidation into someone else’s bigger farm, or go out of production.

5.2 What is Farm Succession?

Farm succession, also referred to as farm transfer, is the passing of farm income, assets and management from one generation or owner to another. Farm transfer is a complex process, involving legal, financial and managerial aspects. These are intertwined. For example, a trust might be a good legal instrument to mitigate tax consequences. In a farm transfer, the business and the real estate might be treated and transferred differently. For example, a retiring farmer might transfer the business to an unrelated successor but keep the land in the family (and rent it to the new business owner). There are various methods, strategies and tools used to instigate a transfer. The best combination will be unique to each farm.

Farm succession planning is the process of arranging for the future of the farm and the farmer. Farm transfer planning can take months and even a couple of years. A plan is not carved in stone; it can evolve due to changed circumstances, altered decisions, or unexpected events. A good plan guides stakeholders, codifies decisions, gathers relevant documents, and sets a general timeline. The actual transfer can take a decade or more. This diagram shows the typical components of a transfer plan.

All farm succession planning attends to concrete aspects such as writing or updating wills, budgeting for retirement, setting up business and other legal entities, and analyzing finances. However, it is widely acknowledged that the hard issues are the “soft issues.” These include visioning and values, goal setting, family dynamics and communications, conflict management, and transfer of business management. If these “soft” elements are not adequately addressed, no amount of legal detail or financial success will achieve desired outcomes for the farm family.

The Farm Transfer Process

Passing a farm from one generation or owner to another.

A Farm Transfer Plan consists of an *action plan*, a *timeline* and the *documents* needed to accomplish the transfer.



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This process is also referred to as farm transition (not to be confused with farmers transitioning their practices), and the senior operators are referred to as transitioning farmers. It's worth noting here that retirement is one type of business life cycle transition that results in a farmer's exit. But there are others; divorce, disability, disenchantment, and non-viability are examples. Health issues would be another. As you support farmers to take on a big responsibility (mentoring a trainee), it's valuable to consider the farmer's whole picture and path. Where is an on-farm mentor in their business life cycle transition planning? Are any transitions anticipated? How does having a trainee fit or change the plan?

One important takeaway is that transitions such as exiting from farming are emotional as well as practical. In fact, many farmers put off succession planning to avoid the emotional aspects: loss of

purpose and control; fear of diminishment; fear of family conflict; and anxiety about financial security, for example. Generally, farmers (like many of us) do not easily express or work through these emotions.

But farm transition is not only about negative feelings and tense dynamics. Many senior farmers and their families are positive, supportive, and enthusiastic about the prospects for continuing their farm. As an on-farm mentor trainer and support, you can play an important role by lifting up the positive aspects while being sensitive to the emotionally hard parts.

Being a mentor is a lot about leadership. Operating a farm is also about leadership. Leadership involves manifesting the values of the organization (the farm) and modeling good attitudes and behaviors. The last imprint of leaders is reflected in their legacy—what they leave behind to be

Farm Business Life Cycle Transition Planning

Transition means a change or passage. Each stage of a farm business's life cycle requires good planning to anticipate and address transitions. From the birth of the operation to a farmer's exit from active management, transitions can be successfully managed—even sudden and unexpected ones such as disability or disaster. Or they can blindsides and ruin the operation...and the family. This chart is a list of good transition practices.

START & DEVELOP 20s -40s	GROW & MATURE 40s -60s	WIND DOWN & EXIT 60s -70s+
FINANCIAL		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and monitor family budget Focus on financial & production systems Develop and refine business plan Acquire assets (farm and non-farm) Start saving (incl. retirement, rainy day/emergency, kids' college, etc.) Monitor and assess business viability Assess business viability; adjust/ expand/adapt business per plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire additional assets Contribute to savings plan(s) Assess business value and viability; make adjustments Scale business up as needed to support you and your successor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin or continue asset transfer according to plan; may include sale/gift of real estate Update financial profile and needs Determine ongoing income share from farm if part of the plan
LEGAL		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create will, Power of Attorney, Health Care Directive, guardianship; revisit periodically Establish business entities/other vehicles Obtain necessary insurance (liability, casualty, health, life, crop, other) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create estate plan; review will/other Review insurance needs Develop structures for growth and asset transfer; buy-will agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revisit/revise estate plan including will Create, revise or fine-tune legal instruments Review/modify insurance
MANAGERIAL		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create processes for good communications with family and employees Network with other farmers Develop advisor team (legal, financial, etc.) Mature family business practices (e.g., meetings, records, job descriptions) Create/monitor contingency/exit plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop transition plan incl. formal retirement plan Develop a vision for succession/exit and a written plan; share with family Re-evaluate/expand team of advisors Develop plan to recruit and groom a successor or plan for biz sale Consider/pursue farmland protection easement Monitor/update contingency/exit plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify retirement path Consult regularly with advisors Continue (or begin) regular family/transition meetings Determine retirement housing; move from farm if in the plan Begin process to cut back Complete transfer of management Continue to mentor your successor Shift to non-farm activities



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remembered by. Viewing farm succession as a responsibility of leadership and an opportunity for a meaningful legacy can help exiting farmers view their transition in a positive light. Offering an opportunity to a young (especially non-family) farmer is profound. Assuring continued land stewardship can be a source of deep pride. Framing a transfer to a trainee in these ways may not eliminate the senior farmer's anxieties and sadness, but it will bolster their pride in a good process and outcome.

Farm succession planning takes a team of advisors and involves all key stakeholders—typically the farmer and spouse or partner, and farming and non-farming children. Sometimes grandchildren or other relatives play a part; sometimes an employee, or a neighbor farmer. When there is an identified family successor, the players are known. The transfer planning process goes through the basic steps: visioning and goal setting; information gathering; options analysis;

strategy selection; document development; timeline; and process for updating.

The advantages of intra-family succession are several. The junior generation on the farm benefits from lifelong participation and learning on that farm, and in that business. The successor has the advantage of “familiness”—knowing the family's culture, values, and patterns, as well as a lifetime of knowledge about that temperamental tractor or temperamental parent. Family dynamics can make or break an intra-family farm transfer, which is why outside advisors such as coaches or facilitators can be crucial to success. But in these cases the players are identified and committed. Some families with identified family successors, enroll in an apprenticeship program. They have found that the framework can greatly enhance the transition experience for both generations. Many of the factors and dynamics discussed below apply to intra-family apprenticeships.

5.3 Recruiting a Successor

Farmers without an identified family successor face different challenges. Not only can they not take advantage of “familiness,” they encounter extra steps and additional risk to bringing on a successor. Researchers have identified the “succession effect” in which farmers make business decisions based on the expectation of a successful transfer. Absent an identified successor down the road, mid-career farmers are less likely to invest in the operation. Farmers without successors need much more assistance and support than they typically receive.

Finding and grooming a successor seems like (and often is) a daunting task to many older farmers. Some of the steps to bringing on a farm successor are the same, regardless of how they are identified or their status re: the family. But there are crucial differences when a successor is brought in from outside the family. Key among these are:

- Due diligence: who is this potential successor?
- Buy-in: is the family on board?
- Terms of transfer: including price and financing terms.
- Formality: typically more formal, written agreements.
- Timing: often a longer transition period, especially with a gradual “work-in” transfer.
- Trust, control and authority: very different dynamics.

A potential successor could be recruited from a farmer’s network, neighboring farms, advertisements, and farm link programs, for example (more on this below). they could be an employee. To the point of this guide, a successor could also start as a trainee. As you know, a trainee is a person who is learning a trade from a skilled mentor, often the employer. A successor is a person who takes over the role or position of another. They are not the same, and they are not treated the same. The rest of this chapter explores the differences and contrasts between a seasonal trainee and a trainee who is—or could become—a potential successor. We will look at what’s different, and what you, as an on-farm mentor trainer, need to know and understand to help your on-farm mentors navigate and succeed.

It’s important to note that in any good succession process, successors are mentored. Whether or not the successor is the retiring farmer’s offspring, the succession process calls for the fundamentals of mentoring, even if not explicitly labeled as such. Skills and knowledge must be passed on. Cultural norms, values, and “how we do business” must be inculcated. The successor’s fit, aptitude, and capacity must be assessed. Plenty of resources guide business executives on how to mentor their successors, although very few resources focus on mentoring farm successors. Without attaching a formal name or training to the process, farmers play mentoring roles all the time—with younger family members on the farm, employees, or the neighbor’s kid who helps with milking or weeding.

5.4 Trainee or Successor?

When considering apprenticeships and succession, the fundamental difference that shapes nearly every aspect of the trainee-mentor dynamic can be boiled down to this:

- When mentoring a trainee, the mentor stays [on the farm] and the trainee leaves.
- When mentoring a successor, the mentor leaves [the operation] and the successor stays.

Let's look at four scenarios that exemplify these different dynamics.

In the first scenario, the seasonal trainee learns a lot from the senior farmer. They then leaves this farm and find employment on another farm. Or have sufficient experience to obtain land and start a new enterprise. Or return to college or another professional or trade path.

In the second scenario, the trainee learns a lot from the senior farmer. They then move to another farm operation to become a potential successor. In this scenario, the trainee leaves, having acquired skills and knowledge to become a credible successor elsewhere.

In the next scenario, a trainee learns the ropes and meets the senior farmer's successor criteria. The operation is transferred [sold] outright to the trainee and the senior farmer exits from that operation [the senior may or may not also transfer the real estate]. The former trainee, now owner, maintains, modifies, or transforms the operation.

In the last scenario, the trainee meets the senior farmer's successor criteria and expectations. An agreement is forged to gradually transfer the business assets to the trainee over a period of time. The senior farmer has a gradually diminishing role and authority on the farm. The operation may undergo modifications agreeable to both parties.

A more likely variation on this last scenario is when the trainee meets the senior farmer's threshold criteria for the trainee as potential successor. They then enter into the next phase of a trial process. This phase takes a lot of conversation about expectations and agreements as the "graduating" trainee, now an employee or partner, takes on more responsibility on the path to a potential transfer.

In the first two scenarios, the senior farmer [who stays] has mentored a trainee [who leaves] but not recruited a successor. In the third and fourth scenarios, the trainee stays and the mentor [immediately or eventually] leaves the operation. Unless the transfer is turnkey, the "leaving" takes time.

SCENARIO 1

Apprentice leaves to start own farm, work on another farm, or pursue other activities. Mentor continues to operate the farm.

SCENARIO 2

Apprentice leaves to become a credible potential successor on another farm. Mentor continues to operate the farm.

SCENARIO 3

Apprentice becomes the successor; operation is transferred. Mentor leaves and the apprentice becomes the new operator.

SCENARIO 4

Apprentice becomes the successor. Assets and control gradually transfer from mentor to apprentice, typically after a successful trial period. Mentor leaves.

To successfully identify and bring on a successor, the senior farmer must go through a process that is different from recruiting a trainee, although the basic steps are similar. These steps are:

1. Prepare: personal, family and business readiness.
2. Find: look for and select.
3. Place: agree on the job.
4. Train: mentoring and other knowledge and skill building methods.
5. Evaluate: is this the right person and are they ready?
6. Resolve: negotiating the financial and legal transactions.

As an on-farm mentor trainer, your job is to prepare and guide the on-farm mentors in your program. All on-farm mentors need to prepare. They need a plan to recruit their trainee on their own, or to participate in your program's recruitment process. They need to get clear on the trainee job description and areas of training. Typically, there is some kind of assessment component.

When the on-farm mentor is looking for a successor, and the trainee is a potential successor, the dynamics around each step can be different—sometimes very different. As a trainer, your sensitivity to these differences will help your on-farm mentors and trainees meet their objectives and avoid negative outcomes.

5.5 Family Apprenticeships

A trainee can be a family member—typically an on-farm mentor's child. In these cases, if the trainee is already a committed successor, the motivations and dynamics are different from non-family apprenticeships. In these intra-family apprenticeships the parties start with the assumption that the junior generation will take over the farm. Both generations see a formal apprenticeship as beneficial to the transition. It's not a test or trial. It's an opportunity to structure the transmission of knowledge and skills, enhance communications, and agree on goals.

A formal apprenticeship or other training framework helps to separate family habits and dynamics from the professional arrangement. Ten to fifteen percent of DGA [DGA] trainees are junior generation in the farm family. DGA assures that all competencies for operating a dairy farm are addressed within a structured program. DGA believes that this structure improves the odds for success. The junior generation trainee benefits from the full range of trainee program offerings. They are more competent and confident to move forward toward transition. That said, it's not easy to separate family from business. What might feel like a helpful hint to a non-family trainee may feel to a junior generation trainee like parental judgment (and, in fact, it might be!).

5.6 Preparing the On-Farm Mentor

In some ways, preparing each party to the mentor-trainee transaction is the most important step. A prospective on-farm mentor may be clear and open about transition plans and their intentions and hopes for a trainee to become the successor. In that case, it's important for the farmer to convey the potential for a long-term relationship and transfer. However, it's possible that the farmer is not certain that this is the "agenda." In fact, it may not be. So starting with why the farmer wants a trainee is key. As you know, the reason(s) could be one or more of these:

- Desire to teach and share; to grow awareness about farming, or a new generation of producers.
- Need for a permanent employee, often at the management level.
- Need seasonal (hired) help.
- Searching for a successor.

New Entry's [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#) links to a worksheet on motivations for becoming an on-farm mentor, produced by the New England Small Farm Institute. Reasons listed include liking to work with others, sharing love of farming lifestyle, loving to teach, and enjoying "new blood" on the farm. It does not mention looking for a successor, passing on the farm, or anything about creating a legacy. Initial interview with prospective on-farm mentors should elicit all their motivations.

“The stakes are much higher when a trainee is under consideration as a successor.”

If a successor search is one of the explicit or unstated purposes of mentoring, more exploration is important. The search process becomes more detailed. A farmer who is considering mentoring a trainee as potential successor needs to address questions such as:

1. Where are you in your farm succession planning process? What are your challenges?
2. Who is on your succession planning advisor team?
3. Are you clear about what will be transferred and an approximate timeline?
4. Are family and other stakeholders sufficiently involved and on the same page (including about bringing on a non-family successor)?
5. What has been your experience recruiting and grooming a potential successor, if any?
6. Are you actively looking for a successor? What is your recruitment plan?
7. If yes to the previous question, is your search process overt, implicit or covert? In other words, are you open and transparent in seeking a trainee to groom as your successor? Or is this possibility hinted at but not explicit? Or is it an unexpressed hope?
8. What are you willing to share about your farm operation with a potential successor that might be different or more than with a "regular" trainee (e.g., financial information)?
9. What characteristics and qualifications are you looking for that are different from what you would seek in a "regular" trainee?
10. What is the offer? [See below for more on this.]
11. How will you decide next steps with your trainee?



PHOTO CREDIT: Glynwood Center New York

An on-farm mentor should have a fairly clear idea of the transition objectives and strategies and make sure that the family is on board. Otherwise problems could arise. For example, if the senior farmer is not clear that a trainee could be a successor, and has not handled this diplomatically, family members (and farm employees) may feel threatened by, or competitive with, the trainee. While many trainees may “start to feel a little like family” (from the on-farm mentor toolkit), the feeling is as temporary as the apprenticeship. If a trainee is being groomed for post-apprenticeship employment on the farm—for example as a middle manager, it’s still not the same as being groomed to take over the business—and its assets.

The stakes are much higher when a trainee is under consideration as a successor. Rick Kersbergen, a DGA Education Coordinator based in Maine, described one mentor-farmer who searched for the “right” trainee-as-potential-successor for two years. He was looking for a specific type of farmer with certain characteristics and values. Rick noted that finding and mentoring a potential successor is “a lot harder.” Always warn both parties against making any commitments at

the start, advises Altfred Krusenbaum, a DGA Program Education Coordinator in Wisconsin. “Good vibes” are not enough for what are essentially strangers to trust their futures to each other.

Because one of the hardest aspects for a retiring farmer is actually retiring, the parameters of the exit path need to be as clear as possible—and clarity is not always possible. Often senior farmers are vague, conflicted, or not upfront about how they see retirement. Retirement can mean very different things. To one farmer, it means selling everything and moving to town... or to Arizona. To another, it means giving up management control but sticking around to help with haying or fixing equipment [this role could be voluntary or paid as part of the transition plan]. The senior couple may still reside on the farm. Some “retired” farmers pass on the heavy labor but still control the checkbook. In fact, studies show that financial control is most often the last thing the senior farmer lets go of. However it is conceived, this “retirement phase” could be months or years. A 63 year old farmer may be scouting for a successor, but not planning to let go of the reins for another decade. Is this okay with a prospective trainee-successor?

5.7 Preparing the Trainee

Trainees have agendas too. As you know, some are interested in the farm experience but don't intend to become producers. They may be good hired labor, but not successor material. Some seek serious learning situations to prepare to launch their own operation. Krusenbaum is disappointed to observe how few trainee applicants see gradual transfer or the New Zealand sharemilking model as attractive, compared to purchasing an existing operation as attractive. Many young farmers have a vision for their own farm; they are not interested in working into an established operation. They trade patience for eagerness. This may be short-sighted. It is also a reflection of how our society views the culture and traditions of training in the trades.

Some trainees are open to all possibilities, including ones they have not yet considered. It's valuable for the on-farm mentor to have a sense of the trainee's interests. If succession is a goal for the mentor, then they can rule out those who are not serious about a farming career, and those who are not open to becoming the transferee of an existing operation. Likewise, trainees should be made aware of the mentor's objectives. It might also happen that the agenda changes—for example in a two-year apprenticeship, if the first “exploratory” year goes well, the second year might be more explicitly focused on working into the business.

Working into someone else's family farm operation comes with challenges. Interested trainees need to understand that the process takes time, trust, and effort. Extremely few situations result in a transfer of the entire operation after one or two trainee seasons. The trainee should not expect to be ready for a transfer for several years (unless he or she comes to the position with a lot of experience already). As trainer, you can prepare trainees to be realistic about becoming a transferee. You can educate them about what various transfer scenarios look like and entail. You can guide them on their own farm acquisition goals and options. You can warn them not to push or force the owner, while encouraging them to be clear and enthusiastic about their desires.

The whole process is a path. It could take five or ten years to complete. If the pair gets along, and the trainee shows interest and promise, they might become a permanent employee and move into middle management as an intermediary step. During that time, they might build equity. The senior and trainee farmers might enter into a more formal (written) agreement. Good transfer agreements offer attractive incentives and also reasonable escape provisions if things don't work out.

5.8 Roles and Expectations

All mentors are encouraged to prepare a general job description that frames both work and educational expectations. What are the trainee's tasks and responsibilities? What is the schedule? What knowledge and skill transmission are most important? An apprenticeship curriculum sets out learning objectives; these are typically focused on production practices, equipment skills, and business and financial skills such as record keeping, budgeting, and business planning. The [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#) notes that "farm mentees must be trained to start and manage their own businesses." In the business training area, considerations around confidentiality, transparency, and decision input may be quite different if the trainee is being groomed as a successor [implicitly or overtly]. The teaching curriculum may not vary much [at least initially] across types or expectations of trainees. But it's important to check.

It also may be true that a mentor will be looking for a different suite of skills and traits if the trainee is a potential successor rather than a seasonal trainee or possible permanent employee. These include attributes such as management style and skills, leadership, strategic thinking, harmony with family members, networking skills, and emotional maturity. Mentors will want to determine not only whether their trainee has met learning objectives, but if they are a good fit. It takes a while [a season at least] of working together to develop confidence that the mentor and trainee can get along. And at some point, timeframe, logistics, and money start to be factors.

The Toolkit reminds mentors "that your operation is not their operation; don't expect them to be as deeply invested as you are" (p. 31). If the mentor is eyeing the trainee as a potential successor—that the operation might indeed be theirs someday, the mentor and the trainee might view "being invested" differently. Whether

implicit or not, a trainee who is a potential successor is on trial. This inevitably shifts the dynamics.

Recall that succession is the transfer of income, assets, and management. Of these, the most under-attended and often most challenging is the transfer of management. When a senior farmer grooms a successor, issues around authority, decision-making, and control surface. This is where many transfers, including within families, fall apart. Many senior farmers find it hard to let go. They also have decades of experience about how to do something "right." A succession attorney tells the story of a senior farming complaining that his son was "just not ready" to take over the farm. Well, the senior was 96 years old and the son was 72.

One cause of contention in family transfers is when the junior generation is chafing under the thumb of the senior or being discouraged from trying something new. What kinds of decisions will the mentor farmer let any trainee make? And if the senior is "testing" the trainee? Is the trainee encouraged to make decisions or offer ideas? How are initiative and assertiveness viewed?

Here are some questions to help you guide your mentors to set expectations.

- What is the offer? How is the apprenticeship being pitched?
- What is the agreement or contract?
- What, if anything, is different when succession is or could be part of the agenda?
- Are the methods and criteria for assessing progress and competency different?
- What happens at the "end" of the apprenticeship? What happens next? What is "closure"?

5.9 The Offer

Agrarian training programs train and support their on-farm mentors based on the program's mission. The emphasis your program places on succession will influence how your on-farm mentors approach and handle the process. DGA, for example explicitly states its mission as "Linking current and aspiring graziers in the transfer of farms [emphasis added] and graziers' skills and knowledge." Other programs do not specifically target succession and transfer objectives.

In the [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#), on-farm mentors are instructed on how to design the application and selection process. Before getting down to details such as writing the questions and scheduling interviews, it might help on-farm mentors to describe the offer. The DGA website's "featured farms" contain short profiles written by the farmers about their farms and what they are looking for in a trainee. In nearly all of these profiles, the offer centers on educating a trainee to go on to their own farm. Several seek applications for a specific position on that farm, such as a "farm assistant." One explicitly states the "goal of taking over farm management in 3-5 years" although it isn't clear from that wording whether the offer is a manager position or a transfer of the operation.

As emphasized above, an on-farm mentor may not have succession as a clear objective in bringing a trainee to the farm. It might evolve in that direction, as a pleasant surprise to both parties. Or, the senior farmer may not be ready to publicly announce this intention. When the intention is concrete and overt, the offer and application can be designed to elicit the information unique to this situation. The benefits are that only applicants with an interest in working into an existing operation will apply, and that an offer with the hope of moving into an ownership position on the farm operation could be especially attractive. If the successor search

is not explicit, the offer description and application might have slightly different wording about learning objectives, exposure to aspects of the operation, etc.

It's highly unlikely that a senior farmer will transfer their operation to a truly novice trainee after one year, or even two. So they might target their application and selection process (e.g., interview questions) to more experienced trainees and to wannabes who understand the realities and risks of the process. Compatible career aspirations may be higher on the list of trainee qualifications. An applicant's resources (e.g., their own livestock or equipment) might be among desired attributes.

Does the offer mention a possible permanent position? Does it include the word "transfer"? Does it talk about a trial period? Does it describe a path? Does it include the possibility of owning the operation? Does it include the possibility of owning the land? Is the envisioned transfer turnkey (sell the operation) or gradual, in which the assets are transferred and the retiring farmer is involved in the operation over time?

Once there's a solid description of the offer and the application and selection process have been set up, you will probably help your on-farm mentors get the word out. The ag trainee toolkit suggests posting to farm trainee lists and social media, creating a webpage, print and online classified ads, and flyers or brochures.

If the on-farm mentor is looking for a potential successor, farm link programs are another important outlet to advertise. Farm link programs were started in the 1990s in an effort to connect retiring farmers without identified successors with entrants looking to work into a farm transfer. Today there are over 50 farm link programs in the U.S., most of which focus more on farm seekers and land access. Farm link programs post more farm properties for sale or rent than explicit farm succession opportunities. There are



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thousands of farm seekers enrolled in these programs—many more than the number of posted offers. Consistent with the observations above, most are not (at least initially) looking to be a successor. That said, farm link seekers are a rich trove of potential trainee-successors.

Postings that specifically seek a potential transferee might refer to a trial period, a gradual transition process, or opportunities to build equity. In one example, the retiring farmers “hope to find a successor who will carry on [their] legacy.” One state-run farm link program explicitly includes “farmers who are interested in providing opportunities to a beginning farmer by transitioning an existing farm with no current heir.” While some farm link programs and their individual property postings might mention “mentoring,” they are not necessarily (or likely) apprenticeships. So a farm link program might be a fruitful outlet for an on-farm mentor to recruit a successor, and in some cases the apprenticeship angle will be seen as a bonus opportunity.

5.10 The Process

For the most part, setting up the apprenticeship and delivering the training are fairly straightforward, regardless of the trainee and situation. However, when senior farmers (and typically farming couples) contemplate transitioning out of farming, and the trainee is a potential successor, the dynamics shift. Foremost perhaps—and not the easiest to acknowledge—the dynamics around the “soft issues.”

Under any scenario, exiting from farming is an emotional process. As described above, uncertainty, sadness, and anxiety are common, if not openly expressed. However, it is also true that transition can be viewed as really positive—a time for renewal, creativity, regeneration, and opportunity. The retiring farmer is shaping a meaningful legacy, showing leadership and modeling land stewardship in the effort to sustain the farm, and keep the land in active farming. This mix makes transition loaded; the future of the operation is at stake, as well as family harmony and the future wellbeing and security of the exiting farmer.

Good communication is key to all mentor-trainee relationships. It is also essential for a successful transfer. In situations where the trainee is being considered as a potential successor, good communications and other soft issues are particularly relevant. As a mentor trainer in these scenarios, you might want to check in with your on-farm mentor trainees. Ask these questions in an orientation or training session:

- How do they manage conflict? What is their “style”?
- How comfortable are they sharing and delegating responsibility?
- Are they sensitive to family dynamics as they bring in a new person? How will they handle this?
- How will the decision to proceed to the next step with a trainee be made? Who will be involved?
- Are they aware of their farm and family culture? How comfortable are they with gender, generational and/or cultural differences?
- What will they need to support their transition and “letting go”?

Beyond the soft issues, many practical factors have to be considered. Who will live where? What resources will the exiting farmer or farm couple live on? What is transferred and when? How does the “organizational chart” change? The financial and legal mechanics can be daunting. Planning takes time, and plans can evolve and shift. Transparency (for example, who is gifted or inherits what assets) is not always possible—or advisable.

In this context, the relationship between the on-farm mentor and the trainee takes on extra significance. If they don’t get along or have compatible visions, it’s not just about enduring an apprenticeship season; it could jeopardize the farm’s future, especially if time is running out on the mentor. Can the senior farmer offer constructive feedback and critique or are

they afraid of losing a promising successor? Do other family members weigh in? Are the benchmarks for progress the same when the trainee is a potential successor? How and when does a decision get made about a future with that trainee?

With a seasonal trainee, the apprenticeship or other training position is over at the end of one (or in some programs, two or more) season(s). This “graduation” is pivotal. Either the trainee is bid a fond farewell, or they stay and the arrangement shifts. As trainer, what is your role during this shift? One important service might be to make sure that the mentor and the hopeful successor have sufficient support to move forward. You can help them connect with a farm succession service provider or program. If the trainee moves on, you could be really helpful to the mentor to process what happened and what was learned. With some reflection, the mentor might be better prepared to engage with the next trainee.

The progression from trainee to successor (or potential successor) is a particular benchmark. It might signal the time to bring in other service providers. A farm succession specialist, facilitator, or “coach” could be valuable to structure the post-apprenticeship transition and support the parties throughout the next phases. Land for Good’s [“Team Approach to Farm Transfer Planning Assistance”](#) emphasizes the importance of building a professional advisor team around succession planning. These might include:

- Attorney
- Farm financial/business management specialist
- Tax advisor
- Insurance agent
- Retirement planner
- Conservation specialist
- Lender
- Mediator
- Appraiser
- Land use planner

5.11 Training On-Farm Mentors

It makes sense to raise these succession planning issues with mentors during their training. Here is a sample training module on this topic.

1. Overview of succession and transfer
 - » PPT with main concepts
 - » Transition graphic (LFG), [page 146](#)
2. Mentor assessment
 - » Where are mentors in their career path? General discussion
 - » Assign a worksheet of selected questions from the list on [page 151](#); individual work
 - » Small group or dyad discussion of the worksheet; could divide into groups or pairs of those who are or might be looking for a successor and those who are not
3. Reconvene for group discussion: what came up? What are common themes? What are challenges?
4. Exercise: Skills and Abilities Valued in a Successor (See worksheet below)
5. Soft issues: See questions on [page 157](#).

Mentoring a farm trainee can be a rewarding and educational experience for both the trainee and the on-farm mentor. The odds of success are improved with the training and support you and programs like yours offer. Adding the succession element makes it all more complex. But with adequate awareness of the issues and dynamics around bringing on a trainee as potential successor, you can guide the process to a successful outcome... whatever that might be.



What Are You Looking for in a Successor?

For each attribute or skill, check low, medium or high depending on how important you think it is.

Characteristic	High	Medium	Low	Characteristic	High	Medium	Low
PERSONAL				MANAGEMENT			
experience				decision-making			
maturity				risk management			
self-confidence				stress management			
creativity & innovation				delegation			
integrity				planning and organization			
tenacity				interpersonal awareness			
loyalty				leadership			
honesty				problem solving			
strategic thinking				conflict management			
other:				administration			
GENERAL				other:			
relationship with family							
relationship with employees							
enthusiasm for this business							
networks & networking skills							
education							
other:							



PHOTO CREDIT: University of Maryland

Additional Resources

- Land For Good resources
 - » Many resources linked from LFG's [Toolbox for Farm Transfer Planning](#)
 - » [Successful Farm Transfer Planning for Farmers without Identified Successors](#)
 - » [Farm Succession Planning: A Guide for the Junior Generation](#)
 - » [A Team Approach to Farm Transfer Planning Assistance](#)
- Other succession resources (a sampling from many available online)
 - » [Planning the Future of Your Farm: A Workbook Supporting Farm Transfer Decisions](#) (Virginia Cooperative Extension and several other editions)
 - » [Ag Transitions](#), online interactive succession planning tool (University of MN)
 - » [What You Need to Know about Farm Succession Planning](#) (Farm Bureau Financial Services)
- State departments of agriculture: may have consultants and/or farm viability programs that address transfer planning. Several have programs that subsidize succession planning
- State Cooperative Extension: may have farm succession specialists, including farm financial/business consultants familiar with succession
- Farm link program databases
 - » [National Young Farmers Coalition Land Link Directory](#)
 - » [American Farmland Trust, Farm Link Programs](#)

CHAPTER 6

Resources for Mentors



PHOTO CREDIT: Alexis Bonogofsky for Quivira Coalition

Throughout the toolkit, we offered case studies, examples, and resource links, and highlighted lessons learned from experienced apprenticeship and mentor training programs. Each of these resources referenced in the document are also included here in Chapter 6, Resources for Mentors to facilitate the development of a library of resources that organizations can draw from when designing a training for your mentors. By no means is this resource list complete; we consider it a work in progress. Throughout the document, we shared sample training agendas, application forms, interview questions, resource handouts, checklists, or other programmatic material shared by existing programs and we have pulled all of those references, as well as online articles, book suggestions, TED talks, videos, and other resources here in the Resource section. If a

resource was unavailable online, content was posted in the [AgALN Resource Library](#) with the author’s permission and links to those were referenced. We strongly encourage readers to visit the [AgALN Resource Library](#) on the New Entry website for additional Apprenticeship Training and Mentor Resources. This is an ongoing, “living” resource library that will continue to be updated as programs share their content with the network. Please refer to [the section on how to share a resource](#) for inclusion in this Toolkit or in our online resource libraries.

Given the size of this Resource Chapter, we wanted to provide a guide to the organization of the resources so you can quickly find information on the topics that interest you. There are three main sections of the Resource Chapter. First, we start with an overview of the many beginning farmer and rancher training programs that are highlighted in the Toolkit either via case studies or who have shared links to their resources and program strategies. Next, we cover the wealth of resources from Chapter 3, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. This is divided into racial equity and justice resources and links to readings and resources covering other dimensions of diversity or “-isms”. Lastly, we wrap up the Resource Chapter with resources organized by topic area that are compiled from all the resources provided in each of the different sections of the Toolkit.

6.1 Farmer Training Resources by Organization

The organizations listed here are often referenced throughout the toolkit, and are introduced here. They provide valuable resources used throughout this toolkit used in their educational and training programs. Access to their resource library and programmatic work is linked in the description.

Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems from the University of Santa Cruz

[The Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems](#) (CASFS) is a research, education, and public service organization dedicated to advancing an ecologically sustainable and socially just food system. CASFS’ work includes both theoretical and applied research; academic education and practical training; and community outreach and public service for audiences ranging from local school children to international agencies. CASFS offers an ecological horticulture apprenticeship as well as a beginning farmer and rancher evaluation project called [Gaining Results through Evaluation Work \(GREW\)](#): Evaluation Support for Beginning Farmer and Rancher Programs.

Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training

The Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) provides access to a variety of [Farmer Resources](#) including: business tools, resources for farm labor, land access, understanding soil tests, financing opportunities, land use resources, networks and other programs and books and publications. This farmer-led coalition offers mentorship and training for farmers emphasizing sustainable agriculture. They offer a range of [Farmer Training Resources](#) including: Farmer Mentor Resources and Farm Beginnings Programs. Local programs divided by state or region promote training of farmers, farm workers and apprentices, the exchange of ideas amongst farm people and the ability to create community for those interested in local agriculture. For more information on CRAFT, access to CRAFT resources and a local program, [click here](#) or email CRAFT@learngrowconnect.org.

Resources discussed in this toolkit include [Best Practices of CRAFT Farmer Alliances in North America](#).

Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship

The [Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship \(DGA\)](#) is a non-profit that partners with established grazing dairy farmers, universities and community-based organizations to provide training in managed-grazing dairy productions. DGA has created fact sheets, webinars and materials for farmers looking to hire apprentices that can be [found here](#). Check out their [case studies](#) to see how DGA has helped dairy farmers and apprentices over the years.

Resources discussed throughout this toolkit include: the DGA “Care and Feeding of your Adult Learner” including [the webinar](#), the [Apprenticeship Adult Learner Tip Sheet](#), the [Apprentice Communication Tip Sheet](#), and other [Apprenticeship Webinars and Tip Sheets](#).

Access to the [Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Application](#).

Other DGA resources include:

- [Training the Trainer Webinar Series](#)
- [YouTube channel](#)
- [Finding the Right Apprentice](#)
- [Your Apprentice's First Week](#)
- [Care & Feeding of Your Adult Learner](#)
- [Good Communications for a Good Apprentice Experience](#)

Institute of Applied Agriculture at the University of Maryland

[The Institute of Applied Agriculture \(IAA\)](#) is a two-year academic certificate program in the [College of Agriculture and Natural Resources \(AGNR\)](#) at the University of Maryland, College Park. The IAA provides students with the entrepreneurial, technical, and leadership skills needed to manage profitable agricultural enterprises, including golf courses, sports fields, landscaping companies, and farming operations. The IAA motivates students to start, enhance, or redirect their careers. Our students include recent high school graduates, people who have been out of school for years, lifelong learners, and career changers.

Land Stewardship Project

[Land Stewardship Project \(LSP\)](#) is a non-profit organization founded to foster an ethic of stewardship for farmland, to promote sustainable agriculture, and to develop healthy communities. LSP does beginning farmer training, but also created the [Farmer Network Directory](#), a searchable database of established farmers who are available to support other farmers. There are also resources for farm transitions, farm development and land access organizing. The Land Stewardship Project also facilitates a [Farm Beginnings Program](#) and coordinates a national network of organizations who offer the Farm Beginnings curriculum in their region.

CASE STUDY

University of Maryland - Institute of Applied Agriculture

The University of Maryland Institute of Applied Agriculture is a way in which students can learn the depths of sustainable agriculture in a formal college degree setting. Students are required to complete an internship of 320 hours after their second year to engage with the community and get hands on experience. Many of the mentors in the program are also graduates, thus the college, along with the greater community, have an active and supportive farmer network.

- **Basic Structure:** Students choose where they want their internship to take place, and create a formal contract with their mentor and their school internship coordinator detailing the internship description, learning objectives, scheduling commitments, and communication mediums. After the internship, students are required to complete an in-depth internship report that summarizes the farming business, detailing everything from tax structures, marketing, and insurance to animal care, fertilization, and irrigation.
- **In-person Events:** Mentors are typically within the farming community,
- **Virtual Platforms:** Students note the hours they worked and any thoughts following the day in an online form daily.
- **Major Take-away:** Mentors are internship hosts, which typically understand the demands of hosting a mentorship, and if changes are needed the internship coordinator steps in.
- **Shared Resources:** Internship search self assessment, internship agreement, and internship manual



PHOTO CREDIT: University of Maryland

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association

The [Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association \(MOFGA\)](#) is the oldest and largest state organic organization in the country. This community educates and advocates for organic agriculture, emphasizing the interdependence with a healthy environment, local food production and the community. MOFGA provides many [resources for farmers](#). Referenced earlier in the toolkit are two recorded webinars:

- [Communication Styles for Positive Farm Apprenticeships](#)
- [Supporting Beginning Farmer Learning](#)

Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service

[Midwest Organic & Sustainable Education Service \(MOSES\)](#) is a Wisconsin-based non-profit organization promoting organic and sustainable agriculture through education, resources and expertise for farmers. Organic farming specialists are available for farming or certification questions. [Projects are created to support farmers](#) including: Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program, Organic Stewards program, and In Her Boots Project for beginning and women farmers. General farming resources can be found [here](#), or questions by topic including: field crops, livestock, market farming, season extension, and soil and cover crops, can be addressed [here](#).

New Agrarian Program from Quivira Coalition

The [New Agrarian Program \(NAP\)](#) partners with skilled ranchers and farmers to offer annual apprenticeships in regenerative agriculture. This program targets first-career professionals with a sincere commitment to life at the intersection of conservation and regenerative agriculture. NAP also seeks mentors who are dedicated stewards of the land; practice intentional, regenerative methods of food or fiber

production; provide excellent animal care; and are skilled and enthusiastic teachers.

If you are interested in the NAP Mentor Training call series, there are recordings available. These can be accessed by emailing newagrarian@quiviracoalition.org. The calls are free and open to anyone. You can also sign up for next season's call series at the same email. Topics covered include:

- Balancing Work and Education
- Effective Interviews
- Evaluating Written Applications
- Feedback
- Mentoring to create a Self-Initiating Apprentice
- Recruiting & Apprenticeship Descriptions
- Setting Expectations

Resources discussed throughout this toolkit include:

- [Mentor Descriptions on the Quivira Coalition New Agrarian](#)
- [NAP Mentor Training call series](#)
- [Quivira Coalition's Agrarian Apprenticeship Guide, 'Are you a Good Fit?'](#)
 - » [#1: Motivations for becoming an on-farm mentor](#)
 - » [#3: Prior Teaching, Training & Coaching Experience](#)
 - » [On-Farm Mentor Self-Evaluation Questionnaire](#)
- [Quivira Coalition NAP skill sheet](#)
- [Quivira Coalition's guidebook Agrarian Apprenticeship: Growing the Next Generation of Ranchers and Farmers](#)

Access the 2021 [Quivira NAP Application](#).

New England Small Farm Institute

The [New England Small Farm Institute \(NESFI\)](#) is a land-based non-profit organization focused on sustainable agriculture and promoting small farm development through information and training for aspiring, beginning or transitioning farmers. NESFI offers extensive resources for beginning farmers and for farm mentorship. Find their resources [here](#).

Resources discussed throughout the toolkit include:

- [NESFI A Systematic Approach to Small Farm Development](#)
- [NESFI On-Farm Mentor Self-Evaluation Questionnaire](#)
- [NESFI Worksheet #1: Motivations for Becoming an On-Farm Mentor](#)
- [NESFI Worksheet #3: Prior Teaching, Training & Coaching Experience](#)

New Entry Sustainable Farming Project

[New Entry Sustainable Farming Project's \(New Entry\)](#) mission is to improve local and regional food systems by training the next generation of farmers to produce food that is sustainable, nutritious and culturally-preferred and making this food accessible to individuals regardless of age, mobility, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. In doing this work, we provide critical training, career development, and economic opportunity to new farmers.

[Ag Apprenticeship Learning Network \(AgALN\)](#) is coordinated by New Entry Sustainable Farming Project to support and professionalize ag apprentice training programs around the country. AgALN is a collaboration with Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship, Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association, Rogue Farm Corps, Villicus Farms, and Quivira Coalition. AgALN provides access to an online resource center, archived and current webinars, annual gatherings, mentor training, and a listserv.

Resources discussed throughout this toolkit include:

- [Apprentice Skills Checklist](#)
- [Apprentice Host Evaluation](#)
- [Apprentice Skills Assessment](#)
- [Ag Apprenticeship Toolkit](#)
- [On-Farm Assessment](#)
- [Farming and Business Skills Assessment](#)
- [Map of Incubator Farms in the U.S.](#)

Northeast Organic Farming Association

[The Northeast Organic Farming Association \(NOFA\)](#) has seven chapters by state in the Northeast including: Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island and Vermont. Each of the seven state chapters comprising the Northeast Organic Farming Association provides educational conferences, workshops, farm tours and printed materials to educate farmers, gardeners, consumers and land care professionals. Each NOFA chapter has a beginning farmer program, with an emphasis on improving beginning farmers' access to education and peer support and networking.

Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture

[Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture \(PASA\)](#), also referred to as Pasa Sustainable Agriculture, is a community of farmers and supporters offers farmer training and development through apprenticeship programs. Pasa offers resources, webinars and research to improve sustainable agricultural practices including the financial viability of farm businesses, soil health, and the nutrient-density of crops and products. They offer a Farmer-to-Farmer Exchange to facilitate field days and forums to put research findings to practical use.

CASE STUDY

NOFA Vermont

Through advocacy, organic certification, events, and training, the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) of Vermont supports the farming community in a variety of ways. NOFA hopes to move farmers at all levels of development along the continuum of progress, to reach their business and quality of life goals. From aspiring growers to farmers perfecting their businesses, NOFA programs help create connections among farmer cohorts and mentors to strengthen the farming community.

- **Basic Structure:** Farm Beginnings is a yearlong program for aspiring farmers, where interested individuals pay for classes and can be matched with a mentor. This cohort class allows farmers to connect with other beginning farmers, and also ask technical and general advice from experienced farmers, that are compensated for their time and energy. This matching process is fairly hands off - mentors and mentees can make it more or less involved depending on their engagement preferences. Growers interested in continuing can then enter into the 2-year Journey Farmer Program, where farmers receive a stipend and have the ability to advance their skills among peers.
- **In-person Events:** Mentees are able to make farm visits to their mentors' farm, and meet others when farmers are brought in as consultants.
- **Virtual Platforms:** Mentors are available to mentees throughout the year for check in or technical advice calls.
- **Major Take-away:** Mentors and mentees are matched based on skills, interest, and geographic area, but NOFA is looking to figure out how to better connect mentors and mentee farmers and better formalize their relationships. Keeping engagement preferences open is important to the organization, but by creating a more formal process, NOFA is hoping that both mentors and mentees will find the relationship more beneficial.

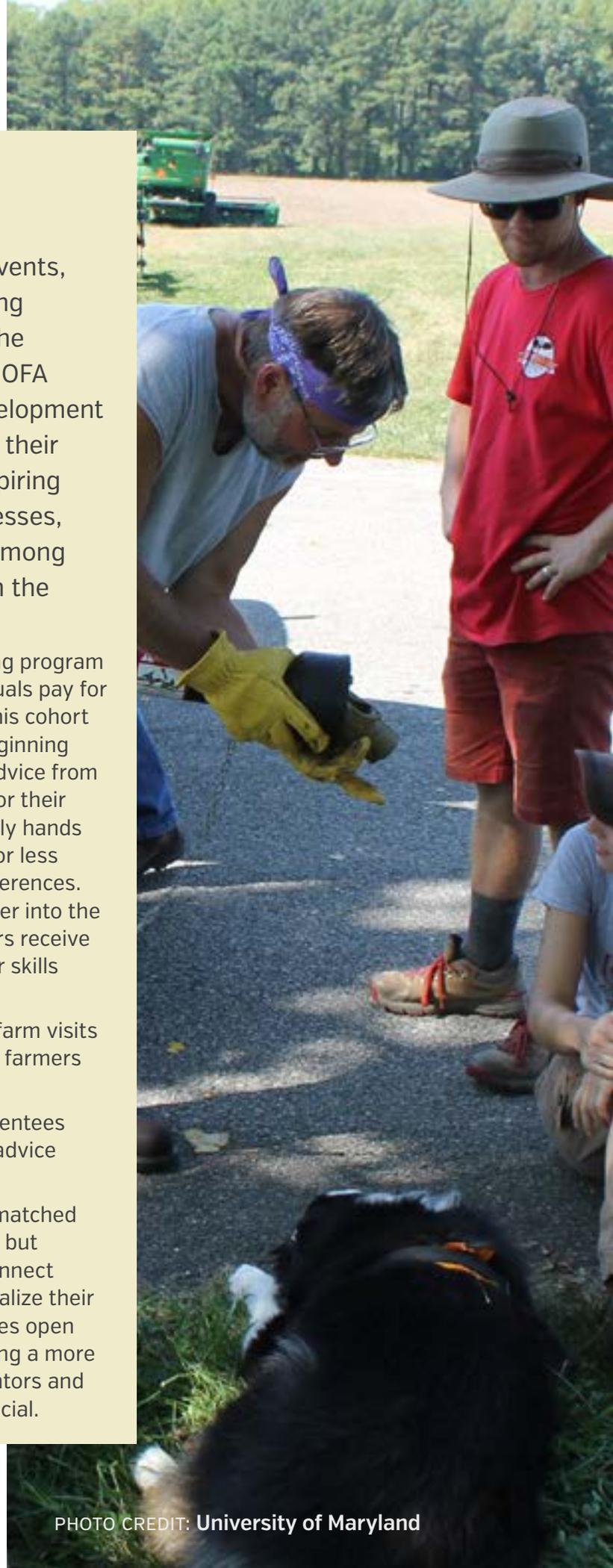




PHOTO CREDIT: Rogue Farm Corps

Rogue Farm Corps

[Rogue Farm Corps \[RFC\]](#) is the only organization in Oregon with a structured, entry-level education and training program for beginning farmers that is based on commercial farms. Their mission is to train and equip the next generation of farmers and ranchers through hands-on educational programs and the preservation of farmland.

Resources discussed throughout the toolkit include: the [RFC Mentor Self Assessment](#), and the [Mentor Decision Questionnaire - Are you a Good Fit?](#)

Learn more about the [Apprenticeship application](#), [Internship application](#) or the [Mentorship application](#).

Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture

[Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture](#) aims to shape an ecological food culture that centers farmers and their stewardship of the land to amplify their success. They are innovative leaders for experimentation from tools, seeds, breeds, and infrastructure. Stone Barns offers [training and support to beginning farmers](#), as well as food education and public programs. There is an Entrepreneurship Intensive, as well as a Young Farmers Conference. Their resources can be found [here](#).

The University of Wisconsin-Madison

The [University of Wisconsin-Madison](#) provides resources for assessing mentoring competencies. This includes resources for mentoring assessment, self-reflection, and mentoring program assessment [found here](#). This toolkit references this survey called [Mentoring Competency Assessment \[MCA\]](#).

6.2 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Resources

Racial Justice Resources

The majority of the resources presented in this section are focused on racial equity and provide guidance on dismantling the racist policies and structures that are the dominant force of oppression in our society. Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by the structural and system policies that impact disparities and outcomes at all levels of society. This does not diminish the other forms of discrimination and harms caused by other forms of prejudice and/or implicit or explicit bias (sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and others). “[Leading with race](#)” helps create an introduction and shared understanding of the tools, frameworks, and resources that are critical to addressing the many other areas of marginalization. Please see the definitions of racism and other key prejudices noted in [Section 3.1 Definitions](#).

General Resources

- [Better Allies: Everyday Actions to Create Inclusive, Engaging Workplaces](#), by Karen Catlin, 2019.
- [Black Food Geographies](#) by Ashanté M. Reese.
- [Black Land Loss](#), a Duke Sanford World Policy Center review of historical factors accompanied by resources and video interviews of leaders involved in combating Black land loss.
- [Black Lands Matter: The Movement to Transform Heirs' Property Laws](#)
- [Black Lives Matter in the Food System](#), by the Civil Eats Editors. Published online by Civil Eats. July 2020.
- [Collective Liberation Guide](#), by [People and Planet](#), a UK student organizing group campaigning for social and environmental justice.
- [Continuum on Becoming Anti-Racist](#).
- [Dismantling Racism in the Food System](#). Holt-Giménez, Eric and Breeze Harper. Food First (Number 1), Winter-Spring 2016. Institute for Food & Development Policy.
- [Dismantling Racism Resource Book](#), Western States Resource Center.
- [Dispossession](#) by Pete Daniel.
- [eXtension Organizing Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#), eXtension Foundation.
- [Farming While Black](#), by Leah Penniman, 2018.
- [Freedom Farmers](#) by Monica M. White.
- [Guide to Allyship](#) by Amélie LaMont.
- [Honor Native Land Guide](#) by US Department of Arts and Culture.
- [How to be an Anti-Racist](#), by Ibram X. Kendi, 2019.
- [In Search of our Mothers' Gardens](#). Alice Walker, 2003.
- [International Food Policy Research Institute: Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index](#).
- [Leveling the Fields: Creating Farming Opportunities for Black People, Indigenous People, and Other People of Color](#). By the Union of Concerned Scientists. Published in HEAL Food Alliance Policy Brief. May 2020.
- [Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World and Become a Good Ancestor](#), by Layla Saad, 2020.
- [Native-land.ca, Land or territory acknowledgement](#).
- New York Times' [1619 podcast](#).

- [Organizational Justice and Equity Self-Assessment Rubric](#) created by Angela Park in collaboration with Tiffany Chan, Curt Coffing, John Reuter, Hope Rippeon, and Ed Zuckerman.
- [Pacific University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Glossary](#).
- So You Want to Talk About Race, by Ijeoma Oluo, 2018.
- [The Cooking Gene](#) by Michael Twitty.
- United States Census Bureau: [National Population by Characteristics: 2010-2019](#).
- United States [Census of Agriculture \[2012\]: Race / Ethnicity / Gender Profile](#).
- [United States Census of Agriculture 2017: Black Farmers](#).
- [US Department of Arts and Culture - "Honor Native Land" guide](#).
- Waking up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race, by Debby Irving, 2014.
- [Want to See Food and Land Justice for Black Americans? Support these Groups](#). By the Civil Eats Editors. Published online by Civil Eats. June 2020.
- White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism, by Robin DiAngelo, 2018.
- [What Do 2020 Candidates Mean When They Say 'Reparations'?](#)
- [Who Owns the Land](#), Agricultural Land Ownership by Race/Ethnicity.
- [Young Farmers Racial Equity Toolkit](#) from the National Young Farmers Coalition.

Online Tools

- [21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](#) invites participants to complete a series of assignments over 21 days, including readings, videos, and podcasts. It is designed to focus on the Black American experience and to expose participants to perspectives on Black history, identity, culture, and the experience of racism in the United States. Beyond the 21-day challenge itself, the website contains a plethora of resources that are well worth exploring.
- [Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index](#) (WEAI) is an aggregate index, reported at the country or regional level, based on individual-level data collected by interviewing men and women within the same households. The WEAI comprises two sub-indices. The first assesses the degree to which respondents are empowered in five domains of empowerment (5DE) in agriculture. It reflects the percentage of women and men who are empowered and, among those who are not, the percentage of domains in which they enjoy adequate achievements.
- [Food Solutions New England](#) adapted the 21-day challenge created by Dr. Moore and adapted it to the food systems network needs, creating their very own [21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](#). They have organized and hosted their adapted version of the challenge since as a participatory activity, open to anyone, each year since 2015. You can either use the resources on their website to create your own challenge, or you can sign up for their annual event, with [registration](#) available online. If you opt to go on this journey on your own or internally with your staff, organization, and eventually your mentors, their ["Tools for Groups"](#) page includes a downloadable Racial Equity Challenge Discussion Guide, a Racial Equity Challenge Facilitators Webinar, and other useful resources.

Organizations, Websites and Consultants for Anti-Racism and Racial Equity Training

- [Adaway Group](#)'s Whiteness at Work training.
- [Ambrose Consulting](#) offers racial equity webinars, culture transformation, strategic assessment (listening and learning) and equity action planning.
- [Angela Park](#) is a consultant, educator, and coach who helps mission-driven organizations clarify their justice and equity values to embed them throughout their policies, practices, culture, and programming.
- [Anti-Oppression Resource and Training Alliance](#).
- [Awaken](#) (Michelle Kim) provides interactive racial equity training and maintains a [spreadsheet of over 300 black-owned businesses](#) who provide racial equity training.
- [Black Label Consulting and Coaching](#); Patrice Lockert Anthony, President, [contact](#).
- [Celebrate Diversity](#)—cultural agility training; provided [support](#) to Rogue Farm Corps for their mentor training.
- [Center for the Study of White American Culture, Inc. \[CSWAC\]](#).
- [ColorLines](#) is a daily news site published by [Race Forward](#) where race matters, featuring award-winning in-depth reporting, news analysis, opinion and curation about racial justice issues.
- [Crossroads AntiRacism Organizing and Training](#).
- [DEI Expert Hub](#).
- [Denver Foundation's Inclusiveness Project](#).
- [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion | A Professional Development of the eXtension Foundation Impact Collaborative](#).
- [EDUCAUSE: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Resources](#).
- [Food Solutions New England](#).
 - » [21-day FSNE Racial Equity Challenge Registration](#)
 - » [Tools for Groups](#)
- [Groundswell Center for Local Food & Farming](#)
- [International Food Policy Research Institute: Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index](#).
- [Interaction Institute for Social Change](#).
- [Justice Informed: DEI and Social Impact Consulting](#), Xavier Ramey.
- [Levi Baer](#), DEI Strategist and Communications Trainer.
- [McGruder and Associates](#), [Natilee McGruder](#), Consultant.
- [National Council of Nonprofits: Why Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Matter for Nonprofits](#).
- [Nikki Silvestri](#) operates [Soil and Shadow](#) and works at the intersection of regenerative agriculture and racial justice.
 - » [Services](#)
 - » [Thriving in Chaos: What Soil Teaches Us](#).
 - » [Diverse and Inclusive Hiring](#)
 - » [Soil and Your Inner Power](#)
 - » [Building True Allies](#)
- [Racial Equity in the Food System WorkGroup](#): hosted by Michigan State University's Center for Regional Food Systems.
- [Regan Byrd Consulting](#).
- [Soul Fire Farm](#), Uprooting Racism in the Food System trainings; they also [maintain a listing of other recommended trainings and a speakers collective](#).
- [Tepeya Consulting](#); offers trainings in Spanish.
- [Undoing Racism: The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond](#).
- [Western States Resource Center](#).

BIPOC-led Organizations and Resources:

This list was compiled by [Civil Eats in June 2020](#) and highlights organizations working to advance Black food sovereignty. Learn more about, look to the leadership of, and support the efforts of these groups (and many more) to deepen the understanding of how we can collectively address and eradicate racial disparities in the food system.

- [Black Church Food Security](#) works to connect Black communities and other urban communities of color with Black farmers in hopes of advancing food and land sovereignty.
- [Black Urban Growers](#) is committed to building networks and community support for growers in both urban and rural settings. Through education and advocacy around food and farm issues, it nurtures collective Black leadership.
- [Cooperative Good Empowerment Directive](#) is a queer and transgender people of color-led organization that partners with young folks of color to build food and land co-ops.
- [Family Agriculture Resource Management Services](#) (FARMS) is a legal nonprofit, committed to assisting Black farmers and landowners in retaining their land for the next generation.
- [Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund](#) is a non-profit cooperative association of Black farmers, landowners, and cooperatives, with a primary membership base in the Southern States.
- [Food Chain Workers Alliance](#) is a coalition of worker-based organizations whose members plant, harvest, process, pack, transport, prepare, serve, and sell food, organizing to improve wages and working conditions for all workers along the food chain.
- [HEAL Food Alliance](#) brings together groups from various sectors of movements for food and farm justice to grow community power, develop political leadership, and expose and limit corporate control of the food system.
- [The Land Loss Prevention Project](#) responds to the unprecedented losses of Black-owned land in North Carolina by providing comprehensive legal services and technical support to financially distressed and limited resource farmers and landowners. Read more.
- [The National Black Farmers Association](#) is a non-profit organization representing African American farmers and their families in the United States.
- [National Black Food and Justice Alliance](#) organizes for Black food and land, by increasing the visibility of visionary Black leadership, advancing Black people's struggle for just and sustainable communities, and building power in our food systems and land stewardship.
- [Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust](#) advance land sovereignty in the Northeast through permanent and secure land tenure for Indigenous, Black, Latinx, and Asian farmers and land stewards.
- [New Communities Land Trust](#) is a grassroots organization that has worked for more than 40 years to empower African American families in Southwest Georgia and advocate for social justice.
- [The Seeding Power Fellowship](#) is an innovative 18-month, cohort-based food justice fellowship program.

- [Soul Fire Farm](#) offers farming and building immersion programs, skill shares, uprooting racism trainings, online programs (Ask a Sista), youth programs and more. They are also members of the [Color of Food Speakers Collective](#).
- [Southeastern African American Farmers' Organic Network](#) is a regional network for Black farmers committed to using ecologically sustainable practices to manage land, grow food, and raise livestock that are healthy for people and the planet.

Colorism Resources:

- [Teaching Tolerance | Diversity, Equity And Justice—What is Colorism?](#)
- [The Difference Between Racism and Colorism | Time.](#)
- [Same Family, Different Colors: Confronting Colorism in America's Diverse Families](#) by Lori L. Tharps [Beacon Press, 2016].

Ableism

- [Ableism 101: What it is, what it looks like, and what we can do to fix it.](#)
- [Ableism and its discontents: Food as a form of power, control, and resistance among disabled people living in U.S. Institutions.](#)
- [Agribility.](#)
- [Creating Accessible and Inclusive Meetings and Events.](#)
- [Disabling Justice? The Exclusion of People with Disabilities from the FoodJustice Movement](#), by Natasha Simpson, for accessible download of Chapter 14 [click here](#).

Ageism

- Stypinska, Justyna and Pirjo Nikander. [2018] [Ageism and Age Discrimination in the Labour Market: A Macrostructural Perspective](#). In: Ayalon L., Tesch-Römer C. (eds) Contemporary Perspectives on Ageism. International Perspectives on Aging, vol 19. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73820-8_6.
- This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism, by Ashton Applewhite, 2016.

Classism

- [A critical race and class analysis of learning in the organic farming movement](#), Catherine Etmanski Royal Roads University, Canada
- [Why Judging People for Buying Unhealthy Food Is Classist](#), the Everyday Feminist, 2014.
- [Can inequality be blamed on the Agricultural Revolution?](#)
- [Class Action](#)—dedicated to building bridges across the class divide.
- [Class Divide in Internships.](#)
- [Classism](#), key definitions, links to videos, TED talks, and statistics compiled by the [National Conference for Community and Justice \(NCCJ\)](#).
- [Created Equal: How Class Matters in Our Lives.](#)
- [Food apartheid: the root of the problem with America's groceries.](#)
- [Food Beyond Class. It's the system, stupid | by Alicia Kennedy.](#)

Gender and Sexism

- Gender, Your Guide, by Lee Airton, 2018.
- Jolley, Chuck. [A few minutes with Megan Brown: Sexism in agriculture](#). Published online by [Feedstuffs](#) on May 1, 2018.
- Leslie, Isaac Sohn, jaclyn Wypler, and Michael Mayerfeld Bell. [Relational Agriculture: Gender, Sexuality, and Sustainability in US Farming](#). Society & Natural Resources. Vol. 32, 2019 -- Issue 8: Gender and Sexuality in Agriculture.
- [National Women In Agriculture Association](#).
- Smith, Bobby J. [Food justice, intersectional agriculture, and the triple food movement](#). Agriculture and Human Values 36, 825-835 [2019]. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10460-019-09945-y>.
- Tavenner, Katie and Todd A Crane. [Beyond “women and youth”: Applying intersectionality in agricultural research for development](#). First published online Dec 9, 2019. Sage Journals, Volume 48, Issue 4, pages 316-325.
- The Witches Are Coming, by Lindy West, 2019.
- [USDA Women in Agriculture](#).

Intersectionality

- [Food justice, intersectional agriculture, and the triple food movement](#).
- [Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color](#), by Kimberle Crenshaw, 1991.
- Moya Bailey & Trudy [2018] [On misogynoir: citation, erasure, and plagiarism](#), Feminist Media Studies, 18:4, 762-768, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2018.1447395.
- [Moya Bailey](#), creator of the term “misogynoir.”
- Reclaiming Our Space: How Black Feminists Are Changing the World from the Tweets to the Streets, by Feminista Jones, 2019.
- We Are Not Here to Be Bystanders, by Linda Sarsour, 2020.
- White Tears/Brown Scars, by Ruby Hamad, 2019.

Inclusivity

- [The Inclusiveness Project](#) from the Denver Foundation
- [Your Inclusiveness Guide](#):
 - » [Introduction](#)
 - » [Step 1: Creating Structure](#)
 - » [Step 2: Consultants/Training](#)
 - » [Step 3: Making the Case](#)
 - » [Step 4: Gathering Info](#)
 - » [Step 5: Creating a Blueprint](#)
 - » [Step 6: Implementing the Blueprint](#)
 - » [Sample Documents](#)
 - » [Next Steps for Your Organization](#)



PHOTO CREDIT: Rogue Farm Corps

Sexual Orientation and Heterosexism

- [24 LGBTQ+ Farms and Organizations Celebrating Community Through Food and Agriculture](#), written by Gabby Lozano and posted on Foodtank.
- [Cultivating Change Foundation](#). Mission: “Valuing and elevating LGBT agriculturalists through advocacy, education, and community.”
- [“Grown with Pride,”](#) by GrowNYC. July 7, 2019.
- Leslie, Isaac. [Queer Farmers: Sexuality and the Transition to Sustainable Agriculture](#). Rural Sociology, Volume 82(4); December 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ruso.12153>.
- [“LGBTQ+ Farmers Work to Build Queer-Inclusive Rural Communities,”](#) by Jeanne Janson. Published on the National Farmers Union blog. June 24, 2020.
- [Queer Farmer Collective](#): “Our Mission is to remove barriers that keep the queer community from engaging in agriculture as a means of personal sustenance and empowerment.”
- We Are Everywhere: Protest, Power and Pride in the History of Queer Liberation, by Matthew Riemer and Leighton Brown, 2019.
- [Where We Call Home: LGBT People in Rural America](#). By the [Movement Advancement Project](#), April 2019.

6.3 Farmer Training Resources by Topic

The following resources are cited throughout the toolkit and are organized by category. These sources can be found throughout previous, or multiple, chapters. They are compiled here to provide a comprehensive list of related resources.

Adult Learners

- [8 Important Characteristics of Adult Learners by Christopher Pappas](#)
- [Characteristics of Adult Learners by Connie Malamed](#)
- [Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Adult Learner Tip Sheet](#)
- [Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship “Care and Feeding of your Adult Learner” webinar](#)
- [Information on Adult Learning](#)
- [The Adult Learning Theory - Andragogy - of Malcolm Knowles](#), by Christopher Pappas
- [University of Minnesota Extension Adults as Learners: Effective Teaching Strategies](#)
- Also see: The Learning Styles section of this toolkit

Communication and Feedback

- [6 Effective Ways Listening Can Make You a Better Leader](#)
- [DGA Apprentice Communication Tip Sheet](#)
- DGA’s [Good Communications for a Good Apprentice Experience](#)
- [How Google Groups Work](#)
- [How to Practice Active Listening](#)
- MOFGA Webinar: [Communication Styles for Positive Farm Apprenticeships](#)
- [Power Up Your Team with Nonviolent Communication Principles.](#)
- [TED Talk: 5 Ways to Listen Better](#)
- [The Association for Experiential Education](#)
- [Education Work Balance Call Notes](#)
- [True Colors communication activity](#)
- [Radical Candor](#), Kim Scott
 - » [The Radical Candor website](#)

Conflict Resolution

- [Chapter 9: Conflict and Negotiation: PowerPoint](#)
- [Kilmann Diagnostics website](#)
- [Practice Exam for Conflict Resolution](#)
- [TED Talk by Adar Cohen: 3 Ways to Lead Tough, Unavoidable Conversations](#)
- [Thomas Kilmann assessment videos](#)
- [To Resolve a Conflict, First Decide: Is it Hot or Cold?](#)

Emotional Intelligence

- [Emotional Intelligence at Work](#) from the HelpGuide.org website.
- [Emotional Intelligence Online Test](#) (free) by the Global Leadership Foundation.
- [Emotional Intelligence: Why it can Matter More than IQ.](#) by Daniel Goleman. 2005 Bantam Press.
- [How Emotionally Intelligent Are You?](#) An online quiz and YouTube video describing characteristics of EI.
- [Six Steps to Improve Emotional Intelligence](#), TEDxTUM Talk by Ramona Hacker.
- [Test your Emotional Intelligence](#), free online quiz by Greater Good Science Center at University of California Berkeley.
- [The Power of Emotional Intelligence](#), TEDxUC-Irvine Talk by Travis Bradberry.
- [What is Emotional Intelligence?](#) YouTube video with Daniel Goleman.
- [“What Makes A Leader?” by Daniel Goleman, Harvard Business Review](#) [This is a subscriber-only article, but it is a really great resource if you have a subscription].
- [Why aren't we more compassionate?](#) TED Talk by Daniel Goleman.

Equity Statements

- [Rogue Farm Corps Equity Statement.](#)
- [Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems, University of California Santa Cruz](#)–Social Justice Advocacy Committee/Social Justice Forum.
- Groundswell Center for Food and Farming's [Equity Statement](#).
- Lazy R Ranch: [Our Commitment to Equity](#).

Farm Succession

- [Ag Transitions](#), online interactive succession planning tool (University of MN).
- [American Farmland Trust, Farm Link Programs.](#)
- [Farm Transfer Planning Assistance](#) Pg. 80, Ch. 5.10.
- LFG's [A Team Approach to Farm Transfer Planning Assistance.](#)
- LFG's [Farm Succession Planning: A Guide for the Junior Generation.](#)
- LFG's [Toolbox for Farm Transfer Planning.](#)
- LFG's [Successful Farm Transfer Planning for Farmers without Identified Successors.](#)
- [National Young Farmers Coalition Land Link Directory.](#)
- [Planning the Future of Your Farm: A Workbook Supporting Farm Transfer Decisions](#) (Virginia Cooperative Extension and several other editions).
- [What You Need to Know about Farm Succession Planning](#) (Farm Bureau Financial Services).

“Check out other resources related to apprenticeship programming, curricula, and program development in the AgALN Resource Library: nesfp.org/agapprenticeship/library.”

Generational Differences

- [“Generation Z says they work the hardest”](#)
- [“How generational stereotypes hold us back at work”](#)
- [“How Generation Z will revolutionize the workplace”](#)
- [Intergenerational Activities Sourcebook](#)
- [Instructor Guide Generations](#)
- [Take Stock in Children’s Mentor Toolki Hosting Students](#)
- [The Key to Preventing Generational Tension Is Remembering That Everyone Wants to Feel Valued](#)
- [West Virginia transportation department activity: Handout #1](#)
- [Why Generational Differences Are a Workplace Myth](#)

Goal Setting & Expectations For Mentors and Mentees

- DGA’s [Your Apprentice’s First Week](#)
- DGA’s [Finding the Right Apprentice](#)
- DGA’s [Training the Trainer Webinar Series](#)
- [Is it Time for S.M.A.R.T.E.R. goal setting](#)
- [Recorded Mentor Training Call focusing on Setting Expectations](#)
- [Setting S.M.A.R.T.E.R. Goals: 7 Steps to Achieving Any Goal](#)
- [SMART Goals: The Essential Guide](#)
- [Top 10 Ways to Set Clear Expectations](#)
- [Writing SMART Goals](#)
- [Writing Smart Learning Objectives](#)

Learning, Working, and Personality Styles

- [5 Personality Test to Understand Yourself and Your Staff](#)
- [Emotional Intelligence at Work](#)
- [Importance of Emotional Intelligence](#)
- [Learning Styles Based on Jung’s Theory of Personality](#)
- [Learning Styles of Introverts and Extroverts](#)
- [Multiple Intelligences Oasis Website](#)
- [Multiple Intelligences | Thomas Armstrong, Ph.D.](#)
- [Self-Assessment 11.4: What Is Your Preferred Conflict Handling Style?](#)

Legal Resources for Agricultural Employment

- [Farm Commons](#) website provides legal and risk management resources for many areas of risk on the farm or ranch
- [Guide to Managing the Risks of Interns and Volunteers](#)
- [Classifying Your Workers: Employees, Interns, Volunteers or Independent Contractors.](#)

Mentoring and Leadership

- [Center for Mentoring Excellence](#)
- [Dare to Lead](#), Brene Brown
 - » [Dare to Lead companion videos and blog posts](#)
 - » [Courage Over Comfort: Rumbling with Shame, Accountability, and Failure at Work](#)
- [Essential Partners](#), training in facilitation and fostering effective dialogue
- Mentor's Worksheet for Evaluating Mentee Goals, adapted from Lois Zachary [The Mentor's Guide](#)
- [Nature's Guide for Mentors | Nature](#)
- Rogue Farm Corps Resources for Farm Mentors
 - » [Are You a Good Fit?](#)
 - » [Farm Training Programs](#)
 - » [Farmer Testimonials](#)
 - » [Hosting Basics](#)
 - » [Participating Farms](#)
 - » [Programs at a Glance](#)
 - » [Rogue Farm Corps Mentor Self Assessment Worksheet](#)
 - » [Standards and Guidelines](#)
- [Skills for Successful Mentoring: Competencies of Outstanding Mentors and Mentee](#), by Linda Phillips-Jones
- [Sorting Out Coaching vs. Mentoring vs. Training](#)
- [The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why it Matters](#), by Priya Parker, 2018.
- [The Mentor's Guide](#), Lois J. Zachary
- [The Skillful Teacher](#), by Stephen Brookfield
- [Training, Coaching and Mentoring - What's The Difference?](#)
- ["What Makes A Leader?"](#) by Daniel Goleman, [Harvard Business Review](#) [Behind a paywall]

Templates, Sample Documents and Models

- [Agenda for Mentor Training held at Stone Barns](#)
- [DACUM \(Developing a Curriculum\)](#)
- [Here's an example of an employment contract](#)
- [Here's a sample skills sheet](#)
- [Mentoring Partner Check in Accountability Tool](#)
- [Motivations worksheets from The Mentor's Guide](#)
- [On-Farm Skills Development Guide](#)
- [UVM Skills Assessment Wheel and Learning Plan Template](#)
- ["What? So What? Now What? Model](#)



PHOTO CREDIT: [New Entry Sustainable Farming Project](#)

Conclusion



PHOTO CREDIT: Center for Arkansas Farms and Food

Next Steps for the Use of this Toolkit

We hope that you have benefitted from this Toolkit and enjoyed perusing the many resources, words of wisdom, and lived experience of the many beginning farmer training programs who have pioneered and are continually evolving this work. Please feel free to share this content with other programs, mentors, and farmer or rancher networks in your region. Adapt aspects of this and make it your own! We are continually grateful for the contributions

and continued innovation in this space shared by the diversity of projects, mentors, and skilled educators who create opportunities for new agrarians to gain practical land stewardship and agricultural skills. We invite you all to engage with and tap into the collective wisdom of the many organizations involved in the [AgALN network](#).

For next steps, and to help this Toolkit “come alive” and be put to the test, New Entry Sustainable Farming Project will be managing a 3-year Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education

[NESARE] Professional Development Project [PDP titled, "[Farm Mentorship Training and Support Groups for Educators of Aspiring and Beginning Farmers.](#)"]

This three-year (2020-2023) Mentor Training Program will develop and deliver robust mentor trainings and facilitate mentor peer support groups. Content delivery will include:

1. Multiple regional 2-day professional development workshops targeting agricultural service providers and farmers interested in mentoring or training beginning farmers (current schedule: Maryland 2021; Maine 2022; New York 2023).
2. Webinar versions of workshop topics and posted on New Entry's website.
3. Regional winter conference presentations to share resources.
4. Mentor discussion or peer groups and individualized training sessions.
5. Resource materials posted on New Entry's website.

Our initial project partners include: University of Maryland Cooperative Extension and UMD Institute for Applied Agriculture, CASA Future Harvest, Glynwood Center, Groundswell Center for Local Food and Farming, Stone Barns Center for Agriculture, Maine Organic Farming and Gardening Association, Quivira Coalition, New Entry Sustainable Farming Project, Tufts University's Friedman School of Nutrition, Agriculture Food and Environment Program, and NOFA Vermont.

We invite and encourage other organizations to get involved in this Mentor Training Network—even if your program is outside the Northeast! Please email: nesfp@tufts.edu if you would like to learn more or become engaged in this project.

Toolkit Feedback and Ongoing Mentor Resource-Sharing

As a reminder, please provide your feedback on the Mentor Training Toolkit, created by the Ag Apprenticeship Learning Network. Your feedback will help us improve the toolkit and make it as useful and as relevant to programs and mentor networks across the country as possible. We envision the toolkit as a "living document" that will continue to be improved and expanded as more programs develop mentor training and support resources.

Please complete the [Toolkit Feedback/Evaluation form here](#).

After reading this Toolkit, if you have a mentor training resource, organization, consultant, or other example or best practice you found useful that we may have missed - we want to include it. If you have developed for your own mentor outreach, recruitment, and mentor professional development training program, or if you have lessons learned implementing recommendations from this Toolkit to share, please be in touch! We would be happy to reference your information in our next Toolkit update or add it to our Apprenticeship Resource Library on the [New Entry website](#). Email: nesfp@tufts.edu to share helpful mentor training resources.