

A publication of
Growing New Farmers

A northeast service providers consortium
GNF Professional Development Series #210



Program: Marketing & Management

Skills for Farmers: A Train-the-Trainer program

Organizations: The Penn State University College of

Agricultural Sciences and Penn State Cooperative Extension

Targeted Audience: Penn State county and university Extension staff who educates prospective and/or beginning farmers

Dates: October 2002. Ongoing development and enhancement of materials and support to use in teaching marketing and management skills to farmers

Need

The Marketing & Management Skills for Farmers program addressed several needs:

- Business management and marketing decisions determine the viability of agricultural enterprises. But the educational needs of prospective farmers in these areas can be overlooked as education specialists concentrate on narrow subject matter and the number of specialists declines.
- Prospective farmers often lack agricultural vocabulary and/or experience to comprehend or adapt technical information adequately.
- Educators often assume that prospective farmers have higher skill levels than is reasonable to expect, making basic business education important to this audience.
- Service providers may lack educational materials to meet the business management and marketing needs of this audience. Comments from at least 37 educators certified to deliver agricultural entrepreneurship curriculum support this conclusion. Most participants noted a lack of confidence in their business skills knowledge.
- Agricultural service providers often rely on established client groups for program guidance and may not be aware of the needs of other groups. Meeting the needs of established farmers contributes to providing inadequate information to new clients whose questions or concerns might seem trivial.

Response

Six Penn State Extension Specialists and one independent businessperson developed educational materials targeted to the needs of prospective producers.

In October 2002, 18 Penn State Cooperative Extension Educators participated in a two-day in-service training to develop service-provider skills, distribute educational materials and share experiences focused on working with prospective and beginning farmers. The in-service stressed outreach to the underserved audience of prospective and beginning farmers and the appropriate methods of marketing educational programs to these audiences.

Topics covered included:

- Presentation techniques for the adult educator
- Introductory business planning
- Accounting basics
- Agriculture's legal framework
- Retail marketing
- Risk awareness
- Farm Bill implications
- Outreach research and methods.

Educational materials included lecture notes, media articles, electronic presentations, worksheets, simulation games and textbooks that instructors have successfully used. The training also used Growing New Farmers research and workshop materials, stressed the use of web-based resources and discussed available research on the needs of entrepreneurs.

The program established a library of production information targeted at beginning farmers. Slide sets, videotapes, printed material and electronic information is included in this modest collection.

Funding

The Penn State University provided the majority of funding. A multi-year Northeast SARE grant supported securing or reproducing materials.

Project partners include Penn State Agricultural Economics & Rural Sociology faculty; Ag Accounting Service, a private firm; and county Extension educators. New or beginning farmers provided input through a needs' assessment.

Outreach

Outreach was internal to the Penn State Extension system. (Peculiarities of the in-service protocols restrict activities to direct employees. In the future, this training could be offered to others.)

Analysis

SUCSESSES: The major success was making educators aware of, or reminding them of, the needs of prospective and beginning farmers. Importantly, the program distributed appropriate management and marketing educational materials to educators. Participants express interest in continuing this process.

CHALLENGES: These are abundant. Decreased funding for education institutions means there are fewer employees to do the work required for the program. The impact of one-on-one consultations is sometimes hard to justify.

Next step

A plan to seek outside financing is required, to do train-the-trainer activities and to develop additional programs to meet the needs of prospective and beginning farmers.

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Additional Resources

Penn State University, College of Agricultural Sciences, 201 Ag Administration Bldg., University Park, PA 16802. Tel: (814) 865-2541. FAX: (815) 865-3103.
Website: <http://www.cas.psu.edu/>

Penn State University, Cooperative Extension, 217 Ag Administration Bldg., University Park, PA 16802. Tel: (814) 863-3438. FAX: (814) 863-7905.
Website: <http://www.extension.psu.edu/>

[Cooperative Extension in the South Central Region](#). Website:
<http://www.extension.psu.edu/scregion/Agriculture/FarmMgmt.htm>

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