



“Building Farmers in the West” Assessment Overview – Year 1

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General

The Building Farmers in the West workshops in year one took place in six locations across the West. The Utah workshop had the highest number of participants with 24 in attendance, followed by Idaho with 22 participants. Of the 102 total participants, the majority of them were either new farmers/ranchers (less than one year experience) or intermediate farmers/ranchers (less than three year's experience). Only 13% of the participants were experienced farmers/ranchers (more than three years experience). On average, 48% of the participants completed a viable business plan for their operation during the workshop.

State	Number of Participants	New Farmer/Rancher	Intermediate Farmer/Rancher	Experienced Farmer/Rancher	Avg Yrs Selling	Completed Business Plan (%)
Colorado	8	50%	38%	13%	3.75	50%
Idaho	22	41%	45%	14%	1.86	41%
New Mexico	15	53%	40%	7%	0.93	56%
Oregon	14	69%	31%	0%	0.46	71%
Utah	24	25%	50%	25%	2.50	46%
Washington	19	58%	21%	21%	0.53	26%
Total	102	49%	37%	13%	1.67	48%

Knowledge/Skills Change

The workshop participants were asked to rate their knowledge/skills on a scale from one to five with one representing “not at all” and five “a great deal.” The participants answered these questions on both the pre-course and post-course assessments. The areas with the most improvement were accessing local resources/technical support, developing business plans, and using effective merchandising at direct markets. These skills showed a percent change of 61%, 60%, and 60% respectively. The areas with the least improvement were maintaining financial records & budgeting, managing labor force & assessing seasonal labor requirements, and using cost-effective production strategies. These skills showed a percent change of 25%, 35%, and 37% respectively. As labor management and production techniques were less common in the workshop curriculum, these results make intuitive sense. It was also noted that record-keeping

and budgeting curriculum was the most cumbersome for participants and perhaps more time should be devoted to this topic in the future.

	Avg Pre-Course	Avg Post-Course	Percentage Change
Developing business plans	2.50	4.02	60%
Maintaining financial records & budgeting	3.02	3.79	25%
Using cost-effective production strategies	2.63	3.61	37%
Targeting viable customers for each product	2.67	3.87	45%
Using cost-effective promotional techniques	2.52	3.79	50%
Pricing products & implementing pricing strategies	2.42	3.59	49%
Using effective merchandising at direct markets	2.30	3.67	60%
Showcasing product variety & abundance at direct markets	2.51	3.89	54%
Assessing operation specific/applicable taxes	1.96	3.07	56%
Managing labor force & assessing seasonal labor requirements	2.25	3.03	35%
Complying with regulatory issues	2.43	3.48	43%
Accessing local resources/technical support	2.38	3.82	61%

The attendees were asked before and after the workshop if they knew where to obtain various products and services for their operation on a scale from one to five with one representing “Definitely Not” and five “Definitely Yes.” The most improvement was seen in business management support, marketing strategy advice, and capital/credit providers with a percent change in understanding of 50%, 46%, and 42% respectively. The pre-course understanding was very high for many of the other areas, and as a result the percent change in understanding was relatively low.

	Avg Pre-Course	Avg Post-Course	Percentage Change
Land (lease or purchase)	3.99	4.37	9%
Labor (permanent and/or seasonal)	3.35	3.78	13%
Water/irrigation system providers or supplies	3.64	4.17	14%
Capital/credit providers	2.74	3.88	42%
Tax planning advice	2.96	3.83	29%
Insect/disease/weed management advice	3.54	4.10	16%
Initial seed/plant/livestock suppliers	3.66	4.37	19%
Equipment (scale-appropriate)	3.46	4.02	16%
Production technical advice	3.16	4.05	28%
Marketing strategy advice	2.79	4.07	46%
Business management support	2.70	4.05	50%

Attitude Change

In both the pre and the post workshop assessments participants were asked about their agreement with several attitude type statements from one to five with one representing “Strongly Disagree” and five representing “Strongly Agree.” The statements with the greatest increase in agreement were the ones concerning their actions such as I follow a financial plan for my operation annually (89%), I follow a marketing plan for my operation annually (85%), and I currently have a business plan for my operation (78%). The first two statements received high agreement ratings in the pre-course assessment and thus the improvement was relatively low. Attitudes toward the need for a business plan and understanding of the business planning process were given the highest ratings in the post-course assessment at 4.56 and 4.54 respectively.

	Avg Pre-Course	Avg Post-Course	Percentage Change
A business plan should be developed prior to implementing crop/livestock production	4.32	4.56	6%
I understand the risks and opportunities associated with direct marketing/targeted wholesale marketing	3.44	4.28	25%
I understand the application & financial requirements for participation in agency (FSA,NRCS, etc.) programs	2.57	3.82	48%
I have previous experience developing business plans/ I understand the process of developing a business plan.	2.82	4.54	61%
I currently have a business plan for my operation	2.28	4.05	78%
I follow a financial plan for my operation annually	2.27	4.30	89%
I follow a production plan for my operation annually	2.60	4.43	70%
I follow a marketing plan for my operation annually	2.38	4.39	85%

Practice Change

Before the workshop, the participants were asked which products they produce and after the workshop, they were asked which products they plan to produce. The largest change was seen in the percentage planning to produce fruits and herbs, which increased by 24%. Flowers and vegetables were a close second at 22% and 21% respectively. With the exception of meat/animal products all products showed an increase.

The participants were asked before the course where they sell or plan to sell their produce, and after the workshop they were asked where they will sell their produce. Farmers' markets had the highest percentage before and after the workshop. Farmers' markets also had the

greatest increase at 35%, just slightly more than the increase in restaurants at 34%. Selling through a CSA program also gained in popularity with an increase of 26%.

	Producing Pre-Course (%)	Plan to Produce Post-Course (%)	Percentage Change
Vegetables	48%	69%	22%
Flowers	13%	34%	21%
Herbs	21%	45%	24%
Fruit	25%	48%	24%
Eggs	23%	31%	8%
Meat/animal products	29%	27%	-1%
Dairy products	8%	11%	3%
Value-added products	13%	29%	16%
Other	18%	26%	8%

	Selling Pre-Course (%)	Plan to Sell Post-Course (%)	Percentage Change
Farmers' Market	41%	76%	35%
Farm/Road Stand	18%	34%	16%
Restaurant	11%	45%	34%
Individuals	36%	50%	14%
Wholesale	15%	27%	13%
CSA	10%	35%	26%
Other	6%	23%	17%

After the course, participants were asked to indicate their agreement with statements concerning their future as farmers/ranchers. Their answers were on a scale from one to five with one representing “Strongly Disagree” and five representing “Strongly Agree.” Those participants selecting “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” were considered to answer “yes.” Of all the participants, 90% are planning to continue farming or start farming, 88% of the participants felt they could use at least 80% of the material and 90% felt they could use at least 40% of the material presented in the workshop.

	Percentage Yes
If currently farming, I plan to continue farming or if not currently farming, I plan to initiate my farm enterprise	90%
A farm career is not compatible with my long-term goals	8%
I plan to apply for a mentorship with an established farm operator (if available)	37%
I feel I can use at least 80% of the materials from this course in my farm enterprise	88%
I feel I can use at least 40% of the materials from this course in my farm enterprise	90%

Economic/Social Impacts

These workshops were able to provide the majority of the participants with a network of farmers to work with, and if the participants already had an established network of farmers, in most cases that network was increased. A good measure of overall success is the fact that 90% of the participants would recommend this course to other farmers/ranchers.

	Percentage Yes
I now have a network of farmers I can work with	79%
I would recommend this course to other farmers or potential farmers	90%
I increased my network of farming colleagues and can draw on them for information/resources	87%