



Steps to Success in New Farmer Training

Sheri Doyel

Angelic Organics Learning Center

**FARM
BEGINNINGS
COLLABORATIVE**

Angelic Organics Learning Center



Five major programs:

- **Farmer Training Initiative**
- On-Farm Initiative
- Urban Initiative
- Farms Forever Initiative
- Civic Engagement Initiative

Programs in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin (rural, peri-urban, and urban).

Founded 1998 as educational partner to **Angelic Organics**, a for-profit CSA farm.

Angelic Organics Learning Center



Farmer Training Initiative

*CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training)

*Stateline Farm Beginnings

Also:

- Farm Asset Builder
- Kiva Loans
- Open Books
- Farm Dreams

Angelic Organics Learning Center



- 230 aspiring farmers have graduated* from *Stateline Farm Beginnings*[®]
- CRAFT farmers are faculty and mentors for these new farmers

* 70% of Stateline Farm Beginnings graduates are farming

What is the **Farm Beginnings Collaborative?**

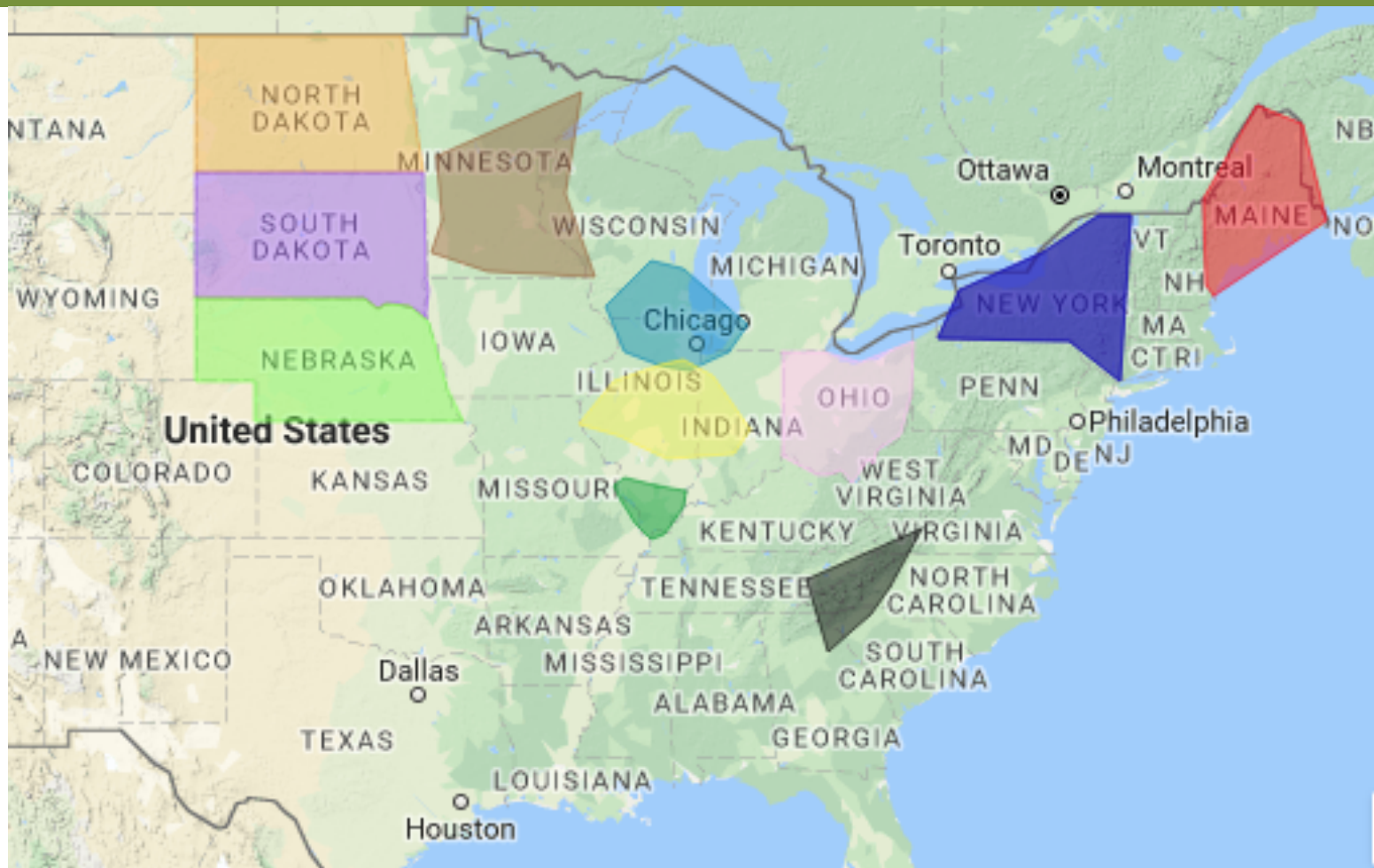
We are a national alliance of independent, regional groups of farmers and farmer-training support organizations working together to promote Farm Beginnings®.

Guiding Principles

- Farmer Led Farm Beginnings is a farmer-led business training program for new and beginning farmers. It was started by experienced farmers, and farmers participate at all levels, as steering committee members, classroom presenters, on-farm presenters, and mentors.
- Community Based We offer new farmers a means to establish relationships with farmers, businesses, resources, and consumers within a local network that supports and strengthens the local food and farming system.
- Sustainable Farming Our programs support sustainable farming by promoting farming practices that are ecologically sound, economically viable, socially just, and achievable for new and beginning farmers.

Where is Farm Beginnings?

12 FB programs... 13 organizations... serving 14 states



FBC Member Organizations



The FBC supports our individual programs and thus the farmers we serve



**Grow NYC
Farm Beginnings Participants**



**FBC Annual Meeting
South Dakota**

The Farm Beginnings Collaborative is generously funded by the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program "**Farm Beginnings from Regional to National: Beginning Farmers and Viable Farms Initiative**" Grant No. 2016-70017-25502

What is Farm Beginnings?

Farm Beginnings is a yearlong training program that offers:

- **farm business-planning sessions**
- **a series of on-farm field day workshops**
- **one-on-one mentoring from local farmers**

The model is **adaptable** to diverse regions and people.

Farm Beginnings has been recognized as “*a model that is creating strong new farm businesses across the country*” by Kathleen Merrigan, then U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, 2012.



How do we build a successful farmer training program?

- 1. Understand beginning farmers as learners (what do they need?)*
- 2. Understand what your group or organization needs to develop*

Beginning Farmers as Learners

Who are they?

- Adult learners
- Diverse backgrounds and experiences
- Educated, second career
- Excited about farming, but with little experience
- Generally assume that the learning process will be quick
- Majority women

Beginning Farmers as Learners

And... what are their common obstacles?

- Access to Land
- Access to Capital (financing)
- Production Experience
- Access to Markets
(and marketing experience)



Stages of Learning

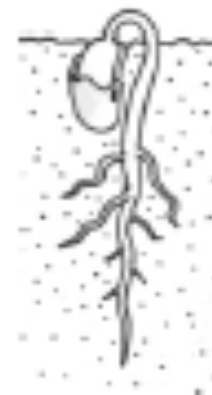
Step 1: EMERGING - Farm Learning Opportunities & Farm Dreams

Field days/Skill Sessions/Farm Tour
Conferences/Workshops
Practice growing where you live.



Step 2: IN-TRAINING - On-farm Training Activities

Work Exchanges/Internships/Farm Employment
Field days/Skill Sessions/Farm Tours
Conferences/Workshops



Stages of Learning

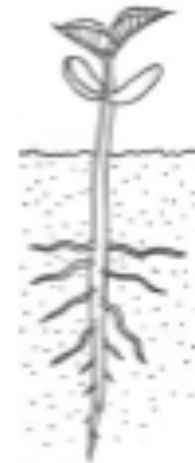
Step 3: START-UP - Farm Beginnings & Farm Pathways

- Year-long training program
- Whole Farm & enterprise planning
- Connection to a farmer network
- Growing season learning plan
- On-Farm Field days & workshops



Step 4: SEASONED - Technical Assistance

- Individualized syllabus
- Production, marketing and financing assistance
- Address land access/Equity building opportunities
- Mentorship with an experienced farmer



How do we build a successful farmer training program?

1. ✓ *Understand beginning farmers as learners (what do they need?)*
2. *Understand what your program/ organization needs to develop*

Laying the Groundwork for a Successful Farmer Training

- Assemble Stakeholders & Farmer Network
- Determine Audience
- Develop Guiding Principles
- Regional Appropriateness
- Assess your Capacity
- Develop Partnerships
- Create Evaluation/Feedback System



Assemble Stakeholders & Farmer Network

- A stakeholder is someone with a vested interest in the outcome of your work
- Helps provide direction and validity
- Farmer network can be a pillar of a farmer training program
- Create connection/community

Example:

- CRAFT steering committee



Determine Your Audience

- Who are you providing support for?
- Assemble some basic demographics
- What type of training/support is needed?
- What is already being provided? Where are the gaps?
- Talk to your stakeholders!



Develop Guiding Principles



- What are your core values?
- Helps with future planning & decision making

Example: Farm Beginnings Collaborative = Farmer-Led, Community-Based, Rooted in Sustainable Agriculture

Regional Appropriateness

- Assess your regions specific needs, resources, and assets.
- Stay true to what is in front of you
- Keep asking for input

Example:

FARRMS emphasis on grazing, utilization of web-based teaching tools, Holistic Management trainers

Assess Your Capacity

Staff, funding, time.... what do you have?

- be realistic
- volunteer-run? one staff person? 20 staff?
- have a planned approach to growth
- be wary of “following the money” in pursuit of grants
- understand that it’s almost impossible to exist on earned income alone, and grant reliance is risky...
diversify funding streams

Develop Partnerships

- Who else in your community is supporting food and farming?
- Pursuing partnerships often means identifying how YOU can help your prospective partner
- Take advantage of networks
 - low hanging fruit: list serves

Examples:

- PCFBDC, Michael Fields, Illinois Extension

Create Evaluation/Feedback System

- Find a way to collect feedback and input from your participants
- Determine if your programs are having an impact
- Evaluation data can be helpful with grant funding

Examples:

- Pre & Post Workshop Surveys



Create Evaluation/Feedback System

Which of these services would help you meet your farming goals more quickly? Check all that apply.

___ Assistance with finding hands-on work on an existing farm

___ Being assigned an experienced farmer as an advisor or mentor (for a reasonable fee)

___ Help with farm design or enterprise development

___ Assistance in finding farm labor or a farm manager

___ A several months long experiential and classroom course in whole farm planning, includes business & financial training.

___ Assistance finding affordable land and or financing

Other (please describe): _____

Activity Time!

Stages of Organizational Development

Phase 1:
Exploration

Phase 2:
Start-up

Phase 3:
Expansion



Keep In Touch!







Sheri Doyel

Angelic Organics Learning Center
Stateline Farm Beginnings Facilitator

sheri@learngrowconnect.org



The Farm Beginnings Collaborative is:

 <p>Angelic Organics Learning Center</p> <p>Address: 1547 Rockton Rd., Caldonia, IL 61011</p> <p>Programs: Stateline Farm Beginnings</p> <p>State(s): Illinois, Wisconsin</p> <p>Website: learngrowconnect.org</p> <p>The Angelic Organics Learning Center helps urban and rural people build local food systems.</p> <p>Read More ></p>	 <p>Dakota Rural Action</p> <p>Address: 910 Fourth Street Ste. A PO Box 549 Brookings, SD 57006</p> <p>Programs: DRA Farm Beginnings</p> <p>State(s): South Dakota</p> <p>Website: dakotarural.org</p> <p>Eat, Grow, Energize & Organize</p> <p>Read More ></p>	 <p>FARMS</p> <p>Address: 301 5th Avenue SE, Medina, ND</p> <p>Programs: FARMS Farm Beginnings</p> <p>State(s): North Dakota</p> <p>Website: farms.org</p> <p>We Grow Farmers</p> <p>Read More ></p>
 <p>Food Works</p> <p>Address: P.O. Box 3855, Carbondale, IL 62902</p> <p>Programs: Southern Illinois Farm Beginnings</p> <p>State(s): Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri</p> <p>Website: fesoil.org</p>	 <p>Hawthorne Valley Place Based Learning Center</p> <p>Address: 327 Route 21C, Ghent, NY 12075</p> <p>Programs: Hudson Valley Farm Beginnings Program</p> <p>State(s): Massachusetts, New York</p> <p>Website: hawthornevalleyfarm.org</p>	 <p>Land Stewardship Project</p> <p>Address: 301 State Road, Montevideo, MN 56265</p> <p>Programs: Land Stewardship Project's Farm Beginnings Program</p> <p>State(s): Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin</p> <p>Website: landstewardshipproject.org</p>

<http://farmbeginningscollaborative.org/>