

## Advanced Learning Opportunities for Skilled and Successful Farmers (in order to further improve or scale up operations)

**Example: Angelic Organics works with new and beginning farmers in the area. This is an example of the trainings that they offer for the path through farmers training at various stages. Green = existing resources and services offered through main collaborators, Purple = what now working to grow within the last year**

Current and Future Support Services for Farmer Training  
in Northern Illinois and Southern Wisconsin

Services	Current Programs/ Services	Beginning Farmer Learning Stages		Future Programs/ Services
	1: Recruitment/ Outreach	2: In-Training	3: Farm Start-Up	4: Farm Years 2-10
Training	CRAFT Handbook			
	CRAFT/AOLC Young Farmer Gathering			
			CRAFT Farmer Development Scholarship Program	
			CRAFT/AOLC Grower Groups	
		CRAFT Field Days, Internships, Exchanges & Mentoring		CRAFT/AOLC Journeyperson Mentoring
	CRAFT, MFAI & PC Urban Outreach	AOLC Stateline Farm Beginnings		CRAFT/AOLC Advanced Winter Workshops
	AOLC Farm Dreams	MFAI CSA Management Course		MFAI Advanced Workshops & Webinars
		MFAI Whole Farm Workshop Series		
		AOLC Farmer Technical Assistance Pool: Training & Marketing		AOLC Advanced Technical Assistance
	Markets		AOLC Cooperative Marketing Decision Tool	
Farmland	CRAFT & TLC Online Services for Farmland Opportunities		PC Farmland Incubator Leasing Business Model	
		PCFBDC Land Tenure Workshop Series & Land Tenure Templates		PC Incubator Collaborative
		AOLC Farmer Technical Assistance Pool: Land & Financing		
Financing			CRAFT/AOLC IDA Match-Savings	
			CRAFT/AOLC Micro-loan Readiness Program	

**AOLC:** Angelic Organics Learning Center  
**CRAFT:** Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training  
**MFAI:** Michael Fields Agricultural Institute  
**PC/PCFBDC:** Prairie Crossing Farm Business Development Center  
**TLC:** The Land Connection

- When people get started they are very small scale (generally individuals or pairs) and need to hire workforce to scale up. How do they move to this next step – make decisions about what to buy, how to afford, and hire workers?

### How best do we serve farmers through training programs?

- Counseling, coaching, mentoring

- someone to review financials
  - Angelic Organics – triangle support
    - Peer – mentor – financial advisor
    - Farmer network that is facilitated, work with a state agency to offer financial advice
- Have seasoned farmers mentor new/beginning farmers
  - Support group - small group setting for support from peers and mentors
- Finding Mentors:
  - Hold meet and greet events for farmers
  - Farmers markets in rural areas
  - Small groups settings within workshops (support groups) – opportunities for networking within trainings offered
  - Structured opportunities
  - Unstructured/Social opportunities
  - Example: CRAFT – cooperative regional alliance for farmer training (craftfarmers.org)
    - Grass roots effort working to train next generation of farmers and passing on expertise
    - Focus on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of farmer training
    - Geared towards beginning farmer who hasn't started a business yet
    - As people graduate, they become part of the alliance for farmer training
  - Incubator programs
    - Offer opportunities for farmers to work with each other (peer mentorship)
- Financial support for farmer mentoring
  - Producers First - WI: using farm-to-school funding to pay consultants to work with beginning farmers, CSAs, +
  - Angelic Organics – have program to pay technical expert/consultant to help farmers
    - Able to get exactly the expertise that they are seeking
    - Other farmers in network are able to learn through mentoring others
    - Farmers could be both mentors and mentees within the community
- Use other business ventures to generate streams of income to support farming efforts (ie: Car detailing)
- When scaling up and considering hiring workers, people lack understanding of labor law
  - Resources: farmcommons.org
  - Can create a package of compensation
  - People get stuck with apprenticeships
    - Have apprentice pay tuition fee
  - Have to meet safety regulations when hiring employees
- Transitioning farms to the next generation – retirement planning
  - When do you start this planning – immediately

- Incorporate succession planning
- Offer trainings in cohorts so that there is peer mentoring automatically worked into the process
- Opportunities for younger generation who don't want to farm
  - Adding value-added products to the business model
  - Children are moving parents farm to the next step
  - Keeping business within the family and offering training to whole family allow for everyone to be on the same page

**What does farmer training look like if we are training farmers to work in a cooperative setting? How do you train for the scaling up piece – either from the beginning of training or after they have become established?**

- Learn the ecosystem of farmer training:
  - Identify the programs that are offered within a given region and fill gaps
    - Work to identify opportunities to fill gaps
    - Is there duplication?
    - Share efforts across those organizations to meets training needs of farmers
  - What trainings are needed may vary by the given region
  - Much of the existing system is centered around conventional farming
  - Some systems are inundated (farmers markets) while others are greatly needed
    - E.g. chicken slaughtering facility
  - Educators need to specialize in what they offer within a region
- Create nodes for distribution of local foods
- It's very difficult to scale up from small farm
  - Expensive/rough financial transition
  - Different markets
  - Scaling up is not always the intention of the small scale farmers
- What about the people intending to build a farm for wholesale marketing?
  - Commodity farmers intending to transition to foods
  - Can be overwhelming when farmers want to grow a variety
    - Some farmers are choosing to focus on specialty crops
    - Easier to branch out over time to diversify crops
  - Farmers with limited English often have skills to produce, but not to deal with customers – easier to deal with a single wholesaler
- Existing Trend – people who want to start farms, want to design the same farm - CSA/farmers market farms are what we are training people for
  - Because it is what we are teaching in our programs
    - Farmers want to cut out the middle man – but can't cut out the middle man. They just become the middle man
    - There are costs to being the middle man

- Need to teach and reveal whole sale models that are profitable
  - Tool – [veggiecompass.com](http://veggiecompass.com) – free excel calculator that can download
- When moving into specialty crop markets, are then competing with other states
  - There are reasons that certain areas have concentrations of specific specialty crops markets
  - But focus on local opens up new markets
- Direct retail farmers are integrating wholesale as well, with help from aggregators

**Need to prepare for future reality: California is threatened, Great Lakes will become increasingly attractive for all kinds of agriculture products.**