

IMPACT

University of Idaho
Extension

Ada County, 208.287.5900, Fax: 208.287.5909
5880 Glenwood, Boise, ID 83714

Cultivating Success: collaborating to grow and support sustainable Idaho small farms

AT A GLANCE

For over 15 years, Cultivating Success™ has worked to support sustainable Idaho small farms. In 2016, the program broke new ground, launching a new statewide course.

The Situation

Idaho is a geographically large state, 83,570 square miles stretched across 44 counties, much of it rural with only a few concentrated metropolitan centers. Small farmers and ranchers are critical to the resiliency, economy, and food security of rural areas and necessary for local food access in urban sectors. Appropriate education, strong farmer-to-farmer networks and access to trustworthy resources are key to their initial and continued success.

Our Response

In early 2016, with funding from the USDA-NIFA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, Cultivating Success™, Idaho began a three year comprehensive program to provide education for new farmers, facilitate access to land, capital and decision-making tools, and strengthen farmer-to-farmer mentoring. The first project in the effort was the creation and delivery of a concurrent, multi-part hybrid course statewide via live webinar, in-person facilitation and farm tours at nine different sites across the state. This represented the largest Idaho expansion of Cultivating Success™ to date.

Our team included ten University of Idaho Extension educators, two program coordinators, six farmers, and two nonprofit professionals from Cultivating Success™ partner Rural Roots and the Inland Northwest Food Network.



The statewide Cultivating Success™ collaborative team of UI Extension educators, farmer mentors and nonprofit partners. Photo by Amanda Snyder.

Statewide, 170 individuals registered for the course. One hundred and forty-five completed the program.

The course began with an introductory evening webinar in January, followed by three full-day, facilitated webinar/in-person workshops covering whole farm planning (Jan.), sustainable crop production (Feb.), and sustainable livestock production (March) held on Saturdays. An evening course wrap-up event was held in all locations in late March, and farm tours focused on crop and livestock systems were scheduled for each site May-June.

Before, during and after the course and tours, we evaluated participants. Evaluations were designed to collect learner's needs, measure the effectiveness of the multiple delivery methods on meeting learner goals and objectives, and capture early indicators of impact on our participants and the Idaho small farm landscape.

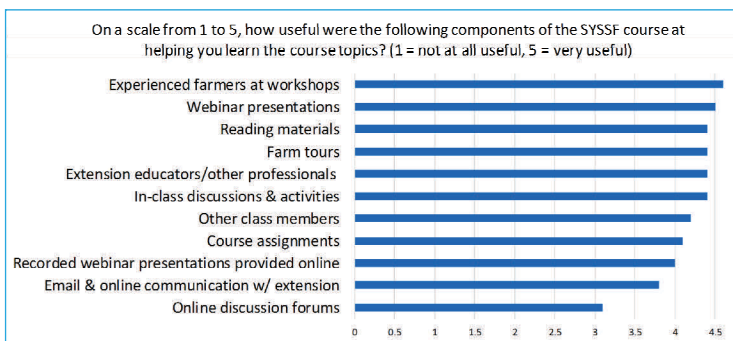
Program Outcomes

Participants rated the quality of the course sessions and tours highly across all locations.

Our participants overwhelmingly found the presentations and interactions with experienced farmers to be most useful in helping them increase their knowledge on the course topics presented, followed by webinar presentations created and delivered by teams of UI Extension faculty and farmers.

Over 66% of participants had established a personal relationship with a farmer they met in the course, and 91% planned to follow up with one of the experienced farmers in the future. Next in usefulness, and nearly equal to each other, were the selected reading materials, farm tours, Extension educators/other professionals and in-class discussions and activities.

Figure 1. Usefulness of Course Components



Upon completion of the course, 83% of participants surveyed had identified their farm goals, 86% had assessed their resources, 72% had evaluated an existing or potential enterprise, and 56% had drafted a Whole Farm Plan. Participants were more likely to begin farming in the next two years, add a new enterprise or explore a new marketing option after course completion.

This course was successful in reaching new audiences and connecting these audiences with high quality, reliable education and information that eased some of our staffing and geographic barriers. We introduced new and experienced small farmers and ranchers in nine communities to UI Extension, local resource providers, and each other, encouraging connection and potential local support networks.

The Future

Future activities for Cultivating Success Idaho will build on these successes with continuing education designed to further the efforts of participants who engaged in our 2016 course, while refining the course to be offered again in coming years to new audiences. We will also be following our 2016 graduates as they start their farms, expand their enterprises, grow their businesses and become integrated into our food system.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

Soren Newman, UI; Nonprofit partners: Colette DePhelps, Rural Roots, Teri McKenzie, Inland NW Food Network; Farmer Mentors: Janie Burns, Diane Green, Jessica McAleese, Marci Miller, Greg Freistadt, Melissa Lines, Keri Wilson.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ariel Agenbroad, Area Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Ada County
5880 Glenwood St.
Boise, ID 83714
Phone: 208.287.5900
Fax: 208.287.5909
E-mail: ariel@uidaho.edu

Iris Mayes, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Latah County
220 E. 5th St., Suite 325
Moscow, ID 83843
Phone: 208.883.2267
Fax: 208.882.8505
E-mail: imayes@uidaho.edu

Cinda Williams, Area Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, N. District
E-mail: cindaw@uidaho.edu

Rikki Ruiz, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Gem County
E-mail: rikkiw@uidaho.edu

Jennifer Jensen, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Bonner County
E-mail: jenjensen@uidaho.edu

Lauren Golden, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Blaine County
E-mail: lgolden@uidaho.edu

Montessa Young, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Washington Co.
E-mail: montessay@uidaho.edu

Melissa Hamilton, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Valley County
E-mail: mbhamilton@uidaho.edu

Kathleen Painter, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension,
E-mail: kpainter@uidaho.edu

Samantha Graf, Extension Educator
University of Idaho Extension, Canyon County
E-mail: samanthag@uidaho.edu