



Connecting New Farmers with Mentors

This series of interactive learning opportunities will help educators to pair new farmers with experienced farm mentors.

TEACHING OBJECTIVES: WHY DO THIS?

- Mentors matter!
 - New farmers learn best from connections with experienced farmers and their peers
 - Mentors can support farms' business successes, profitability, soil health as well as the work/life balance and mental health of new farmers
- Many options!
 - Farm educators can facilitate formal and informal mentorships
- Remember...
 - ... not all farmers have easy access to advice and support from family
 - ... even farmers with a family farm may need farming support

BEST LOCATION

Online, in-person or on-farm

BEST TIME OF YEAR

Connecting mentors with farmers is best in fall or early winter. Trainings for educators can happen year-round.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES: WHAT CAN PARTICIPANTS LEARN?

The Educator training includes how to:

- Start and manage a mentorship project
- Facilitate informal mentorships
- Fund mentorships
- Find mentoring resources

Mentorship networks benefit farm educators:

- Educators learn about beginning farmer needs
- Educators connect with knowledgeable farmer mentors
- Mentors and mentees make great tour hosts, guest speakers or project partners.

Mentor support will focus on:

- Introductions!
- Mentee (the one being mentored) discussion prompts
- Communication techniques

The Meet & Greet will:

- Welcome everyone!
- Connect mentors with mentees in breakout rooms to set goals

The Community Input meeting:

- Invites mentees and mentors to share successes and suggested changes for future years
- Is a good format for evaluation



Peer to Peer Learning CONNECTING NEW FARMERS WITH MENTORS

IMPORTANCE FOR BEGINNING FARMERS

New farmers with mentors are more confident, successful and knowledgeable than farmers without a network.

Farming requires many different skills. Participating in a mentor program can help new farmers learn from different on farm experiences.

Experienced farmers are inspired and feel fulfilled by connecting with a mentee.

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF THE CURRICULUM

This module is interactive and focuses on peer-to-peer learning.

This module has activities directed to mentorship organizers, mentors and mentees.

Facilitator Planning & Preparation

Activity	Est. Prep Time	Est. Instructional Time
Planning a Mentorship Project	4 Hrs	3 Hrs, 30 Min
Supporting Mentors	2 Hrs	1 to 2 hours
Supporting Mentees	2 Hrs	2 hours
Connecting Mentor Pairs	4 hours	2 hours
Community Input	1 to 2 hours	1 to 2 hours



Technical Content

KEY WORDS:

Mentor	An experienced farmer who supports a beginning farmer by answering questions, offering insights and helping the beginning farmer to set and achieve their goals.
Mentee	A farmer who is connected with a mentor to learn skills, ask questions and seek help them to move their farm forward.
Peer	Farmers who are supporting each other through sharing knowledge with each other.
Mentorship Organizer/ Facilitator	Farm educator, farmer or advocate who connects mentors & mentees, offers trainings and checks in with mentors & mentees regularly.

Items to consider:

- What challenges are new farmers facing in your area?
- How long/how much time do you have to organize a mentorship?
- Who might be good to have on the team as organizers, mentors and mentees?
- Do you need funding to organize this mentorship? What funding sources exist?

FACILITATOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Thank you for your interest to start a farm mentorship project! The best mentorship organizer or facilitator may be a new farmer who knows the real-life challenges of starting a farm. Or it may be one who is very experienced and wants to help the next generation of farmers! Then, consider who would be a good collaborator (mentor). Find a way to pay farmer-mentors fairly for their contributions. Don't underpay based on age or perceived experience level. Offer a guidance meeting for new mentors.

Any facilitator should be able to:

- **Listen** with an open mind
- **Be positive!**
- Recognize that **each mentee has their own unique values, goals, skills and background** that and that there are **many different paths to meet farm goals**
- **Notice and address micro-aggressions and tension** within the group
- **Build trust**
- **Become familiar with the farmers and communities** where you'll be working
- **Be mindful of racial, gender, age, education, language, wealth or other differences** that may be a barrier to building trust between educators and farmers. Also this may be between mentors and mentees.
- Have **excellent communication skills**
- Rely on the **collective knowledge** of mentees, mentors and local farmers .



Peer to Peer Learning CONNECTING NEW FARMERS WITH MENTORS

FACILITATOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION (cont.):

Focus on Communication Skills:

Excellent communication skills are very useful to facilitate a good mentor program. These skills do not come naturally to most of us and are learned and improved over time. But having an awareness of what points to consider you too can improve your communication skills.

Active listening is preparing yourself to listen from start to finish. Observe body language and tone of the person's voice. **Nonverbal communication** can tell you about their interest and understanding of the topic being discussed. Allow them to complete their thoughts without interruption. Then offer relevant feedback that respects their perspectives.

Empathy is critical to build and maintain a healthy working relationship. This is when you allow yourself to share their feelings and emotions. You do not have to agree with their feelings but you need to **respect** their feelings and share them based on their points of view.

Clairty and **conciseness** are most important especially when describing an method that is very technical and may be difficult for the mentee to understand. Clarity means not using abbreviations but providing enough background to allow the person to grasp the idea and gain confidence to try it for themselves. Keeping it as brief as possible will reduce the level of confusion. Following an explanation provide a chance for them to think about it then ask questions. Remind the mentees that all questions are important to help with understanding.

When the mentee has participated in a discussion that has included these values they have a much greater chance to gain **confidence** and try the information to improve their farm business practices. If you offer information in several formats; description, visiting and trying and even **written** in the form of a basic manual of how to..., then they have a greater chance to understand and understanding often leads to using the information.

Top communication skills

From sources across the web



Active listening



Empathy



Confidence



Nonverbal communication



Respect



Concise



Feedback



Clarity



Written communication s...





Peer to Peer Learning CONNECTING NEW FARMERS WITH MENTORS

KWL Process

Know, Want to Know, Learn



Questions for farmers seeking a mentor:

- Why do you want a mentor?
- What characteristics or skills would be important for your mentor to help you meet your goals?
- Do you have any mentors now?
- Is there anyone you know who would could be a great mentor if you reached out to them?
- Do you have previous experiences with mentors?



Questions for mentors:

- Why do you want to be a mentor?
- Have you been a mentor in the past?
- What skills would you like to share as a mentor?
- What would help you be a better mentor?
- Are there any beginning farmers you know that you would like to mentor?
- What mentors have been most helpful to you in the past?



Primary Activities

Overview of the main activities in this module

Activity 1

Planning a Mentorship Project

Planning activity will include:

- How to start and manage a formal mentorship program
- How to facilitate informal mentorships
- How to fund mentorships
- Where to find mentoring resources

Activity 2

Supporting Mentors

A welcome meeting for mentors will focus on:

- Introductions to get to know each other
- Brainstorming discussion prompts to ask mentees
- Communication techniques
- Diversity & Inclusion

Activity 3

Supporting Mentees

Organize a meeting where mentees can:

- Meet each other!
- Learn about the mentorship
- Share goals
- Discuss inclusion so everyone can participate
- Practice reflective listening
- Complete a pre-survey

Activity 4

Connecting Mentor Pairs

Welcome to the Mentorship!
The Meet & Greet connects mentees and mentors for:

- Discussing mentorship expectations & timeline
- Breakout rooms where mentor-mentee pairs can work together to set goals and schedule meetings

Activity 5

Community Input

Community Input sessions are a way for mentors and mentees:

- To share successes as an icebreaker
- To suggest changes on 4 aspects of the mentorship in breakout rooms or small groups

Community input sessions work well online or in-person.



1. Planning a Mentorship Project

Brainstorming how to design mentorship for local communities

OVERVIEW

How do you start a mentorship program that is right for the beginning farmers you are working with? How do you stay in touch with mentors and mentees to make sure they are actively communicating?

Activities:

- Mentorship Planning Meeting
- How to start and manage a formal mentorship program
- Facilitating mentorships
- How to fund mentorships
- Where to find mentoring resources

MATERIALS NEEDED

- 3 to 8 farm educators/advocates or farmers interested to help less experienced farmers
- Meeting space (online or in-person)
- (Online) Shared document to take notes; ability to create breakout rooms
- (In-person) Poster paper, markers, pens

FACILITATOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The **best facilitator for mentors and mentees might be a farmer or former farmer** who knows the real-life challenges of starting a farm! Who would be the best fit for this role? Find a way to pay farmer facilitators for their contribution. Don't underpay based on age or perceived experience level.

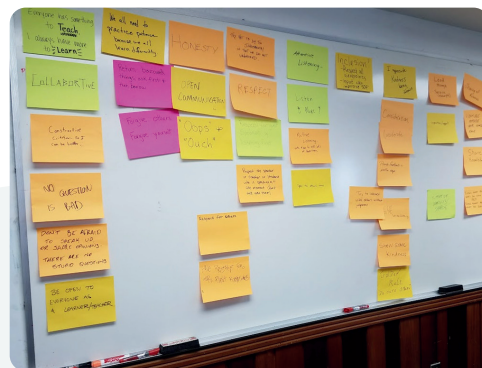
Any facilitator should be able to:

- **Listen** with an open mind
- **Be positive!**
- Recognize that each mentee has their own **unique values, goals, skills and background** that and that there are **many different paths to meet farm goals**
- **Notice and address micro-aggressions and tension** within the group
- Build trust
- **Understand the farmers and communities** where you'll be working
- **Be mindful of racial, gender, age, education, language, wealth or other differences** that may be a barrier to building trust between educators and farmers. Or between mentors and mentees.
- Have **excellent communication skills**
- Rely on the collective knowledge of mentees, mentors and local farmers



1. Planning a Mentorship

Project: Mentorship Planning Meeting



PROCEDURE

Gather! Mentorship planners, such as farm educators, Extension, farmers, non-profits, etc.

- **Introduction Prompt:** Describe one of your mentors from the past and how they've impacted you.
- **Brainstorming:** Create a shared online document, poster or whiteboard to brainstorm for a mentorship program.
 - **Full Group:**
 - **Who?** What types of beginning farmers or group(s) do we want to connect with mentors? What are their needs? Who might make great mentors?
 - **Breakout Groups:**
 - **What?** What topics (eg soil, financials, up to 4 focus areas) should be the focus for the mentorship? Should mentors and mentees sign a contract with best contact info, when they will meet, the mentee's learning goals for the mentorship, etc.?
 - **Where?** Should meetings be online, in-person, on-farms, at existing conferences or in several of those locations? Should mentors and mentees be from a particular region? How often should mentors & mentees meet?
 - **How?** Should we seek funding for the mentorship? Should mentors or mentees be paid? What organizations could partner to lead the project?
 - **Full Group:**
 - **When?** Make a timeline for marketing, matching mentor/mentee pairs, hosting the meet & greet, check-ins, community input session and evaluation
- **Signup & Delegate!**
 - Using the timeline, educators in the meeting are each encouraged to lead one aspect of the mentorship by signing up for an item above by highlighting and/or adding their initials to items they can lead. Examples:
 - Making a signup form (30 minutes)
 - Reaching out to mentors (10 minutes per mentor)
 - Planning & Facilitating a training (training time x 3 + travel)
 - Planning & Facilitating a meeting (meeting time x 1.5 + travel)
 - Writing an Article to promote the mentorship (2 hours)
 - Matching mentors with mentees (30 minutes per pair)
 - Quarterly check-ins individually with a mentor and mentee (4 hours/year)
 - Keeping everyone on track with their tasks (12 hours per year)



1. Planning a Mentorship Project: Facilitating Mentorships



PROCEDURE

Pairing Mentees with Mentors

- How will you decide which mentor is best for each mentee?
 - Geography
 - Learning Goals & Skills
 - Farm Enterprises
 - Other

How will you connect and prepare mentor/mentee pairs for their first meeting?

- Email/Text/Phone call
- Meet & Greet (See Activity 3 for a full description)
 - In-person event or farm visit
 - Online

Check-ins with Mentees and Mentors

- Frequency (Monthly, quarterly, etc.)
- Meetings of all 3: organizer, mentor and mentee
- 1:1 Meetings:
 - Organizer meets with mentor
 - Organizer meets with mentee

Check-in with Mentorship Organizers on Delegated Tasks

- Frequency (monthly, quarterly, etc.)
- What will you want to discuss?

Wrap-up Meeting

- Discuss results of survey (here are [example mentorship surveys](#))
- Discuss recommendations and feedback from community input session
- Planning for another year of mentorship
 - What worked?
 - What didn't work?
 - What should be changed for future years?
 - Which pairs want to continue together?
 - Are there new mentors or mentees to pair?
 - Should outreach for new members continue with this group?



1. Planning a Mentorship Project: Funding Mentorships

DIVE DEEPER

Research the following grants that could fund farmer mentorships

- [SARE Partnership Grant](#)
- [SARE Research & Education Grant](#)
- [Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program](#)
- [2501 - Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers](#)
- [Specialty Crop Block Grant](#)
- Many other grants could fund mentorship projects....

Which grants seem like a good fit for this project?

What would you want to fund?

- Organizer time
- Mentor time
- Mentee stipend
- Travel
- Other?

VARIATIONS

In-person

- All planning meetings and mentoring are in-person
- Most meetings are in-person

Online

- All planning meetings and mentoring are online or by phone, email, text, etc.
- Most meetings are online

Hybrid

- Mix of online and in-person

CONNECTIONS

Connections would depend on mentee needs and program focus area.



1. Planning a Mentorship: Mentee Signup Forms: Example questions

Choose Questions that you want to include in your form:

- Email Address
- Name
- Mentor
- Peer
- Phone
- Are you a beginning or aspiring farmer?
- Choose up to 4 topics that you would like to focus on with your mentor (eg. Land, Loans, Business Planning, Soils, Marketing)
- Choose up to 3 farm enterprises that are now or will be most important on your farm
- Choose up to 3 documents that you might want your Mentor to review (these can be documents that you already have or items you plan to create during 2022)
- How would you like to communicate with your mentor?
- How many years of experience do you have in the following?
- Suggest a mentor you would like to work with
- Demographics (Race, gender, age, location, limited resource producer, veteran)
- Choose up to 3 farm enterprises that are now or will be most important on your farm
- Other questions relevant to your mentorship project.....

Example Mentee signup forms: Michigan Sustainable Farm Mentors and Transition to Organic Partnership Program



1. Planning a Mentorship: Mentee Signup Forms: Brainstorming

Information	Question	Question type and/or Answer Options (eg Multiple Choice: Yes, No, NA)
Contact Info		
Mentee Farm Experience & Farm Type		
Mentee Goals for the Mentorship		
Mentee Communication Preferences		
Other		



1. Planning a Mentorship Project: Mentorship Toolkit

Toolkit to Create a Great Farm Mentorship

- START HERE! Tour video & Table of Contents
 - Toolkit Table of Contents
 - Video Tour of the Toolkit
 - Link to CC video with captions and website
- Full SARE Grant Proposal
 - Full SARE Partnership Grant
- Outreach, Articles and Slide Sets
 - Link to website and CC video with captions
 - Toolkit Poster
- Beginning Farmer Mentee Resources
 - Goal setting and planning documents
 - Goal Setting Worksheet!
 - To Do List + Goals
 - Farm Journal
 - Call #1: Introductions and Resource Assessment
 - Resource assessment
 - Call #2: Financial Viability
 - Schedule F, Enterprise Budgets, Cash Flow
- Call #3: Environmental Sustainability
- Call #4 Community connections & work-life balance
- Call #5: Wrap Up
 - Goal Setting Worksheet Review
 - To Do List + Goals Review





1. Planning a Mentorship Project: Mentorship Toolkit

Toolkit to Create a Great Farm Mentorship

The Toolkit to Create a Great Farm Mentorship is a shared drive of resources for farm educators who want to start a mentorship program.

- **Signup Forms**
- **Marketing Examples**
- **Email Templates for Communication**
- **Training Agendas, & Brainstorming Discussion Notes**
 - **Meet & Greet Agendas**
- **Training Mentors**
 - Mentor Training Curriculum
 - Discussion Prompt Brainstorming
 - Document Review Mentor Training
- **Training Peer Mentees**
 - Mentee Training Curriculum
- **Document Review Examples**
 - Business Plan – Christina Bultinck
 - Christina Bultinck - Your Soil Test Results _ MSU Soil Test
 - Greens Budget – BFG
 - HH Tomato Budget BFG
 - Income and Expense
- **Timelines and Checklists**
 - To Do - Mentorship Checklist
- **Mentee & Mentor Pre/Post Surveys**
- **Evaluation and Community Input Session Agenda and Documents**
- **Results!**



2. Supporting Mentors

Getting experienced farmers ready to connect with a mentee

OVERVIEW

A welcome meeting for mentors will focus on:

- Introductions to get to know the other mentors
- Brainstorming discussion prompts to ask mentees
- Communication techniques
- Diversity & Inclusion

MATERIALS NEEDED

- 4 to 25 farm mentors
- 1 or more facilitators
- Meeting space
 - (Online) Shared document to take notes; ability to create zoom breakout rooms
 - (In-person) White board or poster paper, markers, pens; comfortable space with chairs & tables

FACILITATOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Rely on the collective knowledge of experienced farmers! Many farmers:

- Have been mentors in the past
- Have great mentors themselves
- Can help to plan and ensure success of the mentorship program
- Know other farmers who can be great mentors
- Want to see new farmers get started with all the help they can get
- Understand the challenges and barriers facing new farmers
- Have great information to share with new farmers about farming, marketing, recordkeeping, soil management, conservation programs, loans, financials, etc.

Before the meeting, mentorship organizers should decide if they want to set the 4 topics or if farmers should set those.

Mentorship organizers should be ready to learn from mentors and mentees and to collaborate!



2. Supporting Mentors: Mentor Planning Meeting



PROCEDURE

Gather up to 25 mentors & facilitator(s) together online, in-person or on-farm

- Technology Intro – Mute/Unmute, Share Screen, Video On/Off, Recording in Zoom, etc. (5 minutes)
- Introductions (Full Group or Breakouts of 8 - 12 people)
 - Name, Farm Name, Farm Enterprises
 - Have you been able to Mentor farmers before? (15 minutes)
- Mentorship Organizer describes this Mentorship Program (5 minutes)
- Brainstorm Prompts for Mentorship discussions
 - Full Group (15 minutes)
 - Prompts to ask at every mentorship meeting
 - Examples:
 - @ start of mentorship meeting:
 - Example: Hello! Updates? How are you doing? Challenges?
 - Ask for group suggestions & write on a shared document or poster
 - @ end of mentorship meeting
 - Example: Action steps! List 3 things you're going to try on your farm
 - Ask for group suggestions & write on a shared document or poster
 - Breakout Groups (15 minutes) (2 to 5 people per breakout room)
 - Topic 1 (Example topic: Goal setting)
 - Topic 2 (Example topic: Soils & Conservation)
 - Topic 3 (Example Topic: Work Life Balance & Farmer Quality of Life)
 - Topic 4 (Example Topic: Financials & Marketing)
 - Diversity & Inclusion: Matrix of Privilege Chart
 - Giving Positive, Actionable Feedback
 - CAST! (Complement, Ask, Suggest, offer to Teach)
 - Compliment Sandwich (compliment - critique - compliment)
 - Rose - Thorn - Bud
 - Communication: 5 Why's Activity
 - Reflective Listening
 - Mentor Pre-Survey
 - Thank you!



2. Supporting Mentors: Brainstorming Discussion Prompts



PROCEDURE

Use the following format on a shared document for online meetings. For in-person meetings, use one poster paper for small groups and 1 poster or a white board for larger group brainstorming.

- 1. Discussion prompts for every meeting (full group brainstorming):**
 - a. *Example: Are there any challenges on the farm that you'd like to share?*
 - b.
 - c.
- 2. Discussion prompts for topic 1 (full group brainstorming):**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 3. Discussion prompts for topic 2 (small groups of about 4 people):**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 4. Discussion prompts for topic 3 (small groups of about 4 people):**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 5. Discussion prompts for topic 4 (small groups of about 4 people):**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 6. Discussion prompts for topic 5 (small groups of about 4 people):**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.



2. Supporting Mentors: Matrix of Privilege

PROCEDURE

- Have mentors look through the list for themselves and ponder the times they have felt targeted and the ways they experience privilege. State that this is a sensitive topic and may bring up difficult emotions for both targeted, privileged and border groups.
- Have mentors consider people they know who have suffered bias in the categories on the following pages.
- Ask if anyone has anything they would like to share.
- Ask if anyone sees a group that should be listed but is not.
- How will thinking about privilege and bias help you to be a better mentor?



2. Supporting Mentors: Matrix of Privilege

Social Identity	Privileged Social Groups	Border Social Groups	Targeted Social Groups	Ism
Race	White People, People perceived as white	Biracial People	Asian, Black, Latinx, Native People	Racism
Class/Income	Rich and Upper Class People	Middle Class and Middle Income People	Working Class, Low-income and Poor People	Classism
Sex	Men		Women	Sexism
Gender	Cisgender and Gender Conforming Men and Women	Gender Ambiguous Men and Women	Transgender, Genderqueer, Intersex and Gender non-binary People	Transgender Oppression
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual People	Bisexual People	Lesbians, Gay Men	Heterosexism, Homophobia
Ability/Disability	Temporarily Able Bodied People	People with Temporary Disabilities	People with Disabilities	Ableism
Neurodiversity and Learning Differences	Neurotypical	"Invisible" challenges or ability to mask	ADHD, Autism, Dyslexia or other visible Learning differences	Neurotypical Bias; Ableism,



2. Supporting Mentors: Matrix of Privilege

Social Identity	Privileged Social Groups	Border Social Groups	Targeted Social Groups	Ism
Religion	Christians who attend church	Non-church going Christians	Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Atheist and other religions	Religious oppression
Veteran Status	Non-veterans	Non-combat veteran, reserves, ROTC	Combat Veterans, Physical Injuries, PTSD, TBI, mental health challenges related to service	Discrimination against veterans
Age	Adults	Young Adults	Youth, Elders	Ageism/Adultism
Weight	Thin	Healthy Weight; Overweight	Obese	Weight Bias
Mental Health	Temporarily Mentally Healthy	Past Mental Health Challenges or Managed Addictions	Mental Health Challenges or Addictions	Mental Health Stigma
Family Background	Stable 2-parent Family without abuse, trauma, addiction or mental health challenges	Mostly stable family or amenable divorce without abuse, trauma, addiction or mental health challenges	Unstable home, where abuse, trauma, addiction, or mental health challenges were a problem	Stigma related to trauma and background
Farm Background	Raised on a family farm and continuing tradition	First-generation, traditional Farmers; non-traditional farmers raised on farms	First-generation, non-traditional farmers	??



2. Supporting Mentors: Matrix of Privilege

Social Identity	Privileged Social Groups	Border Social Groups	Targeted Social Groups	Ism
Politics	Share dominant political views and party of local community	Mixed opinions on the dominant political views and party of local community	Different political views and party than most of your community	Political Bias
Rural/Urban	Depends	Depends	Depends	The rural/urban divide
Education	Graduate degree; Bachelor's degree	Incomplete college degree, associates' degree, Technical Training; Certificate programs	GED; HS diploma; Incomplete HS; Learning Challenges	Education bias
Work	Respected professional job titles	Less respected office jobs	Physical labor, retail, service industry	Titlism
Citizenship	Natural-born US citizen	Naturalized US Citizen, Green Card, Temporary Visa	Undocumented	Xenophobia
Language	Native English speaker	Fluent English as a second language	Primary language other than English,	Language discrimination
<i>Add more groups...</i>				



2. Supporting Mentors: Feedback, Listening, and Communication

DIVE DEEPER

Positive Actionable Feedback

Describe a few feedback formats:

- **CAST!**
 - Complement
 - Ask
 - Suggest
 - offer to Teach
- **Rose - Thorn - Bud**
 - **Rose** = Something awesome
 - **Thorn** = Something challenging
 - **Bud** = Something to expand on
- Compliment Sandwich

Examples: Soil test, budget, website, etc.

Review: Have mentors review examples and give CAST!, Rose-Thorn-Bud and Compliment Sandwich feedback

Ask: Was feedback positive? Actionable? Helpful?

CONNECTIONS

Five Why's

Pair: Explain how you will communicate with mentees.

Ask why 5 times.

- Why do you think/do/say/prefer that?
- Why would that help mentees?

VARIATIONS

Reflective Listening

Describe reflective listening

- I will listen fully
- At breaks in your story, I will repeat the essence of your story in my own words
- Let me know if I'm on track and continue your story
- I may ask questions, like:
 - What did that mean to you?
 - How did that make you feel?
 - Why did you think that?
 - What would you say to your mentor if they were here?

Ask for a volunteer to **tell you about a mentor that was important to them.**

- At each break in their story, summarize what you have heard.
- Let the volunteer keep talking
- Ask one or 2 questions

Try: Have mentors break into pairs to try reflective listening describing a mentor or other person who was important to them.



Mentor Planning Meeting Survey

See the Mentor Pre-Survey in part 5 (Alison please include page #)

Create a survey or have a discussion with mentors to ask any of the following questions after their planning meeting:

- What activities were most useful for you?
 - Meeting the other mentors
 - Hearing about the mentorship project
 - Brainstorming discussion prompts (full group)
 - Brainstorming discussion prompts (small group)
 - Matrix of Privilege
 - Positive Actionable Feedback
 - 5 Why's
 - Reflective Listening
- What will you do differently based on what you learned today?
- Do you have any questions?
- What do you want to do or ask before meeting with your mentee?

Other questions that make sense for your mentorship project.



3. Supporting Mentees

OVERVIEW

Organize a meeting where mentees can:

- Meet each other!
- Learn about the mentorship
- Share goals
- Discuss inclusion
- Practice reflective listening
- Complete a pre-survey

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Goal setting shared document for each mentee-mentor pair
- Mentor-mentee contract (if using one)
- 4 to 25 farm mentors
- 1 or more facilitators
- Meeting space
- (Online) Shared document to take notes; ability to create zoom breakout rooms
- (In-person) White board or poster paper, markers, pens; comfortable space with chairs & tables

FACILITATOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The **best facilitator for mentees might be a new farmer** who knows the real-life challenges of starting a farm! or an experienced farmer who wants to help the next generation of farmers. If you do not have such background, try to find someone with experience to co-facilitate. Who would be the best fit for this role? Find a way to pay farmer facilitators for their contribution. Don't underpay based on age or perceived experience level.

Facilitators should:

- Remember that **they have a lot to learn from new farmers**
- **Prioritize mentees'** needs and questions
- Respect participants of **all backgrounds**
- Educate themselves on the **impacts of systemic racism, economic oppression and patriarchy** on individuals, communities and food & farm systems
- Educate themselves on local, state and national **resources for new farmers**
- Recognize that each mentee has their own **unique values, goals, skills and background** and that there are **many different paths to meet farm goals**
- **Build trust through good communication, honesty and good listening.**



3. Supporting Mentees

PROCEDURE

- Housekeeping/Technology-Things to practice before the meeting:
 - (Online) Mute/Unmute, Share Screen, Video On/Off, Recording in Zoom, etc.
 - (In-Person) Location of bathrooms, water fountain, projectors, computers, lights, etc.
- **Introductions by each:** Name, Farm Name and what you want to learn from a mentor
- **You describe the Mentorship Program** in 5 minutes
- **Resources Tour:** Walk through binder of printed materials, google drive or website of resources
 - Goal Setting Document
 - Mentor-Mentee Contract
 - Discussion Prompts
 - Other Resources
 - Feedback on the resources
- **Think - Pair - Share**
 - **Think:** Spend 5 to 10 minutes starting to work on your **Goal Setting Document**
 - **Pair:** Breakout Sessions for Peer Mentees
 - Review each others' Goal Setting Documents
 - Give Positive, Actionable Feedback
 - CAST! Complement, Ask, Suggest, offer to Teach
 - Compliment Sandwich
 - Rose - Thorn - Bud
 - **Share:** Each participant shares one piece of advice from your peer that you are excited to try
- **Matrix of Privilege** - Page 18 in Section 2 or [HERE](#)
 - No need to share! This is for your own learning 😊. Have each person look at the chart and self-reflect.
 - Questions/Feedback/Thoughts?
- **Reflective Listening**
 - Share a story about a mentor who positively influenced you
- **5 Why's**
 - Describe one thing you want to do to improve your farm.
- **Pre-Survey**
- Thank you!
- Questions?



3. Supporting Mentees

PROCEDURE (cont.)

Goal Setting Worksheet-Mentee and mentor discuss these questions together

When Will I meet with my mentor? (Months/Days/Times and/or dates)

- Mentee:
- Mentor response:

How do we each prefer to communicate? (Phone, Zoom, Skype, Email, Social Media, Text)

- Mentee:
- Mentor response:

What questions do I want to work on with my mentor?

- Mentee:
- Mentor response:

What farm goals would I like my mentor to advise me on?

- Mentee:
- Mentor response:

What documents do I want to share with my mentor?

- Mentee:
- Mentor response:

To Do:

-
-
-

Goals!

This year:

Next year:

Next 5 years:



3. Supporting Mentees

DIVE DEEPER

Positive Actionable Feedback

Describe a few feedback formats:

- **CAST!**
 - Complement
 - Ask
 - Suggest
 - offer to Teach
- **Rose - Thorn - Bud**
 - Rose = Something awesome
 - Thorn = Something challenging
 - Bud = Something to expand on
- Compliment Sandwich

Review: Have peers review Goal Setting Worksheets and give CAST!, Rose-Thorn-Bud and Compliment Sandwich feedback

Ask: Was feedback positive?
Actionable? Helpful?

CONNECTIONS

Five Why's

Pair: Explain one thing you want to do to improve your farm.

Ask why 5 times.

- Why do you think/do/say/prefer that?
- Why would that help your farm?

VARIATIONS

Reflective Listening

Describe reflective listening

- I will listen fully
- At breaks in your story, I will repeat the essence of your story in my own words
- Let me know if I'm on track and continue your story
- I may ask questions, like:
 - What did that mean to you?
 - How did that make you feel?
 - Why did you think that?
 - What would you say to your mentor if they were here?

Ask for a volunteer to **tell you about a mentor that was important to them.**

- At each break in their story, reflect back what you have heard.
- Let the volunteer keep talking
- Ask one or 2 questions

Try: Have mentees break into pairs to try reflective listening describing a mentor who was important to them.



4. Connecting Mentor Pairs

OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Mentorship! The Meet & Greet connects mentees and mentors for:

- Discussing mentorship expectations & timeline
- Breakout rooms for the pairs of mentor-mentee to set goals and schedule meetings

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Goal setting shared document for each mentee-mentor pair
- Mentor-mentee contract (if using one)
- 4 to 25 farmers seeking a mentor
- 1 or more facilitators
- Meeting space
- (Online) Shared document to take notes; ability to create zoom breakout rooms
- (In-person) White board or poster paper, markers, pens; comfortable space with chairs & tables

FACILITATOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Connecting Mentee-Mentor Pairs:

- Review mentor/mentee signup forms
- Pair by region, learning goals, farm enterprises, skill level, etc.
- Connect! Notify mentors and mentees they have been paired. Include contact information for each other, next steps and the date of the Meet & Greet.

The Meet & Greet will:

- Welcome everyone!
- Connect mentors with mentees in breakout rooms to set goals for learning and communication

Mentee/Mentor Check-ins will:

- Ensure that mentees have questions about the mentorship answered
- Ensure the mentees and mentors are in communication
- Make it simple to share concerns about their mentor or the mentee

Mentorship Resources might include:

- Goal-setting documents
- Mentor-Mentee contact
- Resources on relevant topics
- Pre- and Post-Survey for Mentees



4. Connecting Mentor Pairs: Pair up!

PROCEDURE

Select & Notify Mentor Pairs

Review mentor/mentee signup forms

- Use a spreadsheet of form results
 - Pair by region, learning goals, farm enterprises, skill level, etc.
 - Sort and highlight to show pairs

Connect! Notify mentors and mentees they have been paired. Include contact information for each other, next steps and the date of the Meet & Greet.

Example email:

Title: Connecting with Your Mentor!

Hi **Name**,

Your mentor will be **Name** from **Farm Name**. I have included them on this email so you have their email address and can begin to plan for a time to start talking.

Below is a sample schedule, so you can schedule your year of meetings on your first call. I recommend spacing out the calls by about 3 weeks or a month so you can have time to implement recommendations, search for information and get the most out of the mentorship.

You are both welcome to contact me at any time if you have questions about the mentorship, beginning farmer resources or farming questions.

- **November:** Meet & Greet - Introductions & Goal-setting
- **December:** Call #1 - Virtual Farm Tour (photos & Google Maps) & Goal-setting
- **January:** Call #2 - Resource Assessment
- **February:** Call #3 - Financial Viability
- **March:** Call #4 - Soils & Environmental Sustainability
- **April:** Call #5 - Community Connections and Marketing
- **May:** Call #6 - Work-Life Balance
- **June, July, August, September:** Answer questions that arise during the farm season
- **October:** Wrap-up! Review goals from before season & set next steps



4. Connecting Mentor Pairs: Meet & Greet

PROCEDURE (cont.)

- Introductions
 - Name, Farm Name, Farm Enterprises
 - If time: Why did you want to be part of this mentorship project?
- Explain the mentorship program
 - Timeline
- Breakout rooms for Mentee-Mentor Pairs
 - Set farm & learning goals
 - To Do:
 - List items
 - Goals!
 - This year:
 - Next year:
 - 5 years:
 - Mentorship Agreements
 - When Will I meet with my mentor?
 - Schedule at least 2 meetings
 - Discuss Months/Days/Times and/or dates that tend to work
 - How do we each prefer to communicate? (Phone, Zoom, Skype, Text, Other)
 - What questions do I want to work on with my mentor?
 - What farm goals would I like my mentor to advise me on?
 - What documents do I want to share with my mentor?
 - Etc.
- Full Group discussion
 - Mentorship pairs: What is one goal that you plan to work on together?



4. Connecting Mentor Pairs

Below are **suggestions** of resources for a mentorship meeting

- **Each Mentee-Mentor meeting**
 - **Hello!** Updates? How are you doing? Challenges? Successes?
 - **Topic of the day** - Refer to the resource List
 - **Action steps! What 3 things** are you going to try on your farm?

Resource List	Name:	Farm Name:
Leave blank if you prefer to keep info private!		
	Now	Can leverage in future <input type="checkbox"/>
Money		
Loans and/or Grants		
Land & Soils		
Infrastructure, buildings, hoop houses		
Wells and Water		
Tools & Equipment		
Skills & Training - Person 1		
Skills & Training - Person 2		
Professional and Social Networks		



4. Connecting Mentor Pairs

CHECK-INS

Check-ins are important! Use check-ins to:

- keep mentors and mentees on track
- gather feedback to improve the mentorship
- find out if a mentorship pair isn't working
- Good time to teach mentors or mentees

Here are questions that may be useful:

- Have you been able to connect with your mentor (mentee)?
- Has the mentorship been useful to you?
- Do you have any concerns about your mentor (mentee) that you want to share?
- What topics have you discussed?
- Do you need any resources to help the mentee (you) move forward?
- Do you have any questions about the program?
- Do you have any suggestions for the program?
- Are there any questions you would like us to ask your mentor (mentee)?

Check-ins can be formal or informal - texts, phone calls, farm visits or meeting at an event are good ways to connect.

TRACKING MENTOR PAIRS

Mentor tracking: Use a shared spreadsheet, an online form or another system to track meetings for each mentor pair.

call	call	call	call	call
1	2	3	4	5
X	X	X	X	later date
x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	later date
texts/email one time				
x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x
x	x	x	x	x

CONNECTIONS

Pairing beginning farmers with a peer or a group of beginning farmers may be very helpful!

Example Tracking Spreadsheet



5. Community Input

OVERVIEW

Mentorship coordinators can see feedback as a gift! Using insights from surveys, community input sessions and informal conversations is hands down the best way to improve mentor programs. Knowing that mentorship organizers listen and are open to recommended changes keeps mentees and mentors engaged year after year. And, of course, success stories and survey data are important for funding.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Mentor and Mentee Pre/Post Survey
- Agenda for Community Input Session
- 4 to 25 mentors & mentees
- 1 or more facilitators
- Meeting space
- (Online) Shared document to take notes; ability to create zoom breakout rooms
- (In-person) White board or poster paper, markers, pens; comfortable space with chairs & tables
- A way to share data and success stories

FACILITATOR BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Mentorship organizers should review this full section before moving forward with any of the individual activities:

Pre/Post Surveys

- Sample Questions
- Link to [survey form to copy & edit](#)

Community Input Session

- Invite mentors & mentees
- Agenda
- Shared documents for brainstorming
- Example of shared documents

Sharing Success Stories

- How to share success stories
- Links to Article, Poster and slide sets

Learning from Surveys & community input session recommendations

- Being flexible
- Accept that dropping an approach or changing is not a criticism but someone who cares enough to improve the program.



5. Community Input: Mentee (& Mentor) Pre/Post Survey

Create a survey or have a discussion with mentees to ask any of the following questions after their planning meeting. Plan to repeat the same questions at the end of the mentorship project or annually. Once you create your mentee survey, copy it to make a few language edits, but otherwise gather similar information from both groups:

Sample Questions:

- Email Address
 - Consider sending responders a copy of their response
- Name
- Share examples of how trainings/meetings for this project have influenced what you plan to DO to improve your farm.
- How have trainings/meetings/mentorship influenced you, your knowledge, attitudes or skills in farming business management.
- What are the 3 biggest challenges for your farm or for you as a farmer?
- Have you overcome any challenges due to your mentor's advice?
- How would you rate your understanding of your financials?
- How would you rate your farm's profitability?
- How would you rate your understanding of your soils and on-farm sustainability practices?
- How would you rate your soil health?
- How would your rate your farm's environmental sustainability?
- How would you rate your work-life balance?
- How would you rate your farm's ability to meet the needs of your community?
- If you have land, how well does it meet your needs?
- If you have a loan, how well does it meet your needs?



5. Community Input: Mentee (& Mentor) Pre/Post Survey

Think about whether answering by an anonymous survey or a 1:1 or group discussion will be best for your mentees and mentors. Then consider what questions you want to ask. Questions might include:

- If you have taken farmer training programs, how well did it prepare you to start a farm?
- If you've taken a business training class, how well did it prepare you for starting your farm business?
- Describe your farm's financials and profitability.
- Describe your farm's environmental sustainability (soil quality, habitat, etc)
- Describe your work-life balance.
- Describe your farm's community connections.
- What is the biggest barrier to your farm's success? (Farmland, Access to credit, Low profit-margins, Availability of markets, Poor soil quality, Environmental challenges, Labor, Burnout and lack of work-life balance, Need for better community engagement, Lack of farm skills, Lack of business and financial skills)
- Which farm enterprises make up 20% or more of your current or planned farm sales?
- How has the mentor program been MOST helpful to you?
- What could the mentor program have done better?
- What could your mentor (mentee) have done better?
- What suggestions do you have to improve this mentorship program?
- Please share up to 3 successes or examples of improved knowledge, attitudes, skills or awareness due to this mentorship.
- Do you have any suggestions on how to help you and other mentees (mentors) prepare for a 2nd year of mentoring?
- Any other comments?



5. Community Input: Agenda for Community Input Session

PROCEDURE

Sample Agenda for Community Input Session

- **Introductions**
 - Name, Farm Name, Farm Enterprises
 - Share one success! (Use chat chat box or small groups if over 12 people)
- **Full Group: Brainstorm ways to improve the mentorship**
 - Type in your suggestions, ideas and feedback!
 -
 -
 - Highlight ~3 ideas to share out with the full group & decide who will share
- **Breakout Sessions: Choose a focus area**
 - **Meetings - Zoom, phone, text, email, farm visits.....**what is the best way to meet with your mentor/mentee? Are there better ways to schedule these?
 - **Needs** - What resources or assistance do you need?
 - **Meeting Topics & Discussion Prompts** - are these useful? Would you recommend new topics or ways to support discussions?
 - **Peer Mentee Pairs & Network Meetings**
 - **Other?** We can add more breakouts or adjust as recommended by the group!
 - Explain that each breakout group will have a white board or poster paper for notes. If meeting online, a shared document will copy these lines for each topic:
 - Type in your suggestions, ideas and feedback!
 -
 -
 - Highlight ~3 ideas to share out with the full group & decide who will share
- Thank you!
- Questions

Example Community Input Session Notes Document from 2022



5. Community Input

DIVE DEEPER

Hmmm..... What to do with all those **recommendations from the Community Input Session?**

- **Choose a few success stories** to highlight in grant reports or an article about the project in a farm journal or farmers 'organization newsletter
- Have a **meeting with mentorship organizers to highlight suggestions to try** in the next year of the mentorship
- Set **action steps to make those changes a reality**
- **Email all organizers, mentors and mentees with the plan** and progress toward making their suggestions happen!

VARIATIONS

Sharing success stories:

- Have mentees and mentors record a short interview on zoom or create a video on their phones to show successes on their farm
- Pay mentees and mentors to write a reflection and take a photo, then choose 1 or 2 to print or include in an email newsletter or an online farm newspaper
- Interview a mentor-mentee pair for a podcast

CONNECTIONS

Organizer's Guide for Peer to peer Learning Groups

Black Farmers: Leading with Values



Additional Resources/Activities

Resource 1

Mentorship Programs

One on One Mentorship Programs

- [Cultivate Growth Mentorship](#)
- [Transition to Organic Partnership Program \(TOPP\)](#)
 - [Mentor Training Videos](#) (esp. Video 3) are good resources
- [SCORE business mentor matching](#)
- [Begin Farming Mentorship Program](#)
- [Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring](#)
- [Mi. Sheep Breeders Association](#)

Group Networking & Informal Mentors

- [Crosshatch Guilds](#)
- [Keep Growing Detroit - GID & GRP](#)
- [MIFFS Networks](#) for Veterans, Women, Spanish Speaking Farmers
- [West Michigan Growers Group](#)

Apprenticeships & On-Farm Learning

- [MSU Organic Farmer Training Program](#)
- [Hunter Park GardenHouse](#)
- [Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship](#)
- [Fair Share Apprenticeship](#)
- [Grow Benzie](#)
- [Growing Hope](#)
- [Keep Growing Detroit](#)
- [MSU Beginning Grazing School](#)
- [MSU North Farm \(UPREC\)](#)

Resource 2

Toolkit for Starting a Great Farm Mentorship

A [shared drive of resources](#) created for the Michigan Sustainable Farm Mentors project, including:

- Mentor & Mentee resource folders
- Signup forms
- Agendas for mentor meetings, trainings and community input sessions

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/toolkit-for-starting-a-great-farm-mentorship-program>

Resource 3

Funding for Mentorships

- [SARE Partnership Grant](#)
- [SARE Research & Education Grant](#)
- [Beginning Farmer Rancher Development Program](#)
- [2501 - Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers](#)
- [Specialty Crop Block Grant](#) (note: this grant funded a mentorship program in Indiana!)
- Many other grants could fund mentorship projects....



Review and Encouraging Further Learning

Module Review and Evaluation Questions:

- Host an educator wrap-up meeting to discuss the year, the surveys and the community input session
- Reach out to other mentorship programs to find ideas to help address challenges
- Were you able to successfully connect beginning farmers with experienced farm mentors?
- What would you change if you did this another season?

Activities for Review:

- Community (farmer mentors and mentees) Input Session
- Mentorship organizer wrap-up meeting