

Report date: June 2019

## Beginning Farmer & Rancher Needs Assessment

A collaborative research project led by the OCFSN BFR Working Group, with support from Oregon State University.

### Introduction

In 2017, the members of the Beginning Farmer & Rancher working group of the Oregon Community Food System Network decided to work together on a statewide assessment of BFR needs and programs. The purpose of the project was to (1) learn if existing organizations and programs are meeting the needs of new and beginning farmers and ranchers in Oregon, and (2) identify audiences that working group members were not yet reaching but should, as well as programming they were not offering but should. *Note:* “new and beginning” also included “pre” farmers who are in the exploratory phase.

### Methods

The group did the assessment in two steps: regionally-specific discussion groups with farmers (focus groups) which included a simple written survey; then a half-day workshop for beginning farmer and rancher service providers once the focus groups were complete.

Focus groups:

Group members held three focus groups with new and beginning farmers and ranchers at existing meetings and events in January/February 2018, as detailed in the table:

Region	Location	Date	Facilitator(s)	Attendees (#)
North Willamette/Metro	Gresham	2.6.18	Heidi Noordijk, Matt Gordon, Jenny	19
Southern Oregon	SOREC	1.30.18	Maud Powell, Stu O'Neill, Megan Fehrmann	22
South Willamette	Eugene, Stella	2.8.18	Jo Rogers and Melissa Fery were co-facilitators for one group (jo@willamettefarmandfood.org); Karen Dunne & Katy Giombolini co-facilitated the other	20
				61

The facilitators did the following:

- Described the project and the goals and made it clear that they wanted to focus on participants' experiences, as well as the services they used both before they started farming and during their first 10 years;
- Distributed survey forms and explained how the session would work;
- Gave participants a Needs Assessment Data Sheet, which included demographic questions (summarized below) and a transcript of qualitative questions;
- Allowed participants time to answer the basic demographic questions;
- Asked participants qualitative questions, allowed them time to brainstorm their individual answers on their Needs Assessment Data Sheet;

- After each question, gave participants a few minutes to write things down on their Needs Assessment Data Sheets and invited them to share answers with the group—a summation of the emergent themes from these conversations are listed in **Part II**.

The demographic survey asked the following:

- Age;
- If they were currently farming or not, how many seasons they had farmed or ranched on land they owned or leased, and how many seasons they had completed on someone else’s land;
- What they are growing or what they are planning to grow;
- How they sell or plan to sell; and what farming practices they are currently using or planning to use.

The survey form is available as a separate document.

A team of graduate students working with Dr. Stephanie Grutzmacher, OSU College of Public Health & Human Sciences, aggregated and analyzed the survey data from the first sets of questions and created an initial report of findings.

Then, in February, we held a half-day meeting that included members of OCFSN’s BFR working group as well as other organizations working with new and beginning farmers. Our goal was to (a) share findings from the farmer discussions so far; (b) discuss this work, this audience, and lessons learned; and (c) decide on next steps for our assessment.

The following table is from the original assessment proposal and shows which organizations were part of the BFR working group when it was planning this assessment project.

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Individuals</b>	<b>Role</b>
Rogue Farm Corps	Stu O’Neill Megan Fehrman Matt Gordon Nellie McAdams Abigail Singer	Project leadership Farmer discussion groups
OSU Small Farms	Lauren Gwin Maud Powell Erica Chernoh	Project coordination, support Farmer discussion groups
Willamette Farm & Food Coalition	Karen Dunne	
Ten Rivers Food Web	Joe Esker Kathryn Weeks	
Nehalem Valley L.T.	Jared Gardner Trav Williams	
Oregon Tilth	Chris Schreiner	
Central Oregon Intergov. Council	Katrina Van Dis	Farmer discussion group

Cascade Pacific RC&D	Jared Pruch	
NEOEDD	Sara Miller	Farmer discussion group and possibly engagement of other orgs to host those
Huerto de la Familia	Emily Sessoms Alexandra Tomaselli	
Adelante Mujeres	Alejandro Tecum	
EMSWCD/Headwaters	Rowan Steele	
Friends of Family Farmers	Lindsay Trant	Farmer discussion groups
Ant Farm Collective (?)	Shelley Bowerman	
High Desert Food & Farm Alliance	Jess Weiland	Farmer discussion group

## Discussion Group Results

1. Farmer Demographics
2. Beginner Farm Experiences: Emergent Themes
3. Current Programs and Services for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers
4. How Participants Define Success

### Farmer Demographics

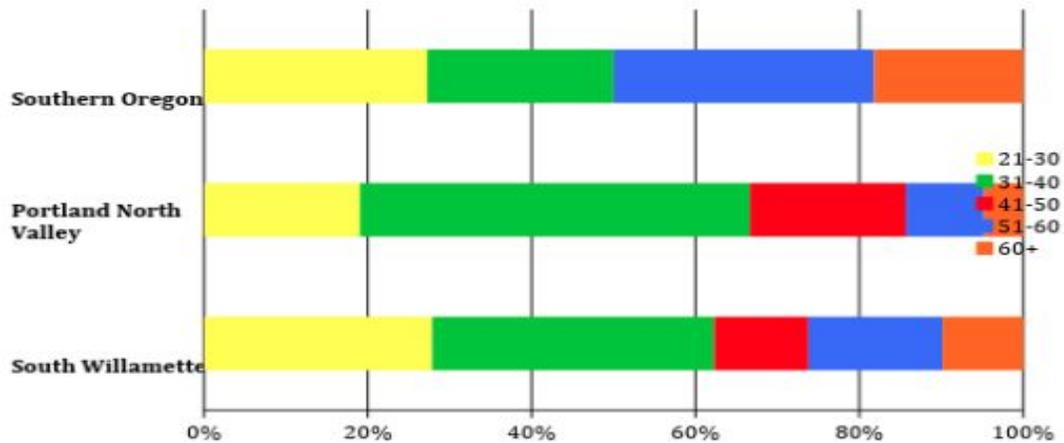
(Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 for all tables and graphs, as well as a full breakdown of each geographic region's results by questions. See also Appendix 3 Needs Assessment Data Sheets: Part #1, Participant Information Questions 1-8.)

There were a total of 61 participants: 19 from the North Willamette/Metro/Portland Region, 22 from the Southern Oregon region, and 20 from the South Willamette area. As observed by the facilitators, there was a fairly even mix of males and females, and all were white except one person. The participants were asked if they were currently farming or not, how many seasons they had farmed or ranched on land they owned or leased, and how many seasons they had completed on someone else's land. The majority of participants (85.5%) are currently farming or ranching.

Of the people who are currently farming and/or ranching, participants have spent, on average, 2.86 seasons farming and/or ranching on land they either owned or were currently leasing. The overall average of farmers and ranchers working both their own and others' land was 1.92 seasons. Portland North Valley participants had the highest average of seasons, farming 2.9 seasons on leased or owned land, while also having the highest average of seasons, working 2.14 seasons on someone else's farm. Participants from Southern Oregon had spent the lowest average number of seasons farming on land they owned or leased (1.82 seasons) and on someone else's land (.95 seasons). Overall, only 10% of respondents grew up farming; however, 22.7% of participants from Southern Oregon grew up farming, which is five times higher than any of the other regions' participants.

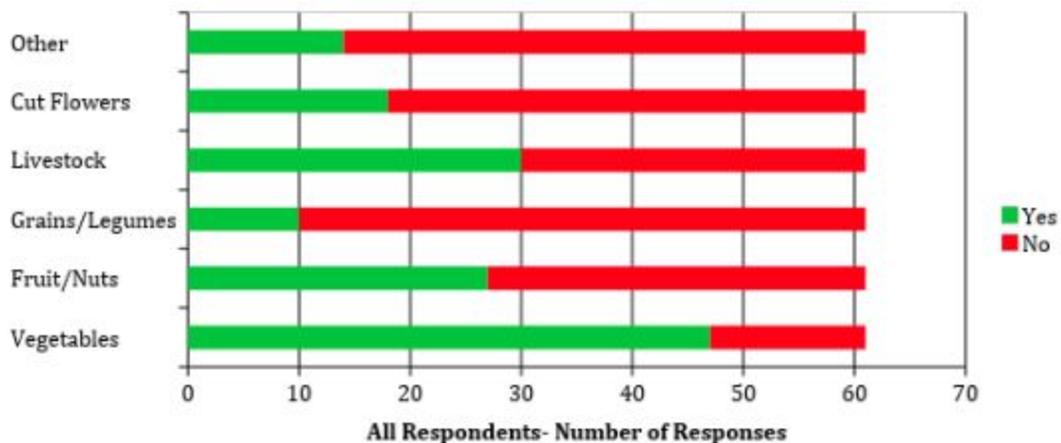
Participants were asked their ages, which were broken down into five categories: 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, and 61+ years. The majority of participants were under 41 years of age. This age group demographic breaks down further into 28% being under 30, and 34% being within 31-40 years old. The 51-60 age group had the next highest representation, with only 16% of participants in this age range. Table 1 below shows the age breakdown per region. (See **Tables 1-5 for all respondents and Tables 6-11 for ages by area in appendix**).

**Table 1.** All Respondents’ Age Breakdown by Region:

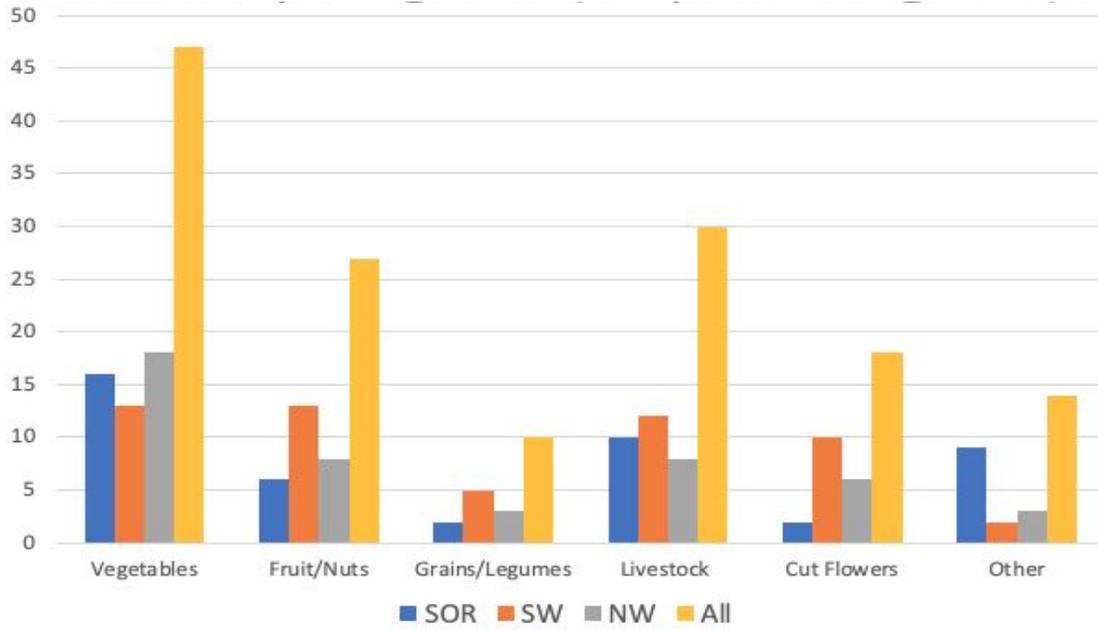


Participants were then asked what they were growing or what they are planning to grow. The options were vegetables; fruits and nuts; grains and legumes; livestock, including poultry; cut flowers, and other, not specified (see **Tables 12 -15**). Vegetables were the most frequent crop category chosen (47 out of the 61 participants); followed by livestock, (30 participants); followed by fruits and nuts (27 participants); cut flowers (18 participants); and finally, grains and legumes (10 participants). Finally, 14 participants indicated “Other or Not Specified.”

**Table 12.** What do you grow or plan to grow- All Respondents



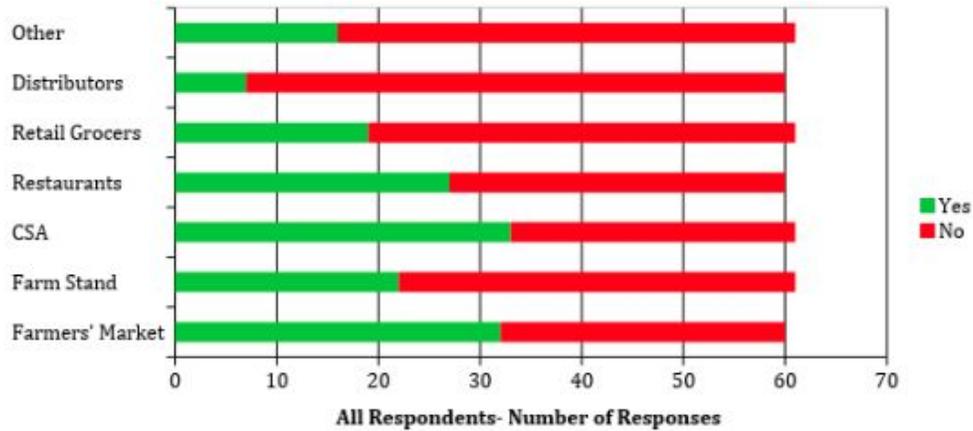
**Table 29.** What do you grow or plan to grow, region specific and all results together.



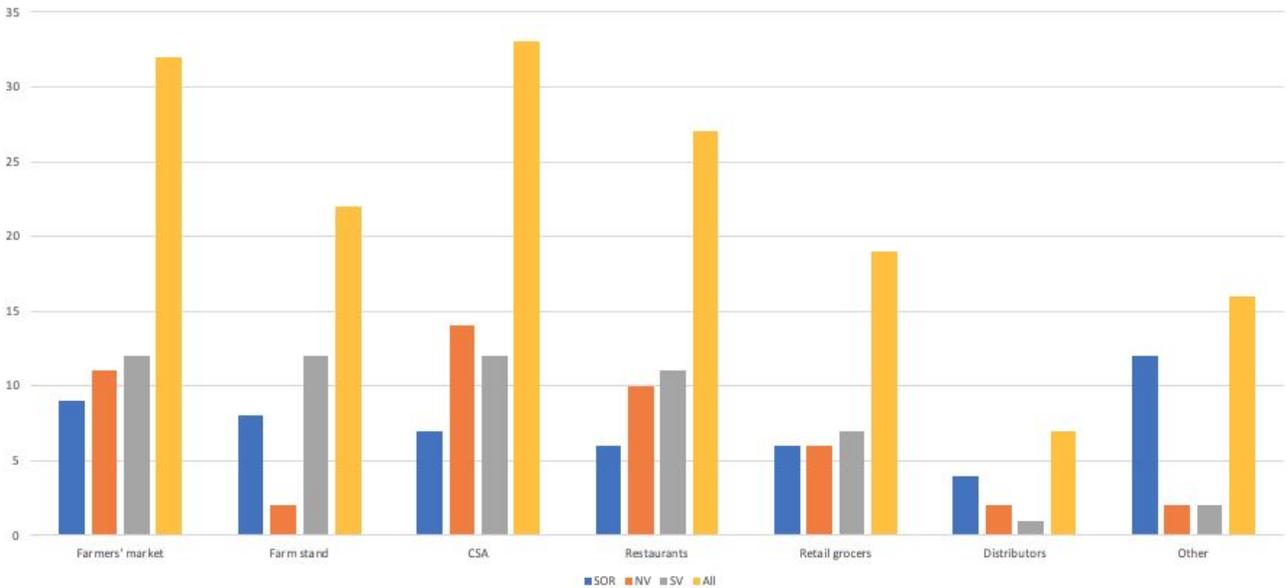
Legend: Blue = Southern Oregon  
 Orange = North Valley  
 Gray = South Valley  
 Yellow = All Participants

Participants were then asked to indicate how they sell or plan to sell their products. The options were: other, or not specified; distributors; retail grocers; restaurants; CSA; farm stand; and farmers markets (see Tables 16-19). From all respondents, CSA was the number one selling avenue (33 of the 61 participants); followed by farmers markets (32 participants); followed by restaurants (27 participants); followed by farm stands (22 participants); followed by retail grocers (19 participants); followed by distributors (7 participants). 16 participants indicated “Other or not specified.”

**Table 16.** How do you sell or plan to sell: All Respondents



**Table 30.** How do you sell or plan to sell, region specific and all results.

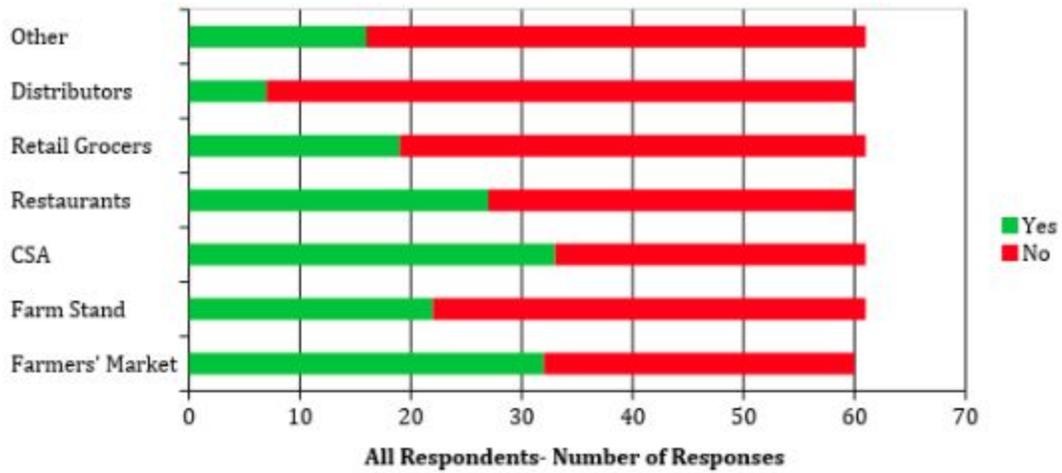


Legend: Blue = Southern Oregon  
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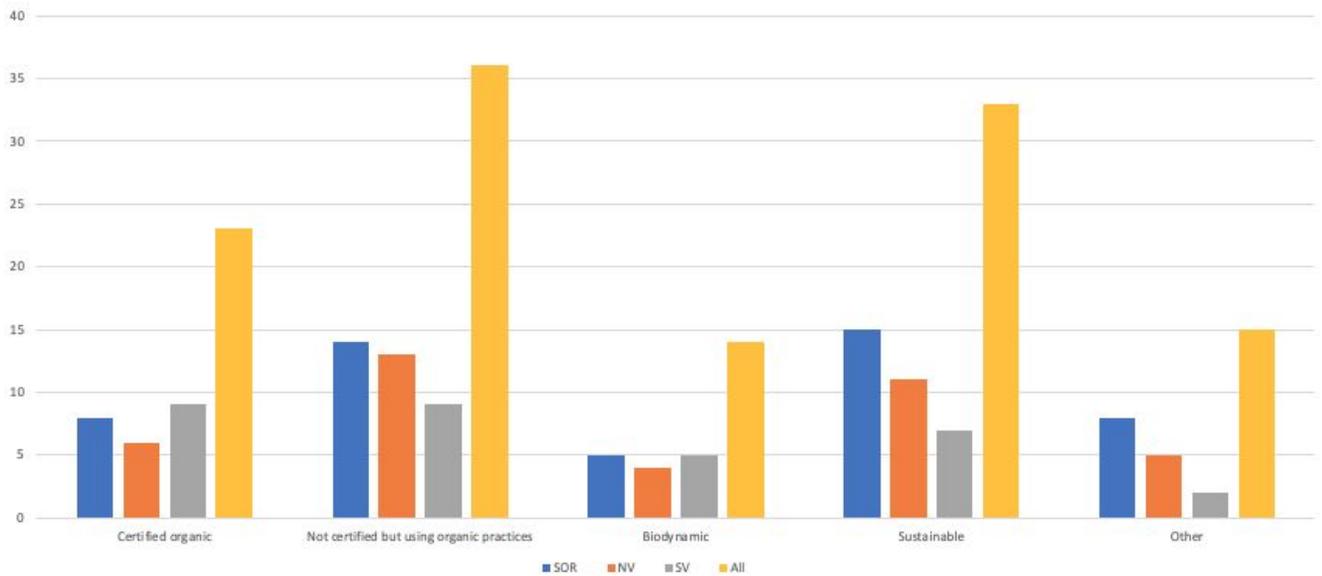
Participants were then asked what farming practices they are currently using or are planning to use. The options were other or not specified, sustainable, biodynamic, not certified but using organic practices, and certified organic (see Tables 20-23). From all respondents, 36 of the 61 participants indicated they are not certified but are using organic practices, 33 participants indicated sustainable practices, 23 indicated they are certified organic, 15 participants indicated other or not specified, and 14 participants indicated biodynamic.



**Table 20.** What type of farming practices do you use or are planning to use - All Respondents.



**Table 31.** What type of farming practices are you using or planning to use?



Legend: Blue = Southern Oregon  
 Orange = North Valley  
 Gray = South Valley  
 Yellow = All Participants

## **Beginner Farmer Experiences: Emergent Themes**

In the focus groups, the facilitators asked each of the following discussion questions aloud. The participants were given a few minutes to write notes below the question on their individual sheets, and the facilitators asked for volunteers to share their responses aloud with the group. The themes noted below are based on notes taken by facilitators while discussing what participants shared from their individual survey forms. For the full range of answers on those forms, please visit the appendix “Needs Assessment Individual Data Sheets.” Themes that came up in respondents’ answers are included below each question in bulleted format.

The following questions asked the participants to share their experiences regarding the first steps they took or are taking to become farmers. The questions asked about motivations to start farming, information sources, resources that were and were not useful, what their first questions were as “pre-farmers.”

### **Question 1: How and why did you get started in farming or ranching? (If you are not yet farming or ranching, speak from your current experience.)**

- Health (of humans and environment)
- Grew up farming
- Passion for working outdoors
- Had grown up on farm and then as a disabled veteran, realized medicine was just fighting symptoms, and that health begins with food and the way one lives
- Came to be increasingly aware of impacts of conventional methods, saw need for sustainable farming and livestock practices, drawn to the ranching lifestyle, and enjoy good food and being outside

### **Question 2: What were (or are) your biggest questions when starting out?**

- How to find land
- How to navigate the financial aspects of farming
- Training; how much do you need before you do “x”? Where/how to get needed training
- Finding the market for the products
- How to set up a lease

### **Question 3: What did (or do) you want to learn first?**

- Irrigation
- Plant succession
- Regional planting schedules, timing for specific crops, and what yields to expect for our region; and specific practices and in different conditions--Seed catalogs and other resources lack this specificity
- Know how to be a farm employee, but how to transition to being an owner?
- What about capital; and
- What do in the off season
- Is my time and money going to pay off?

**Question 4: Where did you look for information (or where are you looking now)? If you did internet searches, be more specific about where you looked and how.**

- Farmer Listservs
- Other farmers--networking was the most important
- Farm visits
- Social media (i.e. Facebook groups and Instagram)
- YouTube
- **Books (Coleman, Solomon)**
- Mentors who were a few years ahead; people to ask where to get what is needed; talked to lots of people
- Mother Earth Fair and OSU Small Farms Conference
  
- SCORE, RAIN, Google Scholar, and OSU publications; as well as Farmer-to-Farmer podcasts
- Craigslist

**Question 5: How useful was the information you found? What was NOT useful about the information you found?**

- The amount of information was often overwhelming
- Somewhat challenging to find information tailored to specific farmers' needs
- Information based on industrial methods are basically useless

**Question 6: Was it (or is it) hard to find the information you wanted?**

- Grants were challenging to find
- Didn't know what I didn't know; it was hard to know what to ask--may not know what you need to ask until you've made a mistake
- Hard to find information on knowing what to grow, as well as certain requirements of particular crops
- How to find a lease
- How to find a good real estate agent

**Question 7: Were there any language or cultural barriers that made accessing information hard?**

*No responses were collected – either because facilitators did not ask the question or because participants did not report barriers.*

### **Current Programs and Services for Beginning Farmers & Ranchers**

This section contains summary from the Needs Assessment Data Sheets in two parts:

- A.** Discusses farmers' experiences as "pre-farmers," and what programs and services from the Beginner Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) working group they had used or had not used.
- B.** Asked about participants' experiences with programs and resources they have used outside of the BFRDP working group.

First, participants were given a list of current programs and services available to and targeted toward beginning farmers and ranchers. The participants were asked to indicate which ones *they had used*, which ones *they had heard of but not used*, and finally which ones *they did not know*. (See Tables 24-28.)

Of the 61 participants, **those using a program/resource**:

- the most used resource, indicated by 95% of participants, *is informal networking with experienced farmers*
- the second most utilized resource is Friends of Family Farmers Oregon Farmlink Program, indicated by 62% of participants
- and finally, 56% of participants indicated attending OSU Small Farms Conference.

The least used resources included:

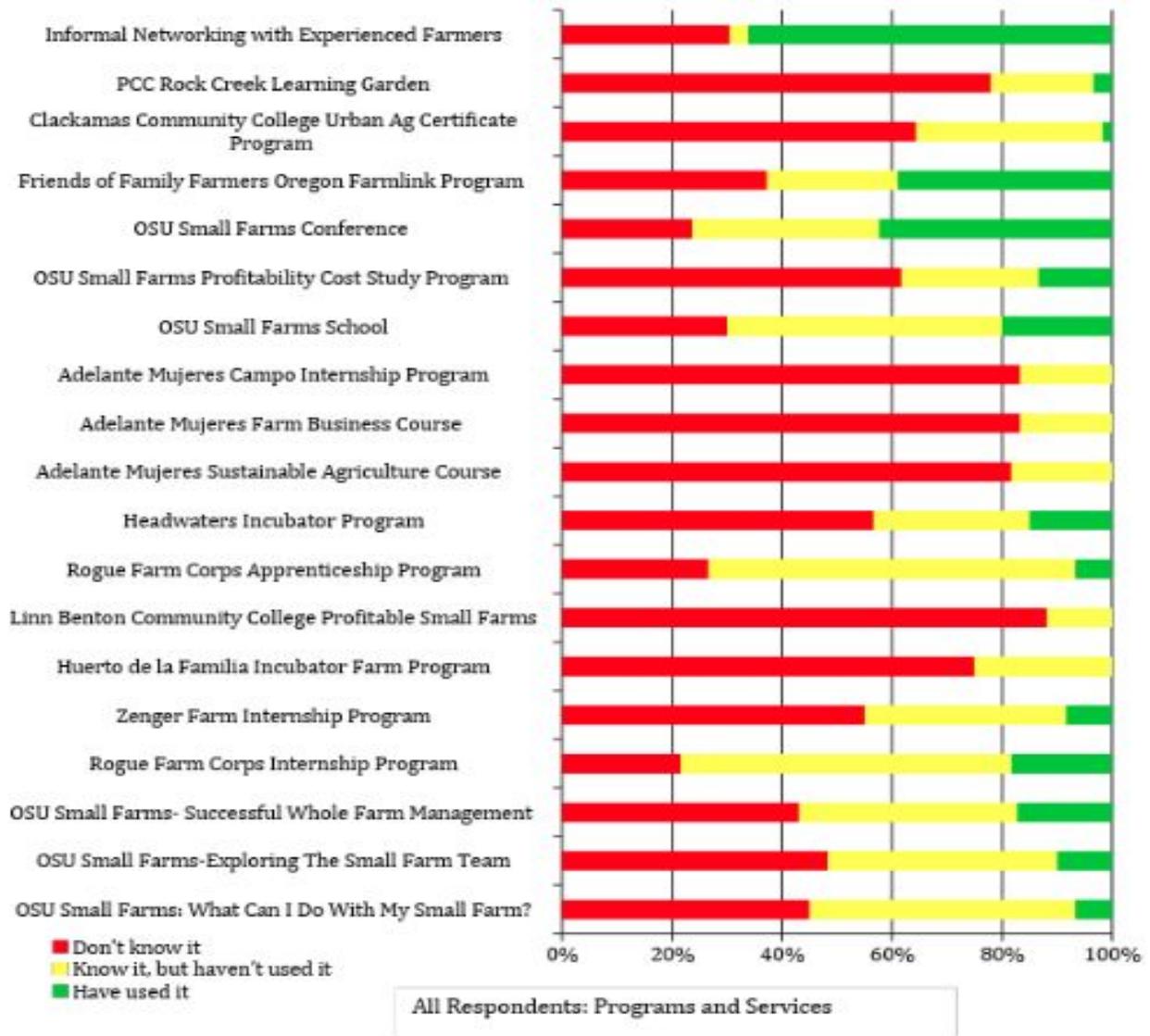
- 9% of participants indicating Rogue Farm Corps Apprenticeship Program,
- and only 5% using Clackamas Community College Urban Ag. Cert. Program.

For those programs that participants **know of, but have not used**, the most recognized are the following: most participants (~65%) had heard of the Rogue Farm Corps Apprenticeship and Rogue Farm Corps Internship Program, while the programs provided by the OSU Small Farms ranged from 50-37% of participants having heard about them.

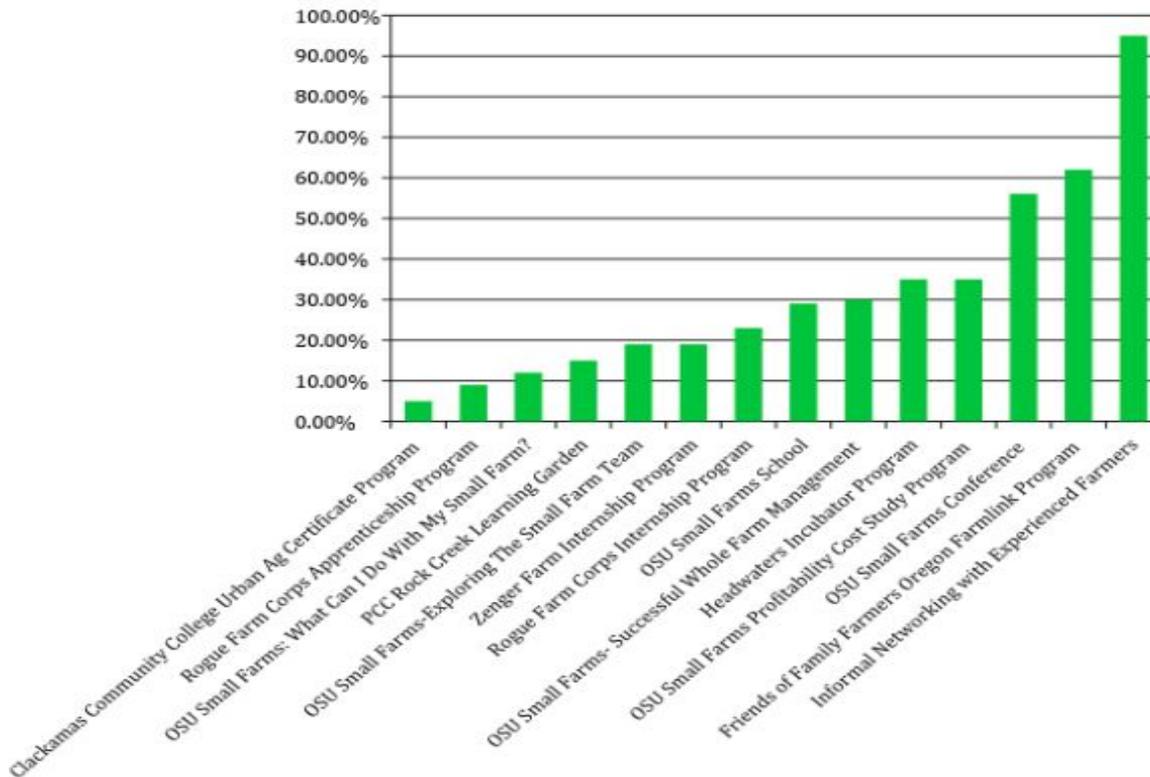
Finally, at least 80% or more of all participants **did not know/had not heard of** the following programs:

- PCC Rock Creek Learning Garden
- Adelante Mujeres Campo Internship Program
- Adelante Mujeres Farm Business Course
- Adelante Mujeres Sustainable Agriculture Course
- Linn Benton Community College Profitable Small Farms
- Huerto de la Familia Incubator Farm Program

**Table 24: Knowledge and Use of Programs and Services- All Respondents.**



**Table 28:** Of those aware of each resource, percent of respondents using those resources



**B.** Participants were then asked to consider questions about programs and services; these were also shared aloud with the group. The following themes came out of these four questions.

Question 1: **What other services, programs, or other information sources have you used? Include not just those in Oregon but also elsewhere.**

- SWCD
- OSU Extension Small Farms program
- SBDC—succession planning workshop—CCC
- SCORE—business planning; 3-4 workshops; one-on-one consulting
- Mercy Corps—business planning
- Mercy Corps IDA—making sure you’re in the right location
- Small farm business class via WSU extension--Hazel Dell
- Women in Agriculture conferences
- Portland Area CSA coalition--farm tours, listserv, share fair
- Barnraiser
- Loans from friends/family
- NYFC
- FOFF
- FSA Prep Program

**Question 2: Please share your experiences with any of these programs, both in the table and others you wrote down.**

- Headwaters has been great for leasing land affordably and access infrastructure, as well as for networking; forces you to business plan

**Question 3: Do you have a business plan? If so, did you access any program or services to help you write this business plan?**

- “Ag Plan”--free, but it made things more confusing
- “Live Plan”--like Turbo Tax, but too many options make it overwhelming
- Financial section of the Ag Plan is great--the marketing plan is important, but less so
- Small Business Center (LCC’s) funnels you to Live Plan
  - NWFCS offers business plan template
  - Zenger Farm

**Question 4: What program or service do you wish you had access to but were not able to find?**

- Free land-use lawyer
- County planner liaison or extension agent
- Network of successful, established farmers or mid-career mentors
- Commercial processing facilities and commercial kitchen facilities
- Real estate agents attuned to small farm considerations
- Farmer Equipment Swap

### **How participants define success**

The following information is from the Needs Assessment Data Sheets.

#### **How do you define success?**

- Happy
- Healthy
- Sustainable
- Financially stable
- Resilient community
- Pride
- Contributing to a communal sense of place
- Producing a high-quality product
- Customer satisfaction

#### **Based on that, do you feel successful?**

Answers not definitive, but positive:

- Even with money, knowing I am doing something productive--good for soil, feeding people good food and no energy or effort is wasted

**Financial viability is usually part of success. Are you there? Do you think you’ll get there?**

- Most farmers are still working on this

## **Results from the BFRDP Working Group Meeting, 2/23/18**

On February 23, 2018, the day before the Small Farms Conference, between one and three representatives from more than 20 organizations and programs from around Oregon came together for a half-day workshop. Lauren Gwin, OSU, facilitated the workshop.

The groups focused on how their organizations work with beginning farmers and ranchers, what has been effective for those organizations in successfully implementing their programs with BFRs, what has not worked, and lessons learned from those experiences. The conversation was backdropped by a timely concern for equity, i.e., whose voices have been missing in the OCFSN/BFR community conversations, as well as their outreach and engagement efforts.

The meeting began with a round-robin introduction, followed by an open-forum for discussion based on questions and themes presented by the facilitator for the group to consider. During a lunch break, folks were encouraged to continue conversations, and post-lunch they could share their lunch-time conversations with the group. Lauren shared preliminary charts and results from the statewide needs assessment, and people gave their initial reactions, as well as connected those preliminary results with the conversations that were occurring that day. This culminated in the group deciding the next steps to take together in order to better support beginning farmers and ranchers in Oregon.

Themes that emerged from the discussion are listed below. The analysis is based on notes taken by a transcriber present during the meeting. The meeting began with round-robin introductions of each person, as well as a summary of the organizations and programs each person represented. (For the full transcript of notes, see **Appendix 4: February 23, 2018- BFR/OCFSN working group**).

The following quotes from the meeting summarize the need for concern toward equity and inclusion, and the extent to which certain voices were not present in the conversation that day, and are also missing overall from the BFRDP community.

*Shantae: "...folks that were missing out of the conversation... Native Americans, immigrant and refugees, other groups and communities--Somali, Africans... We didn't have anybody [from these groups] that is part of the programs... the people who are being impacted by these decisions...whether it be rural or urban... the folks who are actually going to be in these types of programs...getting more diverse folks in the fields. We should all be striving to get as many diverse folks' voices heard so other people aren't making decisions for them..."*

*Marta: "This is my own idea... they (Latinx farmers) work in the orchard. Many times, they have free time. It's difficult sometimes because they have to be in the orchard and they have to be ready to go on call...also, I think they don't have the same sense of belonging to this country. It is hard to break that. They always are thinking they are going to go back to Mexico. They might*

*not, but they are still thinking that way. It is hard for us to help them to think that they can do business here, and it is kind of difficult. With the vegetables, we started telling people a long time ago they can grow vegetables without chemicals. Healthy is different for many people. If we offer them community garden... We are now trying to convince them to sell some. Many of them are old people like me. Their beliefs are if they are (some not old) if they sell their vegetables they are not going to have a good crop next year. They will give to family and friends for free instead.”*

The following Notes and Barriers were collected at the February 2018 meeting and has not been coded or summarized, largely because this was not intended as a public-facing document.

### **Notes and themes taken from the lessons learned while working with BFR’s (ah-ha’s and uh-oh’s)**

- There is a difference between “beginning farmer training,” as in the USDA definition, which is anywhere from one to ten years, and what is being called “pre-farmers,” or those who have not yet started actually farming but are in the research and learning phase prior to starting their search for land. How can this [BFR] community differentiate and meet each of these groups’ needs?
- I thought I wanted to be an owner-operator. These are my goals and maybe an owner-operator is not my end goal. It is not easy to go from a training program of a couple of years to being an owner-operator.
- I don’t just want to fill it with community gardeners. Because there has been so much seclusion for so long, I want to grow farmers. Maybe we need to really call out--maybe it is just the farm managers--“CAREERS IN FARMING.” Maybe someone has some more resources and they want to just be the farm managers.

### **Themes, questions, and barriers that came up regarding BFRs of color and BFRs in general**

- Why are farmers of color less involved?
- How/what are the needs for marketing?
- Business savvy and agricultural savvy don’t always connect. Some farmers are social media savvy. What are the gaps that need to be bridged to help people succeed? What programs help farmers meet their own and consumers’ needs?
- In 2012 and 2013, a lot of people were demanding Growing Farms (OSU Extension curriculum for small farmers). There was a waitlist for farmer training program. Recently seen an obvious decline. Is it that the economy is better? What is it? Did everyone who wanted it get it and that’s why it dropped? Is it a drop in farmers or are more programs available and the programs are working?
- Labor shortages on existing farms.
- There is a gap in advanced farmer training.
- Land-to-city proximity: rural land access, yet want urban amenities. Young farmers don’t want to completely leave their urban lives.
- We as a working group, who are being reached by our programs--why and how?
- Farmers building their own farmer networks, from new to old farmers.

- In the Latinx farmer network, person-to-person things come up. They would much rather go to their farmer friends than anyone else.
- Are we censoring some people? If our goal is to figure out all those things we are discussing before then who are we missing? Is this the right way to do things? How do we modify it? Equity?
- Not talking about the education, but talking about experiences levels. Some programs are up here and they need to be brought down for people: a path that fits them--pre-farmers.
- Modify the program to meet all the different people: where they are in farming experiences, the fact that it's possible to have a farm business but also to farm to feed families, and not just about a business. That's going to look different for different communities. Not everyone wants a business.
- Land access working with land owners, besides succession workshops that connect BFR's to retiring farmers, but having people who are in transition work with specialists. We know there are people in California who have been doing work in that arena, having people who are legal specialists and who can help people manage the implications that come with transitioning farmlands to people that are not family.
- Access to apprenticeships and stipends sufficient enough to step away from a job. For apprenticeships, financially logistical barriers keeping the programs of quality, even though it costs people. What are the long-term prospects of continuing that?
- When looking at the assessment, something that came up around the need-to-know about each other's programs needs ongoing conversation.
- Have a program recruiter go to the college campuses and become the go-to person for recruiting farmers. Having someone that works for all of the programs making connections.
- People go through the farmer training program of one year and that's it. They are left on their own and may or may not have mentorship.
- Kind of an aside, but can we more effectively specialize and help farms with which we work. How can we more effectively prepare farmers for better access to credit and other options for business plans and that sort of thing. What are other people doing for other folks?
- Build systems that connect all people and society against wheel reinvention. Adjust the wheels. What can we share?
- Who works with veterans? What are services for veterans? We are in a room who represent the eastside. What is happening there and what support work can be done on the eastside? What are those services out there?
- How can we make our materials more accessible to all groups and communities?
- We need to be able to share more resources with each other in order to make our programs stronger. When I reached out to certain programs, no one hears back. Make this information more available.
- Mudbone: communities of color reach out to them often because people of color do not have a lot of access.
- A lot of folks are not necessarily getting into farming for business; they don't necessarily want to run a business.

- There needs to be interest in the topic of business management. A tension between business and profitability side. Larger holistic goal of getting people to engage. How to run economically-viable businesses.
- Connecting gaps between farmers and distributors. More food hubs?
- GAP certification barriers.
- Folks come out of training programs asking why no one is helping them sell.
- Land access: plot sizes are too small to support selling wholesale and/or to institutions.
- Navigating the USDA and all the programs in “the system” in another language.
- Selling and marketing: Latinx BFR’s don’t know prices of products, don’t understand direct market versus wholesale pricing, want to grow food not build a business, and do not want to be the “face” of the business.
- BFR’s want/need constant coaching and training to understand pricing scales.
- Latinx land access: all BFR’s, trying to set up lease agreements are weary of signing paperwork. This results in an unstable, tentative lease agreement.
- Most of the services for BFR’s that exist are not offered in Spanish, which creates a lot of pressure on programs that are offering programs in Spanish, thus maxing out their capacity. There needs to be other organizations offering these in Spanish.
- Could various BFR programs/organizations partner with the Latinx programs to make all programs more accessible?
- Multi-linguicism is needed.
- Computer literacy is a major barrier. Most folks have a phone and few have smart phones, which are huge business barriers.
- Growing climate differences: people migrating to Oregon from different climates need to know what plants to start growing and when.
- Discrimination faced when using FarmLink to access land: “there is discrimination because they [refugees and immigrant farmers] are pigeon-holed and limited to urban farm land due to pictures on FarmLink. Need innovative ideas to farm on urban farmland... or work with Metro or parks and rec.”
- Oregon Food Bank: their seed-to-supper program had ambassadors for all the different languages present. They actively searched for a group of ambassadors to assist. Maybe do this?
- Water access is a huge issue, especially in Hood River.
- Co-operative model: there isn’t really a lot of education around the co-operative model.
- Social networks are not there. Stipends for beginning farmer trainings are needed. Graduate school study: how the internship apprenticeship is putting labor exploitation model on top of apprenticeship.
- Barrier for people to uproot and change their lives. Seeds for agripreneuers model. Working two to three days a week on the farm. Getting into those first few years of training is imperative. Our goal is to wean them off the stipend through different contracts. We want to get people to a place where they can sustain themselves.

**Things that have worked for people:**

- Hmong and Mian refugee farmers in California identified grower leaders within the community, worked with them out of UC co-op extension agency, which made a video

subtitled in many other languages to reach populations that don't have programs in their languages.

- Hybrid versions of programs seem to be working for some folks, such as part-online, part-in-person. Some programs are struggling with online platforms because of rural internet access.
- On rejection letters, we listed the other training programs that are out there for folks who might not have been aware of other programs. In regards to FarmLink, I think that I very much want to be out in the rural areas. It's not diverse in the city.
- I went to orientation about midwifing, where was described the different pathways and the ways you need to take. Then, choosing what program path I want to take and how I get there. Access mapping? What are everyone's programs providing?
- Case studies where owner-operators come in and talk to people about what's available and all the different ways people can take to become a farmer that don't require just being an owner-operator. A flow chart with all the different options of being in the food systems area.

**From the conversation that day, the working group selected the following topics to focus on in the coming year.**

1. One thing I am hearing is that Land Access question. What is happening? What's in the farmer's influence? Getting prepared to get land? What's outside the farmer's influence? What's the big-picture questions? Land access group at OCFN? Yes, snapatcha, farmer veggies rx, wholesale, access to land for new and beginning farmers, and farm succession issue--doing research around all of this. Split off from BFR group, we deal with a lot of other things than land. The two groups would need to have similar people to talk to.
2. Impact investment and agriculture finance within land. How do we finance our operation? Land financing or land access?
3. Business-related training would be a useful topic. Most of the time, growing comes before business document. How do we provide that kind of education?
4. What about how to create a pipeline from entry-level farmer to the mid-level farmer? How do farms scale up? What trajectory are farmers following? From just selling to family and friends to selling to a CSA, and from selling to a CSA to mid-level food distribution. How and what education do we need? It came out of a conversation with Addy at eco-trust about how there are not enough farmers of color making \$100,000 in farming in order to level up and become a part of advanced farming and/or rancher programs. What are the barriers keeping farmers of color from reaching the mid and upper scale?

5. Mentoring Programs

Create a list of all services state wide that are offered in Spanish for beginning farmers and see what gaps exist. Do group orientation for this.

**On-going meta-questions for the BFR working group to continue to consider.**

1. Has the BFR "sector" changed in the time you've been doing this work?

2. How will we include who is affected in our decision-making?
3. What beliefs and biases might affect this decision?
4. How does the work we are doing advance racial, class, and/or gender equity?
5. What does our commitment to equity look like in this context?
6. What would you like to do or see other service providers do about BFR's?
7. What are the major external challenges that seem beyond the control of both farmers and us, particularly for people of color and other historically-disadvantaged groups?

## **Next Steps**

One outcome of the February 23rd conversation and meeting has been the ongoing creation of an informational brochure and website that aggregates all the various programs and organizations that support beginning farmers and ranchers. The brochure and website will be multi-lingual, in that those programs that are available in other languages will be written about in a brochure or webpage in that language.