

GROWING GROWERS TRAINING PROGRAM - Core Competencies Self Evaluation Form

These are the general skills, knowledge, and experiences that we understand to be useful to a farmer growing food for local consumption. They are prioritized as High, Medium, and Low to reflect what we think will be possible to cover in a one-season apprenticeship. Items rated “High” will be addressed during the apprenticeship year. Items rated as “Medium” will at least be introduced during the year; items rated as low will probably not be directly addressed.

Hands-On (Field Work, Exposure to Marketing, Apprentice Exchanges, and Farm Visits): The apprentices will learn these areas through their work in the fields, through time spent with the farmer in marketing of the products, and through organized farm visits.

One-to-One (Farmer-Directed Training): The farmer will provide the apprentice with 10-12 hours of focused training in these areas. For example, the farmer will walk the apprentice through the season’s production plan, will show them the process they use to select and order seeds, etc. Work may be done during these trainings (for example, seeds may be selected and ordered), or they may be entirely educational.

Workshops: The Training Program will offer workshops for the apprentices, the farmers, and the general public; we will also make workshops presented by other organizations, such as the Kansas Rural Center, available to the apprentices.

Other Resources: Over the course of the year, apprentices will receive resource materials such as books and pamphlets.

Apprentice-Directed (Research and Discussion): Apprentices will be responsible for “interviewing” their farmers on these topics and then sharing and discussing the information with the other apprentices.

Please rate your abilities on these core competencies, rating yourself on a scale of 1-10:.

1 – I’ve heard the term and I know it’s important.

2-4- Know a little bit more than that

5 – I know the concept and can give you a definition, but I’m not sure I could implement it on my own farm.

6-9- Know a bit more than under “5”

10 – I’m confident that I know both the concept and the practice. I could implement these ideas in my own operation tomorrow.

NAME: _____

Area	Specifics	Priority	Hands-On	One-to-One	Workshops	Other Resources	Apprentice Directed	Self-Evaluation (see below)
SOIL	Basic Overview of types, fertility, microbiology	High			X	X		
	Fertility: Macro- and micro-nutrients, soil testing	High		X	X			

Area	Specifics	Priority	Hands-On	One-to-One	Workshops	Other Resources	Apprentice Directed	Self-Evaluation (see below)
	Soil building & maintenance: rotations, cover cropping, amendments	High	X	X	X	X		
	Practical considerations: recognizing moisture & soil conditions, tillage, tith, etc.	High	X	X	X			
	Composting & Compost Teas	Med	X		X			
	Identifying and controlling erosion	Low						
PLANTS	Basic plant biology	High			X	X		
	Planting seeds, transplanting, propagation	High	X		X			
	Choosing crops and varieties appropriate for the climate, soil and type of operation	High	X	X	X			
	Planting schedules- greenhouse, field, hoop houses	High	X	X	X			
	Field production overall	High	X	X				
	Greenhouse production overall, including seedling production for field transplants	High	X	X	X			
	Hoop house production overall	High	X					
	Seed saving basics	Low	X					
PESTS & WILDLIFE	Basic Pest and Wildlife Identification	High	X		X	X		
	Controls: mechanical, pesticides (organic, other), beneficial insects, physical barriers, rotations	High	X		X	X		
WEEDS	Basic Weed Identification	High	X		X	X		
	Control: mechanical, rotations, herbicides (organic, other), mulches	High	X		X	X		
PLANT	Basic Disease Identification	High	X		X	X		

Area	Specifics	Priority	Hands-On	One-to-One	Workshops	Other Resources	Apprentice Directed	Self-Evaluation (see below)
DISEASES	Control: rotation, variety selection, compost teas, foliar sprays	High	X		X	X		
WEATHER	Weather- temperatures, rain, wind	High	X					
	Managing for Midwestern weather: mulches, row covers, hoop houses, greenhouses, plant varieties, shade cloth, irrigation, planting strategies	High	X					
Integrating SMALL ANIMAL AND DAIRY PRODUCTION into your horticultural operation	Roles in diversified operation : feeding animals excess or spoiled crops, manure for soil building, pest controls (chickens and vegetable pests), other	Med	X		X	X		
	Choices in livestock for a vegetable operation: Chickens, hogs, goats, sheep, turkeys, etc.	Low	X		X	X		
	Physical environment: housing, fencing, sanitation, water, feeders, air, predator control, etc.	Low	X		X			
	Overall health, including nutrition, disease and parasite management	Low	X		X			
	Pastures: nutritional profiles of grasses, pasture building and maintenance, utilization, management intensive grazing	Low						
	Manure Handling	Low						
	Labor and time requirements	Low						
	Sale of livestock: processing issues, direct marketing of meat, adding value, niche markets, sale barns, wholesaling	Low						
HARVESTING	When to pick	High	X		X			

Area	Specifics	Priority	Hands-On	One-to-One	Workshops	Other Resources	Apprentice Directed	Self-Evaluation (see below)
& POST-HARVEST	Post-harvest handling: cooling, washing, sorting, sanitation	High	X		X	X		
	Nutrition of harvested product and managing for maximum nutrition and freshness	High	X		X	X		
PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT AND PLANNING	Scale and focus: how big, what mix of crops, planning for estimated yields,	High	X	X	X			
	Field Plans: Long term rotations, soil building, crop development	High		X				
	Time: planning and managing daily, monthly, and seasonal farm tasks, labor needs	High		X				
	Record-keeping: field maps, planting dates, yields, seed ordering, etc	High		X				
EQUIPMENT	Equipment Options: Hand tools, machines, matching tools to the job	High	X		X			
	Machinery operation	High	X	X	X			
	Maintenance and repair	Med	X	X				
	Machinery and tool safety for adults and children, ergonomic use of equipment, etc.	High	X	X	X			
	Understanding costs of machinery to payback: the cost of the machine vs labor savings, etc.	Med					X	
	Sourcing and buying new and used equipment	Low						
LAND	Basic needs on farm property: water, soil quality, access, buildings, proximity to markets, etc.	Med	X					

Area	Specifics	Priority	Hands-On	One-to-One	Workshops	Other Resources	Apprentice Directed	Self-Evaluation (see below)
	Buying or renting	Med	X					
FARM DESIGN AND PHYSICAL PLANT	Designing or adapting property to create a good farm layout of fields, buildings, driveways, etc. and farm design software available	Med	X			X		
	Washing areas	Low	X			X		
	Refrigeration	Low	X			X		
	Greenhouse choices and construction	Low	X			X		
	Farm building choices and construction	Low	X			X		
MARKETING	Marketing Options: Farmers' Markets, CSAs, Road Side Stands, U-Picks, Wholesale, Restaurants, Value-Added Products, Special Orders, Growing on Contract, Livestock and Produce Auctions, Niche Marketing	High	X	X			X	
	Assessing market demand and opportunities	High			X	X	X	
	Selecting your products: veggies, fruit, dairy, meat, etc.	High	X	X			X	
	Presenting your product: "merchandising" for maximum sales	High	X		X		X	
	Knowing, explaining and selling your product	High	X		X		X	
	Consumer education on health and nutrition and how to cook with your product	Med	X		X		X	
	Advertising and media	High		X				

Area	Specifics	Priority	Hands-On	One-to-One	Workshops	Other Resources	Apprentice Directed	Self-Evaluation (see below)
	Marketing tools, supplies and guidelines: packaging, invoicing, record-keeping, etc.	High	X	X	X			
	Pricing	High	X				X	
	Consumer Psychology, building and maintaining relationships	High	X					
	Staying on top of food “trends”	Med						
FARM BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	Business planning: developing a long-term plan	Med		X	X			
	Financing a farm business: borrowing from banks, self-financed, investors, off-farm income	Med			X	X	X	
	Financial Management: budgeting, cash-flow, bookkeeping, taxes, etc.	Med		X	X			
	Other Small Business Concerns: insurance, legal issues, business structure, etc.	Med		X	X			
	Risk Management	Med						
EATING	Understanding food: taste, appearance, smell, texture	High	X		X			
	Taste & quality: selecting and developing your products	High	X		X		X	