

Cultivating Farmers and Ranchers that Thrive Course Syllabus



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COURSE DESCRIPTION: Cultivating Farmers and Ranchers that Thrive (CFRT) provides beginning farmers and ranchers the opportunity to learn and develop their skills to become food and product providers with education, business training, mentorship, and land access. CFRT focuses on providing support that has a positive Social, Economic, and Environmental impact for farmers and ranchers.

This course is designed to help you manage your land, time, and resources for improved soil health, quality of life, biodiversity, productivity, and profitability using the practices of Holistic Management and business planning skills. Economically viable farm and ranch operations are critical for the long-term sustainability of agriculture. This course will be interactive and hands-on with a mix of classroom time and fieldwork. You will have time to apply what you've learned to benefit your current circumstances and future ambitions. You will leave with a toolbox full of important management, decision-making, and planning skills vital to success in today's world.

We aim to focus on supporting low-income, veteran, specialty crop producers, and Hispanic populations. CFRT is managed by Valley Food Partnership (VFP) and will be facilitated by the CFRT Program Manager and CFRT Project Specialist. The CFRT Program and Valley Food Partnership, in its absolute discretion, may review and amend the Cultivating Farmers and Ranchers that Thrive Program Guidelines.

OBJECTIVES: As a result of this program, you will be able to:

- See the big picture of your farm
- Learn holistic decision-making and problem-solving skills
- Bring all decision-makers to the table
- Prioritize the steps to start your farm/ranch
- Restore health & productivity to land
- Implement skills and tools towards becoming financially sound and economically viable
- Develop a full business/farm plan for your operation
- Gain contacts and build a network of support
- Learn communication and leadership skills
- Gain an understanding of water management in a high desert climate

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS: To apply for acceptance into the CFRT Program, applicants must:

- Be an aspiring, new, or working farmer/rancher in the industry 10 years or less.
- Have a desire to learn regenerative agriculture practices as well as produce a food or added value product for sale in our community.
- Special emphasis will be given to Veterans, Hispanic, low-income, and specialty crop producers as entry into agriculture for these producers can be difficult.
- Aged 18 or older at the time of the application close date.

The Valley Food Partnership considers diversity criteria based on the CFRT program when assessing applications to ensure that each year's cohort includes a diverse range of mentees, including by industry, gender, cultural background, and experience.

Individuals who identify as Hispanic, Low-income, have Veteran status, or working with specialty crops are encouraged to apply.

COURSE DURATION: The program will run from January through November. During this period the program cohort will participate in core curriculum classes, the Western Colorado Soil Health, Food & Farm Forum (WC.SH.FFF), and other continuing education throughout the year. Participants of the cohort will also have the option to apply for Mentorship and Internship opportunities.

The application period opens on **November 1, 2023. The application deadline is January 15th, 2024.** Please know space is limited.

Please contact us if the deadline has passed or if you have any questions about the application process.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION:

- Attend 75% of the Core Curriculum Classes
- Attend at least two Continuing Education Classes and or Events
- Complete a Full Business/Farm Plan
- Completion of Pre and Post Evaluations

ACCEPTANCE TO PROGRAM: Successful applicants will be required to agree to program guidelines/course syllabus as well as complete required documentation. These documents include but are not limited to:

- The Program Curriculum
- Important Dates and Times
- Name and Contact Details of CFRT Program Manager
- Agreement of privacy policy and other forms

TUITION: A \$150.00 tuition fee is due at this time. Please talk with the Program Manager regarding payment plan options or Scholarships.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY: Participants must attend at least 75% of the core curriculum classes as well as at least two (2) Continuing Education Classes, including at least one of the following: Western Colorado Soil Health Food and Farm Forum (WCSHFFF), CSU Meat School, Market, and RMFU Food Safety. All course assignments, registrations, and surveys must be submitted by deadlines or communicated in advance.

Absence for any class must be communicated to the Program Manager 72 hours prior. It is the responsibility of the participant to strategize with the Program Manager a plan for making up the missed class and submitting a demonstration of understanding.

Punctual attendance is expected with communication of any delays.

COMMUNICATION: Class updates as well as other important information will be sent out by email and text. If a participant is unable to attend a class, please contact the Program Manager at cally@valleyfoodpartnership.org.

ACCOMMODATIONS: The CFRT Program and Valley Food Partnership will do our best to accommodate any limitations of attending and participating. These limitations will be addressed on a case-to-case basis. Our goal is to remove barriers to learning within reason. Translation services are also available if needed.

If you are experiencing financial hardship or there are special circumstances that may impact your ability to accept your place in this program as per the Program Guidelines, please contact the CFRT Program Manager.

EVALUATION AND GRADUATION: All participants that have completed the course requirements will be eligible for graduation. Upon completion of the program, each participant may be required to complete a short written or video report on their experience and learnings. A template and questions will be provided at the appropriate time. Graduation from the program will take place in November.

COMPLAINT PROCESS: Complaints, inquiries, and feedback in relation to the processing of applications should be sent to penelope@valleyfoodpartnersip.org.

OTHER INFORMATION:

Holistic Management uses a decision-making process to help ensure that the actions taken to restore land and livelihoods are ecologically, socially, and economically sound based on the context described by the people involved.

Regarding the HMI core classes, full-day sessions will run from 9 AM to 5:00 PM. Lunch will be provided by Valley Food Partnership. Zoom Sessions will last up to 2 hours with a break time. Participants will be provided with the opportunity to start creating their whole farm and ranch plans in the course. Course assignments and reading will be suggested to deepen their learning experience.

To get the maximum benefit from this effort, it is suggested that the participants allow 2-4 hours per week in between sessions to apply what they learn and to complete course requirements for certification. Certificates of completion will be issued to those who adequately demonstrate their ability to implement what they have learned. Earning a certificate of completion is the first step for those who wish to apply to HMI's Certified Educator Program.

Personal experiences, knowledge, and wisdom are important. The instructor will encourage participants to share and work with one another to enhance learning for all. Course materials, presentations, and delivery will be customized as much as possible to meet participants specific needs.

CFRT CORE CURRICULUM CALENDER & SYLLABUS

Dates and Times for all classes are subject to change.

Continuing Education Classes will be scheduled for the first Monday of each month with some exceptions.

Program Kick-Off (Montrose) January 25th

Mentorship/Internship Training
Program Paperwork and Starting Evaluation
Beginning Farmer Rancher Celebration
Networking

Western Colorado Soil Health, Food, and Farm Forum (Montrose) January 26th & 27th

Soil Health Principles
Local Food Systems
Regenerative Agriculture
Land Link Presentation

Introduction to Holistic Decision Making and Testing (Olathe)..... February 23rd & 24th

Seeing the Big Picture/Being Regenerative
Holistic Decision-Making Skills
Creating a Personalized Learning Experience
Observing and Evaluating the Ecosystem That Sustains Us
Understanding the Tools of Land and Resource Management

HMI Virtual Office Hours..... March 7th

Review and Q&A
Practice Holistic Decision Testing Skills
Preparing for Holistic Financial Planning

Whole Farm and Enterprise Planning (Olathe) March 15th & 16th

Planning for Profit, People, and Planet
Enterprise Planning - Know and Understand Your Numbers
Analyzing and Prioritizing Time, Money, and Resource Allocations
Creating a Cash Forecast (Cash Flow Budget)
Marketing your Enterprise

HMI Virtual Office Hours..... April 11th

Review and Q&A
Implementing and Monitoring Your Holistic Financial Plan

Holistic Crop, Grazing, and Land Planning (Olathe).....April 19th and 20th

Crop Planning
Grazing Planning
Land Planning
Creating Your Crop and Grazing Plans

HMI Virtual Office Hours..... April 25th

Review and Q&A
Marketing and Management Review
Land, Crop, and Animal Planning Review

Irrigation Water Management Field Trip (Montrose)..... May 11th 10am- 4pm

Visit Farms and Ranches to Learn about Different Types of Irrigation
Learn about NRCS and other Support Programs
Discuss Water Management Strategies and Drought Mitigation

(Optional) CFRT Community Picnic..... June 15th

CFRT Cohort and Family Picnic
Potluck and Fun

HMI Virtual Office Hours..... June 20th

Review and Q&A

Biological Monitoring (Paonia) August 9th & 10th

Cropland Biological Monitoring / Ecosystem Assessment Techniques
Planning for Healthy Soils, Water, Plant, Animals, and People
Rangeland Biological Monitoring / Ecosystem Assessment Techniques
Using Animals as Tools of Management
Determining Management Concerns and Objectives

HMI Virtual Office Hours.....August 15th

Review and Q&A
Implementing and Monitoring Your Holistic Financial Plan
Preparing for Holistic Business Planning
Preparing for Crop/Grazing Planning

(Optional) Overnight Farm/Operation Tour Summer/Fall 2024

Multi-day Trip to Farm(s)
Continuing Education Class
Location and Lesson TBD

Business Plan in a Day with Region10 (Olathe)September 13th or 20th

Marketing Strategy
Production Strategy
Management Strategy
Creating and Action Plans and Smart Goals

HMI Virtual Office Hours.....September 26th

Review and Q&A
Farm/Business Plan Review

Communication and Leadership in Agriculture by Betsey Hale..... October 12th 4-7pm

Networking

Advocating for Yourself
Better Communication
Farm Leadership

HMI Virtual Office Hours.....**October 17th**

Review and Q&A
Preparing your Farm/Business Plan

Foundations of Agribusiness **October 26th 4-8pm**

Market Channels: Direct to Consumer vs Wholesale
How to Finance and Protect your operation
Agritourism
Networking

Completion of a Farm/Business Plan..... **Due October 31st**

Program Graduation **November 9th 5-9pm**



CFRT is designed to provide support and education about the Environmental, Social, and Economic impact of farming.

CFRT MENTORSHIP AND INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

PROGRAM OVERVIEW: The Cultivating Farmers and Ranchers that Thrive (CFRT) Mentoring and Internship Programs provide aspiring farmers and ranchers the opportunity to be paired with an experienced farmer/rancher or 'mentor' to assist them in:

- Developing skills to better manage their agriculture enterprise
- Identifying risks involved and solutions
- Developing strategies to build resilience and achieve their business goal
- Developing a professional network
- Gain hands-on skills toward their chosen enterprise through documented work

The program is managed by Valley Food Partnership and will be facilitated by the CFRT Program Manager. The Program Manager will pair a new or aspiring farmer/rancher or 'mentee' with a mentor whose experience aligns with the mentee's enterprise and personal development goals.

During the program, the mentor and mentee will collaborate together with oversight from the Program Manager. All parties will work together to arrange regular check-ins to ensure everyone's needs are met.

The purpose of the program is to assist the mentee in building professional networks, utilizing trusted sources of advice and information, and developing competency in setting business goals and assessing risks.

A minimum of 12 mentorships will be awarded per year. Mentors will be accepted into the program on a rolling basis.

Who is eligible to be a mentor? What is a mentor's role?

Farmers and Ranchers with substantial experience (typically 10 years or more) in their area of agricultural business are eligible to become mentors.

Support provided by the mentor may include:

- Responding to specific questions from their mentee.
- Aiding in development of management skills.
- Identifying realistic plans and implementing new ideas.
- Assisting in setting and meeting goals.
- Teaching skills used in maintaining a production farm or ranch.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENT FOR MENTORS:

Upon acceptance into the CFRT Mentoring Program, mentors are required to fulfill the following over the period of the program:

- Complete the application
- Complete Training
 - 2 hour In-Person training available **January 26th, 2024**

OR

- 1 hour – Online training
- Sign and Agree to the Mentor MOU, W-9, and provide payment information.
- Maintain regular contact with both their mentee and CFRT Program Manager, and keep both parties informed of any changes in circumstance relevant to the program.
- A minimum of 24 hours per year or 3.5 hours a month for 7 months of mentorship per mentee must be spent with the mentee in person or virtual.
- Have mentee demonstrate evidence of goal setting and actions taken from mentoring sessions through Mentorship Time-Log.
- In addition, mentors are expected to provide feedback as part of the program evaluation process.

MENTOR INCENTIVES: Mentors will be compensated for their time monetarily for the amount of \$50.00 per hour for up to 24 hours. These hours will be tracked via a Mentorship Time-Log, which is required to be signed by both the mentor and mentee.

This amount is only available for the first 12 mentors to apply, who finish their training, and are subsequently paired with a mentee. Mentors may only mentor one participant/one operation per year.

REQUIREMENT OF CFRT MENTEES:

CFRT participants paired with a mentor are required to fulfill the following over the period of the program:

- Maintain regular contact with both their mentor and CFRT Program Manager, and keep both parties informed of any changes in circumstance relevant to the program.
- To meet formally with both their mentor and facilitator present approximately 2 to 4 times. This may be in person or virtually.
- Demonstrate evidence of goal setting and actions taken from mentoring sessions and track hours with the mentor on a Time-Log to be signed by the mentor and mentee.
- In addition, mentorship participants are expected to do the following:
 - Take part in the CFRT Core Course learning program curriculum determined by Holistic Management International and other key program partners.
 - Provide feedback as part of the program evaluation process.
- **For Internship Mentees Only:** Sign and Agree to the Internship MOU and provide payment information.
 - Additional documentation may be required.

CFRT LAND ACCESS PROGRAM

PROGRAM OVERVIEW: The CFRT Land Access Program component seeks to reduce the barrier of land access for CFRT beginning farmers and ranchers (bf/r's). This is done by facilitating connections between CFRT bf/r participants, land access options and resources through local land access pools, Guidestone's LandLink Program, & other local resources, including 1:1 consultation and workshops with LandLink.

You can be a Land Access Partner if you:

- Have a desire to support next-generation farmers and resilient community food systems through increasing sustained land access
- Recognize that land access is a barrier for beginner farmers and ranchers, with special emphasis on folks of Hispanic, veteran, and low-income backgrounds as well as specialty crop producers
- Have a desire to support the continuity of Colorado's agricultural legacy
- Are willing to negotiate a land leasing agreement with CFRT farming/ranching participants with support from exterior land resources (Guidestone/LandLink)

Part A: Assess land seeker and Land Owners/Partners needs and access

1. CFRT beginner farmer/rancher (bf/r) participants complete a Land Access Needs Assessment to aid CFRT Project Specialist in identifying land needs.
2. Land Owners with available land complete a Land Access Form to list their land in the local land access pool.
3. CFRT Project Specialist connects with land owner/partners, conducts brief land assessment, and confirms land owner/partners' initial interest in joining the local land access pool

Part B: Facilitate links between parties (land seekers and land owners/partners) and land access resources

1. CFRT Project Specialist will assess potential matches between parties and facilitate connection between them.
2. CFRT bf/r's with land access needs may have access to 1:1 consultation with Guidestone's LandLink database, in addition to workshops focused on land access.
3. Lease negotiations* are made between CFRT participants & land owner/partners

*Please note: VFP does not make leases. We will try our best to facilitate connections and access to resources that set all parties up for success. Land pairing takes considerable time to ensure effective matches are successful.

Additional Resources:

Valley Food Partnership: <https://www.valleyfoodpartnership.org>

Colorado Guidestone/LandLink: <https://guidestonecolorado.org/colorado-land-link/>