Collaborative Regional Alliances for Farmer Training:
Best Practices of CRAFT Farmer Alliances in North America
by Thorsten Arnold

Photo Credit: Jessie Crow-Mermel
Image: Scottish Highland Cattle at Angelic Organics Learning Center
Part I
Mapping Diversity
1. Introduction

Introduction by Jenny Doty, Program Director, Angelic Organics Learning Center’s Farmer Training Initiative

This booklet compiles descriptions of the activities and best practices of CRAFT farmer alliances in North America. The content is grouped into sections based on geographic regions. Within each region, individual CRAFT farmer alliances are described, and topics such as group history, organizational structure, and program components, as well as unique attributes, are featured. Important resources, CRAFT snap shots, and best practices—or success factors—are frequently included as text boxes.

In addition to this document, refer to craftfarmer.org for the most current list of CRAFT farmer alliances in North America and other CRAFT resources. If you would like to form a CRAFT farmer alliance in your region, reach us at Angelic Organics Learning Center via craft@learngrowconnect.org, and we will gladly send you a manual to help you launch one in your area.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Local food farms can provide farm families with a good quality of life, support the local economy, and protect our land, air, and water. Yet in the United States, farmers over age 65 outnumber those under 35 by 3-to-1. Aspiring farmers face formidable challenges in accessing capital, land and training. More than 400 million acres of farmland will change hands in the next twenty years. Will it be farmed? Where will the next generation of farmers come from? How will they find the support needed to succeed?

Policymakers and the public have increasingly considered these questions in recent years; nevertheless, many farmers have been cognizant of the situation for decades. In the early 1990s, a group of approximately one dozen farmers in upstate New York, dedicated to on-farm apprenticeship and training the next generation of farmers, looked closely at the apprenticeships they individually were offering to would-be farmers and sought to improve the experience for both the farmers and apprentices.

The First CRAFT Farmer Alliance

These farmers came together in 1994 in the Hudson Valley to form the first Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT), as a “cooperative effort of local organic and biodynamic farms organized to enhance educational opportunities for farm apprentices.” Working together, the member farms organized a season-long training program for apprentices that exposed them to the production practices of the member farms, pooled their resources used for beginning farmer training, and created social and networking opportunities for apprentices that would benefit them in their continued training, post apprenticeship.

The first collaborative regional alliance for farmer training, called “CRAFT in the Hudson Valley/Berkshires/Pioneer Valley,” set up what remains to this day as the core of most of the CRAFT programs that are represented in this compilation. This core program typically includes on-farm apprenticeship and a series of field days (or farm tours) throughout the growing season on member farms, which expose apprentices to a wide variety of farm business models and create community among practitioners.

CRAFT Farmer Alliances Today

Over twenty years since the first CRAFT farmer alliance formed in upstate New York, there are now about 25 CRAFTs in North America and Canada. These grassroots farmer alliances share some basic characteristics – primarily, that they are farmer-led coalitions organized by sustainable agriculture farmers in a self-selected geographic region. Participating farmers offer up their time, talents and experience to help prepare the next generation of farmers.² Aside from the stated objective of farmers working together to offer on-farm training to beginning farmers, CRAFT alliances vary in size, composition, and level of beginning farmer services. This booklet describes their diversity and approaches.

Commonalities among CRAFT Farmer Alliances

Before delving into the details in subsequent sections of what makes each CRAFT alliance unique, the common criteria and objectives that they share are included here. Commonalities among CRAFT Farmer Alliances include:

- **Farmer-led**
  It is farmer owner-operators themselves that shape each CRAFT farmer alliance, each CRAFT program, and their objectives. When CRAFT alliances have a high number of member farms, farmers typically form steering or governance committees that consist of at least 75% farmers—the other 25% may be key nonprofit or institutional partners.

- **A commitment to training beginning farmers**
  CRAFT farms commit their interns, employees and apprentices to participate fully and faithfully in the core CRAFT program. The core CRAFT program varies amongst CRAFT farmer alliances, but typically includes apprenticeship or farm employment, on-farm field days, and either structured or informal exchanges or visits of trainees to other member farms. One farmer summed up the mentality succinctly, "It's not a farmer-to-farmer group. It's a farmer-trainer to farmer-trainer group."³

- **Sustainable agricultural production practices**
  "CRAFT farm membership is made up of organic, biodynamic, and sustainable farms and market gardeners as well as support organizations for organic, biodynamic, and sustainable farmers."⁴

How to use this document

This document is a resource for both current and prospective CRAFT farmer alliances, including farmer networks that do not use the CRAFT name. Existing CRAFT alliances will benefit, for example, from learning in greater depth how other CRAFTs provide services or organize membership. Emerging farmer alliances will benefit from the experience and practices of existing CRAFTs, thus reducing the amount of trial and error.

This booklet compiles descriptions of the activities and best practices of CRAFT farmer alliances in North America. The content is grouped into sections based on geographic regions. Within each region, individual CRAFT farmer alliances are described, and topics such as group history, organizational structure, and program components, as well as unique attributes, are featured. Important resources, CRAFT snapshots, and best practices—or success factors—are frequently included as text boxes.

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While the main body of this booklet compiles profiles of CRAFT farmer alliances, the second section of the text is also very useful; it offers a cross-section of common CRAFT services, bringing together in one place the range of perspectives on, for example, offering CRAFT Field Days.

Lastly, take note of the handy resources in the Appendix:

- **Appendix A** is a table of all known CRAFT farmer alliances at the time of printing and their contact information.

- **Appendix B** is a chart of services, allowing you to see at a glance what each CRAFT farmer alliance offers, thus helping you to narrow down which profiles to read or which CRAFT group you could reach out to for more information.

- **Appendix C** summarizes the most pressing needs of CRAFT alliances as compiled by Angelic Organics Learning Center. This feedback, solicited in early 2013, resulted in the writing of this booklet.

**Funding Context**

This resource is part of a wider project intended to strengthen CRAFT farmer alliances as well as the farmer networks that are a part of the Farm Beginnings® Collaborative (FBC). The FBC is a national alliance of independent regional groups of farmers and farmer-training support organizations working together to promote Farm Beginnings®, a farmer training model that is community-based, rooted in sustainable principles, and farmer-led. The long-term goal of the Farm Beginnings® Collaborative is to expand the use of farmer-to-farmer training models as a proven method for increasing the number of farmers producing food for local and regional food systems.

This booklet derives from work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2012-49400-19571. This specific Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant, which funded the creation and printing of this booklet, includes a scope of work focused on beginning farmer training. Of its four objectives, this booklet pertains to Objective 1 – to assist FBC members and CRAFT organizations to strengthen and expand farmer-to-farmer networks.

The wider goals for the grant are to:

- Increase farmer participation in farmer networks
- Adopt new, relevant farmer-to-farmer training practices
- Strengthen the relationship between CRAFT farmer alliances and the Farm Beginnings® Collaborative
- Identify new partners, potentially CRAFT farmer alliances, interested in the Farm Beginnings® Collaborative
- Recruit new organizations into the Farm Beginnings® Collaborative

Refer to [FarmBeginningsCollaborative.org](http://FarmBeginningsCollaborative.org) to learn more.

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**Methodology**

The compilation was executed by the Grey Bruce Centre for Agroecology Cooperative, a farmer network that works to promote agroecological farming.

Internet resources were first reviewed on each CRAFT farmer alliance, followed by an interview with the coordinator or contact point stated on the respective website. In some cases, direct contacts were available through the Angelic Organics Learning Center. Interviews typically lasted thirty minutes.

The content of this document reflects the online presentation of a group together with the knowledge and opinion of a single individual. It may not represent the opinion of all CRAFT members of these farmer alliances, and we apologize for any omissions or mistakes that were made. To submit a correction, send an email to craft@learngrowconnect.org.

### 1.2 LESSONS LEARNED

There are four main lessons learned as a result of this work.

1. **Farmer alliances fill very specific needs.**

   Working with CRAFT farmer alliances across the country has revealed patterns that explain why we have seen an expansion in the number of farmer networks in the last fifteen years.

   First, farmers cite a lack of practical education in sustainable farming that formal education has not provided. While farm knowledge has traditionally been passed down from one generation to another within family units, this model breaks down when new entrants without a farming upbringing start to farm. While only recently have we seen community colleges and vocational schools start to offer sustainable agriculture curricula, farmer alliances have emerged in the past decade as a means to fill an educational need.

   Second, farmers are motivated by opportunities to promote sustainable farming and to connect to youth as farmer-trainers. CRAFT farmer alliances have an open-source approach to information sharing and gladly pass on their expertise to others. Indeed, several farmers who do not have a second generation recount how important it is to them to share their lifetime of experience with beginning farmers in the CRAFT alliances – they do not wish their experience to be lost, even if they do not have members of their own families who will continue farming.

   Third, farmers feel a sense of ownership in their alliances and enjoy steering their objectives in the directions that best suit their needs. Farmers comment that CRAFT alliances are “bottom-up,” which gives them strength and a voice.

   Last, CRAFT farmer alliances fill a need for farmers to model a resilient short-chain food system that is very different from the predominant one. Many members of these alliances have a different approach to farming, marketing, and logistics than their immediate farming neighbors. Thus, participation in CRAFT fills a networking need to meet farmers with similar marketing approaches.
2. **CRAFT farmer alliances want standards for farmer training.**

Three types of standards were deemed important by CRAFT farmers.

1. Farmers expressed a need for membership consistency at the level of each CRAFT farmer alliance. These standards are stated under the *Commonalities Among CRAFT Farmer Alliances* section, and can be summarized as: a) farmer-led, b) a commitment to train beginning farmers, and c) a commitment to sustainable farming practices.

2. Farmers identify a need for a set of standards for the relationship that exists between a CRAFT farmer alliance and the nonprofit, if any, that coordinates it. Essentially, this means that the coordinating nonprofit must acknowledge that CRAFT is a farmer-led entity. In the near future, CRAFT farmers plan to develop a list of best practices on how they can most successfully interface with a nonprofit. Additionally, CRAFTs welcome case studies on how farmer alliances find success without facilitation by a nonprofit.

3. There is interest in how the international network of CRAFTs would best function. As communication between unique farmer alliances has increased in the past few years, so has the need to sketch out the expectations and protocols for executing objectives CRAFT farmer alliances want to accomplish on a national or international scale.

3. **Farmer networks hold many best practices in common.**

There are already many excellent and successful practices that are widely adopted among CRAFT farmer alliances. Top among those best practices are:

- CRAFT farmer members have a shared vision.
- CRAFT farmer alliances embrace diversity.
- CRAFT is a bottom-up leadership framework. Farmers are autonomous and their voices are heard and validated.
- CRAFT farmer alliances rely on collaboration and shared learning.
- CRAFT members clarify their individual network objectives.

4. **Farmer alliances face challenges.**

Through work with CRAFT farmer alliances over the past three years, these are the most prevalent challenges they face:

- First, some farmer alliances struggle with fostering leadership. These grassroots entities strongly rely on volunteers for defining content and organizing workshops. The farmers in these networks already spend long days working on the farm during growing seasons, so making farmer training and networking a priority—or holding a leadership position in a farmer alliance—are roles that farmer alliance coordinators have a hard time filling.

- Second, many CRAFT alliances are challenged in achieving a standard education level for their farmer-apprentices while recognizing the diversity of educators. Each farm and farmer is unique; thus, farmer alliances face difficulties in ensuring that apprentices finish a year of farmer training with a consistent set of skills.
• Third, most CRAFT farmer alliances have not solved the problem of how to support an apprentice after their first year of on-farm training. Improving the depth of education and skill within a farmer alliance is a challenge, as well as continuing farmer-training opportunities beyond the first year of apprenticeship or training.

• Last but not least, many CRAFT alliances are financially challenged. Even the most modest CRAFT program costs money. To solve this, many farmer alliances rely on volunteer hours, other in-kind contributions, and/or membership dues. Other CRAFT alliances partner with nonprofits as fiscal sponsors. No matter the funding model chosen, the objectives of unique CRAFT farmer alliances often out outpace the funds in place to deliver on those goals.

1.3 NEXT STEPS

As you skim through the content of this resource, remember to refer to craftfarmer.org for the most current list of CRAFT farmer alliances in North America.

If you would like to form a CRAFT farmer alliance in your region, contact Angelic Organics Learning Center via email at craft@learngrowconnect.org to receive a manual to help you launch one in your area.

Finally, this document is intended to help you find and join a CRAFT farmer alliance or ask clarifying questions of another CRAFT alliance. The resources in the appendix will be especially useful to that end.
2. CRAFT Farmer Alliances in Canada

2.1 CRAFT SOUTHWEST ONTARIO

CRAFT Southwest Ontario is “a gateway to a farming internship experience” in the triangle between Toronto, Lake Erie (south of London, Ontario), and the Bruce Peninsula that divides Lake Huron and Georgian Bay. Between 15 and 20 ecological farms participate in this group and collectively host 50 to 60 interns each year. Farms are typically highly diversified and include smaller and larger market gardens, grazing operations, and two education centres – the Ignatius Jesuit Centre and Everdale. Generally, interns are expected to stay at one farm for the full summer season. They participate in monthly farm tours during which farmers cover important topics in workshops and see operations that follow ecological, certified organic and biodynamic practices. This CRAFT group is strictly farmer-driven, without any type of support beyond its farm members, and entirely focused on providing a good internship experience.

History

In Ontario, CRAFT was originally inspired when two farmers worked as interns and lamented the lack of educational opportunities for young people who wanted to learn how to farm and also the lack of interaction among interns. After one of them visited the original CRAFT group in Hudson Valley, they wanted to start something similar in Ontario. They managed to invite a group of farmers from Southwestern Ontario who coach interns to an initial meeting. Seven farms were interested and launched the first Canadian CRAFT program at the Guelph Organic Conference in 2002 – five of which are still members today. Founding members included the long-established farms of Cory Eichman, Tony & Fran McQuail, Plan B Organics, Ignatius Jesuit Centre and Everdale.

For a period of time, an employee from Ignatius facilitated and coordinated the group, until she took maternity leave. At that time, the 20 active farmer members appointed a coordinator and raised $750 dollars/year as reimbursement for related tasks of calling and chairing the two annual meetings, informing new farmer applicants about the program, and acting as a physical contact person. Also, ad-hoc task forces were created to manage other issues, such as advertising, website management, and creating specific policies. That said, the group continues to operate as an informal network by working together to offer monthly intern programming. The application and hiring process remains entirely the responsibility of farmers and interns. The idea continues to be that farmers add value to their internship programs, but the group has grown to be a friendly peer-to-peer network of both farmers and interns. The original format of monthly CRAFT field days on Wednesdays continues today.

In 2009, the original CRAFT ON group became CRAFT ON SW to accommodate interest in other CRAFT groups becoming established regionally throughout the province.

6 This amount was increased to $1,000 recently.
Organizational Structure

CRAFT Southwest Ontario remains a totally informal network of farmers. All member farms convene twice during winter at a farm chosen for convenience. During these two meetings, all relevant decisions are made. For a period of two years, an elected coordinator manages minor tasks such as calling meetings, sending out minutes, and providing a gateway for applications by farmers, questions about the group, and as emergency contact. The coordinator also gives support and advice to new network members who struggle with integrating interns into their farm.

The group remains informal and has no bylaws. However, an application procedure for farmers defines eligibility criteria and also requires that one CRAFT member farm must sponsor new applicants. Each application is discussed during a meeting and then voted on. The group also advertises jointly, operates a website and email list, evaluates internship experiences, and staffs a booth during the annual Guelph Organic Conference to recruit potential applicants. Finances are managed by an appointee and reported on during each meeting. The only source of revenue is an annual membership fee paid by farm members.

Farm Tours

Monthly tours are typically scheduled on Wednesdays as full-day events. They include a general farm tour, a specific discussion topic, a potluck lunch where participants not only bring food but also their cutlery, and a work bee. The work bee lasts 90-120 minutes during which participants are expected to help out, for example, with weeding, moving irrigation equipment, stone picking, or other tasks that farmers are glad to have help with. Discussion topics are chosen during the spring meeting in a way that relevant educational topics are covered in each node.

Tours are mandatory for interns, and only CRAFT members are permitted. However, during the planning meeting in winter, it is encouraged that two to three farmers attend each CRAFT day to add diversity of knowledge.

Too Large Groups? On Subnodes and Mega Days

With more than 50 interns each year, the SW Ontario group has additionally divided itself into two separate subnodes (or three, depending on the number of interns or farms in a particular year), divided primarily by travel distance. Out of the six tours each season, half of the farm tours are attended by farm interns within the same subnodes, and the other half are attended by all farms. These Mega Days typically take place on long-established farms or at the educational centers, which offer infrastructure and sufficient capacity to handle such a large group productively.

While all Mega Days occur on the first Wednesday of the month, the tours of the subnodes are staggered: the northern node holds their tour on the second Wednesdays and the southern on the third to allow cross-visits. Also, thematic foci are distributed evenly such that each node covers all themes (e.g. biodynamic production, finances, etc).
**Advanced Intern Education?**

The group’s motto is "Farmer Training is what we do". A few years after the group started, it became apparent to members of the group that the introductory level of a CRAFT internship is not adequate for more advanced education, e.g. for those who want to manage or own their own farms. When some original members asked if CRAFT could do more, a full-day meeting assessed the opportunities and resource requirements of such an in-depth program. One of the conclusions was that much is possible, but would bring an organizational burden and dependence on external funding. Farmers decided that this is not consistent with the purpose and mission of the network. In practice, many interns take a second year of internship during which they receive deeper education, more responsibilities, and better pay. Some even work a third year as farm managers. At this point, farmer members are content with how the network operates and work at improving their individual programs through exchange with other farmers.

**Impacts**

CRAFT member farms have grown into an active community of mutual support for questions related to agricultural practices, emergencies such as shortage of transplants, or even for sharing equipment or trading products after harvest failures. Interns enjoy that visits to other farms expose them to other farming systems, but also connect them with like-minded interns. Indeed, intern networks regularly organize parties and connect in other ways, which is supported by their hosts.

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**RESOURCE: EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS FOR INTERNS AND FARMERS**

Existing textbooks were found to be too specific for an intern that is completely new to the world of farming; interns require a full overview of the basic farming knowledge in layman’s terms (equipment, soils, etc). Therefore, a manual was first drafted as part of a Master’s thesis with the support of a small grant, and member farmers edited and expanded the text. With a second grant hosted by the Ignatius Jesuit Centre in 2008, a second edition was developed and updated with timely topics like organic certification. With that grant, Ignatius also developed a manual for farmers, *Nurturing New Farmers*, based on the questions that farmers posed about hosting farm internships and managing employees. The manual also received input from a number of experienced CRAFT farms. Contributing farmers received a small honorarium and several copies in compensation for their efforts. Both books continue to be published and sold by the Ignatius Jesuit Centre to CRAFT ON SW farms at printing costs. The Ignatius Jesuit Centre expects to make the manuals available online in the near future.

All farmers are expected to own a copy of both manuals. The manual *Oh to Grow* is popular especially with interns without farming background, because it contains a selection of the most important information and data in text, graphs and tables.
2.2 CRAFT KAWARTHA

CRAFT Kawartha offers farming internships in Kawartha, Northumberland, Peterborough, Durham and surrounding regions. The ecological farming community of the region has joined together and is working cooperatively to provide education and support for prospective future farmers. CRAFT interns will live, work and learn on a farm for a full growing season with invaluable opportunities to learn necessary skills by working alongside experienced farmers.

All internships must involve an exchange of labor (by the intern) for education and hands-on farming experience (from the farmer). Each farm may organize its internship as it sees fit. Individual farms operate independently so the living arrangements, stipends, work hours and training methods for interns are specific to each farm.

The internship includes monthly educational field trips to the other area CRAFT farms to experience various farming enterprises, as well as providing an occasion to interact and network with the other interns. Throughout the growing season, more opportunities arise for interns to have further hands-on experience on additional farms in the region.

Participating farms are either certified organic or have adopted organic farming principles.

History

Kawartha CRAFT initially received organizational support from the nonprofit Farms at Work. This organization hosted and organized the first meetings of farmers and also invited a coordinator of a successful neighbouring CRAFT node to present their success story. A core group formed, made up of six farmers within a maximum geographic driving distance of three hours. Modeled after the Southwestern Ontario node, all interns are required to attend all CRAFT farm tours.

Organizational Structure

The small group has no formal coordinator. Some roles are rotating such as website updates and spring meeting organization, while others, like the treasurer, tend to stay with the same person on a voluntary basis. Participants contribute what they can do well.

Farm members must fulfill these criteria:

- Be a producer and marketer of food
- Offer a full-season sustainable farming internship
- Operate their farm in a sustainable manner that fits with the Principles of Organic Agriculture; however, farms are NOT required to be certified organic.
- Participate in planning meetings for CRAFT Kawartha
- Contribute a membership fee to assist with advertising and website costs
- Farms are encouraged to host an educational “Field Day” for all CRAFT Kawartha interns on their farm and send their intern(s) to all six (with an optional seventh) of the monthly field days on other farms.
An annual spring meeting is organized at which all CRAFT farms meet. Applicants who want to become new farm members attend the spring meeting, where new ideas are discussed and the farm tours are scheduled. Farm members pay an annual fee of $50 for website and other small expenses.

**RESOURCE: STATEMENT OF ORGANIC PRINCIPLES**

Member farms must teach according to key principles:

- **PROTECT** the environment, minimize soil degradation and erosion, decrease pollution, optimize biological productivity and promote a sound state of health.
- **REPLENISH** and maintain long-term soil fertility by optimizing conditions for biological activity within the soil.
- **MAINTAIN** diversity within and surrounding the enterprise, and protect and enhance the biological diversity of native plants and wildlife.
- **RECYCLE** materials and resources to the greatest extent possible within the enterprise.
- **PROVIDE** attentive care that promotes the health and behavioural needs of livestock.
- **MAINTAIN** the integrity of organic food and processed products from initial handling to point of sale.

CRAFT Kawartha specifically rejects the use of genetically engineered/genetically modified organisms in their practices.

**Field Days**

Farm tours generally last a full day from 10:00am-3:00pm. Field days include a farm tour and a specific workshop topic, as well as a potluck lunch. One hour of this time is devoted to a work bee, as appreciation for the host’s efforts. Most farms choose simple tasks with minimal organizational requirements.

**Future Aspirations**

Farmer members appreciate and value the social bond between like-minded people, and the feeling that you can call your peers any time for advice. Members move out of isolation and perceive themselves as part of a movement that broadens sustainable farming through education. The members aspire to have more farms join the network, but would also prefer more frequent meetings with additional face-to-face time and knowledge exchange.
3. CRAFT Alliances in the Northeast

3.1 CRAFT HUDSON VALLEY/BERKSHIRES/PIONEER VALLEY

Hudson Valley/Berkshires/Pioneer Valley is the original CRAFT group initiated in 1994. CRAFT is a cooperative effort of local organic and biodynamic farms organized to enhance educational opportunities for farm apprentices. Apprentices on farms that participate in the CRAFT program experience a diversity of successful farm models and join a community of fellow apprentices and farmers. Prospective apprentices apply for an apprenticeship directly with one of the participating farms.

After hearing experiences from a formal education in biodynamic agriculture from the Netherlands in 1994, farmers in the Hudson Valley discussed the benefits and prospects of practical education in alternative farming in North America.

History

Some of the original founding farmers experienced training in Europe and learned about the idea of agricultural education in a biodynamic school in Holland. In the absence of formal training opportunities in the U.S. at that time, many interns had voiced a feeling that they were working a lot without adequate teaching and were exploited as cheap labor. This reignited discussions amongst farmers on how to be fairer with interns and prepare them better for starting their own farms. Farmers questioned themselves and wrote a list of what they thought an intern should know after having worked on a farm for a full year. Then, they also made lists of what they were actually teaching – and found the latter lists much shorter than the first. However, they also noticed that their collaborative teaching was completely fulfilling the learning objectives and pondered a collaborative teaching approach.

During the early 1990s, when these discussions occurred, the overall organic market was supply-driven and demand-limited, such that farmers competed amongst each other for few customers. It required a great effort of trust building amongst farmers to move forward collaboratively – very unlike the expansive market during the early 2000s when the market was demand-driven and supply-limited, which made collaboration easier. Ultimately, the first CRAFT program was founded in upstate New York in 1995. In 1997, ten farmers from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin founded the second CRAFT program in the Upper Midwest, and CRAFT became an open trade name for a much larger movement.

After their initial success, supporters of the biodynamic idea offered funding to formalize the CRAFT node into a nonprofit or college, following the Dutch model. Farm members pondered the option and finally agreed not to accept the generous funding offer, because it was felt that the informal nature and collaborative commitment of all farm participants actually was the main success factor for the group. All members had somehow, at different levels, contributed to meeting organization, teaching content, advertisement, and thus shared a strong sense of ownership for the group. It was believed that a paid position, though helpful in many ways, would undermine the feeling of community.

The Hudson Valley/Berkshires/Pioneer Valley CRAFT group continues to exist as an informal network. It remains approximately the same size as in the beginning, but is transitioning to a new generation of farmers, many of whom are CRAFT alumni. Some original members have retired or stopped accepting

IN SHORT

- Original CRAFT group
- Initiated in 1994 and founded in 1995
- 26 farms in New York and Massachusetts
- [www.craftfarmapprentice.com](http://www.craftfarmapprentice.com)
interns, and prefer working with employees which is believed to be less burden and responsibility. But a new generation of ecological farmers is carrying the torch of farmer-to-farmer education into the future.

Organizational Structure

The original CRAFT node remains a totally informal network that is neither incorporated nor has paid staff.

RESOURCE: GUIDANCE AND STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR A VEGETABLE CSA

Jean-Paul Courtens from Roxbury Farm is one of the original founders of the first CRAFT group. Roxbury Farm is a community-supported farm that grows vegetables, herbs, and grass fed pork, lamb, and beef. On 300 acres in Kinderhook, New York (45 acres of vegetable), the farm serves over 1,000 shareholders representing over 1,200 families in four communities: Columbia County, the Capital Region, Westchester County and Manhattan.

Over the years, Jean-Paul has written down many experiences and operating procedures for his average of 15 year-round and seasonal employees and farm interns. In his belief that ecological farms should share knowledge openly and widely, Jean-Paul has shared all of these materials with the internet community at www.roxburyfarm.com (select “Information for Farmers”), including:

• a CSA Plan that breaks down their greenhouse schedule, field planting and seeding schedule, and weekly share plan for a 100 member CSA;
• a description of what Biodynamics means on Roxbury Farm;
• a crop manual describes how they seed, transplant, protect, and cultivate each of their crops;
• a harvest manual describes standard operation procedures for harvest, ready-to-harvest indicators, packing and washing procedures, and storage conditions, including expectations for employees;
• an article that describes a thought process before purchasing a piece of equipment.
• detailed schedules for field planting, seeding and greenhouse;
• soil fertility practices on Roxbury farm; and
• the whole farm approach to soil and plant health.

It is understood that all of these resources are highly specific to the scale and circumstances of Roxbury Farm. These resources are highly recommended for consideration by any CRAFT farmer, as they may provide a template for developing similar resources for one’s own farm. Also, by making these resources available, Jean-Paul is setting a gold standard in knowledge sharing and non-competitiveness amongst alternative farmers.
The Farm Tour

CRAFT interns in this node have a five-and-a-half-day work week, which includes Saturday mornings. Once or twice each month, apprentices gather for a half-day farm tour which also includes a two-hour workshop on a specific theme.

The group has experience with full-day and full-weekend workshops with invited speakers, observation exercises, and exercises that sharpen the prospective farmer’s senses. However, interns were too tired during the busy season and not prepared for such an intensive curriculum. They also needed their time to catch up with their lives and were not willing to sacrifice additional free time. But apprentices really liked the social interaction and the opportunity to talk with like-minded people. Ultimately, the group settled on the simpler model with 12 annual half-day farm visits.

Apprentices or Employees?

One experience of this first CRAFT group is that farmers naturally evolved from meeting their labor needs through apprentices towards hiring permanent and/or seasonal staff. Most farms continue to have (fewer) apprentices, in addition to their core crew. Three main reasons were given:

1. Hiring interns poses an enormous risk to farmers
   While many interns are good people and/or very talented, some farmers found that they cannot rely on them to get the job done for a variety of reasons, including a gap between formal textbook education and practical skills experience. In addition, some interns have shown to be too judgmental and questioning of each step in the workflow. Standard operating procedures with time expectations are one way to assist in managing these problems.

2. Cost considerations
   Before the CRAFT network was founded, many farmers regarded interns mainly as a cheap source of labor. Experience, however, revealed the hidden costs of hosting interns – they can require a lot of instructor time for teaching work flow procedures as well as speed of work. More mature farms needed very specific labor skills that cannot be met by apprentices, e.g. tractor work or high quality greenhouse jobs.

3. Many internships were an emotional burden for their host farmers
   Sometimes interns ended with disappointment on the side of the farmer where a feeling that the strong commitment (and cost) from the farmer’s side was met by grumbling amongst interns. Hence, today many farms have transitioned toward permanent and seasonal employees. Two types of seasonal labor were mentioned: Mexican migrant workers, and mothers who seek a second income during the summer season by working on an organic farm.

Larger farms continue to educate apprentices, but have no expectations of them with respect to labor returns. A typical ratio is one apprentice to 5-10 employees. It was pointed out that it is a good educational experience to have apprentices work next to skilled farm laborers.
3.2 EAST END OF LONG ISLAND CRAFT

Many summer residents from New York are relatively wealthy and have a preference for sustainable living and wellness. This supports a movement of organic mixed farms and a vital local food economy with multiple direct marketing venues (CSAs, farmers market, farm stands, wholesale to restaurants). As a consequence, growers target summer residents and focus their growing on the midseason (July, August) while season extension and winter CSAs are not yet common business practices.

Every season, people of all ages and backgrounds who have the desire to gain farming skills come to the East End. Monthly farm tours and workshops train apprentices and other farmers in everything from maintaining optimal soil health to crop planning and marketing.

History

Before 2013, East End farmers visited each other in informal tours to exchange experiences. The idea of CRAFT, as initiated in Hudson Valley, was known but there were no resources or initiatives to formalize a similar group locally. After the idea of a local CRAFT group had sprung up several times in focus group meetings, the Amagansett Food Institute took the initiative and contacted Angelic Organics for guidance on how to start. Amagansett Food Institute hired additional staff as facilitator and coordinator and now formally structure these tours. The goal stated on the first convention for East End CRAFT was to enrich and support education and community building through farm tours, workshops, and social events.

Organizational Structure

The Amagansett Food Institute (AFI) remains the facilitating body of this young CRAFT group. AFI members are local businesses in the food production and processing sector who “envision the East End as a place where all farms and food businesses are thriving and supported by an engaged community whose members understand the benefits and uniqueness of local food”. Its mission is “to support, promote, and advocate for the farmers, vintners, fishermen, and other food producers and providers on the East End of Long Island”.

East End CRAFT remains mostly an informal group without a formal membership or fees. A small grant through FarmAid and more general funding for AFI program management also supports the coordination of this CRAFT group. The main planning and decision-making event is an annual meeting during winter. All farms who are known to have apprentices or hosted farm tours, and even past apprentices, are invited to this annual day of planning where policies, opportunities for improvements, and successes are discussed and the summer tour schedule is set. Many overlaps with AFI membership exists, but non-members are also welcome.

IN SHORT

- Group-facilitated by Amagansett Food Institute
- Founded in 2013
- 11 farms participate in farm tours
- www.amagansettfoodinstitute.org/programs/craft

Farm Tours

Monthly tours take place between April and October with a break during the busiest time of the season (mid-July until end of August). Tours are non-exclusive and mostly target farmers, seasonal employees, summer students, interns and WOOFers, but they are also open to gardeners, prospective farmers, occasional foodies and other food advocates joining. The tour itself typically lasts one or two hours, plus a social component - a potluck or visit to a local bar/restaurant. Participants agree that the social components during a busy and isolated summer season are an important part of these tours, in addition to the learning and knowledge exchange. This year, AFI also organized three workshops that complement more general farm tours with in-depth content on the topics of soil science, tomato pathogens, and beekeeping.

Challenges for CRAFT in a Region of Agritourism

The beauty of East End brings many advantages with a strong seasonal population, but also brings challenges. These challenges include that the growing season is defined more by the tourist season than by weather, and winter extension still remains little explored. For this area, agritourism is as much a revenue stream as production itself, so farmers need to give much thought on how to appeal to the affluent seasonal residents. Given the popularity of the region for vacation, farm business operators must be careful to hire apprentices who are serious about farming and realize the work load and time commitment.

Most farm businesses are operated by relatively young people. Farmland is usually rented under long-term leases in collaboration with a local land trust. In such context where the local zoning bylaw often does not permit temporary housing, finding accommodation for apprentices (and even operators) is often very difficult. The appeal of effective education that the CRAFT logo carries is anticipated to draw apprentices to this area who are seriously considering a career in farming, as well as locals who have access to accommodations.

RECOMMENDED MENTORSHIP RESOURCES FROM NOFA NEW YORK

- Core Competencies for Aspiring Farmers
- Resources for hosts and mentors
  - Agriculture Teaching Information: The Sustainable Agriculture Education Materials Database at Cornell University (http://locale.mannlib.cornell.edu/saem) - classroom activities, handouts to lectures, lab manuals and more
  - Presenting an Effective On-Farm Workshop
  - Creating an Apprentice Library on your Farm
  - Resources and publications on teaching sustainable farming and gardening (Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems. University of California Santa Cruz.)
- Labor Considerations and Mentoring Capacity Evaluation
- Sample Contracts and Agreements

\(^a\) http://www.nofany.org/sites/default/files/2012%20NOFANY%20Core%20Competencies%20Tool.pdf
\(^b\) http://www.nofany.org/organic-farming/beginning-farmers-and-mentors/resources-host-and-mentor-farmers
3.3 CRAFT IN WESTERN CONNECTICUT

Western Connecticut CRAFT farms are located between the NY and MA borders, the sound of Long Island, and the Connecticut River as the eastern border. Member farms are very diverse in their products, marketing mechanisms, and in their farm education. Most market directly in the area or even into New York City. The purpose of the Western Connecticut CRAFT is training of farm workers and apprentices in the craft of small scale agriculture and horticulture with emphasis on food production, exchange of ideas among farm people, and community of farmers, farm workers, and others who are interested in local agriculture.8

History and Organizational Structure

CRAFT in Western Connecticut was organized in 2004. After having had two annual winter meetings of member farmers for several years, members of the CRAFT node have moved to a packed February meeting. A quorum of two-thirds of current participating farms must be present to make changes in the bylaws. Bylaws can be amended at either the fall or spring meeting. Organizational meetings are followed by a potluck where interns share self-grown seasonal food.

Meeting Tasks9

- Review the season and make any necessary adjustments.
- Choose a leader for a one-year term. There are no term limits on the leader.
- Hear sponsorships and vote on any farms in the geographic region that wish to be part of the CRAFT program.
- Set the calendar for the member farm field visits.
- Announce any new Provisional Members to the group.

A farm within the geographic boundaries may apply to become a Provisional Member by indicating their interest to the current leader by February 15. Apprentices or employees of the Provisional Farms may then attend meetings, but will not be represented at CRAFT organizational meetings and will not host CRAFT field visits. After a Provisional Member has attended meetings for one season, that farm may then apply as a full member. The Provisional Member needs to be sponsored by a current CRAFT farm. At the fall farmer meeting, the sponsor will describe the farm and a simple majority vote will be taken to admit or deny admittance to the candidate farm.

At a minimum, a year-end survey is distributed to farm apprentices to gather feedback on the program. Individual farmers may also distribute surveys on or shortly after their visit.

8 www.bloomingfieldsfarm.com/cft_frameindex.html
9 All tasks are performed during a single meeting now, unlike stated in the original 2011 version of the bylaw.
Farm Tours

CRAFT field meetings are open only to apprentices and employees of member and provisional farms. After the spring meeting, attendance of individuals other than those is by permission only of the individual farmer hosting the meeting, who must be contacted at least one week in advance.

Field meetings begin promptly at 3:00pm and will end around 5:00pm, followed by a potluck supper. Field meetings are comprised of a tour and general description and history of the farm, and then a more in-depth discussion of an area in which the farmer has some expertise. The majority of the farm meeting must be delivered by a principal of the host farm, although experienced farm employees may also contribute. Field meetings are intended solely for farm employees. CRAFT farmers are welcome to listen in on the farm tour and topic discussion, but they ARE NOT to ask questions or make comments so as not to interrupt participation by apprentices. Farmers leading a tour should more than gently remind anyone in a tour group who might need a refresher on this policy.

Impacts

The farmer network has created a much wider collaboration amongst farmers. For example, members help each other during hard times in events of personal illness or crop loss. Farmers really enjoy the informality of the network, but also the reliability of mutual support.
The Western Connecticut CRAFT group has adapted a simple bylaw that is accessible at www.bloomingfieldsfarm.com/cft_frameindex.html:

**Purpose**
CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training) in Western Connecticut is an organization of farms dedicated to providing farm education and training to its farm apprentices and employees. We do this by organizing farm field meetings which are attended by the apprentices or employees of member farms.

**History**
The original CRAFT group was organized by farmers in eastern New York and western Massachusetts in 1994. Since that time the concept has become popular nationwide. CRAFT in Western Connecticut was organized in 2004.

**Organizational Geography**
CRAFT in Western Connecticut farms are located within the boundaries of the Western Connecticut CRAFT program, which are from the NY/MA borders to Long Island Sound with the eastern border being the Connecticut River.

**Member Farms**
Member Farms will gather twice a year. The spring meeting will be the last Wednesday in February, and the fall meeting will be the second Wednesday in November. A quorum of two-thirds of current participating farms must be present to make changes in the bylaws. Bylaws can be amended at a member meeting. Organizational meetings are followed by a potluck (optional).

**Meeting Tasks (as outlined in main text)**
A farm within the above listed boundaries may apply for membership. Such farms will be known as Provisional Members. New farms must indicate their interest in Provisional Membership in CRAFT in Western CT to the current leader by February 15 of the season at hand. Apprentices or employees of the Provisional Farms may then attend meetings, but will not be represented at CRAFT organizational meetings and will not host CRAFT field visits. After a Provisional Member has attended meetings for one season, that farm may then apply as a full member. The Provisional Member needs to be ‘sponsored’ by a current CRAFT farm. At the fall farmer meeting, the sponsor will describe the farm and a simple majority vote will be taken to admit or deny admittance to the candidate farm.

**Field Meeting Attendance**
CRAFT field meetings are open only to apprentices and employees of member and provisional farms. After the spring meeting, attendance of individuals other than those listed above is only by permission of the individual farmer hosting the meeting, who must be contacted at least one week in advance.

**Field Meeting Specifications**
The CRAFT Field Meeting Calendar will be created and distributed at the spring meeting. Field meetings will begin promptly at 3:00pm and will end around 5:00pm, followed by a potluck supper. Field meetings will be comprised of a tour and general description and history of the farm, followed by a more in-depth discussion of an area in which the farmer has some expertise. The majority of the farm meeting must be delivered by a principal of the host farm, although experienced farm employees may also contribute.

Field meetings are intended solely for farm employees. CRAFT farmers are welcome to listen in on the farm tour and topic discussion, but they ARE NOT to ask questions or make comments. Generally speaking, two bantering farmers greatly dampens participation by apprentices. Farmers leading a tour should more than gently remind anyone in a tour group who might need a refresher on this policy.

At a minimum, a year-end survey will be distributed to farm apprentices to gather feedback on the program. Individual farmers may also distribute surveys on or shortly after their visit.
3.4 MID-HUDSON CRAFT

The Mid-Hudson CRAFT program is based on the Western Massachusetts/Eastern New York CRAFT program that was formed in 1994. Participants visit a host farm for a tour, a talk or demonstration on a specific topic. These visits to other farms offer farmers-in-training a chance to see how different operations work and to network with other farmers and apprentices.

Members include several farms who are “certified naturally grown” and others who are not certified. Most farms are small and produce vegetables on 3-10 acres, rely on direct marketing or the CSA model, and only few raise livestock.

History

When farmers in the Mid-Hudson region wanted to join a CRAFT network, the nearby group of Pioneer Valley CRAFT was not accepting additional members. However, that CRAFT network was supporting the formation of new groups who replicated the CRAFT model. The Poughkeepsie Farm Project and Phillies Bridge Farm Project piloted Mid-Hudson CRAFT. Staff from these projects were instrumental in launching CRAFT Mid-Hudson. They recruited a few participating farms for tours in that first season and called a planning meeting after the season. It was at this point that it became a more participatory, group-planning process. The following year, Glynwood, Four Winds Farm, and Common Ground Farm became involved in the planning process. The next year, Glynwood got involved and offered experience, as well as some staff time, for being a contact and hosting the website.

Organizational Structure

CRAFT Mid-Hudson is steered by a planning group that is made up of farm members with rotating farm members facilitating the planning meeting each year. The CRAFT group has information hosted on the website of Glynwood, a nonprofit involved in the planning process.10

CRAFT Mid-Hudson has a number of partnering farms that attend the planning meeting. A handful of managers from the partnering farms, the core group, rotate the work of calling this meeting. The organizer circulates an agenda before the meeting for additions and approval from the group. At the meeting, a notetaker is requested. Once the group has come up with a prioritized list for scheduling, a volunteer takes on the task of booking dates and updating the schedule. Website updates are handled by Glynwood, including a resource list for apprentices. Glynwood also sends out baseline data forms for farm managers that care to share details about their operations, which are then shared with apprentices before a farm tour.

There are no formal requirements to join this CRAFT group, but participating farmers are expected to give interns time to attend CRAFT farm tours. During the winter, an annual meeting is called by the planning group where topics for farm tours are prioritized and farms are selected that best fit these topics.

10 www.glynwood.org/about/
The main information channel of this CRAFT group is an internet-based forum. Here, farmers can seek apprentices or advertise full-time jobs, discuss cost-sharing opportunities such as group ordering of fertilizer, and other inputs and advice. As such, the CRAFT network serves as an informal support network amongst participating farms.

**The Farm Tour**

Evening tours, 6:00pm-8:00pm, do include apprentices and sometimes include a potluck (depending on host farm). Farm tours have themes determined by the host farmer, and both content and depth of subject is up to host farm. While there is little standardization of tours, a self-selection of host farms has guaranteed tours of high quality that cover high-priority topics. Maximum travel time about 1.5 hours.

**Success Factors**

One of the success factors of this node was the close proximity to one of the founding CRAFT networks in Hudson Valley/Pioneer River and personal friendships with their long-standing CRAFT member farms. Farm members had a good idea of what to expect from CRAFT and of the values that CRAFT stands for, such that a loose network structure was adopted that proved sufficient for a continued and successful CRAFT node.

### 3.5 FINGER LAKES CRAFT

The Finger Lakes CRAFT is a community of established and aspiring farmers and homesteaders. This community meets monthly throughout the growing season at each of six CRAFT Mentor Farms to learn about that farm operation, ask lots of questions, share knowledge and network with each other. They also have several potlucks throughout the season where participants can get to know other beginning and established farmers. CRAFT potlucks are free and are open to family members and guests who want to learn more about CRAFT. The maximum driving distance between farms is 1.5 hours.

**RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**

A list of all kinds of resources can be downloaded at:

www.glynwood.org/files/2014/03/CRAFT-resources-2014.pdf

**IN SHORT**

- Facilitated by nonprofit Groundswell Center for Local Food & Farming
- Founded in 2010
- Six mentor farms participate in farm tours
- www.groundswellcenter.org/farmertraining/craft
History

The current Finger Lakes CRAFT group was initiated by the Groundswell Center, an agriculture education nonprofit based in Ithaca, NY, operating under the Center for Transformative Action and EcoVillage at Ithaca and serving the broader Finger Lakes area. Their core work is nurturing the next generation of farmers and cultivating knowledgeable ‘food citizens’ through experience-based educational programs (www.groundswellcenter.org). Earlier, local farmers had tried to start a CRAFT-style program that was successful for some time but was not sustained. The idea was taken up by Groundswell, who offered the role of a facilitator with permanent staff time.

The development of this CRAFT group has been strongly centered around mentor farms, who evolved from initially three mentors into a larger group of now six mentor farms. The current mentor farms evolved organically through self-selection. Two of these are still beginning farmers who started as CRAFT interns and sustain its ideals. Mentor Farms host farm tours.

This wording emanated from past Groundswell activities – no specific criteria were ever prescribed for becoming a CRAFT farm.

Organizational Structure

This CRAFT group is facilitated by the Groundswell Center for Local Food & Farming to inspire people and promote positive change in collaboration with, and with support from, diverse donors, experienced area farmers, local educational institutions, granting agencies, a broad range of nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and the efforts of dedicated volunteers.

The group holds one or two winter meetings as part of a larger gathering of the Groundswell Center to which both farmers and trainees are invited. The meeting includes a potluck and an evaluation session for the season, and farmers can voice feedback for Groundswell. Attendants then plan for the following season, taking into account the trainees’ voices.

CRAFT membership is open to all farm interns, employees, and aspiring or experienced farmers, including organic, conventional or other. CRAFT membership provides participants with:

• Admission to all monthly CRAFT farm tours during the season and to potluck gatherings throughout the season
• Participation in a supportive network of experienced and beginning farmers and homesteaders
• Educational benefits for interns and employees that can help attract more qualified workers to participating farms.

CRAFT Mentor Farms

CRAFT Mentor Farms are West Haven Farm, Northland Sheep Dairy, Kingbird Farm, The Good Life Farm, and Main Street Farms. This group of experienced farmer-mentors works with the facilitating nonprofit, Groundswell, to host a series of training sessions for CRAFT members from May to October. Each session includes an in-depth farm tour, potluck lunch, Q&A with the farmers, and plenty of time for informal mentoring and networking among the farmers and their trainees.
Farm Tours

CRAFT tour days follow the schedule below and are open only to CRAFT members, as is highlighted on their website:

- 10:00am-12:00pm, Farm Tour
- 12:00pm-1:00pm, Potluck Lunch
- 1:00pm-3:00pm, Workshop

CRAFT tours happen on different days of the week, mostly on Monday but occasionally on other days (Sunday, Wednesday, Saturday). While initially a work bee was tested, the concept was not successful because farmers could not find anything reasonable.

3.6 CHESAPEAKE CRAFT

Founded in 2010 by a few local farmers, Chesapeake CRAFT brings together the community of new and aspiring farmers in Northern Virginia and Maryland for farm tours and potlucks throughout the growing season. These simple gatherings are fun, informative, and build networking amongst the farming community.

Organizational Structure

Unlike many other CRAFT groups, the Chesapeake CRAFT has adopted a fee structure that gives financial independence. The fee for a farm’s participation in Chesapeake CRAFT is $150 which includes attendance of farm staff at any CRAFT event during the season. It is understood that most farm crews cannot attend every event due to schedule conflicts, etc. The $150 goes towards compensating special presenters at CRAFT events and also offsets the costs of the Summer Solstice conference. Individuals can sign up for the CRAFT program for $50 for the season. Single event attendance is $10.

Accokeek Foundation handles money for the Chesapeake CRAFT program and serves as an organizational sponsor for the program.

The Farm Tour

Chesapeake CRAFT events take place on twelve Mondays throughout the growing season of April-October. CRAFT farm tours commence at 3:30pm, followed by a potluck dinner.

ANNUAL SOLSTICE CONFERENCE

Chesapeake CRAFT hosts the Annual Summer Solstice Conference at the end of June. This full-day conference gives farmers and apprentices a break from the busy season and some inputs on a wide range of themes. Most presentations are drawn from within the participating farms and range from practical growing tips (e.g. How We Amend Our Soils and Plants for Productivity) to management (e.g. whole-farm CSA including dairy) to finances (e.g. Thinking about Leasing or Buying Land?) to cooking (e.g. Pizza Making), to health and safety themes (e.g. Practical yoga for farm workers). Costs are kept low, around $20 per participant.
3.7 CATSKILLS CRAFT

New York State is experiencing a growth in demand for locally grown farm products. With a decline in the number of traditional farms, a focus on developing and supporting new farmers and diverse agricultural practices is central to meeting such demands, as well as enabling agricultural economic development in the region. The Catskills, with their expansive farmlands and rich agricultural resources, are well suited to continue a long history of raising and growing livestock, produce and various other farm products. The region spans six counties with a maximum driving distance of two to three hours between farms.

The rich agricultural community that provides both technical skill-sharing and a social network is necessary to support and inspire farmers. With this in mind, the Catskills CRAFT was formed in 2011 with the support of Farmhearts, Pure Catskills, and the Watershed Agricultural Council. Catskills CRAFT seeks to:

- Deliver a broader experience to beginning farmers than they can receive alone
- Provide a peer base to help beginning and established farmers connect with others who share similar goals
- Increase the skill base in sustainable agriculture

History

Catskills CRAFT was initiated by the farmers market coordinator at the Watershed-Agricultural Council and received seed funding from a number of smaller nonprofits. The group was never farmer-led, which continues to be a struggle for its organizers. In its fourth season, it is an informal group of farms that have hosted events.

One organizational challenge was a frequent change of management within the hosting organization and shifting organizational priorities. One result was much effort going into internal education as well as refocusing the group’s priorities.

Organizational Structure

CRAFT Catskills is facilitated by a farmer coordinator. This position receives some grant funding for approximately one half-day per week. It is administered by the Watershed-Agricultural Council, which receives funding from the local department of environmental conservation. The greater objective of these organizations is to keep New York City’s agricultural water clean, and CRAFT farmers welcome the bridge between conservation, ecological farming and farm land protection.

Farmers are not required to meet in winter because the coordinator can organize the scheduling of all events.
The Farm Tour

Farm tours generally last three hours (4:00pm-7:00pm) and are followed by a potluck supper on varying days of the week that are convenient for the host farm. Topics are chosen by the specific farmers or together with the coordinator. The CRAFT coordinator always points out the option of putting the group to work, which is taken up occasionally.

The Challenge to Build a Peer Network

After a few successful years with high farmer attendance, most tour participants were homesteaders or interested city folks in the last year. It is not clear whether this shift can be attributed to the organization or also to the weather conditions during the cold 2014 season. As a group, the CRAFT node has not managed to establish a community feeling amongst farm members. One structural challenge identified by the coordinator is that farms who work with interns tend to be younger farmers with shorter farming experience, while experienced farmers that qualify as Farmer Mentors have moved towards paid staff. Under these constraints, hosting interns fails as a CRAFT membership requirement, as is generally the case amongst other CRAFT groups. In Catskills, the coordinator struggles to integrate experienced farmers into the group, because intern education has low priority for farmers in an economically depressed rural setting. At the same time, the coordinator believes that a functioning farmer-to-farmer mentorship network is a factor for the long-term sustainability of this CRAFT node and was identified as an important goal for the current winter season.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

On their website, Catskills CRAFT provides resources organized in the following sections:

- Other CRAFT Programs
- CRAFT Resources: www.craftfarmer.org and www.craftfarmapprentice.com
- Beginning Farmer Resources
- Catskills Region Agricultural Resources
4.1 WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA CRAFT

Western North Carolina CRAFT is designed as a program to mentor and teach the next generation of farmers the ins and outs of farm operation while also building a stronger network for current farmers in the Southwestern end of the Appalachian Mountains in Western North Carolina. Membership is open to beginning and experienced farmers, apprentices and farm workers, and anyone else who has a strong desire and drive to begin farming.

The core CRAFT program includes an apprentice orientation event, a farmer orientation event, monthly workshops at member farms, intern exchanges, and informal visits between member farms.

History

The Organic Growers School originated in 1993 as an initiative of community members, who convened to organize a spring conference on organic agriculture and growing in the mountainous environment of Western North Carolina. The multi-stakeholder community group included urban gardeners, food advocates and also farmers. The group continues to organize the spring conference annually but has added an annual harvest conference, other workshops, and web resources. The CRAFT group was founded after Organic Growers School farm members had informally exchanged interns and supported regular visits and tours, and had heard about the CRAFT initiatives in other places. They decided to start a similar program under the Organic Growers School umbrella.

Organizational Structure

The Western North Carolina CRAFT group is focused on farmers, but is non-exclusive and open to other interested people. It is driven by a core group of ten farmers, while other members tend to fluctuate. Numbers of interns/employees vary between 30 and 50 each year.

Four levels of membership (varying costs) are possible: (1) farm members host tours and have interns; (2) associate farms may not have staff or interns, but would like to join tours; (3) student memberships allow interns or farm workers from other farms to participate in the tours; and (4) associate members are gardeners, other interest people, and supporters of sustainable farming. Membership fees are $20-$30 per year and this gives members access to a wealth of summer tours, winter workshops, and farming resources.

For the CRAFT tours, all major decisions are made during the annual March meeting with all farm members, where the farm tours for the season are laid out. The meeting is called and facilitated by the Organic Growers School. The tours themselves are also administered by Organic Growers School staff, who write invitations, reminders, and do advertising. On average, Organic Growers School staff can dedicate one day per week to the network.

IN SHORT

- Group facilitated by Organic Growers School (OGS), organicgrowersschool.org
- Founded in 2009
- About 20-30 member farms participate each year
- Maximum travel distance between farms two hours
- Comprehensive 600-page CRAFT handbook for farm members
- www.organicgrowersschool.org/organicfarming/craft
Since last year, an additional steering committee was created that is made up of core farmers and meets twice a year to discuss strategic directions of the network, and ensure a farmer-driven structure. Several member farmers are also part of the Organic Growers School board and educational programming, so discussions during those meetings cross-pollinate with CRAFT. While there is a recurring concern about funding for Organic Growers School staff to continue to offer administrative support, both Organic Growers School and CRAFT see the benefits of the partnership.

Monthly Tours

A series of on-farm tours are held monthly from April-October and led by experienced growers, focusing on a specific aspect of sustainable farming. Participating farms enable their interns and employees to participate in these events and must be willing to share their experience with others, which creates a sense of community amongst interns as well as farmers.

Monthly tours are typically scheduled on weekend days later in the afternoon and last a total of 4-5 hours. They include a general farm tour, a specific topic (as set during the March meeting), and a potluck with all participants. Participation in CRAFT tours is voluntary for both farm members and interns.

Farm tours are voluntary for member farmers and targeted to farmers as well as to interns. Optimally, tours have 20-30 participants but, in some cases, more than 50 participants challenged organizers to speak up and participants to step forward. This structure implies a range of knowledge levels, which has, on occasion, challenged organizers but also encourages cross-pollination between farmers and interns. The timing of these tours discourages long travel distances and also limits the CRAFT network to a one- or two-hour drive.

RESOURCE: PLACE-BASED EDUCATION AND GROWING

The Southern Appalachians are mountainous and often provide a fairly complex landscape with many marginal lands. These areas are adequate for intensive ecological farming, such as organic market gardening, intensive grazing, and diversified mixed farming.

This CRAFT node reflects this specific environmental setting. It regularly shares articles on topics specific for the region with specific sections on vegetable production, diversified small-scale livestock, integrated systems (rotating pig pasturing with field production), specialized products and on-farm processing. Also, the CRAFT farmers (with Organic Growers School), organize two or three round tables each winter on relevant topics where farmers exchange experiences about intern management, improving internship programs, and hiring, but also on less immediate topics like new tools, individualized gizmos, and collective sharing of knowledge.

The CRAFT group has developed a handbook with over 600 pages, primarily written by member farmers. It offers resources on basic production topics, but also other resources on marketing, employee management, etc. Author farmers received payments for their articles; however, this compendium also offers resources from other organizations included at no additional charge.
Impacts

Since the CRAFT program started in 2005, over 450 farmers and farm workers/interns have been supported. In 2013, 100% reported that they feel ready to start farming or improve their existing operations. Today, the Organic Growers School is laying out a more in-depth impact assessment survey to evaluate the CRAFT program. The most obvious impacts are past interns who started farming themselves and sell in the region. However, Organic Growers School also seeks more clarity about past interns who have not become farmers themselves because of a reality check, and/or because they have become advocates for sustainable food outside the immediate farming community.

What Farmers Say About CRAFT

• “These farmers really do their homework. [At one farm] they showed us products and systems that we had not seen or read about elsewhere. Another benefit of any tour, but particularly these, is being able to get behind the hype. To me that means hearing the failures and questions a farmer has, and the things he/she is experimenting with. You can’t get this any other way than at a CRAFT tour. And, meeting the farmers and the interns and having time to talk allows us all to build a network of help and sharing and spreads good practices farther and faster.”

• “Believe it or not, hosting an event this year was incredibly eye opening. Having other farmers and apprentices out to see our farm and our operations created dialogue about opportunities that I could not see with my own eye. When you can see your farm through the eyes of farmers you respect and trust, you can gain perspective on your farm’s challenges and assets.”

• “Yes, it has opened my eyes to many of the aspects I need to consider when making plans. Seeing and hearing other farmers’ successes and struggles has been a great help.”

• “This has been such a valuable aspect of my apprenticeship this year. Seeing other vegetable farms and hearing lots of information from new farmers … getting the overall feel of farming has been awesome.”

4.2 OZARKS CRAFT

The Ozark region is situated in climate zone 6, and the mild climate allows year-round growing in tunnels and field plantings in March. With the warm summers of this area, farmers can make use of broad shoulder season and access to water is plentiful with an excellent aquifer and lots of streams and rivers.

Farm internships typically last from the beginning of March until the end of October. Recreational activities such as canoeing and hiking the scenic hills and rivers, along with very reasonable land costs, are important factors in attracting interns. Farm products are usually marketed to the urban area of Springfield, Missouri, a town of 400,000 inhabitants that is still underserviced in terms of locally produced food.
History

The network was founded in 2008 by Millsap Farms and Urban Roots Farm, following the model of the Angelic Organics Learning Center. The founders very much enjoyed the freedom of the CRAFT idea, as it is non-prescriptive. The network has grown slowly over the past six years, hosting approximately 25 interns over that time, with half who are still involved in farming. In 2014, interns stayed on four farms and 12 farms contributed to tours. Member farms are diverse, with several market and CSA farms, one goat cheese dairy, one pastured poultry producer, and one urban farm.

Organizational Structure

So far, the CRAFT network in this region is relatively small and most decisions are made on an informal basis. Only full-time farmers who are organic in practice are permitted into the group. In the medium term, it is hoped that there will be a part-time position that grows the size of the network. However, the farmer members do not want to create a nonprofit or other entity.

The Farm Tour

Single day workshops are held on host farms monthly between February and October. Workshops include class time led by farmers and extension specialists, lunch, and a tour of the host farm. As part of each farm tour, participants contribute an hour or two of work to the farm hosting the workshop to help offset their loss of a day of work.

All workshops and tours are open to the general public for a modest fee (approximately $20), which helps defray the cost of the Ozarks CRAFT program. Ozarks CRAFT interns are exempt from registration fees. The intended audience for these workshops are people interested in learning more about the details of farming for market, and specifically people who already have some on-farm experience and are ready to expand their knowledge base to become better farmer – managing crops, livestock, land, and labor for the benefit of all.

In 2014, workshop topics included:

- Pruning and grafting fruit trees
- Soil health and fertility management
- Marketing for farmers
- Tractor and small engine safety and operation basics
- Weed and pest management
- Farm budgeting and production planning
- Grazing and Pastures

Future Aspirations

The Ozark Lake area has very few organic farms and only full-time farmers are allowed to participate in the CRAFT program. Many part-time farmers are anticipating a transition to full-time farming in the coming years. At this point, these farmers participate by hosting field days. Many field days include work bees, such as putting up a high tunnel or similar larger efforts that need many hands. They hope to have up to 25 farms hosting apprentices within the next decade.
4.3 UNITED PIEDMONT CRAFT

Members of the CRAFT group of United Piedmont are located in an area of central North Carolina with driving distances of less than an hour between farms.

CRAFT United Piedmont features new and established farmers dedicated to creating a more just and sustainable food system in central North Carolina through training, social events, and community resource development throughout the region. Most farms market directly and are located within the vicinity of an urban centre, where the main customer base is located, but some farms also market wholesale.

Through CRAFT United Piedmont, inspiring leaders in the local farming community host educational tours on their farms once a month from June to November. Each tour focuses on a special topic and is followed by a community potluck. Farm tours are open to the public and host a wide variety of participants (interested general public, gardeners, beginning to advanced farmers), and are promoted to the sustainable farming community.

History

The idea of a local CRAFT group was originally voiced by an employee of the Inter-faith Food Shuttle, who had participated in CRAFT network events elsewhere. The nonprofit allocated a small budget within its larger farmer education program for this effort, equivalent to approximate staff time of a half day per week on average.

The Food Shuttle called meetings with the farming community in 2013, and several members of the community signed up to contribute in some form or another, but no one assumed responsibility for a coordinating role, which is continued by the Food Shuttle.

Organizational Structure

This new program does not yet have any formal membership structure. Decision-making is mainly based on the guidance provided in three community meetings, attended mostly by farmers from three towns. At those meetings, farmers identified the value they’d like to see from CRAFT. Frequent informal communication amongst the most active contributors remains the core decision mechanism.

The Farm Tour

Farm tours are scheduled on weekends and typically last several hours. In accordance with the host’s availability, typical time slots are 10:00am-2:00pm or 2:00pm-7:00pm. At the farm, tours generally include an introduction of all participants, background on the farm and its farmers, and a specific topic. Tours also include a potluck meal, either for lunch or dinner. The main target audience is farmers, people involved in agricultural education programs, farms with internship programs, organizations working on agricultural issues, and home gardeners.
So far, participants have represented a wide and diverse group, and tours have been engaging with interesting content. Tours provide networking opportunities and potlucks add fun. One of the shortcomings identified was that one target audience, farm interns, were difficult to reach.

### 4.4 NORTHWEST LOWER MICHIGAN CRAFT

The ISLAND guilds started off as a CRAFT program intended for farmers and farm interns. Over time, the initiative evolved into a number of local guilds on topics like small farming, fruit trees, beekeeping and growing mushrooms – enhancing growers’ practices through tours, potlucks and informal workshops. This program is supplemented by ISLAND’s workshops targeted to homeowners, homesteaders and farmers. Workshops teach skills like tool fabrication and maintenance, food preservation, livestock husbandry, soil development, care and use of farm machinery and other equipment, construction and use of passive solar hoop houses, garden design, and more. During the last nine years, scores of these workshops have reached thousands of community members in order to increase food literacy at all levels.

Members of the guilds are located within a driving range of three hours. However, many guilds have split into regional nodes which limits driving to little more than an hour.

**History**

ISLAND is a nonprofit arts and ecology center dedicated to connecting people with nature, art and community. ISLAND helps people become native to place by:

- supporting artists-visionaries, conceptual explorers, and compelling communicators with dedicated time, space and resources to create new work;
- restoring the old and developing the new skills and traditions of community self-reliance;
- creating and sharing a broad collection of tools for ecological living.

Founded in March 2005, ISLAND explores the intersections of art and ecology. ISLAND began with Brad and Amanda Kik’s shared belief that the arts and ecology are intertwined and essential to enriching community. In collaboration with local and federal agencies and nonprofits, ISLAND has organized hundreds of workshops and events about how to live more sustainably. The organization has founded school and community gardens, created a network for small farmers, supported artists through the Hill House residency program, and acted as a planning partner for the Northern Michigan Small Farm Conference. ISLAND programs have reached thousands of people in our community over the last nine years.

In 2009, an ISLAND staff member had the idea to start a CRAFT group for interns and farmers. However, the farms contacted were part-time and had neither interns nor staff. So, farm tours were initially attended by farmers themselves, but then attendance dropped in the following years.
The mushroom and beekeeping guilds preceded the CRAFT idea. These guilds lend themselves to sharing equipment, bulk ordering, or joint pick-up of supplies.

**Guilds**

Guilds provide mutual support for skill-building. Functions of a guild include peer-to-peer learning, mentorship, demonstrations, workshops, and conferences. Other guild functions include swapping and bartering, sharing work, and celebrating community. Guild members share the strength of many through advocacy, problem-solving, collective bargaining, and shared marketing.

Currently, ISLAND facilitates seven guilds for small farmers, orchardists, green building design, grain, beekeeping, fiber, and mushroom growing. Each group has defined main activities which address the specific needs of each topic. For example, small farmers tend to have farm tours and informal workshops, while the orchard guild offers grafting and pruning workshops by professional teachers, or one-on-one mentorship in the beekeepers guild. The guild events are open to other people, but the guild framework gives its members organizational flexibility. Also, the level and type of social activities varies considerably: while potlucks are important to orchardists and fiber processors, small farmers prefer meet-and-greets over drinks, while seed and knowledge sharing events are preferred in the Grain Guild.

Some guilds are currently in the process of forming steering committees. During discussions, they came up with several project ideas, some of which were supported by ISLAND with proposal writing and awarded with grants. Guild members have communicated that the administrative role from ISLAND remains necessary because staff time for setting up and preparing meetings is believed to be essential.

**Future Aspirations**

- Small farmers are currently scaling up production and growing their businesses from the hobbyist, part-time scale to becoming full-time farmers. This process takes time and requires care, but ISLAND is confident that local food supply will increase over the next years.

- Guilds are expanding their scope: several have gotten (or are getting) involved in additional activities like equipment sharing, distribution alliances, and bulk input purchasing, thereby addressing each guild’s specific requirements. It is not clear how to institutionalize such additional activities, but ISLAND welcomes the new benefits for its members.

- ISLAND will continue building community around local food that connects growers and distributors with each other, but also educates consumers and connects consumers and growers.

**LESSONS FOR OTHER GROUPS**

ISLAND has limited capacity in terms of knowledge transfer. However, members have established networks with other organizations and collaborate with those on specific topics. For example, in regards to specific business planning courses, ISLAND helps make connections with other local groups. Similarly, nearby university-based extension services can mentor on several technical issues and also provide workshops. This collaborative mindset allows ISLAND to focus its own resources and develop specific capacities, such as workshops or practical community education with their mobile vegetable processing trailer (canning, pickling, etc) or their mobile chicken processing facility.
4.5 **UPPER-MIDWEST CRAFT**

The Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (Upper Midwest CRAFT) is a farmer-led coalition offering multi-year training for biodynamic, organic, and sustainable farmers and market gardeners. Upper Midwest CRAFT is facilitated by Angelic Organics Learning Center.

**History**

Founded in 1997 by ten farmers from northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin, Upper Midwest CRAFT was the second CRAFT network in the United States. Drawing from the model established by Jean-Paul Courtens and colleagues in New York state, Upper Midwest CRAFT was founded in order to support farm interns and apprentices in building their farming skill sets. Now, over 15 years later, the Upper Midwest CRAFT network includes over 80 farms and supports the needs of farm managers, farm business owners, farm employees and those planning to farm.

**Organizational Structure**

Since this CRAFT network is facilitated by a nonprofit organization (Angelic Organics Learning Center), a best practice has been the creation of a steering committee that guides the farming network. Because of the large size of the network, participants found it important to have a small group of farmers taking the lead to guide the program’s general direction. The steering committee is made up of a minimum of three-quarters CRAFT farmers with a minimum of three member farms. Currently, there are 18 steering committee members, 16 of which are CRAFT farmers. The steering committee convenes once a year in November to review the current state of the network, communicate needs to Angelic Organics Learning Center, and brainstorm ideas for field days for the upcoming year. Additionally, in late winter, there is an annual, full-day meeting for all CRAFT members to gather, socialize, discuss farmer needs, and talk about upcoming programs.

Membership in Upper Midwest CRAFT is divided into three categories: Farm Member, Farm Intern/Employee and Friend of CRAFT. Member farms are people who own or manage a farm business. In 2014, this group had 85 farms in the network. CRAFT farms can add interns or employees to their farm membership so that they can be included in email correspondence and attend field days (on-farm tours that include a teaching or hands-on component). Members who join the network as a Friend of CRAFT may be looking for work on a farm, interested in starting their own farm, or are supporters of regional sustainable agriculture initiatives. Member farms pay an annual membership fee of $45, adding $10 extra for each employee/intern. Friends of CRAFT pay $65 annually.

**IN SHORT**

- Upper Midwest CRAFT is facilitated by Angelic Organics Learning Center
- Founded in 1997
- 15 or more farms participate in farm tours
- [www.learngrowconnect.org/craft](http://www.learngrowconnect.org/craft)
Funding

The Upper Midwest CRAFT program is funded through annual membership revenues, which in 2014 was approximately $6,000. On average, expenses consist of $1,500 to pay farmers for hosting field days, $3,000 to print and mail the annual CRAFT Handbook, $300 in food for meetings, $400 in program supplies for field day potlucks and promotional materials, and $1,100 in mileage reimbursement for facilitators to attend events. Angelic Organics Learning Center’s general operating budget covers indirect costs, overhead and the labor (an 85% full-time equivalent) that goes into administration of CRAFT.

Benefits

The Upper Midwest CRAFT network offers both farmer-to-farmer training opportunities and a supportive network for sustainable farmers in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin. The group offers 10-12 field days annually at member farms on different topics suggested by the steering committee for CRAFT members to attend. CRAFT Field Days are free for all CRAFT members. Non-members can attend one CRAFT Field Day for free before joining CRAFT. All other services are available only to members.

Additionally, the facilitator sends out weekly eNewsletters and occasional eBlasts featuring job postings, member announcements, land opportunities, classifieds, workshops, and farming news. CRAFT members also receive a 60-page handbook each spring that contains a list of the farmer training programs offered by Angelic Organics Learning Center (which facilitates the Upper Midwest CRAFT network), a detailed farm profile of each CRAFT farm, and a map of the locations of CRAFT farms.

CRAFT members also receive discounts to workshops at area nonprofits and get access to the Upper Midwest CRAFT Listserv, through which they can immediately access the collective expertise of the group. Lastly, CRAFT members have access to Angelic Organics Learning Center’s farmer-training programs, such as the Technical Assistance Program and the Farm Asset Builder agricultural IDA (individual development account) matched-savings program. Angelic Organics routinely receives feedback that the field days, electronic newsletter and social networking are the most valuable components of CRAFT.

Attendance at field days can fluctuate widely ranging between 40 or 50 attendees depending on the location or the day of the week. There is usually a good mix of CRAFT Farmers, Friends of CRAFT, and farm interns and employees. There are often 1-2 external people who come out to the field days, sometimes extended family or friends of CRAFT members, who have the opportunity to attend one field day for free before joining CRAFT themselves.

Challenges

Because the network extends over such a large area, it is frequently difficult for farmers to attend field days or events. The network stretches approximately 200 miles from its northern edge to the southern edge. Participation at field days by farm employees and interns is also limited as busy farm managers find it difficult to take time away from their farms during the growing season.

The group is currently tackling the most immediate, short-term obstacle of sporadic farmer attendance at field days, by offering longer field days in the future. This is anticipated to create a greater incentive to travel the long distances typical in this region. Instead of three-hour events and a one-hour potluck, the group pairs two farm visits on the same day or incorporates a more substantial educational module in conjunction with the farm-tour/on-farm demonstrations.
Evaluations received from member farmers also demonstrate their need for support in accessing capital, increasing production skills, and gaining access to land and markets. The programs that are being developed at Angelic Organics Learning Center’s Farmer Training Initiative in the next three years focus on:

- developing a mentoring program
- planning and implementing an agricultural Individual Development Account matched-savings program
- offering microfinancing references and resources; and
- hosting advanced winter workshops on the subjects of record keeping, financing, marketing and land access.

The Farmer Training Initiative works to train the next generation of sustainable farmers. Led by the experienced farmers from the CRAFT, Angelic Organics offers business planning, on-farm training, and mentoring directly from the region’s best farmers.
Part II

Improving Effectiveness of a Diverse Network

A note from the Authors
This second part of this CRAFT report takes Part I (Mapping Diversity) to the next level, by cross-analyzing specific themes of interest. While the first part that described how different networks approach their activities, this part now outlines the range of options for specific activities. It is meant to guide new CRAFT groups or networks that are interested in calling themselves CRAFT, on how they may approach decision-making, funding, social activities, and farm tours.

This part is simply a suggestion or starting point. It does, in no way, reflect the full diversity of opinions within the CRAFT networks and is not meant to represent such. Instead, it aims to describe, not prescribe, strategies that have proven successful in our networks and also point out enabling factors and local success factors. It is meant to assist or add to a discussion.
5. Cross-Sectional Analysis

5.1 WHAT IS CRAFT?

Who is targeted by CRAFT groups?

CRAFT education is not limited to internships. Some CRAFT groups with a young sustainable farming sector are mostly targeted to beginning farmers. Later, small-scale, full-term farmers often work with apprentices and interns. Their years of experience make them excellent teachers of practical farm production skills, and interns can, in exchange for this education and lifestyle experience, alleviate the workload during peak months.

Mature, larger farms often shift towards hiring skilled agricultural labor, either year-around or seasonal. Hired labor is more reliable, suitable for specialized work tasks, easier to manage, and a reduced risk of quitting or premature termination. Even with minimal intern stipends around $200 per month, plus room and board, many owners of mature farms reported that hired labor is ultimately less costly. However, most maturing CRAFT farms continue to offer some internship positions for beginners who want to explore a farming career, and these internship positions are highly sought after.

In summary, findings point out that the role of CRAFT networks change with the maturity of the sustainable farming sector in an area. The flexibility of the CRAFT network allows education objectives to evolve with the maturity of the member farmers and the sustainable farming sector in a region.

What are minimum expectations if you are a CRAFT farmer?

CRAFT farmers must commit to:

- Educating other farmers, farm staff, and beginners who are interested in a farming career with the objective to grow the sustainable farming sector everywhere.

- Share expertise and experience openly with regional prospective farmers through scheduled CRAFT events.

- Enable your farmer interns/employees to participate fully and faithfully in the core CRAFT program. Provide interns/employees with CRAFT handbooks, schedules, reminders, and the ability to negotiate time-off for events. The core CRAFT program includes the seasonal field day workshops at member farms, intern exchanges and informal visits between member farms.

Furthermore, CRAFT farmers are asked to do as follows:

- Protect the environment, minimize soil degradation and erosion, decrease pollution, optimize biological productivity and promote a sound state of health. While few CRAFT groups require their member farms to follow any specific certification regime, member farmers often follow organic and biodynamic practices.

Depending on the specific organizational choice of a local group, member farmers:

- Must participate in winter planning events for the summer education (one or two meetings); OR consider serving on the CRAFT Steering Committee that guides the directions of our CRAFT alliance.

- Contribute to the financial sustainability of the local CRAFT network, such as volunteering their time, paying a membership fee, or by donating to the organization that facilitates the meetings. Details must be clearly set out by each CRAFT network.
5.2 ORGANIZING FIELD DAYS

Craft Farm Tours / Field Days

During the summer months, the core activity of CRAFT networks are farm tours, sometimes called field days or CRAFT days. These farm tours take very different shapes, owing to the different nature of each region, climate, distance amongst member farms, targeted audiences, maturity of the CRAFT group, role of facilitating nonprofits, and other reasons.

With groups drawing farms from an area between one to six driving hours, the timing of CRAFT farm tours varies considerably.

Duration and Number of CRAFT Days Per Year

The duration of a tour can be a full day, a half day, or an evening. Groups with longer travel times tend to have longer tours to make it worth the effort.

The number of CRAFT days per year varies between 6-14 tours. One reason for this wide range is that regional climate tours for interns mainly make sense during the growing season. However, some CRAFT groups are closely aligned with nonprofit courses that stretch into the winter, thus extending the workshop season. Other groups have very intense summer months, such as the tourist-destination East End of Long Island CRAFT. This group has decided to suspend tours at peak tourist season, when farmers are too busy with multiple marketing venues. Instead, the tours are shifted into the early and late season that are calmer.

Workshops: Topics and Instructors

Workshops are presentations or guided conversations on a particular topic. The choice of topics depends on several aspects. If targeted to interns, then the same basic farming topics (e.g. marketing, crop planning, soil health) can be covered year by year and can be fairly specific (biodynamic production techniques, food safety and post-harvest handling, greenhouse heating design). If workshops are targeted to beginning farmers, then there should be new topics in new years to encourage continuing participation. If targeted to the general public, then topics should be more general and also educate about the food system as a whole.

Topics and dates are usually set during a winter meeting of the farm members or the steering committee, taking into account suggestions and guidance by trainees. Typically, workshop topics are chosen broadly and cover the core themes of soils, plants, animals, and people. Tours expose participants to the diversity in the region and should balance visits to larger and smaller farms, organic, biodynamic and sustainable farms, new and continuing CRAFT members, and farms throughout the geographic region.

Workshops are typically conveyed by the host farmer. Often, farms will volunteer to host a specific topic they feel passionate about, and peers will suggest those farms most capable of delivering quality. In some areas, extension or research specialists are invited, in addition to the host. Such experienced external instructors can greatly increase the depth of the workshop, and the host farmer will benefit from another knowledgeable pair of eyes on his practices. While the reliance on experts is welcomed by some groups, others believe that the tours are a mechanism to build teaching capacity within the network and, thus, prefer to engage their farmer members. Some groups also visit non-member farms or destinations such as abattoirs and packing facilities. While these tours can be highly successful and welcomed by
participants, groups should ensure that network and leadership building objective of a CRAFT group are met.

On large farm tours, it may be interesting to offer multiple perspectives on a particular topic. Discussion panels can offer this diversity and also draw more experienced farmers to the tour – as panelists, as audience, or for social reasons.

**The Weekday**

Groups vary considerably during weekdays when they offer tours: some chose the same weekday throughout the season; others offer weekend tours; and others let the host farmers choose the time. All choices have advantages and disadvantages:

- Weekends are chosen by several groups, such as the Hudson Valley CRAFT, Western North Carolina, and others. One core advantage is that Saturday afternoons are not work time on most farms, and farmers will not lose staff labor time. A disadvantage that was reported is that interns are often tired and have other, private business to attend outside of their work time. An advantage is that fully paid staff can participate without costing the host farmer a full workday. This model may be more attractive to regions that have evolved toward paid staff, where internship education plays a lesser overall role.

- CRAFT Southwest Ontario always tours on Wednesdays. Farmers who deliver on this day or cannot free their interns/staff on that day due to regular obligations cannot join this CRAFT group – the regular participation of staff on tours is a membership criterion. Member farmers, however, welcome the easy scheduling once this drawback is accepted.

- Evening tours are popular in many CRAFT groups, especially if member farms are geographically close. These tours typically happen after the workday and do not cost the hosting farmers work hours. It is easier to vary the day of the week during evening tours, and can be more frequent than full-day tours, exposing participants to a greater variety of farms. At the same time, both participants and hosts are tired after a workday and the short time can limit depth.

- Half-day tours combine the benefits of providing more time, but also cut into the workday. They are only reasonable in geographically close areas, because otherwise the work half would be lost to travel.

**Participants**

Participants can be farm interns/apprentices, junior staff, beginning farmers, or the general public. Some groups specify that only farm interns and staff from member farms are permitted to attend the tours. Other groups are less restrictive. Additional visitors may make arrangements with host farmers with the CRAFT coordinator or simply be charged a fee. Some groups specify that a number of farms should attend to broaden the scope where apprentices can ask questions. Other groups specifically discourage questions from other farmers that lead to deep discussions where others are lost. Some groups believe that educating the general public is part of the CRAFT mandate, while others prefer to focus on farmer-to-farmer education and suggest other venues for public outreach.

An interesting group is Northwest Lower Michigan CRAFT. The area has too few interns for an intern-focused group. Instead, the original CRAFT group morphed into a few guilds, which can specialize on topics such as market gardens, orchards, grain, beekeeping, fiber, or mushroom growing. Participants are mostly small-scale hobby or part-time farmers, some of which aspire to make it a full-time career.
Remuneration of Farm Hosts and Work Bees

Different models to reciprocate the time and effort of farm hosts exist. Some groups pay host farmers in cash, in return for their effort. Other groups include work bees (field work by participants on the host farm), ranging from 30 to 90 minutes, where all participants must offer some labor, usually low-priority jobs that farmers would like to get done, such as cleaning up, weeding, picking stones, etc. Other groups provide exposure to the public through their tours or no remuneration at all.

A work bee fits better into a full-day tour than into a 2-hour evening tour that occurs after a long day of work. Tours that are open to the general public are less suitable for work bees, whereas interns are already somewhat trained to move in fields. There is great strength in numbers. Work bees should be well-prepared, not too onerous, avoid any form of danger – ultimately, bonding and social times are an important objective of working together. Work bees are highly welcomed by farmers in Southwestern Ontario and an additional and real incentive to host farm days.

“Our region is too large for tours... What can we do?”

With five driving hours north to south, the large spatial extend of Southwest Ontario and a growing membership have challenged the group on how to maintain the group feeling and bonding amongst farmers in a practical manner. The group has decided to form subnodes. While some of the farm tours are targeted to the subnodes only, other tours (“megadays”) take place on larger farms that can entertain 50+ participants. Megadays are opportunities for all interns to see each other and welcome networking events. Megadays also offer to deviate from the workshop pattern and host a larger discussion panel.

5.3 STEERING COMMITTEE AND (BI-) ANNUAL PLANNING MEETINGS

Who is the Steering Committee?

A CRAFT steering committee guides the general direction of the farmer-led CRAFT network or program. If linked to a nonprofit, the steering committee recommends guidelines for how the facilitating nonprofit executes specific tasks and its fundraising strategies.

In some CRAFT groups, all member farms automatically are members of the steering committee, as well. In other groups, the steering committee supports a nonprofit in the execution of its actions, and farmer members appoint or elect members.

The steering committee outlines CRAFT membership criteria, selects and orients new members to CRAFT, and points out successful strategies for internships and mentorships. This can be done in the form of mentorships from senior to junior members, an education advisor, informal support networks, manuals, and discussions. The committee also facilitates conflict management between members on CRAFT issues upon requests of members.

Upper Midwest CRAFT is a program facilitated by the Angelic Organics Learning Center. It has formed a steering committee that is composed of at least three-quarters CRAFT farmers and a minimum of three member farms. Participants are encouraged to think in circles, deal with uncertainty, bring and enjoy good snacks, and have a good sense of humor.
Planning Meetings and Tasks of the Steering Committee

To plan farm tours and organize membership and other activities, most CRAFT groups meet once or twice annually during the winter months. During these meetings, farmers (and, if applicable, the facilitating nonprofit) meet and discuss questions such as new farmer members, shared advertisement and outreach activities, farm tours, and other activities like participating in the international CRAFT meetings.

General principles to run efficiently apply to these planning meetings: a coordinator should invite sufficiently early, send out reminders to all participants, and collect agenda items. The following steps are recommended:

- assign the roles of a chair, timekeeper, and minute taker
- use explicit motions and voting on these in order to clearly record decisions; and
- restrain from straying off topic during the core meeting.

If farmers volunteer their time and feel that contract staff, for example nonprofit facilitators or other participants, elongates the meeting in order to avoid returning to their office, they quickly lose patience and ownership.

However, planning meetings are also important networking occasions that promote personal bonds between participants, develop ownership to farmers, and foster leadership. These soft objectives of winter meetings should be taken into account, and meetings should not be rushed. Convening an annual meeting as a side event of a larger conference may reduce travel time and increase participation, but may also undermine the bonding experience for CRAFT member farms. It is recommended to balance the objectives of effectiveness, easy accessibility, and group formation carefully.

5.4 NETWORKING, SOCIAL ACTIVITIES, AND FOOD

CRAFT tours are often welcome excuses to leave the farm and engage with like-minded people in busy times. The great value of networking is a key success factor of the CRAFT idea. Networks build member farmers between interns/staff from sustainable farms in an area and between staff and farmers from different farms. Networking builds personal bonds, provides emotional support during hard times, gives space for practical questions, allows comparing the effectiveness of particular practices during seasonal weather anomalies, offers discussions about tools and tips on how to tweak tools, helps input purchasing, and more.

Next to education, networking is the core objective of farm tours. CRAFT Southwest Ontario thus rotates tours and all members must participate – if not this year, then the next. Tours are not targeting external participants, including instructors, because that would impair the group-building experience. Potluck lunch, morning coffee, and a work bee that allows more opportunity for open chat are additional ways to build the feeling of a movement. Dishes for the potluck should be brought by the participant to avoid trash as well as effort for the host farmer.

An infinite number of opportunities for networking and social bonding can be successful for CRAFT groups. Successes include pub days on a certain weekday, a listserver for interns, one intern designated to be the social planner, and simply a table with contact information of other interns such that they can connect with each other, and overnight camping parties or jamming sessions for interns.
The trust amongst a farmer network grows with time, contact, and visits. For this reason, effective winter meetings allow socializing on the side. If all member farmers are encouraged to visit at least one CRAFT farm tour and get to know each other’s operations, it is easier to relate to each other and pose good questions. Also, keeping groups focused on farm members and avoiding external participation is one way of strengthening contacts within the network. Common activities, such as a visit to a conference or assembly, can further build bridges amongst participants.

5.5 THE ROLE OF NONPROFITS IN FACILITATING CRAFT FARMER NETWORKS

CRAFT groups are farmer-to-farmer learning networks. As such, they should be centered around the needs, expectations and requirements of farmers. That said, history shows that many groups collaborate in some way with nonprofits.

The level engagement of nonprofits is a spectrum:

• Some groups, like the first CRAFT group in Hudson Valley, have entirely formed on the initiative of volunteer farmers who wanted to improve their educational programs. This group believes that nonprofits are not necessary for the success of a CRAFT group.

• Other groups were launched by a nonprofit who supported the first years and then quickly handed over control and all responsibilities to farm leaders. One example is CRAFT Mid-Hudson. Here, CRAFT was encouraged by project staff who were on a short-term contract. In the first year, staff set up a meeting schedule, organized farm tours, and reached out to leaders. At the end of the year, the group called its first steering committee meeting with several leaders of the local farming community, including two farms with a nonprofit educational branch. The farmers took over full responsibility, while one of the nonprofits volunteered to host the website and perform some administrative duties. However, the coordination of the planning meeting and the farm tours remained the responsibility of farmers. Today, the coordinator is elected for two years and receives a remuneration of $1,000 per year for his/her efforts out of membership fees.

• A third example is CRAFT Southwestern Ontario. The group was launched by two interns who learned about Hudson Valley CRAFT. The interns organized farmer leaders who already have demonstrated their interest in new farmer education. One intern then was hired by a nonprofit educational center for organic farming. This position gave her an opportunity to continue the coordination of the group, and access funding to develop educational material (manuals for both new farmers and educators). When she took maternity leave from her position, the group was established enough to be self-reliant. Direct funding by the nonprofit was never necessary because the group covers all expenses through membership contributions.

• In other groups, nonprofit branches of farms coordinate the CRAFT network on behalf of farmers. Angelic Organic Learning Center offers facilitation support, as well as coordination to its farmer network. A steering committee guides all decisions and actions of the nonprofit coordinator, and farmers appoint/elect steering committee members from their membership.

All of these examples are CRAFT groups that have existed for more than ten years. The role of nonprofits has evolved in most of these groups, and significantly differed during the first year. These successful examples show how minor involvement of nonprofits is highly beneficial during the first years. Careful involvement during further years can additionally lower the burden on farmers. However, farmer
leadership and membership fees are successful strategies to maintain farmer ownership of these networks.

5.6 FINANCES AND FUNDING

There is not a single financing model for CRAFT networks.

Some groups rely entirely on volunteer time of all participants. These groups tend to be farmer-driven and not reliant on nonprofit facilitation, and may also be located in closer geographic vicinity.

Other CRAFT groups finance themselves independently through membership fees of farmers with annual memberships costing between $50 and $150 per farm. While this fee-based model may be seen as a barrier by some groups, it also gives groups independence from host organizations/nonprofits and provides funds for remunerating a volunteer coordinator.

Yet other groups are hosted by nonprofits, who can access grant funding. This model usually provides staff time for a coordinator who organizes the annual meetings and facilitates tours. Some groups actually pay farm tour hosts in exchange for their time. Another funding model are “friends-of-CRAFT” sponsor memberships.

In addition to grants and membership fees, some groups get revenue from charging farm tour participants.

5.7 BASELINE FARM INFO

Baseline farm info provides the basis for your website posting and is a good send-out for farm tour participants. The following form is a guide that provides a template to anticipate commonly asked questions. It also gives interns who are serious about farming a written record of different farm types/management to assist them as they venture into farming. Each farm will receive a compilation of this information for all CRAFT farms to provide to CRAFT participants:

• Farm Name
• Phone number
• Mailing Address
• Email
• Directions to Farm
• Physical Description

Describe the physical setting of the farm (topographical setting and structures).
Total acreage of the farm and tillable acreage last season.
Describe types of crops grown and acreage for each type (perennials, orchard, vegetables, cereals, pasture etc).
What is your soil type?
What are the first and last frost dates?
What is average first date of tillage?
How do you use the remaining land?
• Farm History
  
  * When was the farm founded?
  * How long have you been a farmer?
  * What was occupation prior to farming?

• Growing
  
  * How do you cultivate? (what tractors with HP/draft power, what cultivation equipment?)
  * How do you irrigate?
  * Do you have a greenhouse?
  * Describe greenhouse.

• Labor
  
  * Who works on your farm? (year round and in-season, type of labor used)

• Livestock
  
  * What types of livestock do you have?
  * How are animals integrated into the overall farm?

• Distribution/Marketing
  
  * Describe markets and distribution system (if CSA) you use.
  * Total number of pounds distributed/sold last season.

• Fertility
  
  * How do you manage your overall farm fertility?

Please feel free to include additional basic data about your farm.

5.8 RESOURCES

Manuals by the CRAFT group

• “Oh To Grow” - (Ignatius Jesuit Centre, Ontario)

  This booklet summarizes the basics that you need to know about sustainable farming: soil, nutrients, organic matter, crop rotation, cover crops, pests, weed management, farm implements, and certification. The compact booklet provides an entry point for new beginners, but also contains a lot of data and useful tables. The perfect preparation for CRAFT day workshops!

• “Nurturing New Farmers: A practical guide to hosting interns and mentoring the next generation of farmers” - (Ignatius Jesuit Centre, Ontario)

  The authors have compiled tips and answers to questions that farmers posed about hosting farm internships and managing employees in regards to hosting interns, how to develop an internship program, recruitment, starting and running an internship program, legal basics and tips.
• “The Crop Manual” - (Roxbury Farm, Hudson Valley)
  www.roxburyfarm.com/crop-manual

  This crop manual describes how Roxbury Farm seeds, transplants, protects, and cultivates each of their crops.

• “The Harvest Manual: Standard Operating Procedures” - (Roxbury Farm, Hudson Valley)
  www.roxburyfarm.com/harvest-manual

  Jean-Paul Courtens, the inspiration of the first CRAFT group in North America, runs a mixed 300-acre farm that includes a 1,200-member CSA. In a very detailed manner, Jean-Paul shares the operating procedures on his farm, ranging from tips on how to move to time targets. Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) not only improve the work flow of a farm, improve food safety, and make the operation less reliant on the owner’s supervision, but are also a perfect tool for educating interns, communicating handling and food safety needs, and offer a place where interns can remind themselves on specific details independently.

• A list of resources and books
  www.glynwood.org/programs/glynwood-farm/craft

  Glynwood Farm from Mid Hudson CRAFT has compiled a list of books and other resources on sustainable farming, which is kept up to date.

• A sample bylaw
  www.bloomingfieldsfarm.com/cft_frameindex.html

  While not technically a bylaw, CRAFT Western Connecticut provides a good summary and starting point for how their CRAFT group functions. (A bylaw is only legally defined for incorporated entities.)

• “CRAFT Handbook 2013” - (Upper Midwest CRAFT)

  Upper Midwest CRAFT published a handbook that describes many aspects of their CRAFT group, including: how Angelic Organics Learning Center facilitates this group, the steering committee, their membership criteria and a commitment statement for member farms, links with the Farm Beginnings® program and other farm training resources in the Upper Midwest, member farm profiles, core competencies and learning stages for beginning farmers, and how different education initiatives align with each other.

Reports by CRAFT groups

• “Collaborative Regional Alliances for Farmer Training: Best Practices of CRAFT Farmer Alliances in North America” - (Thorsten Arnold, Jenny Doty)

  The objective of this study was to gather information about existing CRAFT networks, the resources they use, their operational and decision structure, their history, the lessons and success stories, as well as their challenges and struggles.
Part III

Appendix
## CRAFT Farmer Alliances in North America and Their Websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>CRAFT Ontario Kawartha</td>
<td>craftfarms.ca</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CRAFT Ontario Kingston</td>
<td>facebook.com/CRAFTkingston/info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CRAFT Ontario Northeastern</td>
<td>ontariofarminternships.ca/north-eastern-ontario-farms.html</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CRAFT Ontario Ottawa</td>
<td>justfood.ca/get-involved/food-work-ottawa-region/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CRAFT Ontario Southwest</td>
<td>craftsouthwestontario.ca/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>Catskills CRAFT</td>
<td>catskillscraft.org/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Central Coast CRAFT</td>
<td>sites.google.com/site/centralcoastcraft/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chesapeake CRAFT</td>
<td>chesapeakecraft.wordpress.com/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CRAFT in the Hudson Valley/Berkshires/Pioneer Valley</td>
<td>craftfarmapprentice.com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CRAFT United Piedmont</td>
<td>foodshuttle.org/we-teach/agriculture-training-programs/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>East End of Long Island CRAFT</td>
<td>amagansettfoodinstitute.org/#!/programs/vstc12=craft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eastern Massachusetts CRAFT</td>
<td>elist.tufts.edu/wws/info/emasscraft</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Finger Lakes CRAFT</td>
<td>groundswellcenter.org/farmertraining/craft</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ISLAND, Northwest Lower Michigan CRAFT</td>
<td>artmeetsearth.org/</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kentucky CRAFT</td>
<td>hilldowntownfarm.com/craft.htm</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower-Hudson CRAFT</td>
<td>mobiusfields.com/craft.html</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mid-Hudson CRAFT</td>
<td>glynwood.org/programs/glynwood-farm/craft/</td>
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<td></td>
<td>North Fork Valley CRAFT Program</td>
<td>vogaco.org/education.html</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ozark CRAFT</td>
<td>ozarksfarm.wordpress.com/</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rutland-Bennington CRAFT</td>
<td>rutlandfarmandfood.org/craft</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Santa Cruz CRAFT</td>
<td>santacruzcraft.org/</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Snoqualmie Valley CRAFT</td>
<td>snovalleytilth.org/craft/</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Midwest CRAFT</td>
<td>learngrowconnect.org/craft</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Western Connecticut CRAFT</td>
<td>bloomingfieldsfarm.com/cft_frameindex.html</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Western North Carolina CRAFT</td>
<td>organicgrowersschool.org/organicfarming/craft</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## North American CRAFT Comparison Chart

### Membership Base

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Fees Range</th>
<th>Services/Activities Provided</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-startup farmers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers years 1-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers years 5+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Public</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interns/employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of Members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$25-$50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50-$100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundtables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field Days/Farm Visits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handbooks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Newsletters/Articles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apprentices Only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Literacy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>IDA Matched Saving Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business Planning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Gatherings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Listserv</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Farm Profile</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshops (some open to the public)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary report on telephone conferences on Jan 23, Mar 6 and May 13, 2013.

Each CRAFT made recommendations about what how they envisioned further communication and interaction with other CRAFT and farmer networks. They also identified the most pressing needs for their farmer networks. A summary of the recommendations and comments follows.

Recommended topics:

- Best practices/ what has been successful
- The structure of the networks and how they work
- Best practices in on-farm mentoring
- How to better support both farmers and apprentices
- How to best support farmers after the first year
- How to improve the learning experiences of participants
- Membership fees and financial support
- How to bring more people to events
- Technological support for distance meetings/learning opportunities
- How to do farmer training without organizational support
- Share CRAFT Handbooks

Structure of sharing/communication:

- Use technology to increase communication: conference calls, list serve or websites.
- Provide documentation of resources, presentations and other documents via website or other electronic forums
- Have a face-to-face meeting
- Have an annual conference call
- Share best practices throughout the year

Most pressing needs:

- Extend farmer training beyond the first one or two years; multi-year apprentice training programs
- Offer business planning training for more experienced farmers who have not taken Farm Beginnings
- Hire skilled professionals to present workshops
- Formalize the curriculum so the same series of topics is covered each year
- Strengthen the network through both farm-to-farm and public events
- Provide more opportunities for social interaction among farmers in the network
- Improve networking among Farm Beginnings graduates
- More direct market options
- Broaden the network’s steering committee
- Track/report activities and participation within the farmer network
- Rebrand the program; serve as a guild rather than a CRAFT
- Start satellite chapters of CRAFT
- Expand mentoring abilities
- Assist farmers with land access
- Branch out to include non-CRAFT farmers in the network (most are former apprentices)
Collaborative Regional Alliances for Farmer Training: Best Practices of CRAFT Farmer Alliances in North America

by Thorsten Arnold