



Cultivating Community, Portland ME

# TEACHING HANDBOOK

## Refugee Farmer Training

Guidance, teaching tips, and tools for staff working with culturally and linguistically diverse farmers in farmer-training projects.

**ISED SOLUTIONS**  
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



United States Department of Agriculture  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

This resource was prepared by ISED Solutions - a fiscally sponsored program of TSNE MissionWorks - and supported by grant no. 2015-70017-22886 from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.



# Acknowledgments

This handbook was written and designed by Dani M. Scherer M. Ed., with the Institute for Social and Economic Development (ISED solutions). Dani is an adult educator, curriculum developer and language and literacy acquisition specialist.

She co-coordinated ISED's national initiative - developing specialized resources and adult education tools for educationally and linguistically diverse farmers, and teaches English as a Second Language with the refugee community in Maine. She can be contacted at [dani.m.scherer@gmail.com](mailto:dani.m.scherer@gmail.com). Many thanks to Susannah Walsh Daloz and Kathleen Nay for editorial and formatting assistance.

Twelve Refugee farmer training programs across the country provided feedback on the content of this guide. From 2015 to 2017, ISED partnered with refugee farmer training programs through a BFRDP educational enhancement grant, to support the design and testing of new and shareable teaching resources for culturally and linguistically diverse farmers. Ongoing training of trainers workshops, webinars and guidance aimed to increase staff capacity to meet the learning needs of the farmers in their programs.



To learn more about this project, or to access the whole list of newly developed teaching resources referenced throughout this handbook, visit the [New American Resources library](#).

# Acknowledgments

Quotes in boxes like this one come from our partners who tested and reviewed specific teaching materials and methods discussed in this guide.

We would like to thank our partners listed below for their collaboration throughout the three years, and specifically for their feedback and contributions to this handbook.

- Alex Redfield and Jessica Woiderski of *Cultivating Community* in Portland, Maine
- Katie Painter of *Global Gardens* in Boise, Idaho
- Robin Chanin from *Global Growers* in Atlanta, Georgia
- Meredith Walrafen of *New Roots for Refugees*, Catholic Charities of NE KS
- Aley Kent of the *International Rescue Committee's National Food Security and Agriculture Program*
- Elizabeth Moore and Brooke Ray of *International Rescue Committee* in Charlottesville, VA
- Brianna Bowman of *New Entry Sustainable Agriculture Project* in Massachusetts
- Hannah Spare of *All Farmers* in CT River Valley MA.
- Ashley Carter of (former) *New Lands Farm* in Worcester, MA
- Kelly Owensby from *Transplanting Traditions Community Farm* in Chapel Hill, NC
- Linda Seyler from *Global Garden Refugee Training Farm* in Chicago, Illinois

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	5
<b>Glossary</b>	8
<b>Definitions of Language and Literacy Levels</b>	9
<b>Chapter One: Refugee Farmers as Learners</b> Knowing more about who farmers are helps us to be better trainers.	11
<b>Chapter Two: Assessment and Goal Setting</b> Foundational understandings and applicable strategies for using assessment and goal setting.	24
<b>Chapter Three: Teaching Methods and Approaches</b> Strategies and approaches for teaching adult English language learning farmers.	34
<b>Chapter Four: Communications and Interpretation</b> Verbal communication strategies with farmers, with or without interpretation.	46
<b>Chapter Five: Participatory Teaching Activities</b> Participatory teaching activities designed specifically to help farmers learn and demonstrate learning	53
<b>Chapter 6: Designing a Lesson Plan</b> Strategies and templates for designing your own curriculum and workshops.	68
<b>Works cited</b>	77



# Introduction

## WHAT IS THIS HANDBOOK?

This handbook is for staff providing training and technical assistance (T&TA) in immigrant and refugee farmer-training programs. Since the farmers in these programs are often learning English and / or literacy for the first time, staff search for the best methods and materials for teaching. For example, print and lecture-heavy methods should be replaced with more picture-based, interactive learning activities. Additionally, many farmers may not be familiar with classroom norms and skills because they come from non-formal teaching environments. This requires a retraining for many of the educational methods trainers may fall back on. This book will help trainers learn how to recognize skills they may take for granted, and address them by pre-teaching the needed skill or replacing it with a hands-on activity.

Many of the methodologies and teaching approaches in this handbook have been revised from research and work done in adult education and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, with beginning farmers in mind. Trainers can also learn how to use and incorporate a farmer's home practice and knowledge as a springboard to teach new farming and marketing-related skills and concepts. This foundational and practical handbook provides basic explanations of certain teaching theories, as well as tips for applying them in the design and delivery of T&TA.

## WHO IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?

The content of this book will be especially useful for staff providing training and technical assistance to farmers who are learning English or literacy for the first time. However, the participatory nature of these methods makes them beneficial for all adult learners. The principles underlying the material in this handbook are those of respect and justice for all learners, and therefore apply to all of us as learners. Those working with western-educated farmers can pay special attention to the sections on adult learning theory, and can adapt the teaching activities and tips to be appropriate for higher-literacy or English-speaking farmers. While this book may be especially timely for newer staff who are just starting to provide T&TA, those who have experience working with refugee and other New American farmers will also find new ideas to add to their arsenal of teaching techniques. This handbook can also be circulated to volunteers, students or community partners who may provide workshops, technical assistance or trainings with the farmers in your programs.



# Icons

Throughout this handbook, there will be icons denoting additional or key information.



## QUOTES FROM OUTSIDE SOURCES

This icon will indicate when we draw from the field of beginning farming, trauma in education, adult learning theory, English as a second language research and curriculum development to support the approaches outlined in this book.



## TEACHING RESOURCES CONNECTED TO THE TOPIC

As part of the three year project that made this handbook possible, we also created new curricula incorporating the new educational methodology we learned about. Look for this icon to indicate the name of an educational resource that incorporates or speaks to the approaches being outlined in that section of the book.



## VOCABULARY WORDS

Look to this icon to see relevant vocabulary words defined.



## FURTHER READINGS SUGGESTED

This icon will mark additional articles, books or websites for extra reading on the topic at hand.

# Glossary

- Farmer training programs:** Educational programming, which can include group workshops, technical assistance, and field-based-learning, designed to help farmers grow their businesses. Refugee farm incubators emphasize culturally and linguistically informed services for farmers.
- T&TA:** Training and Technical Assistance. This refers to workshops, lessons, in the field assistance, and any form of group or one-on-one training and assistance with farmers.
- ToT:** Training of Trainers. Various efforts, workshops, and materials that are designed specifically to train the trainers either on technical content knowledge, or more likely in this case, on methods for training
- ESL or ESOL:** English as a Second Language (ESL) or English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).
- ISED:** Institute for Social and Economic Development
- NIFTI:** National Incubator Farmer Training Initiative, a program of New Entry Sustainable Farming Project.

# ENGLISH *LITERACY* PROFICIENCY LEVELS\*

“Nice to have a framework and common language to assess and discuss literacy levels.”

- *New Roots staff member from International Rescue Committee*

## **Level 1: Preliterate**

- Does not read or write in native language as written version does not exist or is not often used.
- When presented with basic information, may be able to only read the prompt for name, or other basic information.

## **Level 2: Non-literate**

- Recognizes and writes letters and numbers and reads and understands common sight words. Can write own name and address.

## **Level 3: Semi-literate**

- Able to complete a standard personal information form with some assistance.
- Reads and writes letters and numbers and a limited number of basic sight words and simple phrases related to immediate needs.
- Can read and interpret simple material on familiar topics.
- Able to read and interpret simplified directions, schedules, signs, maps, and menus.

## **Level 4: Advancing-literate**

- Able to complete a standard personal information form.
- Can read and interpret simplified and some non-simplified materials on familiar topics.
- Can interpret simple charts, graphs, and labels; interpret a payroll stub; and complete a simple order form; fill out medical information forms and job applications.
- Can perform reading and writing tasks, such as most logs, reports and forms, with reasonable accuracy to meet work needs.

## **Level 5: Literate**

- Able to complete all reading and writing activities related to life roles and professional positions.
- Can read and interpret non-simplified materials.

# ENGLISH *LANGUAGE* PROFICIENCY LEVELS\*

## **Level 1: Beginning**

- When speaking English, communicates mostly through gestures and a few isolated words.
- Able to satisfy routine travel needs and minimum courtesy requirements.
- Can provide some personal information, e.g. name, country of birth.

## **Level 2: Emerging**

- Able to satisfy routine social demands and can provide basic personal information and respond to simple learned phrases spoken slowly and repeated often.
- Asks simple questions. Can respond to some either/or questions.

## **Level 3: Developing**

- Can satisfy most survival needs and social demands.
- Has some ability to understand and communicate on the telephone on familiar topics.
- Initiates conversation and can respond to all and correctly ask all 'WH' (where, when, why) questions and personal questions (feelings/reactions).

## **Level 4: Advancing**

- Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary, usually can participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on different practical, social, and professional topics.
- Able to respond to personal questions, and some interpretative questions.

## **Level 5: Fluent**

- Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels relating to personal/professional need.

**“Having a uniform scale with positive language is very helpful.”**

*- Brooke Ray, International Rescue Committee of Charlottesville, VA*

\*Adapted from official CASAS level descriptions, see references.





# 1

# REFUGEE FARMERS AS LEARNERS



Cultivating Community, Portland ME

## IN THIS CHAPTER WE WILL ADDRESS:

- The range of experience and skill refugees farmers have
- Distinct ways adults learn
- Classroom skills you should not assume farmers have
- Turning deficit thinking into asset-based thinking

For all educators, finding out about the backgrounds of the learners you will be working with is the first order of business. Without taking this step, you run the risk of using your own experience as a learner as the compass for all learners. Adult learners come with a lifetime of experience under their belt, and it is the educators job to learn as much as we can about those experiences. Those providing T&TA in farmer training programs can learn about the educational backgrounds of the farmers they are working with, especially where and how farmers learned. For example, did farmers learn at home through generational storytelling, or in a classroom through more formalized means? Knowing this can help the trainer to anticipate and adapt teaching methods to be more aligned with the farmer's background. Trainers can also explore how adults learn in ways that are distinct from how children learn, and design and deliver trainings that are more responsive and reflective of the wealth of experience adults bring to any educational setting.



**“I really like how the PowerPoint is set up to talk about how people farmed in their home countries. This seems like it would be a really fun conversation with the class.”**

*- Elizabeth, International Rescue Committee of Charlottesville, commenting on Intro to Organics*

## **DIVERSITY OF FARMERS**

We know that refugee and immigrants arrive in this country with an incredible diversity and range of experiences, skills and knowledge, as well as professional and educational credentials. We also know that many immigrants and refugees have experienced hardships and trauma that are hard to imagine. The amount of new experiences and expectations that refugees and immigrants bump up against when starting to farm in the U.S. can be overwhelming. Not least among these, learning a new language while learning to read and write at the same time can be frustrating and overly burdensome to farmers. That is why it is important to know a farmer’ educational background and context, so we can approach challenging situations with care, respect and skill.



**Cultural Orientation  
Resource Center  
(<http://www.culturalorientation.net/>)  
is a great website with  
extensive background on  
specific refugee groups.**





**“Learning to speak another language can be stressful, time consuming, and confusing for adults.”**

*- from ‘Making it Real: Teaching Pre-literate Adult Refugee Students’*

## LANGUAGE

Refugee farmers come into farmer training programs with a wide range of languages and English fluency. Many speak more than one language or dialect. While English may be new to them, it is important to remember that no one is without language, and allowing refugees to use the wealth of language they already have as much as possible will increase their access to knowledge and connection.



### Language Justice

“For us, language justice is about building and sustaining multilingual spaces in our organizations... [and] recognizing the social and political dimensions of language and language access, while working to dismantle language barriers, equalize power dynamics, and build strong communities for social and racial justice”

*-The Highlander Center*

### Multilingual Spaces

A Multilingual space is a “constructed space where all languages in the room are on equal footing in terms of being spoken, written on flip-charts, in the handouts, etc., and no language holds an advantage over another. Speaking English is not an advantage over others”

*-The Highlander Center*

## LITERACY

Immigrants and refugees have diverse literacy levels, and while some can read and write in their home language or even in English, others never learned to read or write in their native language. Many of us are used to using print to teach, disseminate and record, and this medium is only accessible and



**“They may have never held a pen, yet are faced with computers and other technologies. They are used to passing information orally but not in writing...”**

*- from ‘Making it Real: Teaching Pre-literate Adult Refugee Students’*

useful to some farmers. Pre-literate farmers are less attuned to the role that print plays in everyday life, while farmers who have had some formal education are more used to paying attention to signage, or recognizing the importance of keeping written records, etc.



### **Pre-literate**

Pre-literate means that a farmer comes from an oral tradition, and therefore does not read or write in their own language. Quite often, the written alphabet does not exist in their primary language, or is only recently recorded. Learning to orient a piece of paper right side up, or hold a pencil, are all new skills for these farmers. Simply translating training materials will not be helpful. For example, Somali Bantu farmers come from a strong oral tradition, and are considered pre-literate, since the written alphabet has only been recently documented and is rarely used. In this case, the most important aspect of these instructional activities is the use of minimal print to convey concepts, and using verbal-heavy strategies appropriate for emergent readers and writers. Because Somalis have an oral tradition, many are adept at learning through this medium. In parts of Somalia, oral language skills are highly lauded as markers of intelligence and leadership ability. Therefore, teachers should capitalize on this strength and use verbal direction as often as possible as an instructional strategy.

While these farmers are learning how to access the printed word, they are not without ‘literacies’, as skilled farmers, mothers, leaders, story tellers, etc. It is important to recognize and use these literacies to teach the literacies of print.

# Formal and Informal Education

**“I’ve always assumed this skill [reading a grid] was something everyone had so we’ve never taught it and I imagine it’s been one of the barriers to having folks record keep and track certain information.”**

*- Meredith, New Roots for Refugees.*

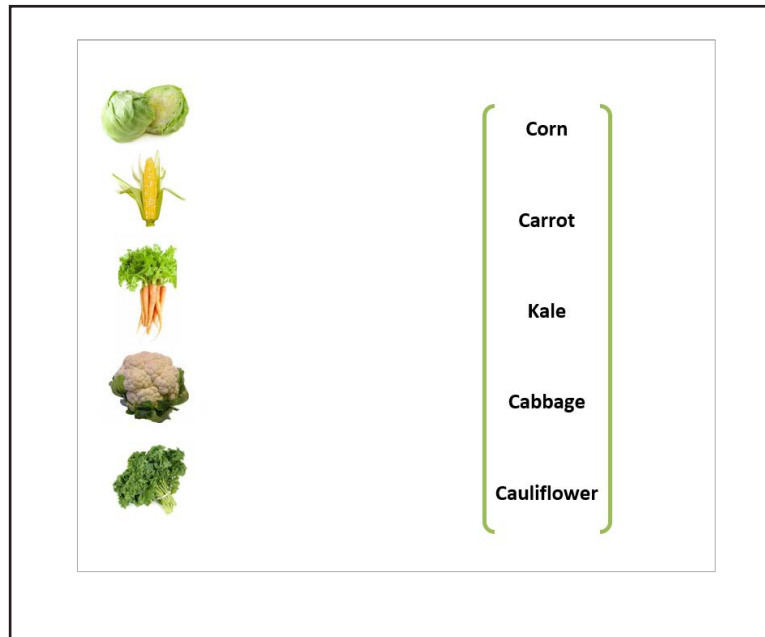
## OVERVIEW

Learning happens both within and outside of traditional classroom walls, in formalized and non-formalized learning spaces. For some refugees and immigrants, learning happened and happens in non-formal educational spaces, such as homes, community centers, and gardens. Teachers and trainers formally educated in a western school system may need to un-learn some of our teaching and learning methods that rely heavily on learned academic literacies or ‘school skills’.

### “SCHOOL” SKILL EXAMPLES:

- Reading a grid, tracking left to right.
- Interpreting the purpose and task of a worksheet
- Forming and tracking goals.
- Keeping papers in a folder.
- Holding on to important papers and notes for later reference.
- Understanding the meaning of symbolic icons, pictures and drawings.
- Understanding that certain labels go with certain pictures, etc.
- Using a calendar, calculator, reference guide or sign.

**EXAMPLE** Consider the worksheet sample below, which aims to help farmers recognize and match written vegetable words and their picture equivalent. In order to complete the activity successfully, what will they have to understand?



- Decide to look or read.
- Find the message.
- Locate and integrate relevant details.
- Orient the paper so words are right side up.
- Identify each picture.
- Possess visual literacy skills to recognize clip art and identify the item represented.
- Form a mental model. Is it a familiar concept?
- Remember the English name for the picture.
- Correctly read the five words on the right.
- Understand that the words and pictures are in different orders.
- Understand the goal is to connect the picture and word.
- Associate the picture with the correct word.
- Use a writing implement to draw a line.
- Draw a line connecting the picture with the correct word.
- Understand that crossing lines are acceptable.
- Recognize the one-to-one correspondence of the words to pictures.

# How do Adults Learn?



**“For me as a teacher, it is very important that farmers understand the “why” behind an activity. They are then empowered to make their own decision and meet challenges in creative ways without staff oversight.”**

*- Kelly, Transplanting Traditions, on Participatory Farmer Competency Tool*

## OVERVIEW

Adults learn in ways that are distinctly different from how children learn, and knowing these differences will help us design learning environments that are respectful, responsive and effective. While children’s learning environments are often designed to achieve a generalized knowledge and skill base, adults respond to environments where they can direct their learning based on their past experiences, and what they consider important to learn. It is widely accepted that all adult educational efforts should use the adult’s own experiences as the springboard for teaching new knowledge and skills.



Learning in Adulthood: A guide.  
Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., &  
Baumgartner, L. (2007).

# Principles of Adult Education

- 1. Since adult learners bring a wealth of experiences and knowledge to each workshop or lesson...*

  - Build a time to share experiences in to every lesson
  - Ask farmers to share knowledge and peer teach
- 2. Since adults have a general sense of themselves as learners, and some have associated feelings of anxiety and low confidence...*

  - Build self-confidence
  - Don't present material that is too advanced, causing farmers to check out
  - Create opportunities to recognize and celebrate small moments of success
- 3. Since adults often have specific reasons and goals for being involved in a training program...*

  - Identify farmers' learning needs and what is important to them.
  - Actively involve adults in the learning process
  - Check in often to make sure farmers are continually in touch with their goals
- 4. Since adults learn best in an atmosphere of active encouragement, involvement, participation and reflection...*

  - Provide activities that require active participation of farmer
  - Provide many opportunities for reflection, and group discussion
- 5. Since adults learn from each other...*

  - Use farmers as teaching resources
  - Support and create peer teaching opportunities
  - Support and create opportunities for farmer leadership
- 6. Since different adults learn through different teaching methods...*

  - Use a variety of training techniques.
  - Use audio, visual and kinesthetic learning methods
  - Establish an atmosphere of respect and understanding of differences

# Self-Awareness



**“Using smiley faces as a feedback tool for educators allows farmers to communicate across language barriers to convey their comfort and confidence in a skill or process without having to use an english language Likert scale.”**

*- Jessica, Cultivating Community, on ‘Learning about CSA’ lesson*

## SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Self-directed learning is an approach often used to allow adults to oversee their own learning path. Self-directed learning emphasizes autonomy, process and reflection, where the learner is free to choose and able to self-evaluate. It is important to include adults in the learning process, from selecting the topics and materials, to assessing the learning at the end.

While self-directed learning sounds like the teacher can take a hands-off approach, the opposite is true. Adults still need to be set up for success, and the teacher, trainer or facilitator needs to know and anticipate the learning needs of their learners. For example, learners from a formal western educational background may have been taught the skills of doing independent research, establishing study habits, and setting and tracking their own goals. However, immigrants and refugees from non-formal backgrounds may not have these academic literacies, and either need to learn these skills, or work within a more structured and supported learning environment. In many cases, it may not be appropriate to assume farmers are ready to be self-directed in their learning, and they may need more support and structure than we expect.

# Trauma-Informed Teaching

## TRAUMA INFORMED TEACHING

Many new American farmers come to this country as refugees or asylum seekers, fleeing a situation where they were persecuted due to race, ethnicity, politics, religion, gender or other social identifiers. Because of this persecution, many refugees and asylum seekers carry the heavy burden of trauma.

Trauma manifests differently for everyone, and it can be hard to know if what you are experiencing with a farmer is the result of trauma. Not all refugees we work with have experienced trauma, and those who have may not wish to disclose. For others, what we see manifesting is just the tip of a much deeper trauma that informs their everyday. We will focus on what we can recognize and manage within the classroom or field T&TA sessions.

### How do these manifest in the teaching and learning space?

- Confusion and disorientation
- Anxiety about not understanding
- Exhaustion or fuzziness with new information
- Guilt and shame associated with feelings of inadequacy or alienation
- Irritability and anger in communication
- Fear at losing resources



**“Trauma is an overwhelming experience(s) that involves serious loss, harm, or threat to a person’s physical and/or emotional health. These experiences may occur at any time in a person’s life. Some may involve a single event, while others may be repeated over many years.”**

*(SAMHSA quoted in “Trauma-Informed Cross-Cultural Psychoeducation: Refugee Mental Health Training for Community Leaders” 2013)*





**“Most of the farmers we work with are from Burma and two are from Bhutan, and we were a little concerned that if we had a farmer demonstrate the harvesting process, with others critiquing, we might shame someone unintentionally.”**

*-On reviewing an activity in a Food Safety lesson.*

## TRAUMA IMPLICATIONS FOR T&TA

1. Understand that changes in behavior, either withdrawing, being irritated or disruptive could be a reaction to the trauma.
2. Listen closely and carefully if a farmer starts to talk about trauma. It may help you to understand what they are dealing with.
3. Keep activities and actions free of shame in the classroom or otherwise.
4. Make sure you are not making farmers share personal information in front of other farmers that they may not be ready to share.
5. Validate strengths and offer encouragement and support, since learners may have received negative messaging about themselves.
6. Have a list of community resources or hotlines that can be contacted if a you think a farmer would benefit from that.
7. Do not assume that all immigrant learners have experienced trauma. Neither do teachers necessarily need to know who among their learners has experienced abuse.



**Interactive Training Manual  
“Trauma-Informed Cross-Cultural  
Psychoeducation: Refugee Mental  
Health Training for Community  
Leaders”**

*From <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/professionals-and-service-providers/ohea/refugee-mh/ticcp>*

# Non-Western Ways of Knowing

## OVERVIEW

In addition to the diversity of religions, educations and cultures, immigrant and refugee farmers also have diverse ways of knowing and learning. Many western educational spaces are individualistic, where individual learners amass knowledge and skill and demonstrate these competencies to advance in their careers or educations. Other cultures and communities across the world learn in a way that may be more connected to group knowledge, religious understandings, or service to others. The role of the teacher also changes in different cultural learning spaces, and while some cultures view it as acceptable to challenge the teacher, still others place the utmost respect and trust in the teacher and do not consider it their place to engage on that level. Without having this understanding, we may think that a learner is not engaged, or that a learner's silence means that they are content with the material. In the right hand margins are some excerpts that provide just a hint of how other cultures and regions may frame teaching and learning differently. This is not meant to explain these differences, but to open our eyes to other ways of being and learning.

## Malaysia

"In a study of the role of cultural values in shaping older adult learning in Malaysia, participants spoke of **learning as a spiritual or philosophical quest**, and as 'a responsibility and a means of giving back to their communities.'" (Merriam & Muhamad, 2000, p. 60)

## Islam

"The emphasis on a **communal learning obligation** is unique because it stresses the believers' responsibility to society. Education and the acquisition of knowledge are good only if 'they serve to engender virtue in the individual and and elevate the whole community,'" (Cook, 1999, p. 349). "Learners and society benefit from knowledge acquisition. 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?' (Qur'an, 39:9)." (Merriam & Muhamad, 2000, p. 60)

**IMPLICATIONS** Knowing more about how different cultures form knowledge might determine how we teach a group versus individuals or different groups. For example, some groups move more towards interdependency. What can we do to support them? In contrast, how can we be systematic about meeting the learning needs of individuals and groups from different backgrounds all at once?

### Botswana, Africa

“In oral societies, such as in Africa, every normal person, besides being required to be a productive worker, also plays the double role of learner and teacher. A unique form of formal instruction is the acquisition of revealed **knowledge through the processes of dreams and visions.**

For example, many herbalists in Botswana claim that the secrets of their medicine and how it should be administered were communicated to them mainly through dreams.”

(Merriam & Muhamad, 2000, p. 60)



# 2

# ASSESSMENT AND GOAL-SETTING



Transplanting Traditions community Farm

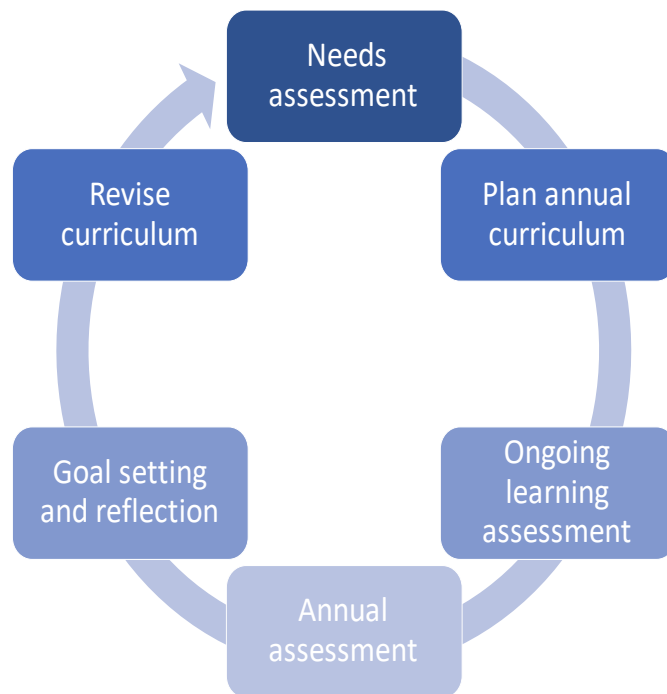
## IN THIS CHAPTER WE WILL ADDRESS:

- Needs assessment:  
why it is important and which methods to use
- Learning assessment: where, when, and how
- How to teach self-assessment and goal setting skills to farmers

To build effective training programs, it is essential to keep in touch with farmers' needs, interests and goals through ongoing assessment. The two kinds of assessment we will focus on here are the needs assessment and the learning assessment. These efforts should be participatory, where staff and farmers come together to align farmer needs with curriculum and programmatic needs. The other practice we will discuss here, goal setting, should arise out of these assessment practices. However, the skills associated with testing, such as ranking, prioritizing, forming goals and measuring personal competencies are all academic skills that need to be explicitly taught to farmers who have limited formal education. This chapter will introduce methods and practical application strategies for participatory assessment and goal setting, and will end with a section on how assessment data can be used to guide curriculum development and teaching.

## THE ASSESSMENT CYCLE

How do the different pieces of a robust assessment cycle work together? We have identified six components that can be pieced together to form a robust and participatory assessment framework in your program.



**Needs assessment** An initial needs assessment allows you to initially get a sense of farmer’s gaps in knowledge and interests in learning skills and concepts.

**Plan curriculum** This helps you to form a curriculum or learning plan for the year, etc.

**Learning Assessment** Ongoing learning assessment allows you to modify your lessons and workshops, based on how farmers are responding to your curriculum and lessons.

**Annual Assessment** Annual self-assessment or staff assessment of farmer learning helps you to revise your curriculum, and helps farmers reflect on their learning and form goals.

**Goal setting** Narrow down farmer’s priorities to a few key areas and form specific and measurable goals.

**Revise Curriculum** Incorporate changes.

# Needs Assessment



Please see:  
**Participatory  
Benchmarking  
Tool**

Developed by Elizabeth  
Moore, IRC Charlottesville



**“The framework  
that this tool gives  
for assessment  
has already added  
value to how we  
are planning for  
this season.”**

*- On reviewing the  
Participatory Benchmarking  
tool.*

## WHAT IS IT?

Needs assessments are essential, as there is no way to design and deliver effective curricula without being in touch with learners’ needs, goals, and interests. Training programs that conduct on-going needs assessments are more successful, as the content and focus of the training is more aligned with what learners need and are interested in learning about. Farmers may come into a program with specific learning needs in mind, and while often the farmer benefits from being exposed to the general curricula, without needs assessment that farmer’s needs may never be addressed. In this way, needs assessments lead to responsive curricula that farmers have a hand in shaping.

While it is always a good idea to tailor curriculum to meet farmers’ needs and interests, only ask interest and needs assessment questions that you can follow through on. If you can’t alter your curriculum too much, do not make it seem as if you can.

## WHY DO IT?

- To understand farmers’ learning priorities
- To involve farmers in the learning process
- To revise curriculum and lessons to meet farmers’ needs
- To continue to revise the objectives/curriculum of the program/goals of the farmers
- To use data to inform decisions about placement of participants in levels
- For accountability, to ensure that the program is meeting farmers’ needs
- To learn how farmers’ needs change season to season

## HOW DO YOU DO IT?

Needs and interest assessments are used on the grand scale (to get input about program design before it even starts), as well as on the smaller scale (choosing between a few different content areas for a winter workshop). There are different ways to gather important information about farmers learning needs and interests. Choosing the best method depends on what kinds of information you are looking to gather.

ASSESSMENT TYPE	HOW DO YOU DO IT?	WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?
<b>Focus groups</b>	Small groups talk about specific topics that need to be addressed. Staff members listen in to gather information and assess needs, etc.	If starting a program or new initiative within a program, this could give staff a sense of general interest and needs.
<b>Interviews</b>	One-on-one, could be based on a series of questions about the different options offered through the programs, and farmers could respond based on interest and need.	This takes time and resources (like an interpreter), but is a great way to annually check in with farmers one on one.
<b>Inventories</b>	This could be a list-based document (using pictures) that farmers go through to identify needs they have based on the categories or skills in front of them.	This is somewhat like an annual self-assessment and is usually done once farmers have been in the program for at least a year. Finding pictures to represent everything could be time consuming.
<b>Vote with your feet</b>	Names or pictures of skills or topics are posted around the classroom, and individuals move to stand near the most important choice. Several rounds of voting may occur.	Topic selection provides information about learners' highest priority needs about competencies, skills, and topics.
<b>Priority cards</b>	Individuals or small groups use cards, each containing one skill or topic. The cards are placed in order of importance.	Can be used in workshops to get a sense of farmer needs, or can be used before designing a curriculum.



# Learning Assessment



**“It was so affirming to the farmers to list the beginning benchmarks and for them to note how they had advanced out of that category.”**

*- Kelly, Transplanting Traditions Community farm, commenting on the participatory Benchmarking Tool*

## WHAT IS IT?

Learning assessment is ongoing within each workshop or lesson, and can also be done at the end of the year to assess overall learning gains. There are many ways to conduct informal assessments during and after workshops, lessons, or TA sessions, as well as many ways to conduct more comprehensive learning assessments. Dynamic assessments, whether formal or informal, should always use diverse methods (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, listening, engaging, demonstrating, etc.) Formative assessments should be used to help a learner identify their areas of strength, and areas to work on. Dynamic assessment means using multiple mediums and data to assess a learner. Formative assessment is used only to help shape future learning opportunities and methods. The table on page 30 outlines several common forms of learning assessment.

## WHY DO IT?

- Hold your program accountable to learning expectations.
- Show farmers’ evidence of progress.
- Reinforce and motivate learning through confidence.
- Improve training for farmers so that it is relevant to their interests and needs.
- Give more responsive and individualized feedback to farmers about how trainings are helping them meet their goals.
- Highlight skills farmers are performing well, and point out areas for improvement.
- Suggest areas that farmers should work on, and upcoming workshops that will be particularly useful for them.
- Share information and rely on more comprehensive data when making decisions around farmer advancement in the program.
- Show farmers how far they have come.
- Use metrics other than income, etc. for grants.

## HOW DO YOU DO IT?

TYPE	WHAT IS IT	GOOD FOR WHAT
<b>Trainer observation</b>	This informal method of assessment is based around the trainer's observations of farmer's skill levels in the field, classroom, or at the market.	This is a good assessment method to pair with something else, such as farmer self-reporting. Notes from observations can be used to add to an annual assessment conversation.
<b>Demonstrated skill</b>	A farmer demonstrates a skill in the field, market, or classroom which you both acknowledge shows a gain in learning or mastery.	Adding data to self-assessments. It can be hard to record/remember these, so keeping notes or using skill charts could be useful here.
<b>Activity</b>	A farmer can show their skill or knowledge in a participatory classroom activity (see Chapter 4).	This is good for in-session learning assessment. The learning activities themselves allow you to see farmer's competencies and adjust or correct your teaching accordingly.
<b>Self-ranking</b>	A farmer chooses a number or smiley face etc. to show how they would rank their competencies or confidence with a certain skill or concept.	This is good to use regularly. Farmers can rank themselves 1 through 5 using their fingers. This ranking skill should be taught though, as it might be unfamiliar to some farmers.
<b>Worksheets, records and other documents</b>	Using worksheets or forms that farmers fill in as an activity and as an assessment of competency level.	At the end of a lesson, when assessing for literacy-based tasks, or when teaching recordkeeping.
<b>Self-assessment forms</b>	Comprehensive documents that list with text and pictures all the skills or competencies farmers are expected to ascertain. Farmers rank their competency level using guidance from staff.	Once a year at end of the season, when it is time to reflect and set goals.



**“We like the way the self-assessment is broken out into beginning, intermediate and advanced. The reflective dialogue questions are really helpful too - different ways to get the conversation going.”**

*- Global Greens, Lutheran Services in Iowa, on the Participatory Benchmarking Tool*

# Goal Setting



**“Goal setting and self-reflection is such a conceptual process. Some pre-taught vocabulary would help. And breaking down why it’s important to reflect and record would be helpful too.”**

*-Hannah, All Farmers, commenting on a goal setting lesson*

## WHAT IS IT?

Goal setting is a way for farmers to align the purposes of the program and the training curriculum with their own learning needs and farming goals. The needs and learning assessment practices give farmers the information they need to set these goals. Goals can be written during or after an annual review or self-assessment, before the beginning of the season, or both. The most important thing to remember here is that goal setting and benchmarking are skills that may require setting aside a whole lesson to teach as a concept and practice. Below are recommendations of what you might include in a goal setting lesson.

## HOW TO TEACH GOAL SETTING

1. Include a culturally appropriate explanation of the vocabulary and concepts of goals and goal setting.
2. Go over examples of goals to help farmers form their own goals.
3. Use picture-based prompts and tools to help them determine priorities and goals.
4. Put practices into place to make sure farmers can reflect on their progress and revise goals.
5. Farmers would benefit from using a picture-based progress bar chart.
6. Determine how many goals make sense. For some programs, no more than three goals for the season.

*Please see:*

**“Farmer-Centered Goal Setting Workshop”**

Developed by the International Rescue Committee

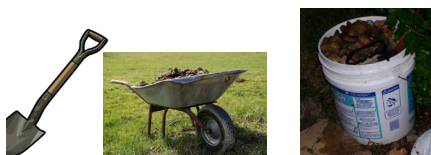
# Tools for Assessing and Setting Goals

Tools and Supplies						
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE SCORE</b>						
Seasons: Planting on time						
Crop Planning: anticipated yield						
Crop Planning: Bed Map						
Crop Planning: Following Plan						
Bed Maintenance						
Mulch						
Spacing and Succession						
Best ID						
<b>PRODUCTION SCORE</b>						
Harvest						
Market Prep: Bunching						
<b>HARVEST AND POST HARVEST</b>						
Farm Stand: Attracting Customers						
Restaurant Skills						
Pricing/S: Writing Price Tags						
Pricing/S: Making Change						
<b>MARKETING SCORE</b>						
Reading Charts: Table						
Reading Charts: Pie Chart						
Recordkeeping: Keeping Receipts						
Recordkeeping: writing invoices						
From Ham To Home   Rescue.org						



**Fencing**

Irrigation for new plot					
		Test the Fence Voltage	Charge the Energizer Battery		Have and Use Own Supplies and tools
Water in the Right Place	Use Drip Tape Correctly	Open and Close the Fence Properly	Keep Fence Clean	Keep Fence Working Correctly	Take Care of NRF Tools
Irrigation	Fencing				
INFRASTRUCTURE					



**Tools and Supplies**

## 1. INTERNAL CHECKLISTS AND CORE SKILLS

Checklists for your curriculum could be based around core skills or competencies that farmers aim to achieve.

## 2. FLASHCARDS / CARD SORTS

Flashcards allow farmers to demonstrate priority or interest topic areas without reliance on literacy or language. Cards shown are from IRC Charlottesville Benchmarking module.

## 3. FARMER SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Farmers can rate themselves on different areas and recognize their own progress. Find a way to make farmer’s competencies and levels visually accessible to them, through bar graph or similar format.



“This activity improved the goal setting process by helping farmers organize their thoughts through the card sort, and thinking about different categories in which they might grow.”

- Katie, Global Gardens, on Goal Setting



# 3

# TEACHING METHODS AND APPROACHES



## IN THIS CHAPTER WE WILL ADDRESS:

- Teaching methodologies (participatory and experiential)
- Principles for teaching language and literacy-learning adults
- Teaching strategies and classroom management tips

It can be difficult to know how to begin teaching farmers to do things like buy seeds, use record-keeping tools, or fill out farmer’s market applications, when they don’t yet use the written alphabet or a calculator. Questions come up like: “What is too advanced?”, “What is not advanced enough?”, “When should farmers be learning the written version of these words?”, “When should I include explicit vocabulary instruction?” Thankfully, we have some tools for figuring out how to prioritize certain skills, how to manage a diverse group of learners, and how to make sure farmers are achieving the learning goals you set out to achieve. This chapter introduces some of the most salient and helpful methodologies from adult ESOL education, and provides practical strategies for breaking down complex information and reaching all learners.

## PARTICIPATORY LEARNING

What does participatory teaching and learning mean in the context of refugee farmer training? Participatory teaching (sometimes called popular education, social justice or democratic education) is, in the most basic sense, an educational approach that uses learner experience and participation to guide the learning process. One of the most important ways to operationalize this educational approach is through a robust needs and interest assessment process that highlights what learners know and are interested in (as detailed in previous chapter). This does not preclude having a curriculum structure based on what you think farmers need to be able to know and do, as long as there is active revising and reworking of the framework to reflect farmer interest, need and reaction.

### Learner-centered objectives

Learner-centered objectives are the other way to operationalize this teaching approach. Learner-centered objectives are written statements about what farmers will be able to do as a result of a workshop or curriculum, whereas content-centered, or teacher-centered objectives are based on topics that a teacher needs to cover in the course of the curriculum or workshop.



**“This is really important content, and getting the info off the screen and into their hands leads to much greater learning retention.”**

*- Aley, International Rescue Committee, on Marketing Workshop*

LEARNER-CENTERED OBJECTIVES	CONTENT-CENTERED OBJECTIVES
Based on farmer background and need	Predetermined
Based on learning a skill or concept	Based on coverage of content
Based on a learning that farmers can achieve	Based on what farmers ‘need’ to know to be successful
Success based on seeing evidence of learning	Success based on completion

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The experiential learning cycle is another way to put the methodology of participatory education into action. This can become a template for designing any learning experience, from a quick lesson plan to an annual curriculum.

- 1. Find out what participants know and do** (formal or informal interest and needs assessment, starting classes with sharing and storytelling, etc.)
- 2. Build on what participants know and do** (curate their contributions, record or categorize what they share to give it structure and meaning)
- 3. Clarify content and concepts** (identify any new vocabulary words, concepts, or specific skills that you want to add to their experiences)
- 4. Participants practice new skills** (using the new vocabulary or skills you provide) by engaging in a learning activity
- 5. Reflect on practice** (within the space of the classroom or workshop setting)
- 6. Farmers apply learning** in a real-world setting
- 7. Reflect!**



**“After the class, I had a field-walk through the farmers’ plots. We stopped at various places and looked at soil to discuss what it needed and why.”**

*- International Rescue Committee, on Soil Fertility*



# Teaching Tips

## 1. AUTHENTIC ACTIVITIES

Make sure all 'practice' activities are based on skills that farmers will actually use soon in their day to day lives.

## 2. USE REAL OBJECTS

For teaching purposes, a photograph is better than a drawing of a shovel, but a real shovel is better than both.

## 3. NOT TOO MUCH INFO

Break information into digestible pieces, include pauses to check for understanding.

## 4. PRE-TEACH ACADEMIC SKILLS

Identify 'school' skills farmers may need to complete your workshop e.g. reading a grid or setting a goal.

## 5. USE ONLY ESSENTIAL TEXT

If including written words in your worksheets and PPTs, make sure they are only words you think farmers need to know.

## 6. USE AUDITORY, VISUAL AND KINESTHETIC METHODS

Diversify your lessons by including visuals, auditory activities and movement.

## 7. USE POWERPOINT STRATEGICALLY

Only use powerpoint if you need it to explain difficult concepts or show select images. Don't use it as a default for all lessons.

## 8. USE MORE MANIPULATIVES

If possible, get information off the screen or sheet and into flashcard form!



**“If this module was conducted alongside a field activity, I might suggest following up with demonstrations on how to properly thin and weed as suggested in the presentation.”**

*- International Rescue Committee, reflecting on crop planning on MPA Module 4: Growing for Market*

## AUTHENTIC ACTIVITIES

There is no substitute for hands-on-demonstrations and lessons, especially when you are teaching farming skills. Farmer training programs do as much field-based hands-on education as possible, but often trainings happen during the off-season, making it hard to show the real thing in the field, packing shed or at market. Therefore, if you are using a simulation of something to teach a skill (e.g., farmers market set-up to teach sign writing or making change, choosing a IPM method based on a pest problem, etc.), make sure it mirrors real life scenarios as much as possible. In traditional K-12 schools, students often learn through hypothetical situations (“Mary had two apples and seven oranges, how many...”) which may not make sense for these adult learners who have a much clearer understanding of real world problems, and less familiarity with academic constructions.



*Please see:*

**“Financial Literacy: Decision making”**

Developed by Wakulima cooperative

# USE REAL OBJECTS AND PHOTOS

Whenever possible, use the real objects or articles you are discussing (as opposed to picture or word representations of the objects). This is not always possible, but some example objects you can easily bring into your workshops are:

- Seed packets and seed catalogs
- Tools and amendments
- Fertilizer packaging
- Cash and cash box
- Packing supplies: bags, rubber bands and boxes
- Soil samples, weed specimens or pests
- Other market set-up supplies

In the absence of real supplies, photos (as opposed to sketches or drawings) are best. Whenever possible, use pictures from your program (e.g., of fields, market set-ups, and farmers themselves). If pulling from other sources, make sure it mirrors your actual farm as closely as possible and always choose actual photographs over drawings or cartoons. If you are using drawings consistently in your worksheets or signage, make sure they are explained to farmers, instead of assuming they are self-explanatory.



*Please see:*

## **“Soil Health and Fertility”**

Developed by Global Garden  
Refugee Training Farm



**“I would change the pictures to pictures my farmers would recognize and I would adapt the vegetable groups to something that is more particular to the demands of our CSA customers.”**

*- Jessica, Cultivating Community, reflecting on adapting materials to be more authentic.*



**“Build in more pauses in presentations to ask students about their experiences and what they can teach others about it.”**

*- Aley, International Rescue Committee, on Marketing Workshop*

## NOT TOO MUCH INFO

Because farmers are building new language and literacy skills at once, it is important not to overload them, which can cause learners to shut down or feel alienated. One way to avoid this is to always be clear about your session’s learning objectives, including what seems feasible, and what seems like too much new information. Also consider building in time for review of previous sessions, and build upon that with new information.

Many trainers may find themselves in a situation where they must communicate a lot of information in a relatively short amount of time, and are not able to space it out as much as they would like. In those cases, do your best to use the ‘teaching skills’ (page 43-47) to help you scaffold, chunk and sequence information to make it as digestible as possible.

## PRE-TEACH ACADEMIC SKILLS

Scan your lessons, workshops or in-field sessions for any essential classroom or academic skills that farmers may not be familiar with. Some examples of this are:

- *Interpreting a graphic with labels*
- *Reading a grid*
- *Worksheets that require tracking left to right, up and down*
- *Using a book and reading left to right, up and down*
- *Forming goals*
- *Keeping a folder, storing papers, keeping track of important documents*
- *Participating in ice breaker activities*
- *Using a calculator*
- *Accessing classroom materials to work independently*

While you do not need to pre-teach these at the beginning of the lesson, scanning your lessons for these types of skills is a good practice and will help you calculate time needed to teach or review these skills (or to choose an activity that does not require them).

## ONLY ESSENTIAL TEXT

For many, the role of text is new. As trainers, we need to choose wisely what text is included in PowerPoints, worksheets, whiteboards, handouts, receipts, invoices, recordkeeping forms, etc. It is also important to know which words you want farmers to be able to understand and say, as opposed to which words they will need to read and write. Knowing the difference will help to simplify things for you and the farmers.

Here are some principles you can follow:

- *If you use vocabulary on important forms that farmers use, teach those words (reading, writing, speaking, listening).*
- *If you use words often when talking to farmers, but don't often write them, teach them through speaking and listening only.*
- *If there are words that farmers often need to write (e.g., vegetable names), teach them!*

## USE AUDITORY, VISUAL AND KINESTHETIC TEACHING METHODS

Most of us have a preferred way to learn new information, whether it be through conversation, listening, visuals and video, or moving and manipulating. It is important to include audio, visual and kinesthetic teaching methods in your workshops to reach all different kinds of learners. Total Physical Response (TPR) is a language teaching method which has a lot of value for adult learners who have not spent a lot of time in formal education environments. Learners can move their bodies as they learn new words, through pointing, moving cards around, picking up tools, etc. Some examples of this may be:

- *Have farmers come to a board to sort cards.*
- *Have farmers point to different vegetable cards or other visuals to answer questions.*
- *Have farmers signal thumbs up or down.*
- *Have farmers match up with other farmers who have corresponding words or pictures.*



**“Chunk out the main points and try to reduce the words on the screen.”**

*- Aley, International Rescue Committee, reflecting on improving a powerpoint*

## USE POWERPOINT STRATEGICALLY

For many reasons, using PowerPoint makes sense for culturally and linguistically diverse farmers since images can be easily used to explain words, concepts and skills. However, the way that many presenters use PowerPoint (to help them structure their talk and provide text and bullet points to reinforce their message), may not be a beneficial teaching strategy for farmers from diverse educational backgrounds. Therefore, use PowerPoint to explain concepts or teach vocabulary words using high quality images or graphics, but do not reinforce your points with text-based slides or bullet points (unless you are working with high-literacy farmers).



*For example of a lesson without PPT, please see*  
**“Learning about CSA Workshop”**  
*Developed by the New Roots for Refugees*

## USE MANIPULATIVES

We learn by doing, and moving cards, words and objects around is a great way for farmers to try out new knowledge and demonstrate skills. This can be done with a few different teaching activities (see ‘Sorting, Categorizing and Matching’ and ‘Sequencing and Ordering’ in the Activities chapter). Flash cards or picture cards could be easy to make, especially if you have a PowerPoint that you are using for class. You can turn slides into printed pictures that farmers can move around, point to, arrange, ask questions about, etc. Manipulatives are a great way for farmers to engage with learning without relying on language or literacy skills.



*For example of use of manipulatives, please see:*  
**“Season Extension Workshop”**  
*Developed by the Global Gardens*

# Teaching Skills

Oftentimes, farmer training program educators find themselves with limited time to teach advanced material, or large volumes of content with a group of very mixed-level farmers. The following strategies are ways to manage this by thinking of how to build skills, break-down large concepts, and differentiate learning to meet the needs of beginner and advanced farmers in one group.

## SCAFFOLDING

With this strategy, the trainer provides scaffolding (supportive instruction and tools) while teaching a new skill so that the learner can work on it in a supported environment. Then, when the scaffolding is not there (in the real world), the learner will be able to apply the new skills, vocabulary and concepts on their own. It is useful to consider this when you are assessing what you would like farmers to be able to do independently, and how you can use training time to provide them with the appropriate scaffolding to help them build those skills.



**“We created an activity where we wrote income and expense headings on the whiteboard and had farmers decide where to tape photographs of things that fell under those categories...the same categories as on the record keeping sheets.”**

*- Elizabeth, International Rescue Committee in Charlottesville, on Farm Tax Preparation*

## MODELING

If there is an activity, demonstrate it first so that farmers can envision it. It is easy to see why demonstrating a skill in the field is the best way to explain something, but the same can be said for explaining an activity. Farmers will benefit from watching you act out any activity you are asking them to do, whether it be role play, using flashcards, doing a sample dialogue, making change, setting goals, etc. You can always pull a more advanced farmer from the group (or another staff member) to show partner activities, or use yourself as an example if it is an individual activity.

# SEQUENCING AND CHUNKING

Sequencing activities move in an order from less challenging to more challenging when teaching something new or complex. For example, you can progress from listening to speaking, reading, and finally writing skills. Some adult ESOL learners can be overwhelmed when new language, knowledge and skills are being asked of them simultaneously. Piecing harder material into more digestible chunks helps build upon skills, so that farmers do not shut off or feel alienated by the material. For example, perhaps you have a newly required recordkeeping or insurance form that you want to teach farmers how to fill out. Instead of handing out the form to allow farmers to familiarize themselves with it on their own, you could:

1. *First teach the vocabulary they will see orally*
2. *Then teach the skills of tracking and filling out a grid form*
3. *Then show the form on an overhead projector / slide*
4. *Then model for them how you would fill it in*
5. *Then have farmers practice writing the words they need on a white board or blank paper*
6. *Finally, hand out the form itself*
7. *Help farmers to recognize the words they just learned*
8. *Help them to match the words they just learned to write, with the questions they just learned to identify*

# REVIEW AND REPEAT

For language to take hold and stick, farmers need to hear the language many times, in many different contexts. The same is true for new information and new concepts: farmers will benefit from reviewing the information from previous sessions before they start learning new content. One benefit of this is increasing confidence. Through repetition and review farmers can begin to see their own learning and gain confidence in their mastery of certain words, phrases or skills. Research shows that repetition is beneficial for all learners, but especially the adult brain where neural pathways need constant reinforcement to build solid connections.



*For example of review and repeat, please see:*

**“Farmers Markets and Farm Stands”**

Developed by Cultivating Community



# Differentiating Instruction



**“I think it might be useful to split some activities up for farmers at different experience levels. Growers who are more familiar with basic concepts could get the ‘buy your own fertilizer’ lesson, growers with more of a land base could get a tailored ‘cover crop/rotation’ workshop.”**

*- Alex, Cultivating Community, on Soil Fertility*

Rarely will any adult educator teach a class where all students are at the same level in terms of background knowledge, language or literacy development level. More often, classes have a wide range of experience and learning levels. Refugee farmer training programs are no different, and trainers find themselves teaching to advanced and beginning farmers who have a range of English and literacy levels. Perhaps the most challenging task faced by trainers is: “How do I reach all learners and help them to advance at the level that is appropriate for them if we are short on time, staff and other resources?” This is not just a challenge for refugee farmer trainers; most ESOL and adult educators would cite this as a primary challenge as well. Having a variety of materials, activities and approaches, adjusting groupings, adapting specific tasks, and building in self-directed learning options are good ways to tackle differentiated groups. Below we offer a few tips and strategies for tackling the idea of differentiated instruction.

## **SAME TOPIC, DIFFERENT POINTS OF ENTRY**

You can teach the same topic to a diverse group of farmers, and allow them to engage with this topic through different tasks. For example, perhaps you are teaching a class on wholesale, yet you have some farmers that just contribute to an aggregated wholesale hub managed by staff, as well as some very advanced farmers that are beginning to talk and forge relationships with their own wholesale buyers (certain restaurants, etc.).

Examples of 'same topic, different points of entry': You could provide the initial overview of wholesale, key vocabulary and invoices/receipts, then break farmers into groups based on farming level. This way:

1. Beginning farmers can practice taking verbal wholesale orders from staff
2. Intermediate farmers can read a list from a staff member
3. Very advanced farmers can practice talking to a buyer on the phone

## STRATEGIC GROUPING OR PAIRING

Separating people out into cross-ability or same-ability groups can be an effective strategy if well-planned. If you are differentiating tasks, for example, it would make sense to do same-ability groups and pairings so that farmers at one level can work together.

However, if you are working on a skill that you want all farmers to have (filling in crop calendar, writing receipts, talking to costumers, etc.) you can put advanced farmers with more beginning farmers, so that they can teach each other necessary skills.

### Cross-ability groups and pairing

- Factors to consider when grouping: culture and gender differences, literacy, educational background, English proficiency, and farming experience.
- This strategy is good for allowing struggling farmers to practice a new skill with their peers.
- Be mindful of always asking advanced farmers to play the role of mentor/educator. It may be considered burdensome for more advanced farmers at times.

### Same-ability groups and pairing

- This strategy allows you to differentiate instruction through assigning different tasks to higher and lower level groups.
- This strategy does not allow farmers to learn from each other's differences.

## SELF-ACCESS MATERIALS

This involves building in some routines or creating some flashcard-like materials that farmers know how to access and use, if they are in a spot where they are waiting for assistance from staff or are interested in continuing to learn on their own. Examples of this:

1. Flashcards of vegetables and vegetable names, so farmers can practice speaking, writing and reading the names of all vegetables they grow and sell.
2. Learning stations where they can walk to a spot in the classroom that has been equipped with worksheets, picture series or cards, seed packets, etc. Farmers can sit there and engage in an activity until they re-engage with the main or self-access resources (flashcards, etc.). Routines help learners direct themselves when they need extra practice or don't have one on one time.

## PEER-TEACHING OR PARTNERING

While it is important to not always take advantage of the more advanced farmers by making them teachers, there are times when farmers can take on leadership and mentorship roles in the field, market and classroom. This can be formal or informal, but should always be discussed with the peer educator beforehand. Farmers may have specialized farming skills, and you could ask them to lead a class or TA session on this skill. If farmers share the same language or culture with other farmers, they may benefit from hearing things in their own language and discussing any culturally-based questions related to the new skills.





# 4

# COMMUNICATIONS AND INTERPRETATION



The Nashville Food Project

## IN THIS CHAPTER WE WILL ADDRESS:

- Terminology and important language of interpretation
- Using some principles from plain language for speaking
- Best practices for working with trained and untrained interpreters

Communication with linguistically diverse farmers is often dependent on the work of informal or professional interpreters, which makes our relationships with interpreters one of the most important aspects of effective communications. Working with interpreters requires preparation, analysis of program capacity, and a commitment to ongoing communications with both interpreters and farmers. In this chapter, we define some key terms of interpretation, discuss the differences between working with formally trained versus untrained interpreters, share some tips for both setting up a session with interpreters and debriefing, and discuss plain language for speaking tips that you can use with or without an interpreter.



See “interpreter Training workshop”  
Developed by ISED

# Definitions

*(Adapted from the Highlander Center’s resources on interpretation)*

**LANGUAGE JUSTICE** “For us, language justice is about building and sustaining multilingual spaces in our organizations...[and] recognizing the social and political dimensions of language and language access, while working to dismantle language barriers, equalize power dynamics, and build strong communities for social and racial justice.” (Language Justice Toolkit from The Highlander Center)

**MULTILINGUAL SPACES** A Multilingual space is a “constructed space where all languages in the room are on equal footing in terms of being spoken, written on flipcharts, in the handouts, etc., and no language holds an advantage over another. Speaking English is not an advantage over others.” (Language Justice Toolkit from The Highlander Center)

**INTERPRETATION** Interpretation is the action of directly moving one spoken language into another (or several others). Interpretation refers to oral language.

**TRANSLATION** Refers to written materials of any kind. If you would like someone to translate teaching materials, program documents or signs, you would ask them to translate, not interpret these materials.

**SIMULTANEOUS** Simultaneous interpretation is when the interpreter interprets while the speaker is speaking. This often happens at a talk or event where there are multiple language groups in one room, and the interpreters either sit right next to the individual(s) they are interpreting for, or using audio transmitter equipment (headphones and a speaker system for each language in the room).

**CONSECUTIVE** This method of interpretation is more common with programs that do not have specialized audio transmitter equipment. The speaker speaks first and then gives the interpreter time to repeat the information through other languages. This method is more time intensive.



*“Language justice Toolkit”*  
**from The Highlander Center**

*“Interpreting for Social Justice”*  
**from The Highlander Center**

# Working with Interpreters

*(Adapted from the Highlander Center’s resources on interpretation)*

To provide effective and culturally-responsive training and technical assistance with refugee farmers, we must have solid practices and policies around the use of interpreters and interpretation. Being unprepared for how to use interpretation, or falling into some common interpretation pitfalls can make speakers of other languages feel isolated and confused. One of the ways you can prepare yourself is to understand the different expectations you can have between working with an informal interpreter versus a trained interpreter. There are things you can find out before working with an interpreter that will help you be very clear with the interpreter and ensure a successful session.

BEFORE	DURING	AFTER
<p>Ask and Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this interpreter formally trained in code of ethics or is this an ‘untrained’ interpreter?</li> <li>• How many languages are represented in the room?</li> <li>• Do you want interpretation into multiple languages or just one?</li> <li>• Do you want the interpreter to use simultaneous or consecutive interpretation?</li> <li>• Is the request limited to verbal interpretation or also written materials?</li> <li>• Has this interpreter worked with your program before?”</li> <li>• Is the interpreter familiar with this group of farmers or their cultural backgrounds?</li> <li>• Is the interpreter familiar with the content specific knowledge?</li> <li>• Is the interpreter familiar with small scale agriculture?</li> <li>• What specialty words should I explain to the interpreter? (Use the vocabulary list.)</li> </ul>	<p>Remember to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always explain to the larger group about who is interpreting, what, where, and why.</li> <li>• Explain that if anyone has a problem hearing or understanding they should let us know.</li> <li>• Speak at a moderate pace, not too fast or too slow.</li> <li>• Prompt interpreter to speak in first person.</li> <li>• If you have time, train interpreter to use correct positioning to support direct communication (interpreter stands next to speaker, speaker looks directly at the listener(s) ).</li> <li>• Avoid complicated jargon and make sure you break down information into pieces easily understood and interpreted.</li> <li>• Speak normally, as if speaking to a fluent English speaker.</li> <li>• Look directly at the person(s) you are addressing, not the interpreter.</li> <li>• You do not need to say things like “Ask her” or “Tell him.”</li> <li>• Avoid idioms and expressions.</li> <li>• Say only things you want interpreted.</li> <li>• Speak in short, manageable phrases that are not too much for the interpreter to remember.</li> </ul>	<p>Ask Interpreter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask the interpreter if there were any words or concepts that were hard to interpret. Add those to the list of vocabulary for interpreters.</li> <li>• Ask the interpreter if there is anything you could change next time to make the session go more smoothly.</li> <li>• Ask the interpreter how much they think the farmers understood, and if there were any sticky spots or points of contention they picked up on that you did not.</li> </ul>



## TROUBLESHOOTING

If you are experiencing any trouble while interpreting (for example, you are not sure your message is being understood or relayed correctly), there are a few things you can try:

- Teach back: ask the interpreter to repeat what you just said to them to check their understanding.
- Remind interpreter to repeat exactly what you say. One suggestion: tell the interpreter to tell the other person you are in conversation with that you have asked the interpreter to say exactly what you say.
- Plain language: break down difficult concepts and avoid jargon except when necessary.
- Ask interpreter for culturally relevant information. If the interpreter is from the same cultural background as your conversation partner, or can easily interpret or explain, ask them to explain to you if there is anything important you should know.
- Tell interpreter that they should stick as close as possible to the words and phrases the speaker uses.



**“When you pre-teach interpreters, give them ample opportunity to ask questions and repeat back to you what they understood you to say. The better they understand what you are teaching, the better they will be able to interpret!”**

*Hannah, All Farmers*

# Trained vs. Untrained Interpreters

**OVERVIEW** The main difference between trained and untrained interpreters is their knowledge of the Interpreter Code of Ethics that informs their practices and procedures while interpreting with you. However, there are other pros and cons to working with different interpreters. Some trained or untrained interpreters may or may not have the technical language and vocabulary that you need for small scale farming. Additionally, these interpreters may or may not share cultural knowledge that will help them to relate to the farmers they are interpreting for. For all interpreters, the more information you can share up front with them before they start interpreting, the better!

**TRAINED** Trained interpreters have most likely gone through a course that has taught them the Interpreter Code of Ethics. This means you can rely on them to interpret exactly what you say, using standard procedures for positioning and questioning, and to uphold professionalism and boundaries in their work. The topics covered in the Interpreter Code of Ethics are:

- Accuracy and Completeness, Confidentiality, Impartiality, Respect, Cultural Awareness, Role Boundaries, Professionalism, and Advocacy

**UNTRAINED** Working with an untrained interpreter allows you the opportunity to share a few pointers with them if you have time and if you feel they would benefit from it.

# Oral Communication



**Rule of thumb:  
Farmer speak  
or activity 70%  
or more of the  
session time.  
Trainer should  
speak no more  
than 30% of the  
time.**

Effective oral communication with English Language Learners (ELLs) can be challenging, as it is a hard skill to pin down and there is no on blueprint to success. While it is important to not speak at a level that is too advanced (difficult sentences, hard vocabulary etc.), it is equally as important to not 'dumb down' your speech too much. Success in this department often comes from knowing your learners, and applying common sense.

However, the most important action you can take is beforehand, when you can make sure you are designing simplified learning objectives that are dependent on farmer conversations and farmer activities, so that your own speaking role is limited.

While there is not one path to success in oral communication with English language learners, the list on page 52 suggests some useful approaches and strategies to keep in mind when learning to communicate orally with ELLs at all levels. Remember that the best way to recognize success is to be in touch with farmer learning through on-going assessment practices.

## SOME TIPS FOR ORAL COMMUNICATION

- Use clear, normal speech in communicating with English language learning (ELLs) adults. If you are a quick talker, it will benefit ELLs and interpreters if you speak at a more moderate speed.
- Anticipate any difficult vocabulary that might come up in your session or materials. Aim to choose no more than five difficult vocabulary words to pre-teach, and aim to use simpler language for difficult new vocabulary beyond these five.
- Avoid using too many idioms or colloquialisms. Additionally, euphemisms might also be lost in translation.
- Don't talk too much. In workshops and other trainings, aim to build sessions that have farmers either talking or doing activities 70% of the time, so that your speaking time as the trainer does not exceed 30% of the session time.
- Allow farmers to use their native language when speaking with each other to increase comprehension. If you are using an interpreter, using the native language in the classroom will be easy, but in the absence of an interpreter, allowing for and encouraging native language use in the classroom can be especially useful.
- Non-verbal clues can be used alongside speech (such as gestures, pictures and concrete objects). Repeat directions for activities twice, or even better, use several mediums to relay directions: spoken, visual (pictures and written words) and modeled (acted out).
- Make sure that all farmers are seated or positioned where they can see and hear well.
- To encourage farmers' confidence with speaking English, do not correct pronunciation and grammar, unless that is the specific focus of the activity. This might cause farmers to participate less. However, you can correct content to help them arrive at the objectives for content knowledge.



# 5

# PARTICIPATORY TEACHING ACTIVITIES



Cultivating Community, Portland ME

The participatory activities outlined here can be used to teach a variety of skills and concepts related to beginning farmer training. Because these activities do not rely on the written word or too much verbal explanation, they are well suited to farmers who are learning English and literacy for the first time. In addition, each activity is designed to allow farmers to demonstrate their learning through the activity itself. Therefore, these activities are used as teaching and assessment tools. It is largely understood that the best way to teach farming related skills is through doing hands-on-demonstrations and participatory activities in the field. However, combining those with these rigorous and engaging classroom activities during your training times will help to reinforce learning in a safe learning environment.

# ROLE PLAY



**“We do about 30 minutes of role playing where we have farmers and staff all take turns being the farmer and the customer.”**

*- A reviewer on using role play marketing skills.*

## OVERVIEW

Using role-play allows farmers to demonstrate knowledge in a situation that mirrors life. Authentic activities like this are especially useful for adults who have had limited time in a formal teaching environment.

Since speaking English in field or market settings can be intimidating to farmers, role plays can be a time for farmers to try out new skills or dialogue in a safe space. Volunteers can be selected from the group, or all farmers can rotate through the role play.

## USEFUL WHEN

- Farmers are learning new words and phrases
- Farmers are trying to get comfortable answering customer questions
- Farmers are practicing ‘on the phone’ skills (with buyers, staff, etc.)
- You want farmers to choose the best option or response out of several

## TIPS

- Pre-teach the key phrases that you want farmers to use in the role play.
- Make sure everyone is comfortable with the phrases before you ask them to come up and act.
- Have the phrases written down or represented by a picture, so that if farmers get stuck, you can point to the words / picture to jog their memory.

## EXAMPLE ROLE PLAYS

- Interactions with farmer’s market customers, CSA members, and wholesale buyers. This is a good time to practice dialogue and phrases that are needed to ask and answer key questions: “Where is your farm?” “Where else do you sell?”
- Learning procedures for how to accept various kinds of currency at farmer’s market (cash, check, EBT, credit).
- Asking and following directions to the farmer’s market or wholesale delivery.
- Surveying crops and answering staff questions such as “what do you have ready to harvest?”

# STRUCTURED DIALOGUE



**“Ask farmers to answer frequently asked questions at farmers market, such as ‘Is this organic’, ‘Where is your farm’, or ‘Where are you from’.”**

*- A reviewer on teaching farmers market skills to farmers.*

## OVERVIEW

Using structured dialogue can help farmers practice asking and answering questions they encounter frequently from customers, staff or others. This strategy requires less set up than role play, and can focus more on written phrases if needed.

## USEFUL WHEN

- Farmers are looking to get comfortable with ‘frequently asked questions’ from staff or customers
- Farmers are looking to get comfortable with commonly written questions

## TIPS

- Dialogue practices can have written or pictorial prompts.
- Written out dialogue should be used if farmers want to learn written words.
- Dialogue lines can be practiced together verbally, and then staff can point to written questions and farmers can search for and provide the correct answer.
- Write out the phrases so that farmers can connect text to meaning.
- Only choose some key English words to teach explicitly; not all words in the dialogue need to be written.
- Contextualize the questions by modeling or doing a mini role play to illustrate the situations in which these questions commonly occur.
- This can often be done without an interpreter.

## EXAMPLES

- Answering common personal information questions: practice these verbally while pointing to the dialogue lines: “What is your name?” “What do you sell?” “What is your phone number?” etc.
- Answering common staff questions such as: “What did you harvest today?” “What did you sell today?” “What is in the CSA today?”



# VOCABULARY DRILLS



**“We don’t usually explicitly teach vocabulary, very helpful in this case and might consider adding that to other lessons.”**

*- A tester commenting on vocabulary in a food safety lesson.*

## OVERVIEW

Practicing oral vocabulary drills allows farmers to practice new words or phrases in response to prompts or pictures (such as veggie flash cards or veggie word cards). As a vocabulary building tool, pictures can be shown to farmers who then name the object or concept they are looking at. It can also be a way for farmers to practice phrases that they will need to use or understand regularly, such as “Carrots are \$2.50 a bunch,” or “Your total is / your change is...”

## USEFUL WHEN

- Farmers are learning new farming-related English words, such as names of vegetables, pests, or supplies
- Farmers are learning to read labels that have set systems, such as seed packets, price signs, or invoices and receipts
- Farmers are learning new calendar / time-related English words and systems, such as days of the week, months, and times on a clock

## TIPS

- As often as possible, have pictures representing all the words you are using / teaching. Pictures and words can be first introduced in a Powerpoint, but are best if they can be manipulated (printed-out flash cards, etc.).
- These can often be done without any interpretation.

## EXAMPLE ORAL DRILLS

- Vegetable flash cards to learn vegetable names
- Practicing standard operating procedure
- Doing a CSA packing simulation exercise

# HANDS-ON DEMONSTRATION



**“If this module was conducted alongside a field activity, I might suggest following up with an activity in the field.”**

*-A tester commenting on a crop planning lesson.*

## OVERVIEW

Though there are many nuanced ways to teach skills and concepts, hands-on demonstrations in field or at market are the most effective and engaging way for farmers to learn. Especially when teaching a specific production practice, there are no substitutes for having staff or a farmer guide others through trying out the skill themselves. Hands-on demonstration is optimal while the season allows, and concepts and skills taught in the classroom off-season can be reinforced in the field during the on-season. Asking questions to gauge learning throughout or after the demonstration is a great way for the demonstrator to know if and how farmers are learning.

## USEFUL WHEN

- Farmers are learning a specific production practice: weeding, trellising, etc.
- Farmers are learning and incorporating new harvesting standards
- Farmers are learning management of a new tool or infrastructure
- Farmers are learning specific pest and disease identification and management

## TIPS

- While it may seem like an intuitive teaching approach, the learning experience will be more beneficial if the demonstration is well planned. This will limit use of excessive or potentially alienating verbosity and large vocabulary words.
- Think through vocabulary words essential for farmers to know. These can be pre-taught, or you can pause your demonstration to make sure farmers understand and can say the word.
- Think about how you will have farmers participate in the demonstration to show their learning.

## EXAMPLES

- Trellising / pruning tomatoes
- Laying drip line irrigation
- Harvesting techniques / selecting for ripeness
- Pest control / bug picking techniques
- Using the rototiller / learning a new tool usage
- Laying black plastic or row cover

# PEER TEACHING



**“We have more advanced farmers who have mastered this skill already and we could rely on them for some of the teaching.”**

*- A reviewer commenting on using peer teaching.*

## OVERVIEW

Peer teaching is a great way to check what farmers know, use farmer expertise, and build and encourage farmer leadership. Often, certain farmers will exhibit production or marketing practices that illustrate their advanced knowledge and skill in the area. You can ask this farmer to do a hands-on demonstration for the group, or for another individual farmer. Sometimes farmers will incorporate practices from their home-country that would be beneficial for other farmers to know. Peer teaching allows farmers to demonstrate their knowledge.

## USEFUL WHEN

- You are teaching production practices that certain farmers are particularly skilled in
- Farmers would benefit from hearing an explanation of a certain skill in their native language

## TIPS

- If possible, have the farmer run through how they will teach with you first. That way they will be comfortable when teaching to a group.
- Ask the farmer to think about questions they expect they will get from farmers. Walk them through the answers.
- If desired, allow farmers to use native language instruction whenever possible. Certain complex concepts can be peer taught in farmers’ native language.
- If there are key English vocabulary words you think farmers need, make sure the farmer teacher knows to include them, or add them yourself.
- Any topic that can be taught through hands-on demonstration can be peer taught by a willing and able farmer.

## EXAMPLES

- Teaching production practices around less common crops that farmers may be more familiar with from their home country.

# REALIA



**“We have also used picture flash cards in box packing activities but doing it with real veggies makes a difference if it is possible.”**

*- A reviewer commenting on a CSA packing activity*

## OVERVIEW

Real objects are excellent aids to introduce vocabulary and extend practice. Preliterate students may not be adept at reading pictures and graphics. Bringing the real thing to class when possible avoids confusion. There are many ways to use them to teach skills, identification and vocabulary. The strategy of using realia is effective because there is no substitute (pictures, slides, words) for the real thing, and for literacy level learners, this is especially true.

## USEFUL WHEN

- You are teaching farmers vocabulary about tools or vegetables
- Farmers are learning how to use certain tools and supplies

## TIPS

- Use real objects whenever possible to teach, only using pictures and slide representations when it is logistically too difficult to have the real thing.
- Incorporate realia into role plays and oral drills when possible.

## EXAMPLE REALIA

- Vegetable name, harvesting size, price writing, quality control
- Tools and supplies: name, usage, and care
- Vegetables and tools are the most obvious, but realia can also be used to teach different applications (fertilizers and amendments), seed packets and planting phases, money and marketing supplies, etc.

# PICTURE STORIES



**“I would have visuals showing plants growing in sand compared to ones growing in good soil”.**

*- A reviewer commenting on a soil fertility lesson plan*

## OVERVIEW

If farmers are learning a sequence, order of operations or are planning their crops / businesses, picture stories can be a way for them to do this without requiring too much English or written explanation. Picture stories allow farmers to show what they know about setting up for market, crop rotation, or life cycle of a plant or insect. Picture stories can also show what farmers are planning for their business or their own personal goals. By choosing a series of pictures related to farming, farmers can show you what they plan to incorporate into their business over time.

## USEFUL WHEN

- Farmers are figuring out their business plan or goals for a specific timeline
- Farmers are demonstrating a sequence or order of operations

## TIPS

- Use photos that are as realistic as possible. Pictures from the farm and of the farmers would be ideal.
- Make sure farmers have at least one English word for each picture they put together or explain.
- Understand as a trainer whether this is a matter of interpretation, or whether there is a specific order you want farmers to demonstrate.

## EXAMPLES

- Goal setting for farmers. Show pictures of farmers at various stages of development, or specializing in specific areas. Ask farmers to pick what looks good to them. Have them tell you what it is they like about what that farmer is doing or holding. Then work backwards to talk about specifics and what they would need to get there.
- Put in order the life cycle of a plant, or the planting and harvesting cycle of specific crops.
- Show the order to set up a market stand.

# THUMBS UP AND DOWN



**“The thumbs-up/ thumbs-down pictures for different money handling practices were effective and easy to understand.”**

*- A reviewer commenting on a money handling lesson*

## OVERVIEW

In this teaching approach, you present a picture and/or statement, and ask farmers to tell you if they think it is true or false. This is a good way to allow farmers to deepen their understanding of a situation, such as good and bad practices at the farmer’s market booth, what is and is not organic, or what kinds of insects are beneficial or are pests. Thumbs up and thumbs down is the same principle, but involves a kinesthetic method of breaking things into good and bad categories. For example, the trainer could show pictures of different situations at market or different stages of ripeness, and farmers can demonstrate their knowledge by showing approval with thumbs up, or disapproval with thumbs down.

## USEFUL WHEN

- Farmers need to demonstrate their knowledge of good and bad practices
- Farmers need to categorize a large group of things into two categories

## TIPS

- True and false might be a challenging concept. Yes/no and thumbs up/thumbs down are more straightforward.
- Provide actual yes/no or thumbs up and down pictures to each farmer so that as you show them pictures and ask them questions, they can answer you by holding up specific pictures.

## EXAMPLES

- “Is this a beneficial insect, or a pest?”
- “Is this product organic or not organic?”
- “Is this picture of a vegetable ripe or over-ripe/under-ripe?”
- “Is this picture of a market display good or bad?”

# TELL ME ABOUT THIS PICTURE



**Show a photo of a farmers market and ask farmers what is happening in this picture.**

## OVERVIEW

This activity is used to prompt conversation. Pictures of farmers at different stages in their farm and business development are ideal. (These can be pictures of the farmers themselves, or of other farmers.) This picture strategy can be useful to start any envisioning or goal-setting conversation. It can also be useful to teach marketing techniques or to have farmers reflect on their own production practices.

## USEFUL WHEN

- Farmers are reflecting on their future goals
- Farmers are reflecting on their own season or market set-up
- Farmers are engaging in conversation about good and bad practices demonstrated in a photo

## TIPS

- To reflect on the season, see if you can get pictures of the farmers' actual fields or market set ups.
- To reflect on their future goals, see if you can select many diverse pictures of other farmers / businesses so farmers can find visual examples that help them explain what they want and don't want.

## EXAMPLES

- Show them a picture of their market stand, or another stand, and ask them: "Tell me about this picture. What is good? What is bad?" or "What do you like?"
- You can show them a picture of other farmers and ask: "What do you like? What do you not like?" This is also a way for farmers to reveal things to you that may not come up otherwise.

# MAPS



**Draw pictures of fields in year one and year two and then have them move vegetable picture cards around on the map to learn about crop-rotation.**

## OVERVIEW

Maps are a visual way for farmers to understand and demonstrate knowledge about a field, farm, process or a way to market. Maps can be interpreted loosely, as in farmers may use a 'map' format to plan their successions for the season or crop rotations over the years. Maps can be used like a board game that farmers can move pictures of vegetables around on.

## USEFUL WHEN:

- Farmers are planning for the season or multiple years
- Farmers are learning how to get to market

## TIPS

- Simplify maps as much as possible.
- Demonstrate an activity with a map before asking farmers to complete it on their own.
- Use manipulatives (as opposed to writing) on the map as much as possible.
- Make maps large, with big print or big pictures and thick lines.

## EXAMPLES

- Planning the season's crop successions or estimating yields with map or vegetable manipulatives.
- Planning rotation cycles for soil fertility.
- Learning how to get to a common market or CSA site.



# REFLECTION QUESTIONS



**“I would add reflection questions: What did you have too much or too little of last year? How much more or less of those crops do you want to grow this year as a result?”**

*- A reviewer commenting on a crop planning lesson*

## OVERVIEW

Regular reflection questions can be a teaching activity if they are done intentionally. For example, using pictures with questions about specific topics, skills or concept areas, farmers can answer and voice their opinions in a way that both demonstrates their knowledge and allows you the chance to correct misinformation. Reflection questions can be a great way for farmers to demonstrate their knowledge of a topic or concept in a low-stakes environment. It can also give staff a chance to get to know farmers and the breadth of their knowledge on a one-on-one basis.

## USEFUL WHEN

- Farmers and staff are doing process check-ins
- When long or short term goals are being discussed
- New choices are explained and farmers need to demonstrate knowledge of the choices and choose one

## TIPS

- Use the phrases farmers use to clarify what they are saying (language experience approach).
- Use picture prompts as much as possible or as needed.
- Working with an interpreter could be especially useful here, depending on farmers’ English level and familiarity with the conversation format and subject matter.

## EXAMPLES

- Regular check-in points to conduct pre-, mid- and post-assessments.
- To guide the process of creating goals, or refining goals to make them more SMART (short, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound).
- Asking farmers their preferences (in terms of marketing options, size of farm, crop options, infrastructure choices, etc.)



**“Farmers can practice ‘packing’ CSA boxes by making piles of vegetable pictures that represent different shares.”**

*- A reviewer commenting on a CSA lesson plan*

# **SORTING, CATEGORIZING AND MATCHING**

## **OVERVIEW**

This is a great way for farmers to demonstrate knowledge by sorting cards, pictures, words, etc. into distinct groups. Farmers can also match words with their corresponding pictures or prices. Have farmers sort cards into crop families, seasonality, production practices, etc. Have farmers tell you how they separated things into groups (report out, reflect and re-evaluate).

## **USEFUL WHEN**

- Farmers are learning how to sort vegetables into types (relating to pests, seasonality, rotation, etc.)
- Farmers are learning to differentiate techniques for certain crops
- Farmers are learning to match new words or numbers with their corresponding pictures
- Farmers need to be familiar with what kind of items go where on forms they need to fill out

## **TIPS**

- Have farmers tell you why they sorted things the way they did.
- Farmers can look over, and correct, each other’s categorizations.

## **EXAMPLES**

Things that can be sorted using pictures/words:

- Vegetable families
- Good and bad pests
- Appropriate prices with appropriate crops
- Appropriate post-harvest techniques with crops
- Crop rotation ideas
- Organic and inorganic inputs
- Expenses and inorganic items
- Cold and warm weather crops or hardy and not-hardy crops
- Direct seed or transplant

# ORDERING AND SEQUENCING



**“We also really like the idea of using the goal setting cards as visual cues and to do it as an activity.”**

*- A reviewer on using the goal setting flashcards for setting priorities*

## OVERVIEW

Ordering and sequencing is a good way for farmers to demonstrate knowledge of the order of things, or to illustrate how they would prioritize, using pictures or other manipulatives. Using pictorial representations of the process being taught, farmers will rearrange and explain why they put things in a certain order.

## USEFUL WHEN

- Farmers are learning a sequence or an order of plants or processes
- Farmers are learning how to set priorities or rank things
- Farmers are learning calendars or seasonality
- Farmers are learning crop rotations or succession planning

## TIPS

- Model activities first to show farmers what you would like them to do.
- Use picture cards that farmers are familiar with, especially pictures directly from the farm if possible.
- Have more advanced farmers model the activity first.

## EXAMPLES

- Put months, days or seasons in order, to demonstrate knowledge of the calendar.
- Put early, mid-, and late season crops in order, to demonstrate knowledge of seasonality.
- Rank topics of interest for learning.
- Plant or pest life cycles.
- Succession planting and crop rotation plans.
- Order of certain transactions.
- Schedules or calendars, etc.
- Ranking / prioritizing goals or tasks.
- Plant nutrition factors.

# GAMES



**“I really like the visual use of the colored beads to show different crop requirements.”**

*- A reviewer discussing a soil fertility workshop using beads*

## OVERVIEW

Games refers to activities that you do with farmers that in some ways mirror board games, and are especially useful for teaching concepts without relying on literacy. The way that some training programs have used games has been to explain resource allocation (in terms of weeds or soil fertility), but can similarly be used to explain other resource allocation (money, time and energy). The use of a board and manipulatives can help farmers easily visualize tricky concepts on their own without extensive explanation from the trainer.

## USEFUL WHEN

- Farmers are learning about managing their soil fertility
- Farmers are learning the importance of certain management practices
- Farmers are learning about money, time or energy management
- Farmers are learning plant nutrition factors

## TIPS

- Model activities first to show farmers what you would like them to do.
- If you are using manipulatives to represent real life things, make sure farmers understand that through pictures or realia of the real-life object that is being represented.
- If farmers are wary of playing a ‘game,’ play in front of them with another staff member to show that this game is for adults.

## EXAMPLES

- To encourage the practice of crop rotation, use different colored beads to illustrate plant uptake of different nutrients. Have each crop only take up one type of nutrient, so tomatoes will take up red beads, cucumbers will take up green beads, etc. Time the farmers so they can remove their nutrients for 10 seconds and then stop.



# 6

# DESIGNING A WORKSHOP OR LESSON PLAN



BFRDP Core Developers, 2016

## IN THIS CHAPTER WE WILL ADDRESS:

- How to write a lesson plan using backwards design
- How to write learning objectives that are SMART
- How to make visual resources for farmers

We have learned about farmers' backgrounds and how that may influence learning, we have reviewed methodologies, theories, tips and activities, and now we are putting the pedal to the metal to see how to integrate these into actual lesson, workshop and curriculum design. We will discuss how the principles of backwards design help us to create any learning plan, for a one year or multi-year curriculum, to a smaller in the field TA session. We will also look at how to put together effective visual resources for farmers, whether using Powerpoint, signage, forms or flashcards.

# Backwards Design



**“The structure for creating tools has changed the way I’ve approached organizing new workshops and clarified my expectations for those also providing T&TA.”**

*- Brooke, International Rescue Committee in Charlottesville VA on lesson templates*

## WHAT IS IT?

Backwards design is a design tool for building lesson plans that allows us to be more responsive to the learning needs of the people we work with. Through backwards design, we start with the end first. What do we want farmers to be able to do or know because of this lesson? Once we can adequately answer that question, we can fill in our learning plan.

Ultimately, the evidence of learning is what happens in the field and at market. However, building in a measure of learning in the classroom or workshop allows you to address those who may have otherwise fallen through the cracks, when the stakes are lower.

This approach helps us to:

1. Be more culturally responsive, because it allows us to rethink the approaches to teaching that we are most familiar with, and allows us to replace them as needed with learning activities that will be more aligned with how the people we are working with may learn.
2. Focus on achievable learning gains, as opposed to trying to cover too much content in a short period.
3. Keep farmers in the loop about why we are doing what we are doing.
4. Share with the farmers why we are doing certain activities, so that nothing seems random.

# Backward Design Step-by-Step

When we start thinking about a lesson we are soon to teach, traditional design would have us first thinking about the activities we will do and the materials we need. With backwards design, we will not think about any of that until we can answer what exactly we want farmers to be able to do as a direct result of this lesson.

## STEP 1: IDENTIFY DESIRED RESULTS

- What are the central understandings farmers need to have about this topic? It might take some time to settle on it. It is important to prioritize, since there is usually too much content to teach.

## STEP 2: DETERMINE ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE

- What counts as evidence that farmers now have this central understanding? “The collected assessment evidence needed to document and validate the desired learning has been achieved, not simply as content to be covered or a series of learning activities.”

## STEP 3: PLAN THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND INSTRUCTION

- What enabling knowledge (facts, concepts, principles) will students need to achieve and perform the desired results?



“Understanding by Design”  
Grant Wiggins and Jay McTeigh (1998)



# Learning Objectives

Using the principles of backwards design, we would write the learning objectives before anything else. While writing learning objectives, you should simultaneously be thinking of what farmers will do to show that they have accomplished the objective.

**What:** Objectives for a training provide a statement of what participants will be able to do at the end of the training.

**Why:** Written objectives help you to evaluate the effectiveness of your training, and they allow you to share training goals with participants and other trainers.

**When:** Objectives should be written when you are beginning to design your training and should be shared with participants at the beginning of the session.

**How many:** The number of learning objectives depends on the duration of training, but between 1-3 is generally appropriate for farmers.



**“Measuring the learning objectives happens within the lesson itself, which is helpful immediate feedback to the educator of farmers’ understanding.”**

*- Jessica, Cultivating Community, on Weed Management*

# Learning Objectives Steps

1. As you write your learning objectives, be thinking simultaneously about what learners will do to demonstrate their command of this objective. This will force you to write an objective that is appropriately leveled. (Can be adapted at time of training to meet learners at higher or lower language, literacy, farming and education levels.)
2. How you will measure your objective?
3. How are you going to accomplish it?
4. Make sure your objective is SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES CAN BE:

- *Skills acquisition*: skills you hope farmers acquire on the job such as learning to use appropriate procedures, equipment, or methods. (Example: Farmers will be able to trellis tomatoes using xx method...)
- *Knowledge acquisition*. (Example: Farmers will demonstrate their understanding of the basic pros and cons of organic certification...)
- *Personal, professional or career knowledge*. (Example: Farmers will choose their best marketing option for their personal goals...)

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES ARE NOT:

- *Purpose of training* (this refers to what you want them to do after the training, for example integrate new knowledge or skills into their context).
- *Goal of training* (goal refers to an overall solution or improvement of an initial problem).

## ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- If objectives are SMART, you can determine whether or not participants have reached the learning objective (perform a task better, integrate new knowledge / skill) through self-report or direct or indirect assessment

# Lesson Plan Step By Step

## 1. DEVELOPMENT GOAL AND RATIONALE

Articulate your needs identification process and your rationale for development. This will include topic and scope, audience, time and resources. Rationale may include an articulation of the gap in the available resources on this topic.

## 2. LEARNING OBJECTIVES

SMART learning objectives allow you to decide on essential or core understandings you would like farmers to have by the end of the training(s). Writing these down will force you to start thinking about what is necessary, what is realistic, and how this might be adapted for lower and higher level farmers.

## 3. DEVELOPMENT OF ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Working back and forth between the objective and assessment, think of a way that you will see evidence of farmer learning, first by deciding on the desired / essential understanding farmers will have at the end of the session. Make sure the assessment activity you choose is aligned with your learning objective and that you are specific about what you will be looking for.

## 4. LEARNING PLAN

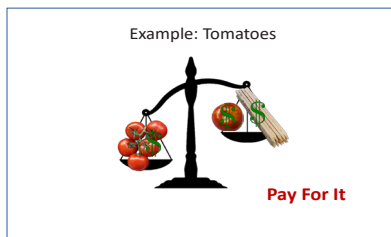
After deciding on the way you will see evidence of learning, work backwards to decide on the sequence of activities needed to set learners up for the assessment activity. The learning plan may include participatory teaching activities, ppts, and discussion.

## 5. SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Supporting resources (flashcards, handouts, Powerpoint, posters) should be developed with an eye towards simplicity, authenticity and minimal but effective use of print. Their role should be clearly laid out within the lesson plan and facilitation guide. Some supporting materials may be available for self-directed use, so that farmers do not require as much assistance.

# Visual Resources

We try to do as much hands-on, activity-based learning as possible, but there are times when we need to rely on visual teaching materials to explain concepts and teach skills. In navigating farmer's print literacies, we often lean on visual aids, but also need to be mindful of visual literacy and make effective use of our pictures, graphics, signs, forms and handouts. In order to avoid cognitive overload, we can first choose the right kind of visual resource for the job.



## POWERPOINTS

For explaining concepts and discussing pictures

	1 table cloth	
	box of 100 or 500 plastic bags	
	10 baskets	
	Many price signs	
	1 change box	
	40 bills	\$1 dollar
	10 bills	\$5 dollar

## MANIPULATIVES

(Flashcards, picture series, 'design your own' crop plan etc.) Demonstrate learning, reinforce learning and plan



## HANDOUTS

(Planting calendars, harvesting guides etc.) For continued learning, planning, reference, and reinforce learning

Year _____	Name: _____																																									
<b>Income (FOR TAXES)</b>	<b>Expenses (FOR TAXES)</b>																																									
<table border="1"> <tr><td>June</td><td>\$120.00</td></tr> <tr><td>July</td><td>\$120.00</td></tr> <tr><td>August</td><td>\$120.00</td></tr> <tr><td>September</td><td>\$120.00</td></tr> <tr><td>October</td><td>\$120.00</td></tr> <tr><td>November</td><td>\$120.00</td></tr> <tr><td>July 1</td><td>\$72.25</td></tr> <tr><td>July 15</td><td>\$189.00</td></tr> <tr><td>July 20</td><td>\$101.75</td></tr> </table>	June	\$120.00	July	\$120.00	August	\$120.00	September	\$120.00	October	\$120.00	November	\$120.00	July 1	\$72.25	July 15	\$189.00	July 20	\$101.75	<table border="1"> <tr><td colspan="2">Car and Truck Expenses</td></tr> <tr><td>Transport</td><td>April</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>May</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>June</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>July</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>August</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>September</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>October</td><td></td></tr> </table>	Car and Truck Expenses		Transport	April			May			June			July			August			September			October	
June	\$120.00																																									
July	\$120.00																																									
August	\$120.00																																									
September	\$120.00																																									
October	\$120.00																																									
November	\$120.00																																									
July 1	\$72.25																																									
July 15	\$189.00																																									
July 20	\$101.75																																									
Car and Truck Expenses																																										
Transport	April																																									
	May																																									
	June																																									
	July																																									
	August																																									
	September																																									
	October																																									

## WORKSHEETS AND FORMS

(Record-keeping, crop planning, receipt writing etc.) To practice literacy skills that they will need later.

# Tips for Visual Resources

**“We will double check that our visuals are consistent.”**

*- Ashley, New Lands Farm*

**“We will use more pictures from our own farm.”**

*- Jessica, Cultivating Community*

**“Use text for (english or literacy) learning purposes only!”**

*- Aley, International Rescue Committee*

- 1. Make the text large.** Choose a font that is simple and mimics hand-writing, such as Comic Sans.
- 2. Only use text for explicit learning purposes.** Do not use text to explain. Only include text in your Powerpoints and handouts that you want farmers to be able to write and read.
- 3. Make spaces for writing large.** Farmers may write in large, capital letters. Make sure all spaces you expect farmers to write are large.
- 4. Use pictures that are real.** Best case scenario would be to use a picture of the farm and farmers in your program when possible.
- 5. Use more manipulatives, less worksheets.** Assess every worksheet to see if you can turn it into a movable activity.
- 6. Use icon or clip art consistently.** Throughout your Powerpoints, worksheets and signs, make sure you use the same image to relay specific words or concepts. This will help farmers to make image-to-meaning connections more easily.

# Make Your Workshops Successful

## TEACHING DIVERSITY

Lesson engages and satisfies various teaching and learning modalities (reading, writing, speaking, listening, etc.).

## PRE-TEACHING

New skills or vocabulary words that could be pre-taught in this lesson are noted.

## AUDIO / VISUAL / KINESTHETIC

Activities of various types are included in the lesson (Audio-visual, hands on, discussion, small group, role play, physical activity, object manipulation, etc.).

## PARTNER AND GROUP WORK

Has at least two of the following: peer teaching, group, one on one with trainer, partner work, and/or individual work (if in workshop format; not applicable if not).

## CULTURAL INCLUSION

The cultural background (gender, mix of ethnic groups) of participants are taken into consideration and, if applicable, there are opportunities to amend the delivery of the resource to acknowledge cultural differences between participants.

## DEMONSTRATED LEARNING

There is a clearly articulated activity that will act as the observable or demonstrable evidence of learning. The assessment activity is particularly appropriate for intended (noted) audience, with suggestions for adaptation.

## PRE-EXISTING KNOWLEDGE

There is built-in opportunity to check pre-existing knowledge.

## FEEDBACK

There are noted opportunities for the trainer to give feedback to the participant on their progress (feedback on their assessment activity, short term, and long term follow-ups). There are noted opportunities for the participant to give feedback to the trainer on the effectiveness of the training, how relevant the lesson was, and/or their progress.

# Works Cited

CASAS level descriptions retrieved from <https://www.casas.org/product-overviews/curriculum-management-instruction/cases-scale-skill-levels-and-descriptors>

Croyden, Alyson. (2005) 'Making it Real: Teaching Pre-literate Adult Refugee Students' Tacoma Community House.

Cultural Orientation Resource Center (<http://www.culturalorientation.net/>)

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. (2007) *Learning in Adulthood: A guide*. Jossey-Bass.

The Language Justice Toolkit (2014) from the highlander Center. Retrieved from <http://highlandercenter.org/programs/methodologies/language-justice/>

"Trauma-Informed Cross-Cultural Psychoeducation: Refugee Mental Health Training for Community Leaders" From <http://www.dbhds.virginia.gov/professionals-and-service-providers/ohea/refugee-mh/ticcp>

Wiggins, Grant, and McTighe, Jay. (1998). *Backward Design. In Understanding by Design*. ASCD.