University of Hawaii’s
GoFarm Hawaii:
A regional new farmer development initiative

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Project Overview

• Program Description
  • Enhance Hawaii’s food security and economy by increasing the number of local agricultural producers by offering those with an interest in agriculture a combination of knowledge, experience, and support designed to assist them in becoming viable production growers, and accomplish this in a manner that encourages sustainability. 5 program sites across 4 islands
  • Multi-phased program
    - Cohort-based; must take phases in order; must re-apply for each phase
    - Classes are evenings and weekends to accommodate people with other full-time employment
    - Science-based, experiential + academic,
    - Personal accountability
Project Overview

• Audience:
  • Adults who aspire to farm commercially in Hawaii

• Approach:
  • Develop new farmers
  • Evaluate curriculum dissemination
  • Determine feasibility of expansion

• Target outcome:
  • 200 learn and practice fundamentals of farming
  • 75 start agribusinesses
  • $500k in graduate sales
  • Add 1 island, develop and test distance-ed
Project Accomplishments

• *Distance learning website created and utilized by all 5 sites*
• *Added Maui and Hawaii islands*
• *Added advanced phases at Leeward and Kauai*
• *$1.5 in non-federal funds raised*
• *Hosted 2 annual statewide beginning farmer/rancher program conference to discuss and collaborate.*
Impacts and Evaluation

Impact in the past 3 years:
• 210 graduates
• 79 started agribusinesses through AgPro
• $75k of food sold to community by program students (AgSchool and AgPro) across all sites
• Success stories: FarmLink Hawaii; Friends with Farms Cooperative; Farm Manager at large local farm;

Impact in the past year alone:
• $80k of local produce sales reported by AgIncubator participants
• 81% of program graduates are either continuing in the program, working as ag producers or in ag sector

Evaluation techniques:
• Entrance/exit surveys; annual longitudinal survey; Focus groups with TKC
• Plan to host annual alumni conference to capture graduate stories and results
Lessons Learned & Best Practices

• To help participants commit to farming, foster confidence and resilience, and get participants as close to independent farming as possible
  – Phased program, market-farming, personal accountability, incubation, inter-cohort mentoring and intra-cohort bonding
• Hands-on practical experience is necessary
• Create competition and strict admissions to help identify those who are more likely to commit to commercial Ag path
• Adding advanced phases (AgPro and AgIncubator) increases commitment and likelihood of producing actual commercial scale farmers
• Setting and clearly communicating rules and policies (i.e. Incubator level evaluation benchmarks)
• Host multiple opportunities to foster networking amongst students and local resources
• Monthly Pau Hana (after work) meetings with pot-lucks are popular; keeps connections and provides additional learning opportunities
• Students graduate with an entrepreneurial spirit, we need to remind them of importance of considering apprenticing/working as Ag labor to continue learning
• Always adding to and enhancing curriculum: Value-added training in AgPro, Farm to Table educational events for AgIncubator
• Graduates and social media are promoting the program.
Next Year & Beyond

Next round of BFRDP funding will focus on:

• More viable and sustainable farmers for Hawaii
  • Continuing with delivery of curriculum at all 5 sites
  • Adding advanced phases on Hawaii island, Kaua’i & Maui
  • Improving quality and consistency across all sites
  • Increasing reach and content using distance-ed tools
  • Provide ongoing business support
  • Explore and facilitate farmland options for graduates
  • More effective and efficient Beginning Farmer Development in Hawaii through collaboration and shared resources.
Questions?

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