Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship:
A National Program for Training Dairy Farmers

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The average age of dairy producers in the U.S. is 58.5 years old. In the next decade, hundreds of farms and thousands of acres will change hands.

DGA serves **current, retiring, and aspiring dairy farmers**, primarily in WI, MN, and MO but with strong interest in ME, NY, and PA.

Beginning dairy farmers require specialized knowledge, skills, experience, relationships, and capital for land, cows and equipment.

Aspiring dairy farmers include **young people, students, women, veterans, hired hands, herdsmen, farm managers, and farm workers**.

DGA has an **affirmative action policy** that guides outreach and recruitment of underserved populations.
In 2010, DGA was established as a formal Apprenticeship through a partnership between GrassWorks, Inc., the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, and the Wisconsin Technical College System, with the support of a 2010 BRFDP Development Grant and a 2011 BFRDP Standard Grant.

The current 2014 BFRDP Standard Grant provides support at a critical stage of development as DGA prepares to become a National Apprenticeship and a standard career track for new dairy farmers.
Partners/Collaborators

- U.S. Department of Labor-Employment and Training Administration
- Northcentral Technical College, Wisconsin
- Wisconsin School for Beginning Dairy & Livestock Farmers, UW Madison
- University of Missouri Extension
- Grasslands, Inc.
- Cadwallader Consulting, LLC
- USDA Farm Services Agency
Key Approaches

- Accredited **National Apprenticeship** under Department of Labor-Employment and Training Administration.

- **4000 hours** of training over **two years**, combines on-farm employment and training with related instruction.

- **DGA Training Guidelines** provide structure to mentoring relationship.

- Educational and technical support from on-the-ground DGA staff, peer group discussions, and local networking.

- Financial planning services for Masters and Apprentices.

- Relationships with industry and private investors.

- **Approved vendor** for Farm Services Agency’s Financial Management Training Program.
Apprenticeship is a structured system of training designed to prepare individuals for skilled occupations by combining on-the-job training with related instruction. Apprentices earn while they learn and their skills are nationally recognized.

For 100 years, skilled trades have used Apprenticeship to train certified skilled workers and ensure their standard of training.
Overall Target Outcomes

- **Establish** DGA as a National Apprenticeship under DOL-Employment and Training Administration.
- **Strengthen** DGA in Wisconsin by providing additional services to participants.
- **Support** the development of DGA in Missouri as a template for state-by-state expansion.
- **Enroll** at least 30 Apprentices (15 in Wisconsin and 15 in Missouri).
- **Graduate** at least 20 Apprentices to certified Journey Dairy Grazier status.
- **Start or retain** at least 10 managed grazing dairy farms (5 in each state).
- **Strive** for 10 percent of graduates from underserved groups—women, veterans, ethnic or racial minorities.
Skilled People are the Key
What do you hope to learn?

- Distance learning education and specialized teaching modules that meets local needs
- Outreach to veterans, women, farm workers, immigrants, and other underserved groups
- Resources, strategies, and issues regarding land access for beginning farmers
- Potential partnerships for expansion into additional states
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