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*Farm Works: Supporting beginning, limited resource farmers,
including immigrants and refugees, in the Puget Sound Region*
Award # 2015-70017-22867

*The Beginning Farmer Support Collective: Harmonizing beginning
farmer support programs and improving farmland access in King
County (WA)*
Award # 2017-70017-26954

BFRDP Project Directors
Meeting
Sept. 26-28, 2017
Nashville, TN



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Farm Works:

Supporting beginning, limited resource farmers, including immigrants and refugees, in the Puget Sound Region

Award # 2015-70017-22867

Sarah Collier ❖ Rachel Schindler ❖ Kyong Soh
Tilth Alliance, Seattle, WA

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Purpose: To provide culturally and linguistically accessible education in production methods, farm business management, and marketing.



Audience: Refugees, immigrants, veterans and other socially disadvantaged beginning farmers.



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Context: At the intersection
of urban and rural





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Approach:

- Organic Farming Education Program (OFEP)
Introduction to farming and farm business management
- Subsidized land leases
On-site land access, 1/8th acre and up
- Microloan financing
Access to capital, support in purchasing supplies and equipment
- Tilth Alliance Produce (TAP)
Secured sales and sales training – CSA, wholesale
- On-site technical assistance
Continuing improvement & constant learning
- Co-farming environment and collaborative problem-solving
Community-building, empowering



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2016 – Project Accomplishments:

- Trained **10** new farmers through 20-week OFEP course
- Provided **188** classroom and field-based instruction hours
- Signed subsidized land leases with **9** new OFEP graduates and **17** returning farmers
- Delivered **3,360** total hours of technical assistance to **26** farmers
- Assisted **15** farmers in microloan financing
- Assisted **7** farmers in moving to off-site locations or farming occupations





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2016 – Impact Evaluation:

➤ Number of new and returning farmers engaged in the program: **26**

➤ Total gross revenue for all farmers: **\$104,000**

➤ Average net monthly income for returning farmers: **\$918**

➤ Total acres in production: **7**

➤ Farmers selling through TAP: **22**



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2016 – End-of-Season Farmer Evaluation:

- Good communication with TAP food hub is key to farmer success
- Earlier farmer involvement in crop planning would aid in planning
- Soil fertility and watering are challenges requiring additional support
- Ongoing education around crop production, quality control, animal production, and other areas was requested
- *Continuing program improvement → 2017*





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Concluding project year 3 of 3 (2015 – 2017)

Key Outcomes:

- **30** BFRs graduated OFEP training and develop farm business plans
- **24** BFRs signed land leases with Tilth Alliance
- **7** program graduates operate land off-site, with more preparing for 2018
- **3** Program graduates gained enough experience and confidence to become farmer-mentors, with more expected in the future





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Best Practices & Lessons Learned:

- Access to land, equipment, and infrastructure (cooler, wash/pack, greenhouse) overcome major obstacles for new farm enterprises.
- Secure markets support financial success for new farmers, instill confidence, and encourage farmers to return for another year.
- Workshops, online resources, and videos throughout the season can provide farmers with important ongoing support and education around topics that are crucial to farm success.





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Best Practices & Lessons Learned:

- Advanced business development and marketing support is needed to help businesses scale up and become independent.
- A co-farming environment creates a community of support and facilitates opportunities for labor & resource sharing and mentorship.
- Livestock production ventures require intensive technical and financial support and, ideally, on-site residency.





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It's working!

But challenges still persist:

Outside of the Farm Works program, beginning farmers and ranchers in the region still face a *fragmented support system* for BFRs and challenges in gaining *long-term access to farmland*.



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- \$6B food market
- Strong interest in local produce
- Supportive local government
- Good farmland
- Strong development pressure
- Growing population
- Increasing numbers of aspiring farmers





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Needs:

- Coordinated training and support structure
- Improved access to land
- Ongoing technical assistance





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The Beginning Farmer Support Collective

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programs and improving farmland access in
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Three beginning farmer support programs:



King County



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Objectives:

✧ Create a formal partnership

Between the three organizations, facilitated by King County

✧ Harmonize curriculum and coordinate support systems

Review curricula and share best practices, develop a system for referral of aspiring BFRs to most suitable program

✧ Provide continuing training

Provide training through the three organizations' BFR training/incubator programs

✧ Promote independent land access for BFRs

Improve and expand the Washington FarmLink web platform

✧ Keep beginning farmers farming

Provide ongoing technical assistance, especially around land access

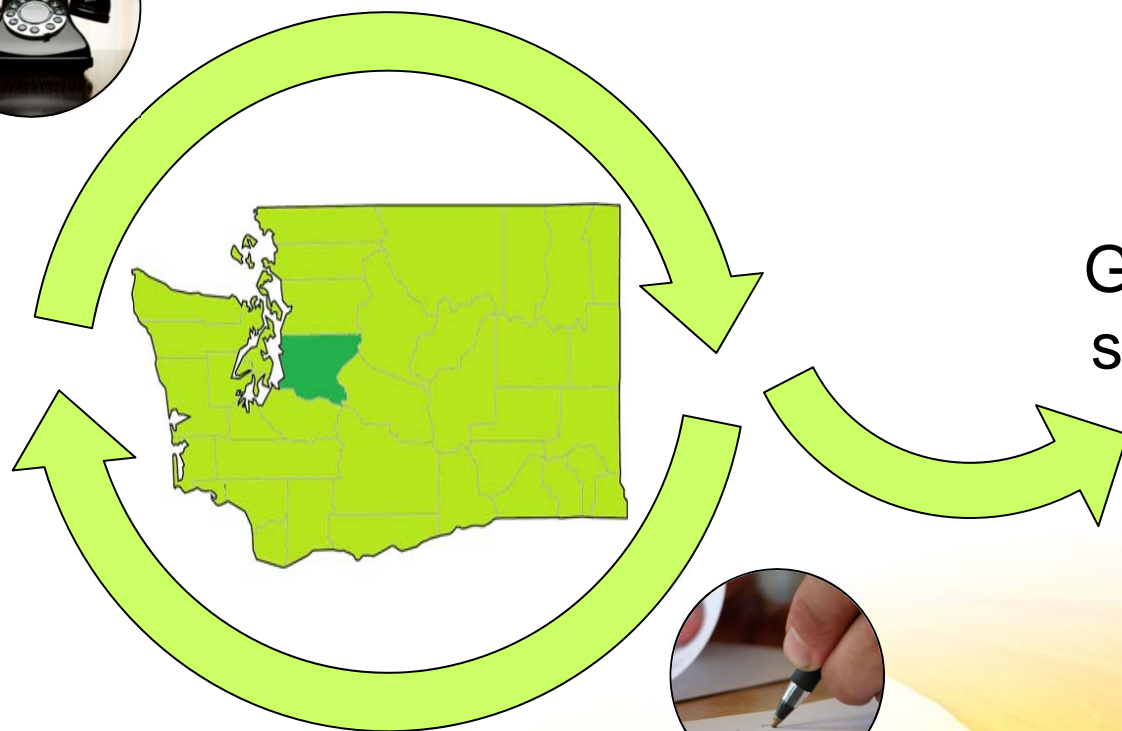


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(statewide)

New farmer land access and
ongoing support



Growing pool of
successful new
farmers



Beginning farmer training
(focused in population center)





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Thank You!



Questions?

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