Educational Tools and Methods for Beginning Refugee Farmers

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Beginning Farmer Incubators

- Defined by the National Incubator Farm Training Initiative (NIFTI): “A farm incubator project is a land-based multi-grower project that provides training and technical assistance to aspiring and beginning farmers.”

- At least 150-200 land-based incubators nationally (NIFTI).

- Varying levels of development and diverse new farmer trainees.

- Many components – land access, production, marketing, enterprise development, T&TA.
64 Refugee Incubator Farming Projects Serving Beginning Farmers in the US
Incubator T&TA

- T&TA - key element of programs.
- Typically provide training / education and technical assistance (hands on, often 1-1).
- Should be tailored to beginning farmers’ capacities and priorities.
- Also should reflect purposes of the incubators.
T&TA for US-born audiences

- US-born BFs typically have English fluency and literacy, high school education or beyond.

- T&TA essentially reflects English language and written content.

- **Spoken:** Lectures, discussions, AV / media.

- **Written:** Project materials, books, articles, manuals, online written content, etc.
INCUBATOR T&TA

• Scope, content and quality varies widely.

• Training: Some have well designed curricula – clear objectives, good lesson plans, tailored content.

• Diverse resources available to use or adopt.

• Increasing online access allows sharing, multiple users of same resources.
REFUGEE INCUBATORS

Typical of refugee incubator participants:

• Non-English-speaking
• Non-literate, at least in English
• Limited education
• Cultural differences; acculturation challenges
• Different and diverse agricultural heritages
• Very limited resources for farming
• Urban-based; other resettlement challenges
T&TA for Refugees

Written:
- English materials not useful except for ESL
- Content of such materials usually not appropriate for levels of understanding, even if translation used

Spoken:
- Usually by English-speaking trainers, not bilingual
- Typically requires interpreters
- Exchanges / discussion more difficult
T&TA for Refugees

Non-written resources:

- Oral communications
- Videos
- PowerPoints
- Photos, drawings, other visuals
- Hands-on demonstration
- Props, classroom and field tools
What IS T&TA?
Not just content, no matter how delivered. It combines:

- Overall curriculum / Lesson plans
- Guidance for providers / trainers (ToT)
- Content for audience(s)
- Provider facilitation or instructional content
- Methods for delivery and engagement of participants
- Communications tools and techniques (language)
- Evaluation and feedback
Constraints to effective T&TA for Refugees

- Instructional competencies and credentials
- Appropriate content for recent refugees
- Provider facilitation materials
- Guidance resources for trainers
- Delivery and communications skills
- Interpreters
- Cultural appreciation and competencies
- Alternatives resources for refugees
Our EE Project

Educational Tools and Methods for Beginning Refugee Farmers

Participants: 20-25 refugee-serving incubators

Developers: 8 organizations

Users / Evaluators: 20+ incubators

Major partners:

• New Entry Sustainable Farming Project / NIFTI
• International Rescue Committee’s ‘New Roots’
Project Core Objectives

- Develop coordination teams
- Support a Community of Practice (CoP) for development
- Assessment - Review existing curricula and gaps
- Build instructional and curriculum development skills
- Develop new and adapted curricula
- Pilot test resources and instructional methods
- Dissemination
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Outcomes and Deliverables

Curriculum development

• Audience appropriate content / tools
• Instructor / provider content and facilitation guidance
• Resource library for content development
• Pilot testing and feedback
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Overall T&TA curriculum

- Overall objectives / outcomes
- Courses / classes / workshops / modules
- Content for farmers
- Instructional / facilitation materials for providers
- Training of trainers guidance / skills
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Skills and capacity development:

- Instructional skills – how to teach
- Curriculum and lesson design / planning
- Instructor content development
- Communications skills for non-English low-education audiences
- Working with interpreters
- Farmer engagement – participation
Relevance to teaching literate English-speaking audiences

• Do you have instructional skills / credentials for adult education?

• Are you experienced with curriculum planning and design?

• Do you know your audience’s comprehension levels?

• Are your materials appropriate to audience education levels?
Relevance to teaching literate audiences

• Are you talking at audience comprehension level?
• Is content suited to type of farming, level of development, etc.?
• Is your facilitation material designed for your audience?
• Are additional resources tailored to audience needs and interests and capacities?
• Most farmers have literacy and comprehension levels below the typical agriculture literature.

• Plain language is a way of organizing and presenting information so that it makes sense and is easy to read for the intended audience.

• Mostly developed & prompted by AHEC health communications programs.

• Guidance easily found online, but recommend training to understand it. It is a skill.
Plain Language

• Plain language (also called Plain English) is communication your audiences can understand the first time they read or hear it.
• Includes wording, sentence structure, design.
• Less technical jargon, shorter words and sentences, larger text sizes.
• Integrates graphics; other visual images.
• Encourages engagement / exchange.