



Farm Business Planning Course - Winter 2011 Distance Learning Syllabus

Instructor Information:

Maura Schorr Beaufait, MS/MPH	maura.beaufait@tufts.edu
Farm Business Educator & Distance Learning Coordinator	Skype: nesfp_technicalassistance
New Entry Sustainable Farming Project (www.nesfp.org)	(845) 270-2853

Kyle Foley, MS Candidate	kyle.foley@tufts.edu
Farm Business Planning Teaching Assistant	Skype: kyleelizabethfoley

Technical Assistance:

Virtual office hours will be held each Tuesday evening from 6pm to 9pm. The instructor will be available by Skype (preferred), Gchat, and email during these times to provide technical assistance. Limited other time slots are available by appointment. Students may receive up to 1 hour of technical assistance each week.

Course Objectives:

- To identify goals and timelines for your farm enterprise
- To identify the resources available to you to start a successful business
- To identify the crops/livestock/value-added products you want to market
- To develop the individual elements necessary for an effective farm business plan
- To weave those elements together into a cohesive business plan

Course Modules:

- Week #1) Introduction to Distance Learning & Course Expectations*
- Week #2) Introduction to Farm Business Planning
- Week #3) Enterprise Selection
- Week #4) Marketing and Sales
- Live Webinar/Student Sharing Session
- Week #5) Crop Planning and Production
- Optional: Livestock Production
- Week #6) Equipment and Supplies Sourcing
- Week #7) Writing Business Plans I: Startup Budgets & Farm Financials
- Week #8) Writing Business Plans II: Building the Business Plan

Technology Requirement

A computer with a reliable internet connection and the software necessary to use the Internet to communicate and access information/resources are fundamental to participating effectively as a distance learner.

Expectations:

As a participant in the online course, you are expected to complete each module fully (including all course materials, discussions, assessments, and evaluations) and to submit all homework assignments. We anticipate a minimum time commitment of approximately 5 hours per week in order to complete this coursework.

In addition, at the conclusion of the course you will be required to submit a completed business plan in full to the instructor(s). The finalized business plan will be due on March 19th. Provided your final business plan is completed on time, you will receive a full review of your plan by the instructors according to the Business Plan Evaluation Rubric. This tool will help you to understand the strengths and weaknesses of your plan and how it might be improved in the future.

Winter 2012 – Distance Learning Course Schedule

Mandatory Course Introduction Meeting Sackler Building, 145 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02111 12 noon – 4pm, Sunday, January 8th		
Due date	Module	Assignments to be completed
Friday, Jan. 13th	Week #1) Introduction to Distance Learning & Course Expectations	1. Discussion Forum Post: Why have you joined the course? 2. Farm Business Planning Course Pre-Assessment 3. Module #1 Evaluation
Optional Field Trip: NOFA Mass Winter Conference* Worcester State University, Worcester, MA 7:30am – 5:30pm, Saturday, January 14th		
Friday, Jan. 20th	Week #2) Introduction to Business Planning	1. Discussion Forum Post: Response to case study 2. Discussion Forum Post: What business plan template fits your needs? 3. Week 2 Learning Objectives Assessment 4. Module #2 Evaluation
Friday, Jan. 27th	Week #3) Enterprise Selection	1. File Submission: Initial enterprise "wishlist", and sample budgets for each crop 2. Week 3 Learning Objectives Assessment 3. Module #3 Evaluation
Friday, Feb. 3rd	Week #4) Marketing and Sales	1. File Submission: Marketing plan, competitive analysis worksheet, revised enterprise wishlist based upon market research 2. Week 4 Learning Objectives Assessment 3. Module #4 Evaluation
Friday, Feb. 10th	Week #5) Crop Planning & Production	1. File submission: Submit completed cropping and successions timeline as well as seed calculation worksheet. 2. Week 5 Learning Objectives Assessment 3. Module #5 Evaluation ADDITIONAL: Submit 2-5 PowerPoint slides for live webinar
Live Webinar – Student Sharing Session 7 – 8:30pm EST, Wednesday, February 15th		
Friday, Feb. 17th	Week #6) Equipment & Supply Sourcing	1. File submission: Submit completed Improved Crop Planning Sheet, Field Schedules, Seed Calculations, and Materials Worksheet 2. Week 6 Learning Objectives Assessment 3. Module #6 Evaluation
Friday, Feb. 17th	Livestock Production (Optional) *Complete assignments to receive an additional hour of technical assistance	1. File submission: One-page initial livestock operations plan 2. Livestock Production Learning Objectives Assessment 3. Livestock Production Module Evaluation
Friday, Feb. 24th	Week #7) Writing Business Plans I: Farm Financials	1. File submission: Submit your completed financial documents as well as the month that you anticipate breaking even 2. Week 7 Learning Objectives Assessment 3. Module #7 Evaluation ADDITIONAL: please review the narrative sections of the SCORE business plan in preparation for next week's session
Friday, Mar. 2nd	Week #8) Writing Business Plans II: Narrating the Business Plan	1. Begin compiling previous assignments for final business plan 2. Week 8 Learning Objectives Assessment 3. Module #8 Evaluation
Mandatory Course Conclusion Meeting Sackler Building, 145 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02111 12 noon – 4pm, Sunday, March 4th		
Monday, Mar. 19th	End of Online Course	1. Final Business Plans and accompanying materials submitted 2. Complete Online Course Exit Interview
NESFP Spring Launch & Business Planning Graduation Evening of Thursday, March 22nd, exact time TBA Lowell, Massachusetts		

Instructor Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays 6-9pm EST
 Limited other appointment times available, email instructor to schedule.