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**Farm Business Planning Course**

**Distance Learning Syllabus**

**Fall 2014**

**Instructor Information**

TBD, *Teaching Assistant*

* Email:
* Skype:
* Google+:
* Phone:
* Online office hours:

Wendy Mainardi, *Farm Business Educator*

*and Distance Learning Coordinator*

* Email: wendy.mainardi@gmail.com
* Skype: WendyMainardi
* Google+: wendy.mainardi@gmail.com
* Phone: (973) 224-4321
* Online office hours: Mondays, 6:00-8:00pm

**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

**Office Hours**

Virtual office hours will be held each Monday evening from 7:00pm to 9:00pm. The instructor and the TA will be available by gchat, phone, email, google+ video chat, and Skype during these times to provide technical assistance. Limited other time slots are available by appointment. Students may receive up to one hour of technical assistance each week.

**Technology Requirement**

A computer with a reliable Internet connection and the software necessary to use the Internet to communicate and access information and resources are fundamental to participating effectively as a distance learner. Basic understandings of email, video chatting, website navigation, and Microsoft Office programs (Word, PowerPoint, Excel) are also important.

**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 Sunday, December 21st. Provided that 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.

**Fall 2014 Distance Learning Course Schedule**

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| **Mandatory Course Introduction Meeting**  Sackler Building, 145 Harrison Avenue, Boston, MA 02111  Saturday, October 18  10:00 AM – 1:00 PM | | |
| **Due Date** | **Module** | **Assignments to be Completed** |
| Wednesday, October 22 | Week #1: Intro to Distance Learning and Course Expectations | 1. Discussion Forum Post: Why have you joined the course?  2. Farm Business Planning Course Pre-Assessment  3. Module #1 Evaluation |
| Wednesday, October 29 | Week #2: Intro 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 |
| Wednesday, November 5 | Week #3: Enterprise Selection | 1. File Submission: Initial enterprise "wish list", and sample budgets for each crop  2. Week 3 Learning Objectives Assessment  3. Module #3 Evaluation |
| Wednesday, November 12 | Week #4: Marketing and Sales | 1. File Submission: Marketing plan, competitive analysis worksheet, revised enterprise wish list based upon market research  2. Week 4 Learning Objectives Assessment  3. Module #4 Evaluation |
| **Optional Field Trip: Marketing Opportunities**  Union Square Farmers Market, Somerville  Saturday, November 15  10:00 AM – 1:00 PM | | |
| Wednesday, November 19 | Week #5: Crop Planning and 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 |
| **Mandatory Live Webinar – Student Sharing Session**  Wednesday, November 19  7:00 – 8:30 PM | | |
| Wednesday, November 26 | Week #6: Equipment and Supply Sourcing | 1. File submission: Submit completed Improved Crop Planning Sheet, Field Schedules, and Materials Worksheet  2. Week 6 Learning Objectives Assessment  3. Module #6 Evaluation |
| Optional: Livestock Production  \*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 |
| Wednesday, December 3 | 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 |
| Wednesday, December 10 | 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 |
| **Optional Course Conclusion Meeting**  TBD | | |
| Sunday, December 21 | End of Online Course | 1. Final Business Plans and accompanying materials submitted  2. Complete Online Course Exit Interview |
| **NESFP Spring Launch & Business Planning Graduation**  New Entry Office in Lowell, Massachusetts  Mid-March, exact date and time TBA | | |



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