

# BEST PRACTICES

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# PAST EXPERIENCES

## *Overview of the best practice:*

Adult learning theory reminds us that adults come into the learning space with a wealth of accumulated experiences and knowledge. Farmers can connect more easily to new content and ideas via prior experience, and feel more recognized when their knowledge is called upon. The majority of refugee and immigrant farmers in farmer-training programs come from agrarian backgrounds. Using this exchange as the foundation of your training is not only responsive and respectful, it can become the basis for reflection and change as it allows you to ask farmers what practices they have used in the past and how they are changing and adopting practices in their new country.



## **INTRODUCING ORGANIC CERTIFICATION**

### **SETTING:**

*New Roots for Refugees, Catholic Charities of NE KS.* In classroom workshops during the winter training period. 16 -20 farmers with varying levels of literacy and varying levels of language. Interpreters present.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Explain the status quo of agriculture in the US so farmers understand the value of growing organically (and knowing how to promote it) in the context of US food production.

### **DETAILS:**

New Roots for Refugees in Kansas City begins an introduction to organic farming by asking farmers how they farmed in their home countries. While the organic vocabulary and certification process may be novel for farmers, for many farming organically is how they have farmed their whole life. Introducing organics and certification in this way ensure that it does not become overly complex or alienating. This approach acknowledges their experience and makes the information you will soon share with them personal and relevant. Starting with farmers past experiences allows them to see in their own way why making shifts in their US farm practices is important. (*Meredith Walrafen*)

## **ADDRESSING PRODUCTION CHALLENGES**

### **SETTING:**

*Cultivating Community, Portland ME.* In the field technical assistance, 1-on-1 with farmers.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Farmers will learn about problem solving irrigation and weed management issues by reflecting on what they have done in the past.

### **DETAILS:**

Cultivating Community's Farm Staff have begun to rely on this strategy as a component of our problem-solving strategy in the field. If farmers are struggling with agricultural challenges (weed pressure/pest damage/irrigation issues), our first response is to ask participants if they've experienced this problem before and how they might have addressed it in the past. Farmers might remember that they irrigated particularly needy crops over more drought-tolerant crops in times of water shortage, or that they frequently rotated weedy fields into an easily cultivatable crop to clean it up. This simultaneously helps us develop collaborative solutions to on-farm problems (which results in much greater farmer buy-in), deepens respect and relationship between staff and participants, recognizes lived experiences of farmers as valuable, and contributes to our goal of trying to promote farmer independence through reducing reliance on staff resources and knowledge base. (*Alex Redfield*)



# PEER-TEACHING

## **Overview of best practice**

Creating space and opportunity for peer-to-peer teaching among farmers enables increased and specialized learning in the program. For educationally and linguistically diverse farmers, peer-teaching helps to breach language and cultural barriers, and allows farmers to share and connect over practices from other parts of the world. In addition, advanced farmers in the program have much to share about how they have made production, marketing and business skills work for them.



## **SETTING-UP A FARMERS MARKET DISPLAY**

### **SETTING:**

*New Roots for Refugees, Catholic Charities of NE KS.* In classroom workshops during the winter training period. 16 -20 farmers with varying levels of literacy and English. Interpreters present.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

This lesson demonstrates both the logistics and aesthetics of setting up a farmer's market booth.

### **DETAILS:**

*New Roots for Refugees* asks advanced farmers to teach newer farmers how to set up a good farmers market displays. After the display is set up, staff facilitate a discussion of quality, color, amounts etc. Instead of a PowerPoint explaining what a good market display looks like, this teaching approach uses peer teaching, realia and hands-on demonstration. This could also be very useful when introducing a new concept or skill that farmers may be skeptical of, especially if it involves time or financial investment. Sometimes it works best to ask for volunteers among the advanced farmers, and sometimes you need to call out certain people to demonstrate. This kind of activity can be a great way to develop confidence and farmer leadership in the group by asking certain farmers, who have shown mastery in the past, to lead others in a learning experience. (*Meredith Walrafen*)

## **FARMER-LED T&TA**

### **SETTING:**

*Cultivating Community, Portland ME.* In winter workshops (classroom) and in the field technical assistance, one on one with farmers.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Farmers will learn about problem solving irrigation and weed management issues by reflecting on what they have done in the past.

### **DETAILS:**

Peer-teaching is a strategy that happens in both structured and organic ways at Cultivating Community. We hire advanced farmers or past graduates to teach courses in our winter workshop sessions, but peer-to-peer teaching in the field happens on its own during the growing season and is important in conveying key information. In the classroom, some curricula lend itself more naturally than others - we ask advanced farmers to teach things that we've seen them master in past seasons and that need to be retaught or revisited every year (i.e. communicating which crops can be planted in succession, what mix of crops goes into a great CSA bag, which crops need row cover). If there are new concepts being introduced to participants for the first time or new materials being introduced, we let staff manage those workshops. The unstructured peer-to-peer teaching is valuable in peak season when staff attention is at a premium. We organize people's plots at the farm to have farmers that share a language next to each other, trying to have experienced growers adjacent to new farmers whenever possible, to facilitate as much of this type of knowledge exchange as possible. This lets advanced farmers both teach by example and creates the opportunity for quick questions to be answered by fellow farmers rather than staff members. One thing to note, though, is that bad habits can spread quickly through these channels as well. If a fourth-year farmer thinks it's still ok to slip a few bruised eggplants into the bottom of the bag, it's hard to re-establish good practices with new farmers after the fact. (*Alex Redfield*)



# FIELD-TRIPS

## *Overview of best practice*

Seeing other farms and other practices can be one of the most straightforward teaching methods. Adult learning theory tells us that adults (as compared to children) have a much more realistic grasp on why learning is important, based on their real experiences of the context in which they will apply learning. Therefore, while simulations, explanations and role plays are important and often necessary for workshops, there is much to be gained from direct contact and experience. Field-trips allow farmers to see new, more advanced, or differently-scaled practices in action. Farmers can connect directly to farmers, which mirrors the natural non-formal learning context that many farmers may be familiar with.

## TEACHING NEW PRACTICES AND CONNECTING FARMERS



### **SETTING:**

*Cultivating Community, Portland, ME.* In winter workshops (classroom) and in the field technical assistance, one on one with farmers.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Farmers will see, learn and experience from the methods and tools used at another farm. Farmers will make connections with others in their agricultural community.

### **DETAILS:**

It's hard to find time for farmers to leave their busy marketing and production schedule in the middle of the growing season, but creating opportunities to visit other farmers is helpful in sharing information on new tools, management strategies, infrastructure ideas, vegetable varieties, and marketing plans. Visiting farms can also be useful in reinforcing systems that already exist on the incubator farm. For example, Cultivating Community farmers rely primarily on hand-tools for weed management, but fields often get weedy by the end of the year. We take farmers to visit a nearby producer that uses the exact same tools as our farmers do, but had a pristine field with no weeds whatsoever. Program farmers got a firsthand look at what *could* be done with the same tools and systems - creating a clear goal for farmers to work towards.

We find it effective to visit farms that are operating both at the same scale as program farmers, and to visit farms that are just a little bit bigger. It's valuable to see the tools and systems that work well at the same acreage, as those visual cues are relevant to farmers right away - but to show the tools or equipment or marketing strategies that make sense at the next tier of production gives farmers an aspirational target and demonstrates some efficiencies that could be built into their farm operations in the future.

Another important outcome of using field trips as teaching tools is to create opportunities to strengthen and develop new connections within the broader agricultural community. For the same reasons that New Americans often face challenges in integrating with communities outside of their own (language, cultural customs, ideological orientation, etc.), New American farmers may not have opportunities to connect with fellow farmers in the area. Connecting with other growers, creating relationships between farms to share ideas or equipment or commiserate over cabbage aphids - this can be an important part of a balanced and fulfilling livelihood for farmers and we've seen it emerge from this type of field trip. Additionally, it's an opportunity to introduce neighboring farmers to your training program - to clarify what it is that your program does and doesn't do to support refugee and immigrant farmers, and to start conversations on how your agricultural community could be stronger with a more diverse group of producers. *(Alex Redfield)*

# MANIPULATIVES

## **Overview of best practice**

Whenever possible, create flashcards or other 'manipulatives' (pictures, words, objects) that farmers can sort, match or categorize to practice and demonstrate learning. This activity is accessible to all farmers, and is especially beneficial for farmers from diverse language and education backgrounds, since it requires very little language and literacy. By sorting and categorizing manipulatives, farmers can learn a new concept and demonstrate their new knowledge without having to explain it in English or complete a worksheet.



## **HOW TO PACK A CSA SHARE**

### **SETTING:**

*New Roots for Refugees, Catholic Charities of NE KS.* In classroom workshops during the winter training period. 16 -20 farmers with varying levels of literacy and English. Interpreters present.

**LEARNING GOAL:** This activity is focused on helping farmers pack high quality, diverse CSA shares.

### **DETAILS:**

*New Roots for Refugees* uses vegetable picture cards to teach farmers about which vegetables are okay to pack every week, and which vegetables should be packed more infrequently for CSA customers. Farmers are learning, perhaps for the first time, which crops are common staples for U.S. born customers (lettuce, potatoes etc.) and which crops people tend to eat infrequently (fennel, kohlrabi, ethnic crops). Each farmer receives a stack of vegetable pictures of all crops they grow, and are asked to create three piles of vegetable cards ('okay every week', 'okay sometimes', 'okay one time'). The facilitator can then review the categories and use any mistakes as a basis for discussion and reflection. The purpose of using these vegetables pictures is to allow farmers to show that they understand the concept without having to rely on English language or reading or writing skills.

This is a participatory teaching activity that can be used with any group of adult learners, as it allows people to demonstrate learning and correct mistakes in a low-key, low-literacy setting. In the past, many approaches to teaching some of the important concepts mentioned above have relied on PPT, lecture, worksheet or question and answer session. This means that while farmers may be receiving the correct information, there is not an appropriately accessible mechanism for them to demonstrate their understanding. The use of manipulatives allows trainer and farmer to be clearer about the intended learning in the session. This fits with the idea of providing culturally and linguistically accessible teaching methods that don't depend heavily on the written work or on interpreted language, and to the adult learning theory of engaged, participatory learning. It can take time and prep work to print/cut/copy/etc. enough copies to make these activities effective. Give yourself enough time to prepare and think critically about how you can repurpose manipulatives in other parts of your teaching or program. (*Meredith Walrafen*)

# REFLECTION

## **Overview of best practice**

Learning only becomes real for us when we are asked to apply it directly to our day to day lived experience. All learners, and especially adult learners, get the most out of a learning environment when they can make direct connections between new learning and their own day to day lived experience. Reflection questions allow farmers to take new content and reflect on how this may or may not change the way they farm and market. What new practices do you want to use, what do you want to change about parts of last season, what is working or not working?



## **REFLECTING ON MARKET OPPORTUNITIES**

### **SETTING:**

*New Roots for Refugees of Catholic Charities in NE KS.* In classroom workshops during the winter training period. 16 -20 farmers with varying levels of literacy and varying levels of language. Interpreters present.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Explain the status quo of agriculture in the US so farmers understand the value of growing organically (and knowing how to promote it) in the context of US food

production.

### **DETAILS:**

New Roots for Refugees has farmers reflect on their readiness for certain marketing options. Using smiley, neutral or unhappy faces, farmers can indicate what they are ready for (i.e. transportation), and what they need to work on (i.e. English skills, diversity of produce). This kind of reflection is valuable to getting farmers to think longer-term about their goals. Taking inventory of current skills and capacities, and then thinking ahead about the timeline of our program is one of the ways we encourage farmers to take initiative and increase their capacity. This can also be an opportunity for confidence-building if farmers under-estimate themselves. *(Meredith Walrafen)*

## **CHOOSING WEED MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND APPROACHES**

**SETTING:** *Global Gardens in Boise Idaho.* We did this in a classroom setting with about 10 farmers of mixed-literacy and English levels.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

This activity allows us to understand how well the farmers understood the material presented. It also helps us know which materials and tools we need to get to teach the activities they have selected, in the field.

### **DETAILS:**

In a class on weed management, Global Gardens introduces a set of new tools and approaches for managing different kinds of weeds at different points in the season. After learning the names and purposes of these different tools and considering investing in these tools, farmers are asked to 'choose what tools they want to try this upcoming season, and why'. This reflection not only acts as crucial communication, but if you ask why they made certain choices, this reflection also allows farmers to demonstrate what they have learned. Global Gardens replicates this approach for different workshops where new ideas and tools are presented, always giving farmers an opportunity to articulate approaches they would like to use in the coming season or apply right away. *(Katie Painter)*



# VOCABULARY

## *Overview of best practice*

The practice of identifying essential vocabulary words before teaching helps staff to use words consistently and helps farmers focus on the words that will help them communicate with staff and other service providers. While it is important to forward a farmer's' English learning goals, you don't want to overload with vocabulary and English teaching when trying to teach new farming content and skills. A good rule of thumb for selecting words is to think of how helpful this word would be when a farmer is communicating with English speakers. For example, some pest names, irrigation terms and all vegetable names are important words for farmers to know in English so that they can discuss with staff and other service providers.



## TEACHING FOOD-SAFETY VOCABULARY

### **SETTING:**

*Global Growers, Atlanta, GA.* 5 to 10 farmers in a classroom workshop setting, and in all follow up interactions on the farm.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Farmers and staff share common language to learn new material and help farmers move towards more independent communications with all service providers.

### **DETAILS:**

Global Growers identifies vocabulary ahead of teaching a topic, to ensure consistent use of terms among staff, and to focus on words that will help farmers move towards independent communications. Global Growers has an extensive workshop on food Safety, but only explicitly teaches farmers six vocabulary words: Contamination, Sanitize, Audit, Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), Postharvest and Wash/clean. In implementing new food safety measures on the farm, the staff wanted to be sure farmers understood and could use these words in communicating about protocol after the workshop. Often, there is more than one term or word with the same meaning, something that can get confusing for English language learners. Deciding on what versions of words is key to helping farmers acquire and use vocabulary words. Staff, farmers, farm crew and others who regularly interact with farmers can be notified of which word is being used regularly in workshops and in all follow-up. There are some cases where it is important to also let farmers know that there are two words for the same thing that are used by different people to refer to the same thing (like hoop-house and high-tunnel) and then there are times where it is important to tell farmers when two similar words refer to different things (like cleaner and sanitizer). Work to ensure that all staff, interpreters, and farmers are using a consistent, shared vocabulary not only during the educational activity, but also in ongoing communications and operations. *(Robin Chanin)*

# PRE-TEACHING

## Overview of best practice

Examine all learning plans for any assumed classroom skills, such as reading a grid, using a calculator, or filling out a form. Otherwise, you may be half-way through an explanation before you realize you designed an activity that is relatively inaccessible to farmers. This is especially important if you work with farmers who come from non-formal education backgrounds. Once you have identified any potentially prohibitive skills, you can take the time to teach or review these with farmers, or find an alternative way to get at the same idea.



## PRE-TEACHING HOW TO USE A SCALE

### SETTING:

*Global Growers, Atlanta, GA.* 5 to 10 farmers in workshop setting, interpreter present when necessary.

**LEARNING GOAL:** Farmers will be able to use the basic functions of a scale to weigh vegetables for customers.

### DETAILS:

Global Growers teaches farmers how to use a digital and/ or manual scale as part of a marketing workshop. While marketing workshops are common in farmer training programs, some may overlook certain skill sets. Using the scale is a skill that some farmers may be learning for the first time. For certain scales, there is the potential to go into a lot of detail, especially if you are caught off guard and did not prepare to teach using a scale. Therefore, prepare by asking yourself what it is you want farmers to be able to do on the scale: zero out, read weights with pounds and ounces, turn on and off the scale etc. Prepping the interpreter with your learning goals could also help to make sure you don't alienate farmers with extraneous and complex information. In summary, be clear on identifying only what you will be teaching, but also what you will not be teaching (e.g., the physical and conceptual differences between kg., lb., and oz.) so that the lesson stays focused on specific skill development objectives. *(Robin Chanin)*

## USING A GRID FORMAT

### SETTING:

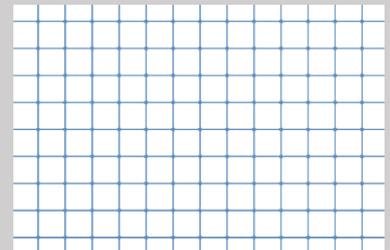
*International Rescue Committee in Charlottesville, VA.* Classroom. We work with 5-10 Micro Producer farmer trainees

### LEARNING GOAL:

We wanted farmers to understand how to read a grid, as we do a lot of our crop planning calendars and recordkeeping using grids.

### DETAILS:

IRC's New Roots program in Charlottesville devotes a whole mini lesson to teaching the use of grids. Many programs noticed that assuming farmers knew how to use a grid could have been a major barrier to many of their lessons and recordkeeping expectations. You can explain how the table or grid works, and then do an activity to check for comprehension. Points to make: each column gives a different piece of information, we read left to right. Model tracking up and down. You can ask farmers to fill out and to read an enlarged grid to practice. Explain that we use can and do use tables to share information about our farm and crop planning. For returning farmers, ask them how they might have seen or used tables in the past with their farm plot. We do a similar activity to teach how to read bar charts as well, as bar charts are one way that we convey information on harvests and sales at market. *(Elizabeth Moore)*



# REALIA

## **Overview of best practice**

Real objects are much clearer to teach with than pictorial, sketched or photographic representations of objects. Being able to hold and manipulate the objects you are discussing (whether it is vegetables, tools or packaging) enhances learning and eliminates confusion. This is especially true for farmers who may have learned with books, pictures, diagrams and signs. While simple in nature, this teaching concept is called 'realia' in the world of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL), because it reminds us to seek out *real* objects whenever possible.



## **INCOME AND EXPENSE RECEIPT TRACKING**

### **SETTING:**

*International Rescue Committee in Charlottesville, VA.* We do this in the classroom but it could probably be done in the field as well: we work with 5-10 Micro

Producer farmer trainees.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

This activity helps farmers understand and practice with the concepts of income and expenses, and act out their actual practice of saving and categorizing their receipts which they will do throughout the season.

### **DETAILS:**

Many any programs ask farmers to save receipts all season to build in record-keeping and budgeting skills. Charlottesville IRC New Roots office suggests that farmers play a sorting game between income and expense receipts. We give farmers two manila envelopes titled "income receipts" and "expense receipts" that they then put all their invoices and receipts in throughout the year. These are introduced in this activity as well. We wanted to help farmers get in the habit of identifying income and expenses and saving all receipts for tax recordkeeping. (*Elizabeth Moore*)

## **TEACHING FERTILIZER WITH THE ACTUAL BAGS**

### **SETTING:**

*Global Garden Refugee Training Farm, Chicago Illinois.* Refugee farmers with mixed literacy and English levels. Classroom or farm/garden supply store.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Farmers learn how to locate and recognize the N-P-K ratio on fertilizer packaging. Farmers learn about new vegetable varieties.

### **DETAILS:**

Using actual objects in place of pictures of those objects taps into two strengths of some New American farmers from non-formal learning backgrounds. First, the farmers have lots of previous hands-on experience and information about seeds, tools, etc. on which to scaffold new learning. Second, real objects in the classroom makes for sensory reinforcement of learning. Example: Identifying the N-P-K ratio in a picture of a package is a very different activity from searching for this information on multiple packages, and making comparisons, in the store. In another example, for farmers who knew only one variety of tomato in their home country, passing around a basket with seven distinct tomato varieties (ex. Standard red and orange tomatoes, Roma-types, plum and/or grape tomatoes of different colors, a bicolor heirloom or two) will make a deeper impression than a description or photos in a catalog. Seeing, handling, slicing, and tasting -



each sense adds depth and reinforcement to learning. Most of our farmers are adults. In working with elderly ESL students, I learned that adult learners especially benefit from realia in the classroom. Children may seem to learn faster because learning is their main occupation and because they have relatively little prior knowledge to process and integrate with incoming ideas. Adults will seem slower because they are sorting through what they already know to integrate new ideas. Sensory stimuli from realia create more pathways into prior knowledge. (*Linda Seyler*)



## CALCULATING SEED QUANTITIES NEEDED

### **SETTING:**

*All Farmers, Connecticut River Valley, MA.* Classroom or in the field; new American farmers.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Teach farmers how to translate their experience (this feels like the right amount of seed for what I want to plant) to the weights and numbers in

seed catalogs, so they can order for themselves.

### **DETAILS:**

Different people and cultures have different ways of knowing and communicating. While many “western” farmers have learned to calculate seeds, bed feet, etc., or judge soil based on lab results, other people and cultures rely more heavily on lived experience. As much as possible, we integrate real objects and experiences into lessons to connect to farmers’ knowledge that they already hold through experience

All Farmers in Massachusetts uses realia in teaching more conceptual skills, such as projecting seed quantities needed in crop planning. Seeing how farmers struggled with the abstract nature of calculating seed quantities, All Farmers first handed out seed packets: “when farmers see/feel a seed packet, they have an idea how much of a crop they can grow from that, and about how much space those seeds will fill up”.

Physically practicing a habit that we want to teach (e.g. saving and categorizing receipts) also has a much higher likelihood of success than simply telling farmers what they should do. Take time and observe how the people you work with conceptualize and relate to different kinds of information. What do they focus on? How do they communicate about it? This is a good guide for how you can best teach and communicate with them. (*Hannah Spare*)

# SELF-ASSESSMENT

## **Overview of best practice**

Being able to self-assess learning progress and set and track goals are important skills for any farmer to learn, and for farmers from non-formal educational backgrounds, many of these skills may be unfamiliar. Goal setting is a very abstract and conceptual process, and applying a measurement to rank your own learning progress can be similarly vague. Many programs use check-list-like documents to chart farmers' competencies. These documents are beneficial for outlining curriculum and tracking farmer progress, but could be even more formative if farmers had more access to this information.



## **PARTICIPATORY BENCHMARKING**

### **SETTING:**

*International Rescue Committee in Charlottesville, VA. Classroom and field; we work with 5-10 Micro Producer farmer trainees*

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

We wanted to develop curriculum that was skill-based and moved farmers towards building useful and practicable skills rather than just knowledge. We also wanted to develop curriculum and learning activities that responded to what participants were interested in working on. We wanted to be able to track progress and growth beyond just income through vegetable sales. Finally, we wanted to identify what was needed for a farmer to be successful and help move participants through those benchmarks.

### **DETAILS:**

IRC Charlottesville has taken the next step with these assessment tools, and uses demonstrated benchmarks, bar charts for tracking progress, and a lesson on how to set goals to include farmers in the assessment process and teach these important farming skills. To set goals, Charlottesville asks farmers to prioritize photos representing different training and farm business areas, and explains goal setting to farmers in a culturally accessible way. Charlottesville also uses competency based self-assessment checklists, where each competency is designed to be demonstrated and easily measured by both farmers and staff. It takes time both to build these tools, and to train farmers in the use of them. *(Elizabeth Moore)*

## **PARTICIPATORY SELF-ASSESSMENT**

### **SETTING:**

*Transplanting Traditions Community Farm, Chapel Hill, NC. farmers who are interested in advancing towards a specific goal.*

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Farmers will learn about problem solving irrigation and weed management issues by reflecting on what they have done in the past.

### **DETAILS:**

This self-assessment tool demonstrated that there were patterns that might contribute to gaps in skills or knowledge. It might be something as simple as we need to focus more on technical skills such as drip irrigation because we know we only did one workshop on that topic OR if we know we did 5 workshops on drip irrigation but farmers are still struggling, we can look for patterns as to why our teaching approach isn't working. The self-assessment is discussion-based which allows the farmers the autonomy to discuss with



staff where they are excelling and where they want or need to improve. This provides more of a sense of internal motivation/ambition versus a staff person simply collecting pre/post survey results and telling a farmer the areas they need to improve. I also like how this tool provides a comprehensive picture of the MANY skills a farmer needs to have to be successful and can break down the often unmanageable and overwhelming art of farming into more manageable pieces. It's a great tool.

Although this tool is time consuming, it outlined clearer and specific areas that we needed to focus our workshops and trainings. I recommend doing it at the end of the season when farming is fresh in farmers minds but when they and staff have more time. Doing it in a group could be strange for programs that don't have a lot of farmer cooperation and who might struggle with negative competition. It is a personal/vulnerable process to rate oneself in a group environment. It works well for our group of all women farmers who are all from Burma (two ethnic groups). *(Kelly Owensby)*

# SKITS AND ROLE PLAY

## **Overview of best practice**

Role play is a participatory and fun way for farmers to apply new knowledge, ideas, or skills in a low-stakes environment. Role plays can be especially effective with farmers from linguistically-diverse backgrounds since they can use many actions, motions and facial expressions that do not rely on a common language. Some ideas that can be complex to explain can be easily acted out by staff or farmers. Humor is an important element in teaching across language and cultural barriers, and role play is a good way to bring humor into teaching new ideas that may be fraught or challenging.



## **POST-HARVEST HANDLING**

### **SETTING:**

*Transplanting Traditions Community Farm, Chapel Hill, NC. Any farmer level, any literacy level, any location.*

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Teach post-harvest handling practices for fresh vs. wilted produce.

### **DETAILS:**

To teach the importance of keeping crops fresh post-harvest, Transplanting Traditions uses a skit to show what time of day farmers should harvest things leafy greens, and then shows reactions between leaving these in the sun, vs. cold water baths and refrigeration. The use of realia is especially effective combined with skit and role play when possible. A couple of costume items or wigs which allow the participants to get into character and feel silly. We have a couple of characters that farmers now are familiar with. For example, when someone wears the red wig that character is always the sort of clueless farmer who is absent minded making mistakes in a very exaggerated way. For us role play is a memorable and interactive way to get a point across. Particularly around customer interactions or in conflict resolution workshops. It also allows for an “alternate” space to discuss mistakes that have farmers are making but in a non-personal and indirect as well as humorous way. As mentioned above it’s a great way to actively engage learners in a topic and is accessible to almost all learning styles. *(Kelly Owensby)*

## **FARMERS MARKET INTERACTIONS**

### **SETTING:**

*Cultivating Community, Portland, ME. Winter workshop marketing classes.*

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Farmers will navigate challenging interactions with customers and buyers through role play.

### **DETAILS:**

Role play and skits are best done in small groups where farmers know each other and are comfortable with each other. Role play needs to be introduced into a group slowly, and with some groups a bit of goofiness might lighten the stress of getting up in front of people and talking. Cultivating Community uses role play in the winter to work through some of the difficult conversations and experiences that have happened or are expected to happen in the summer. For example, we set up a role play where one of the farmers is an unhappy and somewhat snooty customer, another is the middleman (grocer/wholesaler/Cultivating Community), and a third is the farmer. They give the three actors a specific situation and have them talk back and forth, up and down the line of communication, to work out a solution. When the farmers are physically and orally acting out a position that is not their usual, it helps them understand the other position better. Often farmers and staff will refer to these role plays during the summer when a similar situation in real life comes up and the farmers are frustrated or angry. There has even been evidence of farmers teaching other farmers in the summer by reminding them of a role play that was acted out the previous winter.

*(Jessica Woiderski)*



# DIFFERENTIATING

## **Overview of best practice**

One group of farmers often has farmers from very different farming, English, literacy and educational backgrounds. Teaching only at one level may alienate some farmers, making it important to differentiate the content and delivery of the materials. Learning can be differentiated by content, or by method, depending on the group of farmers you are working with. For example, some farmers can work with certain worksheets on their own, while others can work as a group to see the worksheet enlarged and broken-down step by step.

## **DIFFERENT LEARNING GROUPS**

### **SETTING:**

*Transplanting Traditions Community Farm, Chapel Hill, NC.* 5 to 10 farmers in workshop setting, interpreter present when necessary.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Distinguish between advanced and beginning farmers to determine content and group configurations for optimal learning.

### **DETAILS:**

About two years ago we started separating out farmer levels and providing specific workshops and trainings by skill level. We started this partially because our advanced farmers are requesting information that is inaccessible to beginning farmers. Teaching to two groups of farmers takes significant restructuring of resources up front, but it could save us staff time in the long run. However, there are certain lessons where a mixed learning group is stimulating to beginner level learners to see their peers with higher comprehension and ability. *(Kelly Owensby)*



## **SOIL HEALTH AND FERTILITY**

### **SETTING:**

*Global Garden Refugee Training Farm, Chicago, IL.* Refugee farmers group with diverse English and literacy levels.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

For all levels, the goal is for farmers to improve their ability to select the best source of fertilizer for their needs.

### **DETAILS:**

In a soil fertility plan, the content can be leveled up for more experienced farmers, and pared down for farmers at a more introductory phase. If farmers are familiar with basic fertility concepts, you could organize a lesson on buying their own fertilizer, whereas farmers with more land and experience could receive more tailored cover crop and crop rotation lessons. The learning goal is the same even when there are differences among farmers in the types of tools/activities each can use. Our farmers do a lot of group learning, with those who 'get it' explaining what the trainer is trying to communicate to the other farmers, followed by questions and discussion among the farmers. Students with lower literacy levels can get tired of always being on the receiving end of the explaining, so it's useful to mix in methods accessible to them. Students with higher literacy may enjoy an occasional challenge, but they may also not want to always be the one to explain/teach the other students. *(Linda Seyler)*

# SHORT AND LONG-TERM OBJECTIVES

## *Overview of best practice*

Knowing the difference between short term and long-term learning objectives will bring clarity to designing any learning session. Most training programs think primarily about what they want farmers to be able to do and know in farming, business and marketing longer term. However, in designing learning sessions (workshops, TA lessons), knowing what you want farmers to be able to do by the end of the learning session will help you bring clarity and purpose to your plan. Knowing what farmers should be able to do will help you to work backwards and design activities around these short-term objectives, keeping the longer-term objectives in mind.

## SHORT AND LONG-TERM MARKETING GOALS



### **SETTING:**

*Cultivating Community, Portland ME.* In winter workshops (classroom) and in the field technical assistance, one on one with farmers.

### **DETAILS**

Short term objectives for the learning session can start with words such as “say”, “complete” “demonstrate”, “choose” whereas longer term objectives may start with phrases such as “understand the importance of”, “increase yields”, “improve recordkeeping”. A marketing workshop designed by Cultivating Community in Maine has objectives for the short term: “ID vegetable names,” “make change” and objectives for the long term: “know what it takes”, “understand the importance of”. Long term objectives will always drive short term objectives, but short-term objectives ensure lesson clarity, accountability and measurability for staff and farmers alike.

A good market farmer will be able to adopt a persona when talking with customers: friendly, comfortable, helpful, gregarious, knowledgeable, etc. If you want to build the farmer up to a place where they can be these things at their farmers market, teaching them short term tangible and measurable skills (like identifying vegetables, pricing, making change, giving recipe ideas, smiling and looking people in the eye, etc.) in workshops will help them reach that long-term objective. It is important to set tangible objectives that can be practiced multiple times in workshops so that farmers feel a sense of accomplishment and an increase in their abilities. Those skills will add up to the long-term objectives that you are working towards.  
*(Jessica Woiderski)*

# PREPARING INTERPRETERS

## *Overview of best practice*

Farmer training programs often use a mix of professionally trained interpreters and informally trained interpreters. Sometimes these interpreters have a background in the content area they will be interpreting, and sometimes they do not. To ensure the reliability of your message to farmers, prepare interpreters on any specialized technical information they may need to know. Make sure to identify any vocabulary words that may be unfamiliar so interpreters have some time to think of the best interpreted term.

## REVIEWING MATERIAL WITH INTERPRETERS

### **SETTING:**

*All Farmers, CT River Valley MA.* Applies to all sessions or communications that use an interpreter.

### **LEARNING GOAL:**

Farmers will see, learn and experience from the methods and tools used at another farm. Farmers will make connections with others in their agricultural community.

### **DETAILS**

Interpreters convey meaning between two languages, not always word-for-word. Interpretation has been much smoother and clearer in the classroom when the interpreter already understands difficult concepts and has had some time to process how to best communicate these concepts in another language.

Therefore, take some time to prepare the interpreter on the lesson and any specialized technical information they may be unfamiliar with. found this especially helpful when teaching financial literacy. Many of the words and ideas aren't used in everyday conversation, and it made the class time more productive. When you prepare interpreters, give them ample opportunity to ask questions and repeat back to you what they understood you to say. The better they understand what you are teaching, the better they will be able to interpret! If possible, try to find an interpreter who already has some background knowledge about what you are teaching (and still go over the lesson material). *(Hannah Spare)*

