

June 20, 2024

# Refugee Farmer Training

Spotlight on the IRC's  
Micro-Producer Academy

---

**switchboard**  
connecting resettlement experts





# Today's Speakers



---

**Eugenia Gusev**

Senior Program Officer,  
Switchboard

**Aley Kent**

Senior Technical  
Advisor, Food Security  
and Agriculture

**Cecilia Lapp  
Stoltzfus**

Manager, Food and  
Agriculture, IRC  
Charlottesville

**Theresa Allen**

Coordinator, New  
Roots, IRC  
Charlottesville

# Learning Objectives



By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1

## IDENTIFY

challenges faced by newcomers who want to engage in farming as a business in the U.S.

2

## DESCRIBE

three linguistically accessible and culturally responsive approaches to farmer training for newcomers

3

## NAME

the key components, topics, and intended audiences of the Micro-Producer Academy training

4

## APPLY

key strategies and best practices to ensure effective implementation of the Micro-Producer Academy

# slido



Which type of organization do you work with?



1

# **Common Challenges Faced by Newcomer Farmers**

Exploring Barriers and Key Statistics from New Roots National Network



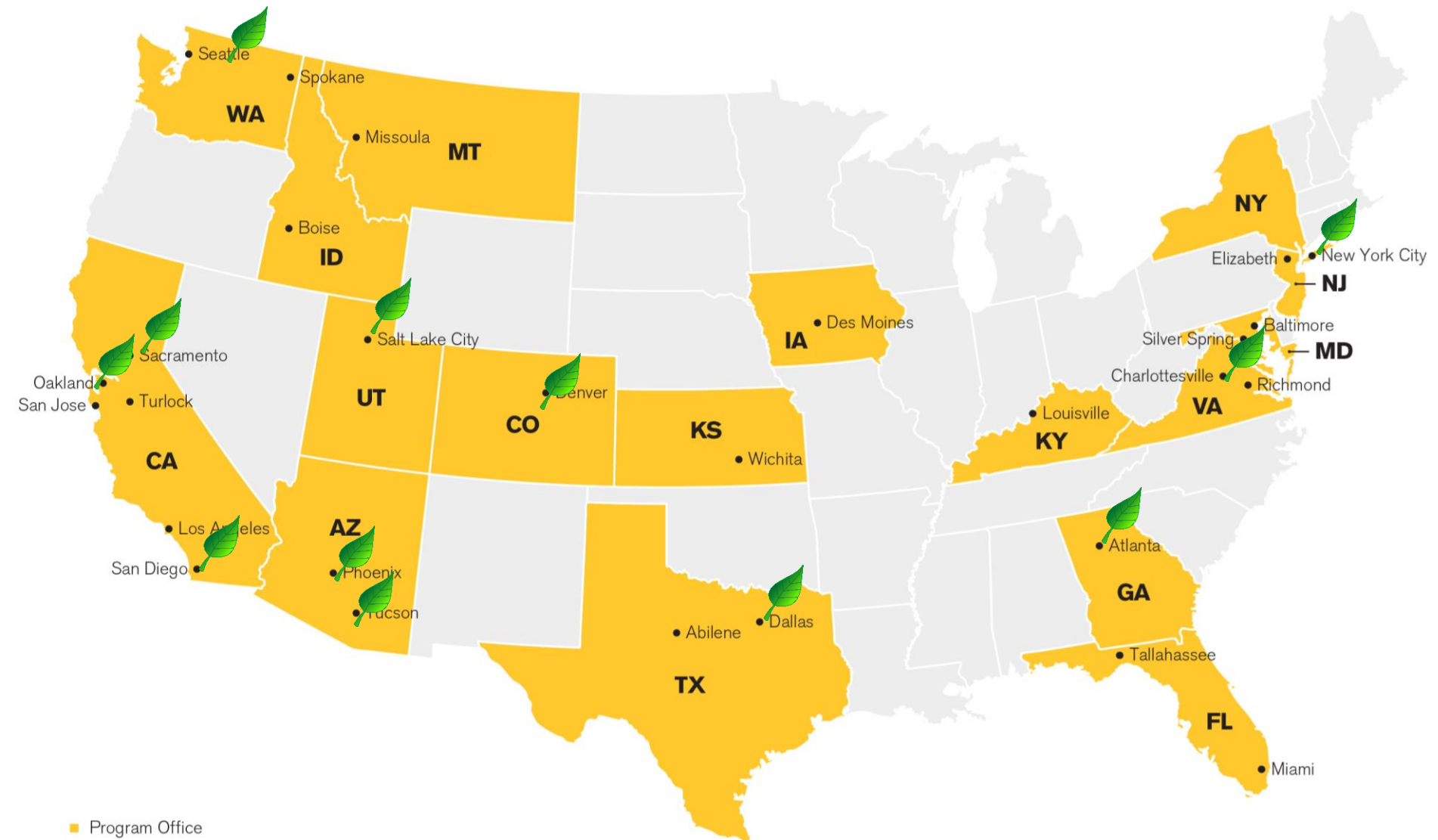
*Over 13,000  
clients served in  
12 locations in  
2023*



*484,474 pounds  
of fresh food  
distributed*



*Over \$380K  
in income  
generated*



## What is New Roots?

New Roots Foods Security and Agriculture programs promote health, community, and livelihoods.



# Who are New Roots Farmers?

- 50% female
- Average age 45
- 15+ nationalities



slido



**What challenges might newcomer farmers face when they want to start farming and selling their produce in the U.S?**



# Key Barriers

For Newcomer Farmers



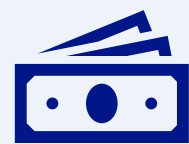
Language



Access to Land



Access to Skills and Knowledge



Access to Resources



Access to Markets



Social and Community Support







# What is a Beginning Farmer?

- “The USDA defines a **beginning farmer** as someone who has operated a farm or ranch for **less than 10 years**. They also define a beginning farmer as someone who **doesn't own a farm or ranch that's more than 30% of the average size farm in their county.**”







## With the Right Support...

- Refugee and immigrant farmers can surpass these challenges to become successful small agribusiness owners, contributing greatly to their local food system and community.





2

# **Linguistically Accessible and Culturally Responsive Approaches**

Working with Newcomer Farmers when Providing Technical Assistance



# Newcomer Farmer Training Programs Often Include...



**Mixed literacy and numeracy levels**

**Mixed age adult learners**

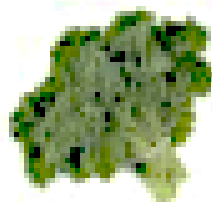
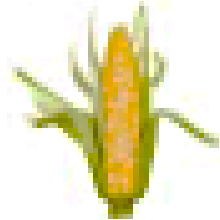
**Formal and informal educational backgrounds**

**Varied experience with agriculture in their home country**





**In terms of formal  
and informal  
education...**



**Corn**

**Carrot**

**Kale**

**Cabbage**

**Cauliflower**



slido



**In order for the learner to successfully complete the vegetable matching activity, what concepts and skills might they need?**

# Formal and Informal

## Education



“Learning to speak another language can be stressful, time-consuming, and confusing for adults.”

“They may have never held a pen, yet are faced with computers and other technologies. They are used to passing information orally but not in writing...”

“I’ve always assumed [reading a grid] was something everyone had so we’ve never taught it. And I imagine it’s been one of the barriers to having folks record, keep, and track certain information.”



# Guiding Principles for Adult Learners



1. Build in time for learners to share experiences
2. Scaffold support to build self-efficacy
3. Connect content to learning goals
4. Provide opportunities for active reflection, involvement, and encouragement
5. Support peer teaching moments
6. Use a variety of teaching techniques





# **Participatory Teaching Approaches**

# Guiding Principles for Trauma-Informed Education



1. Notice changes in behavior and listen closely if a farmer talks about their trauma
2. Keep activities and actions free of shame
3. Do not ask farmers to share personal information
4. Validate strengths and offer validation and support
5. Keep a list of community resources or hotlines on hand
6. Do not placate or over-promise





# Teaching Handbook:

## Refugee Farmer Training

- Refugee Farmers as Learners
- Assessment and Goal Setting
- Teaching Methods and Approaches



# TEACHING HANDBOOK

## Refugee Farmer Training

Guidance, teaching tips, and tools for staff working with culturally and linguistically diverse farmers in farmer-training projects.

**ISED SOLUTIONS**  
HELPING PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES THRIVE



This resource was prepared by ISED Solutions - a fiscally sponsored program of TDM MissionWorks - and supported by grant no. 2015-70017-22495 from the USAID National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

slido



Which training approaches discussed here resonate with you?





# Micro-Producer Academy

Key Components, Topics, and Intended Audiences



# Micro-Producer Academy

## Audiences

- Aspiring farmers
- Refugees, newcomers, and/or English language learners
- New to production agriculture in U.S. context





# Micro-Producer Academy

Eight Topics



**Orientation**



**Market Types**



**Growing for Market**  
Choosing Your Crops



**Growing for Market**  
Crop Harvest Calendar



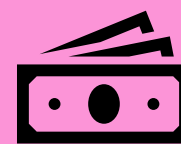
**Budgeting**



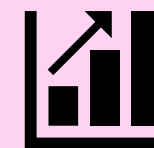
**Clean and Healthy**  
Harvest



**Dealing with Money**



**Market Success**





# Micro-Producer Academy

Components

- Visually rich learning materials
- Eight modules, one to two hours each, on key topics relevant to starting a small agribusiness in the U.S.
- Discussion guides
- Experiential learning activity supports
- Templates customizable to your local context



# Micro-Producer Academy



## PROGRAM ORIENTATION

New Roots Micro-Producer Academy: Module 1 of 8

### Summary

Farmers get an overview of the program, its context, and what they can expect from their participation in it. They also will have the opportunity to envision what they want their year to look like which can both help farmers to get excited about the season and help program directors better understand what their participants want from the program.

**The need:** It sets the tone for the program and is a place where participants can consider what the program will require of them, and their commitment to being part of the program (and their agreement to follow any rules).

ISED SOLUTIONS  
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

new roots  
RESCUE

USDA NIFA  
United States Department of Agriculture  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



## Orientation to The MPA Farm Training Program

What is it? What are the benefits?

What can I expect?







new roots

the food local. the story is global.  
Rescue.org/Char...tesville

new roots

the food local. the story is global.  
Rescue.org/Char...tesville



Pumpkin Snoots \$5

Potato \$4/box

Bitter Melon \$5.00

Nepali green beans \$5

TOMATO \$5/box

Hot Chili \$4

Pepper \$5

OKRA \$5.00/box

Sweet banana peppers \$5/box

Asian Eggplant \$5.00/lb

Garlic \$2/head

new roots Sweet corn \$5

corn \$1/ear

THE STANDARD





4

# **Effective Micro-Producer Academy Implementation**

Key Strategies and Best Practices, Straight from the Field



# Case Scenario: Charlottesville Micro-Producer Academy

## Start Your Small Farm Business



English-learners Welcome!  
Interpreters provided

Apply Now



Become a New Roots Grower!

- Attend 4 workshops in Jan/Feb
- Create your farm business plan
- Grow on shared farm site
- Receive marketing support

newroots.cville  
@rescue.org  
(434) 326-7296



New Roots is an agriculture initiative of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) that works in partnership with refugees and other New Americans to support their health, community connection and household economics.

## आफ्नो सानो कृषि व्यवसाय सुरु गर्नुहोस् Start Your Small Farm Business



अंग्रेजी सिक्नेहरूलाई स्वागत छ!  
दोभासे प्रदान गरिनेछ  
English learners Welcome!  
Interpreters provided

न्यु रुट्सको कृषक बन्नुहोस्!  
Become a New Roots Grower!

- जनवरी/फेब्रुअरीमा हुने चार कार्यशालाहरूमा सहभागी हुनुहोस्  
Attend 4 workshops in January/February
- आफ्नो कृषि उत्पादनको व्यापार योजना बनाउनुहोस्  
Create your farm business plan
- सामुहिक जमिनमा खेति गर्नुहोस्  
Grow on shared farm site
- बेचबिखनमा सहयोग प्राप्त गर्नुहोस्  
Receive marketing support

आहिले नै  
आवेदन दिनुहोस्  
Apply Now



newroots.cville  
@rescue.org  
(434) 326-7296



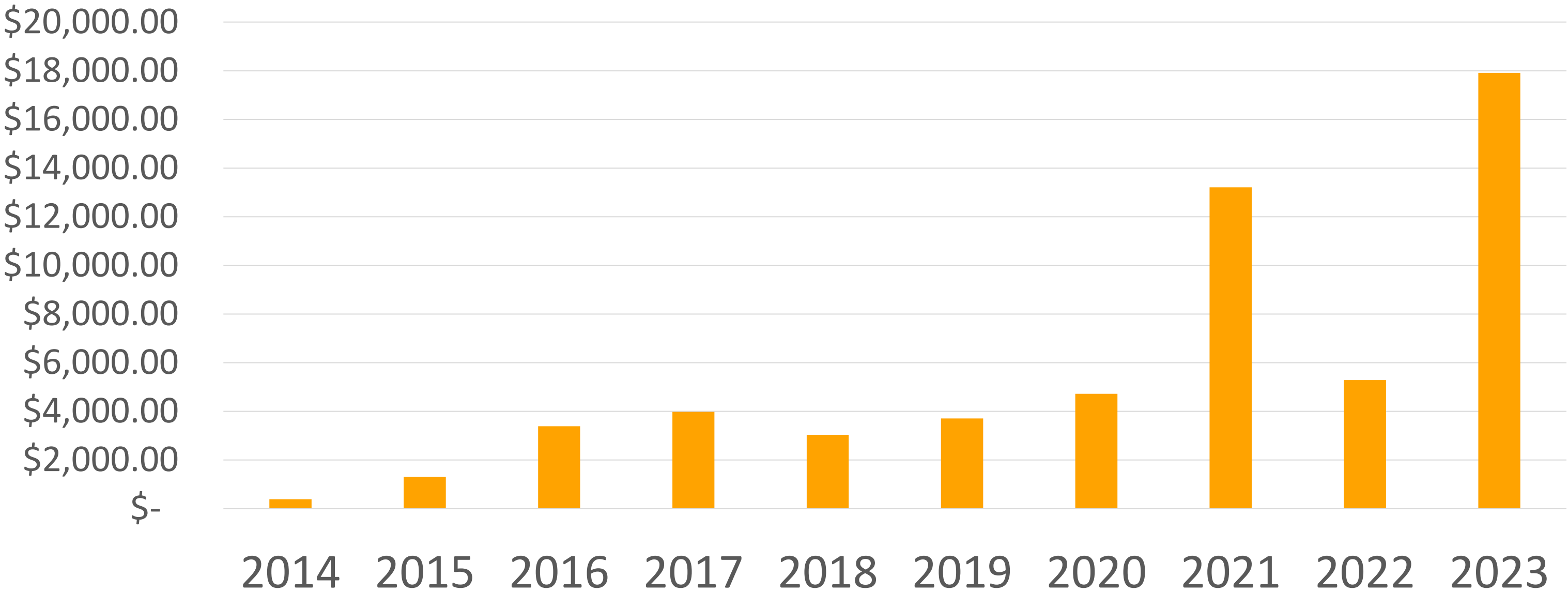
न्यु रुट्स- अन्तराष्ट्रिय उद्धार समिति (IRC) को एक कृषि पहल हो जसले शरणार्थी र अन्य नव अमेरिकीहरूसँग साझेदारीमा काम गर्दछ उनीहरूको स्वास्थ्य, सामुदायिक सम्बन्ध र घरायसी अर्थोपार्जनलाई समर्थन गर्दछ।  
New Roots is an agriculture initiative of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) that works in partnership with refugees and other New Americans to support their health, community connection and household economics.



# Increasing Farmer Income 2014-2023



### Total Micro-Producer Income



Total Micro-Producer Income 2014-2023: Charlottesville New Roots Annual Report

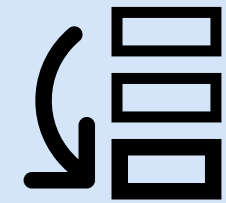


# How?

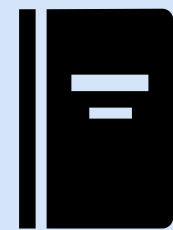
Overview of Key Strategies



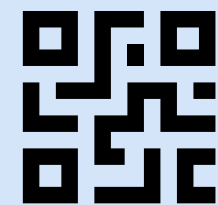
Visually rich training materials



Plain language adaptations



Class binders with worksheets



Optimizing for new technologies



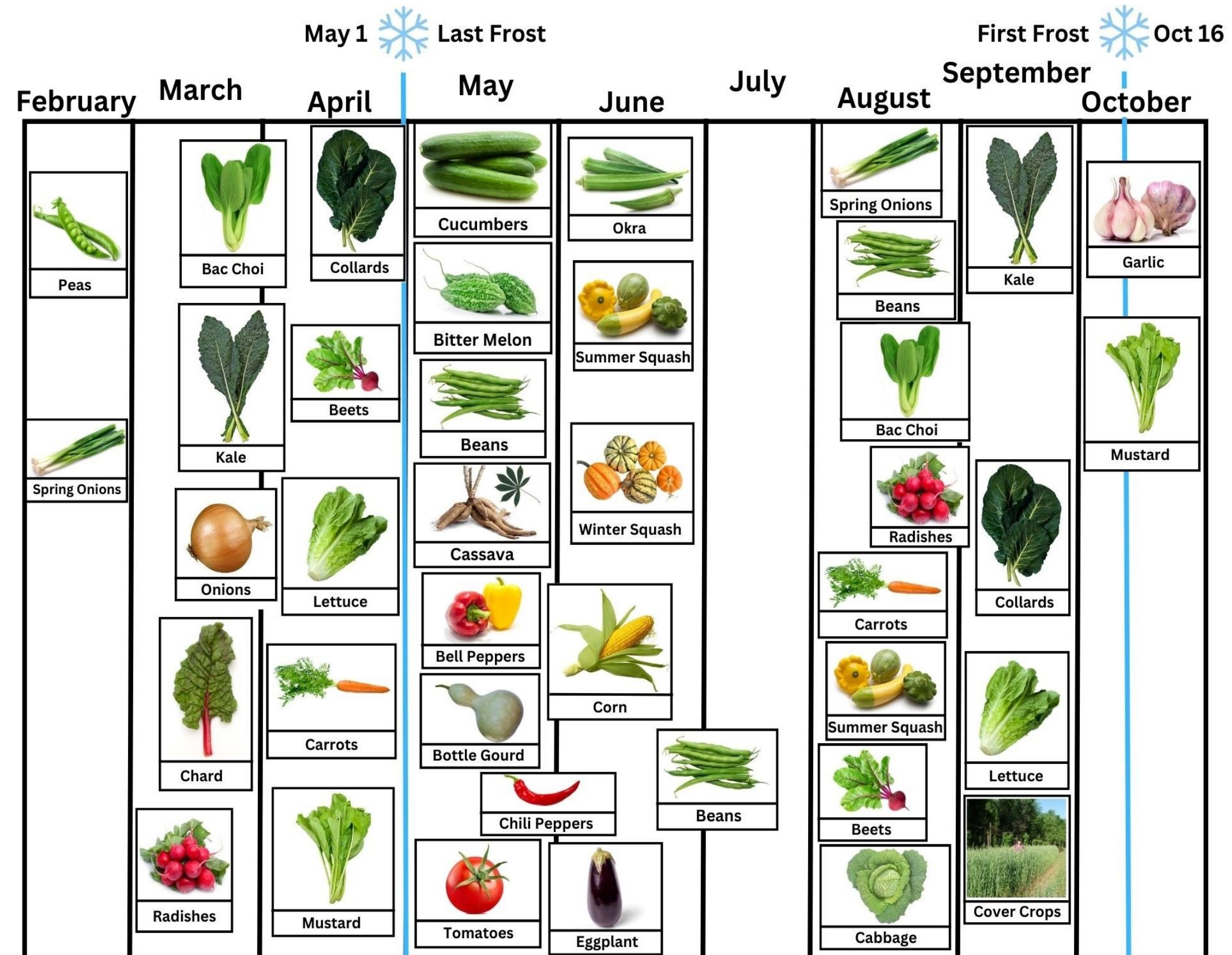
Retaining interpreters





# Visually Rich Training Materials

- Example: Outdoor Planting Calendar for Charlottesville, VA

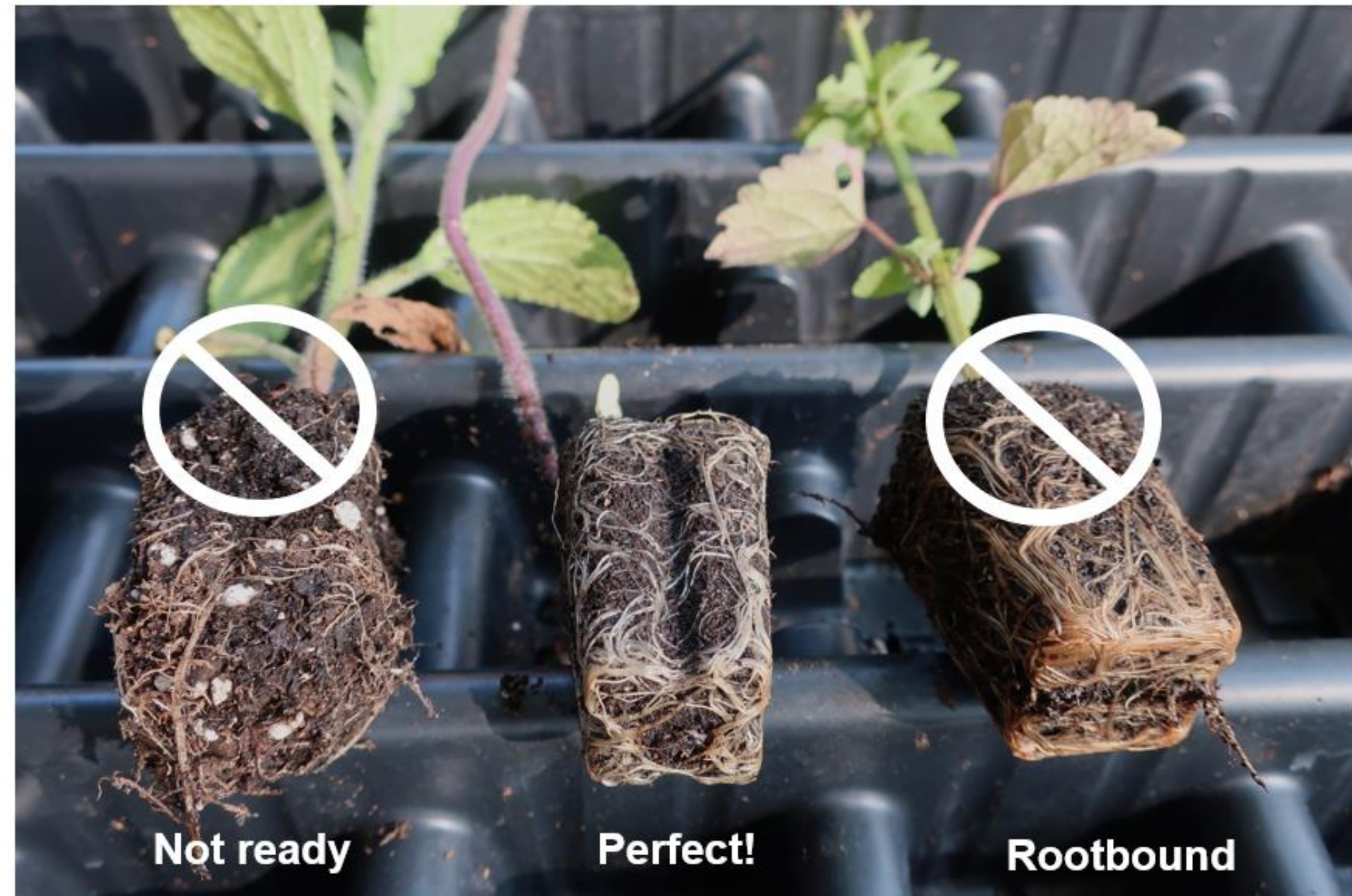






# Plain Language

- Short words and simple sentences
- Active voice
- Fifth-grade reading level
- Open-ended questions



After 4-6 weeks, check the roots. If the roots have filled out the cell and hold the soil together in a "plug" they are ready to transplant.

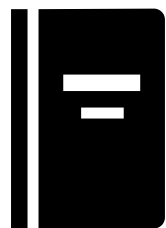


# slido



How might we rewrite this caption to be more Plain Language? "After 4-6 weeks, check the roots. If the roots have filled out the cell and hold the soil together in a "plug" they are ready to transplant."

Remember to use 1) short words and simple sentences, 2) Active voice, 3) 5th-grade reading level 4) open-ended questions.



# Class Binder with Worksheets



Farmer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Goal :**

**Next steps:**  
*how to reach goal?*

1.		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

Type of Goal?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Working on it = Stuck = Done =

**\*Who Can Help?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Accomplished?**

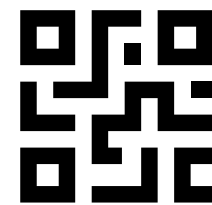
Yes  No

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Optimizing for New Technologies

- Digital payment technologies:
  - Square
  - Venmo
  - Cash App







# Retaining Interpreters

- Seating language groups with their interpreter
- Summarizing same-language discussions for the rest of the class
- Promoting conversation between language groups, which is essential for mutual understanding and informal learning







# Retaining Interpreters



Plan for twice as much time to accommodate live interpretation



Provide interpreters with training materials and special vocabulary ahead of time





# Key Adaptations

- **Recruitment:** personal recruitment calls; go beyond passive advertising
- **Prioritizing the Most Relevant Content:** combining eight modules into four sessions by selecting topics relevant to the cohort and their training goals
- **Differentiation:** choosing or adapting content and activities for students with different levels of experience
- **Localize and Modernize:** updating modules with local images and technological developments like digital payment technologies
- **Approach:** asking open-ended questions that draw out individual experiences and solutions

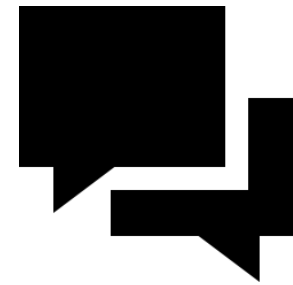






Photo credit: Theresa Allan

# MPA Participant Reflections



Esperance shares: “It has taught me how I can benefit with income from what I’m planting, not just planting for the sake of planting. Now, I’m excited to start farming again! It’s going to be fun!”

Alphonsine, who has been part of the New Roots community for 10 years, shares: “I loved that I learned how to keep records of expenses. What I am most excited about is remembering what I learned and putting it to use.”



**slido**



**What do you see as the biggest benefit to using the Micro-Producer Academy curriculum for newcomer farmers?**



# Big Take-Aways



**Market Types**  
**Micro-Producer Academy**

- The Micro-Producer Academy is the first step towards determining if selling garden produce is a good fit for a newcomer's personal and financial goals
- Personalized technical assistance and field-based trainings are essential follow-ups for each unique business plan
- Concepts from the Micro-Producer Academy can be helpful in many aspects of farmers' lives
- The Micro-Producer Academy builds community and sets the tone for the upcoming season





**Questions?**



Type your question in the **Q&A**



# Learning Objectives



Now you are able to:

1

## IDENTIFY

challenges faced by newcomers who want to engage in farming as a business in the U.S.

2

## DESCRIBE

three linguistically accessible and culturally responsive approaches to farmer training for newcomers

3

## NAME

the key components, topics, and intended audience of the Micro-Producer Academy training

4

## APPLY

key strategies and best practices to ensure effective implementation of the Micro-Producer Academy





# Help us help you!

Scan the QR code or click the link in the chat to access our feedback survey!

- Five questions
- 60 seconds
- Help us improve future training and technical assistance





# Recommended Resources



- Training Resources
  - [Micro-Producer Academy Toolkit](#)
  - [Refugee Farmer Training Handbook](#)
- Trauma-informed care resources:
  - Switchboard Guide: [A Trauma-Informed Care: A Primer for Refugee Service Providers](#)
  - Switchboard Webinar: [Trauma-Informed Approach to De-Escalation and Crisis Response](#)
  - National Child Traumatic Stress Tip Sheet: [Understanding Refugee Trauma](#)
- Experiential and popular education frameworks:
  - [Kolb Experiential Learning Theory](#)
  - [Rural Support Partners' Spiral Model for Popular Education.](#)
  - [ISED YouTube Channel for Farmer Videos.](#)
  - [Readability Scoring](#)





# Stay Connected



**Switchboard@Rescue.org**



**@SwitchboardTA**



**www.SwitchboardTA.org**



**@SwitchboardTA**

The IRC received competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant #90RB0052 and Grant #90RB0053. The project is 100% financed by federal funds. The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.

