



# Webinar: Refugee Farmer Training

June 20, 2024, 3–4PM ET

Transcript

## Introduction

**Eugenia Gusev:** Hello, everybody. We're going to kick off this webinar. I wanted to thank you all for joining us today. It happens to also be World Refugee Day, so I'm excited to present on this day in particular.

## Today's Speakers

**EG:** My name is Eugenia Gusev and I am the Senior Program Officer for Switchboard. I'm developing materials focused on food security and agriculture, and I'm going to briefly introduce my other colleagues and speakers today. I'm joined today by Aley Kent, who's the Senior Technical Advisor for Food Security and Agriculture. She oversees the entire New Roots network of 12 offices at the IRC. We are also joined by Cecilia Lapp Stoltzfus, who's the Manager for Food and Agriculture and IRC, Charlottesville office. And we also have Theresa Allan, who is the Coordinator for New Roots IRC in Charlottesville. They have both been working to develop and grow the New Roots program in Virginia, and they have a lot of experience with working with the Micro-producer Academy, specifically. Next slide, please.

## Learning Objectives

**EG:** So, our objectives for today are to identify challenges faced by newcomers who want to engage in farming as a business in the United States. We will describe three linguistically accessible and culturally responsive approaches to farmer training for newcomers. We will name the key components, topics, and intended audiences of the Micro-producer Academy training. We will apply key strategies and best practices to ensure effective implementation of the Micro-producer Academy. Next slide.

## Poll Question

**EG:** Right now we're going to use Slido, which we'll use a couple of times. Now, if you're not familiar with it, what you need to do is use your phone to and your QR app, to take a picture of the QR code that you are seeing on the screen. Or you can go to [slido.com](https://slido.com) by opening your web browser and entering in the hashtag 2733975. We'd like to hear from what type of organization you are coming from, so please go ahead and take a few moments to take the Slido and we'll be seeing the results on the screen populate. This is also interesting, I think, for everyone just to see where everyone is coming from.

## Which type of organization do you work with?

**EG:** So we are seeing, there's a lot of resettlement agency folks and also our agricultural organizations that serve newcomer farmers, state agencies, and also some private philanthropic organizations and all. It doesn't



look like we have any university or research institutions represented. Pretty, pretty interesting. Thank you. Thank you all for joining and for using Slido. All right, let's go to the next slide.

## 1. Common Challenges Faced by Newcomer Farmers

**EG:** So the first section, I will be presenting on is common challenges faced by newcomer farmers. We'll be exploring barriers and key statistics from the New Roots National Network. Next slide, please.

### What is New Roots?

**EG:** So, I wanted to talk about what is New Roots, because the Micro-Producer Academy was born out of the, the work that New Roots has been doing for over a decade at this point. New Roots is a network of programs that currently exist across 12 offices, but it started over a decade ago in San Diego, and it started to support the need for newcomers who wanted to, who come from agricultural backgrounds, and they wanted to grow produce and to sell it here in the United States. New Roots currently covers a myriad of different types of programs, which includes emergency food assistance to gardens and farms. It currently serves over 13,000 people in 12 locations, and over the past year, almost 500,000 pounds of food have been distributed to clients and their communities, and over \$380,000 worth of income has been generated by new roots farmers. Next slide, please.

### Who are New Roots Farmers?

**EG:** Who are New Roots farmers? So, I think this is important to note that new roots farmers that are being served vary in age and nationality, 50% of them are female, roughly average age is 45, and then we serve over 15 nationalities. And this really looks different in each location.

### Poll Question

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

**EG:** So one more Slido. Now that you're all Slido experts, can you please answer this question? What challenges might newcomer farmers face when they want to start farming and selling their produce in the US? Just take a moment to, again, do the QR code or the slido.com, not being sure of the laws and regulations. Money for seeds. Language, land access. Yes. Access to land is a big one. Absolutely. Getting access to tools, seeds, plants, access to land is really trending. Permits, market access, lack of education, discrimination. Great. Exactly. Let's go to the next slide.

### Key Barriers

**EG:** So the barriers that we have encountered through our work with newcomer farmers, you've mentioned most of them, or all of them, in fact. Language, access to land, access to skills and knowledge, access to resources, which might be monetary or physical, access to markets and social and community support. New Roots staff work together with farmers to find ways to address these barriers. And through that work, they have developed several types of trainings that are tailored to help support these challenges. Many of you asked in the question when you were signing up for this webinar, we also gave you an opportunity to ask some questions, and many of you brought up land and how to access land in the United States for a newcomer



farmer. I will just mention that for New Roots, and IRC, we rent land from a private and public entities, but I know that for other refugee serving pharma organizations, that might not be the case. But I wanted to just address that as it came up a lot in your registration questions. Next slide, please.

### What is a Beginning Farmer?

**EG:** And also, just for background, what is considered a a beginner farmer here by the USDA? This is someone who has been farming for less than 10 years. In reality, New Roots farmers might come with really in depth experience from their home. But they have to learn how to farm in a new context and climate and learn how to navigate markets and sell their produce here. Other farmers that New Roots works with are newer to farming, and so are truly beginner farmers. So there's really a range of experiences and educational backgrounds within the New Roots farming network. Next slide. With the right support, and tools, new American farmers can surpass these challenges to become successful agribusiness owners, contributing greatly to their local U.S. food systems. Let's look at some of the key tools and approaches that support newcomer farmers honor pathway to success. So with that, I'm going to pass it over to Aley to speak about linguistically accessible and culturally responsive approaches.

## 2. Linguistically Accessible and Culturally Responsive Approaches

**Aley Kent:** Thank you so much, Eugenia. And we can actually go to the first slide.

### Newcomer Farmer Training Programs Often Include...

**AK:** Yeah, so I mean, getting into the types of training that we do and the approaches that we use when we're working with these different groups before we hop into the Micro-Producer Academy as a specific tool, wanted to give a little background. So we're often dealing with mixed literacy and numeracy levels. Different age, different age adults, learners, usually adult learners, varied experience with agriculture in their home country, and, in some ways more, most importantly, formal and informal educational backgrounds, different amounts of education that people have had previously. Go to the next slide. So I wanted to ask all of you to consider this, you know, easy peasy workshop sheath that you might hand out. This is an example that showcases a vocabulary quiz so that people can start learning the names of vegetables.

### Poll Question

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

**AK:** But what I wanted to ask you, if you could look at this, and we're going to go to the next slide and we're going to go back to Slido again. I wanted to just, say, okay, so what's the, so the instructions, you're handing out the sheet, to people, and in order for a learner to successfully complete this vegetable matching activity, what concepts and skills do they actually need to have?

**AK:** What kinds of things do you need to be able to do? You'd be familiar with vegetables. Folks are typing to be able to read in English, to have fine motor skills, literacy for sure. This knowledge of the vegetables grown.



**AK:** Connecting the words and images, you know, how to reorder a list. Maybe different climates, folks are even thinking beyond. Yeah. So, yeah. I mean, some other things people might need to know is just if, especially if they've never been in a classroom setting before, they need to know to orient the paper so the words are right side up. They need to locate and integrate different, you know, the relevant details. They need to possess visual literacy to know that the clip art image is supposed to represent the real image, the real item that's represented. They need to understand that the words in the pictures are in different orders and that they're supposed to connect the picture with the word, as drawing and like, know to draw a line, to do that. Understand that crossing lines is acceptable.

**AK:** There's all kinds of sort of rules and practices that are, I think, inherently, or that are as some, you know, we assume a lot as educators that people sort of know how to do. And so as we think about our, the people that we are teaching, it's important to be conscious of a few things.

**AK:** So these are some quotes and we can just pop these up on the screen. But I mean, so what can we conclude from the vegetable batch activity? You know, people from non-formal education systems might need to take extra time to learn the steps, you know, that we want, if we sort of want them to sort of do something, we can't make assumptions that they're going to automatically be able to take those steps, might require more steps and more time, than we realize to help someone.

**AK:** So here, like this one, I 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, you know, take records, and keep and track certain information. You know, you hand people a, a record to, to help them keep track of their sales or their farm produce or something, and people aren't using it and it's like it, there might be more to it than that. They may never have held a pen yet they're faced with computers and other technologies, right? So they're used to passing information orally, but not in writing. So these are actually quotes collected from a toolkit from staff working with the refugee farmers, and we'll share that link at the end of this presentation. But as educators finding out about the backgrounds of the learners that you'll be working with is really the first order of business. And so, we need to make sure that we don't run the risk of our own experience as a learner, being laid on top of how we train people. So let's go to the next slide.

## Guiding Principles for Adult Learners

**AK:** So combined with this is the understanding that, you know, or I guess so some things to remember about how adults learn, so we can put this list together. So the first thing is, you know, adult learners bring a wealth of experience and knowledge, right? So build in time for learners to share experiences. Adults also have a general sense of themselves as learners, and some have associated feelings of anxiety and low confidence around it. So it's important to, you know, we call it scaffolding, to support and build self-efficacy around different topics that we might be training in. Helping people realize, yeah, I can do that, so let's do something that's easier and then maybe a little harder and a little harder. Also, some adults have specific reasons or goals. Usually adults do, actually, they often have specific goals for going to a workshop or using their precious time to take part in a training session.

**AK:** So making sure that we're connecting content to the learning goals that people have. And since adults learn best in an atmosphere of active participation and reflection, making sure that we're providing opportunities for that to happen, in the classroom. Again, use farmers as teaching resources. People come with all this experience, have them learn from each other. And then finally, since people learn through different means, and different teaching methods, let's make sure we use a variety of teaching techniques. So next slide.



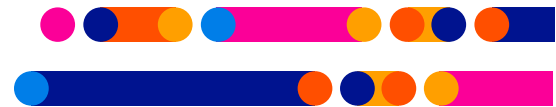
## Guiding Principles for Trauma-Informed Education

**AK:** What might some of those be? We can, it's a couple of these on here. So we have a couple of fancy terms on here, but I think there are things that some of you, most of you probably are already somewhat familiar with, but we tend to try to work in things like using realia, which is, you know, using the actual thing, the real thing.

**AK:** Even if it's in a classroom setting, bringing in a shovel, bringing in something, not having a picture of something or a photograph of something on a screen. Role playing, a great method for people to become active in trying something out. Like, you know, a farmer's market interaction or a meeting with a loan officer. Structured dialogue, another thing where this is not so much give people the role and they wing it. It's more like you're going to follow a script and you're going to follow a script and we're all going to watch you and we're going to use that to reflect on it. What's another thing you're teaching? Again, like having, asking one farmer to train someone else, or just taking a break from the lesson and asking people to talk to each other at tables, hands on demonstration. All of you, I'm sure are very familiar with this, doing as much as we can hands on. We try to aim towards that as much as possible. And vocabulary drills is just something else to remember, right? If we're, if it's just about trying to get those words, so people are feeling more confident about communicating, or yeah, knowing the names of things, it's sometimes just important to make time for vocab drills, vocab test. Next.

**AK:** Finally, I don't want to leave this out. We also know that many immigrants and refugees have experienced hardships and trauma that are hard to imagine. So you see this image of the iceberg as an analogy, right? So only 10% of the iceberg might be something that you see, but really the rest is underneath. And, so when we're working with people who may have potentially had traumatic past, we want to always hold space for that and how we approach interactions with them. So, what does this mean? And it can be close, sorry, it can be hard to know. Can be hard to know, right? What you're, if what you're experiencing, with a farmer or with a person, any person is a result of trauma. So in general, we try to hone our training to these principles. So the first thing is just notice changes in behavior and listening closely if a farmer talks about their trauma, doesn't always happen. So that's a really important time to just very actively listen. To keeping activities and actions free of shame. So making sure that there's not necessarily right or wrong, that there's ways for people to participate in ways that are affirming.

**AK:** Asking farmers, not asking farmers to share personal information. Never, never trying to put that on people to share about their past or share about, something that might trigger something for them. Validating strengths, again, similar to number two, validating strengths and also offering more validation and support, as people are, doing things well or improving or trying something out for the first time. And also just really important, keeping a list of community resources or hotlines on hand in case something does come up where you feel as though this is not your skillset or your wheelhouse to really, work with. And also just not placating or over promising, making sure that we're very realistic and upfront about expectations, what we're expecting of them and what they can expect from us. Finally, so this is this handbook that I mentioned, much of what I've been talking about is in this resource, it can be found on the New Entry Sustainable Farming program website, forgot the last part of their name. In their resource library. It's linked at the end of the slideshow, or it's linked right now in the chat, so you can go check that out. It was developed by a collaboration of different immigrant refugee farming programs around the country, gosh, almost like eight or 10 years ago at this point. With different folks that were serving, agricultural, refugees going into agriculture and with the help of some experts, that were really good with adult education and helping us with understanding different ways to educate folks. I think that's all I could say about that. So yeah.



## Poll Question

Which training approaches discussed here resonate with you?

**AK:** Let's do one more little reflection time since adults like being actively engaged in their [laughter] environment. Need time for reflection. So yeah. So what training approaches discussed? I just went through a whole lot of stuff, but, what things resonate with you? Yeah. Learning by doing, hands on practice, showing trauma, informed peer teaching, role plays.

**AK:** Not over promising, real. Yeah, that was a fun word for me when I first learned it. Reflection and sharing previously held skills, connecting vocabulary to activities, active listening and the vocab drills, it's hands-on practice. Yeah, as much as we can do, there's so much more that people learn and integrate when they actually get their hands on something. I know I, for one, I'm not someone who learns that much through reading, for example. So it's important for me to like, take that and work with it. Scaffolding, being patient, listening, reality-based, everything else, meeting people where they're at. Great.

## 3. Micro-Producer Academy

**AK:** Okay, let's go to the next piece. I want to get us into the Micro-Producer Academy, so we can hear from Charlottesville. Yeah, so real quick, let's go to the next slide.

### Audiences

**AK:** The Micro-Producer Academy, the audiences for this are aspiring farmers, refugees, newcomers, and other English language learners, and other people that are new to production agriculture in the US context. It was created by... It was started to be created by Ellie Igo, who formerly worked at IRC, and I contributed a lot to it after that. And since then, a lot of other folks have done a lot to update and do more with it. Like we'll hear in a minute from Therese, from Terry and Cecilia. Anyway, so it's meant really as an introductory course for aspiring farmers who are thinking of growing food for sale in the U.S.

### Topics

**AK:** So let's go to the next slide. So it covers eight specific topics at present, not necessarily in this order, although orientation's usually first, but we can go ahead and put all them up on the screen. Sometimes different modules happen, one before the other, but the idea is that because they are modular, they could be used at different points of the season depending on where the needs are for your group. But there's this orientation where, again, expectations are set, a one on market types where we talk through different ways that people might want to market, and the pros and cons of all those different options, two different modules on growing for market. One on choosing your crops that are actually going to be able to, whatever, be in demand from your market.

**AK:** And then also, more on just thinking through your calendar and when things will be ready and what you can sort of tell your buyers. We have a module on budgeting, and another one on dealing with money, how you're going to... What kinds of income will you even see at the market, what's going to come in and how do you manage that? Clean and healthy harvest is all around food safety, both pre-harvest, in-field and post harvest.



And then market success is a sort of a demo role play module where people can practice setting up their farm stand and thinking through their interactions at the market. Next slide.

## Components

**AK:** And yeah, so basically, every one of these modules has like a PowerPoint presentation, a set of discussion guides and some experiential learning activities. Because again, it's like we want to have different ways that we could make this information available to people. Some trainers are more able to really help people do more of the experiential learning supports, other farmers are really looking for, just like, just give me a show and tell me what I need to know. And we can talk about it, but anyway, the templates are customizable to your local context. And yeah, finally, just the next slide just has an example of the first module, like what you would see if you go to the new entry website. And so it's some nice formatting here, but yeah, there's some great tools to sort of start from and then build onto, depending on what your specific needs are. Sometimes you need to substitute in photos that fit your context better, etcetera. But yeah, everything's available through the new entry website and are we going to... Did we post that link?

**EG:** Yes, we did.

**AK:** Oh, there it is. Great. Okay, and I think that's it for me. I want to make sure we turn it over to the Charlottesville team to hear about their real experience with this. So take it away.

## 4. Effective Micro-Producer Academy Implementation

**Cecilia Lapp Stoltzfus:** Thank you, Aley. Good afternoon, everyone. My name's Cecilia Lapp Stoltzfus and I'm the program manager of the New Roots Team here in Charlottesville. And I'll be joined by my colleague Terry Allan, and we'll tag team this portion this afternoon, so that we can share a little bit more about what the Micro-Producer Academy looked like in the context of our work in Charlottesville. Before we move along, this is one little snapshot of our farmer's market booth a couple of years ago, joined by four micro producers themselves and the young daughter of one farmer. So we just want to give you some images to hold in your mind as we go through some of the more heady content here.

### Case Scenario: Charlottesville Micro-Producer Academy

**CS:** As Aley mentioned, our Micro-Producer Academy is a series of introductory workshops, designed to help growers determine if commercial produce sales are a good fit for their personal and income goals. So as we talk through key strategies and best practices, I will provide a general overview of sort of the Charlottesville context, and then pass it to Terry to share more specifically about what the curriculum adaptations and strategies have looked like in our programming here. So next slide.

**CS:** First things first, we thought we would talk a little bit about recruitment and program enrollment. I know we had a number of questions about that in the registrations. So as a program of our local IRC office, New Roots receives many referrals directly from our direct service colleagues, and that typically means caseworkers, employment specialists or other economic empowerment staff who identify clients that have a background in agriculture or an interest as they're doing their program intakes. In addition, we also typically recruit for the Micro-Producer Academy through our community gardening participants. And if we have any community gardeners who are interested in kind of scaling up, this is a great next step to sort of build on their foundation with gardening on a household scale. And then thirdly, we also did a lot of recruitment to other local immigrant



and refugee serving partner organizations, adult English language learning programs and the like, just to help kind of get the word out more broadly. So, as we think about strategies, we did a lot of direct outreach. We put together multilingual flyers, and some of the languages that we know are most present in our Charlottesville community. And we also did quite a bit of phone banking to former clients of the IRC who may have matriculated through other resettlement and placement programs, and might now be a better candidate to re-engage in the context of urban farming programs.

**CS:** So before we move on, I will say that one sort of learning moment for us as we did our program recruitment is that, we found it helpful to screen for interest in agriculture more generally to pose open-ended questions to sort of feel out folks' experience and goals. And then from there, plug them into opportunities such as the Micro-Producer Academy to then dig a little deeper and figure out what exact project or what exact application might suit them best as they go through this learning experience. So once our cohort is formed, we will host our classes throughout the winter months, in our off season, and we typically opt to host sessions, multiple sessions on each topic, typically one in the morning and one in the evening, just to accommodate participant schedules. As we know, many folks work night shift and many also work day shift. Next slide.

### **Increasing Farmer Income 2014-2023**

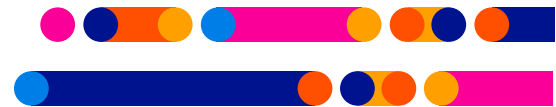
**CS:** And I also wanted to talk briefly about outcomes and specifically Micro-Producer earnings. So this is a brief snapshot of our program-wide earnings since the founding in 2014. And you'll see that farmer income has increased steadily since the beginnings of the program. And just for reference, this data reflects income from typically between four and seven farmers each year, and typical earnings per individual range from \$100 on the very, very low end to upwards of \$6,000 for those who are really, really involved. So I wanted to highlight a couple of factors that could contribute either to growth in income for an individual or for the program, or also vulnerabilities that might explain some of the decline that we see on this chart. From our experience, we can really enhance earnings through developing loyal and large wholesale contracts. We can also enhance earnings through diversification of market outlets to make sure that we're providing that stability through diversity.

**CS:** And then also, of course, growth and program enrollments associated with launching or expanding workshops like the Micro-Producer Academy help to grow the program in a plethora of ways. On the flip side, and we always want to keep these challenges in mind, loss of key customers can be really impactful in the program. So for example, from 2022 to '23, loss of one large wholesale buyer really impacted the program, and that's something that we need to think about in terms of market strategies. And then also, simply retirement or participants exiting. We know there's always an ebb and flow in our work, in our... The long-term impact of this work welcomes new faces and celebrates when folks are ready to step on into other directions. So as we've relaunched our Micro-Producer Academy workshops in the past two years, following COVID pandemic shutdowns, we've really seen a growth in our enrollment and reinvigoration of what small scale refugee farming in Charlottesville looks like in our community. So from here, I'll pass it to my colleague Terry. She's our lead Micro-Producer Academy instructor, and she will talk about some of the adaptations that have been critical to our success in this context.

### **Overview of Key Strategies (1/2)**

**Theresa Allan:** Thank you Cecilia and Aley and Eugenia. So I'm going to talk about different ways that I used the eight different modules to adopt them to our local situation here. And if you could just populate that slide, we're going to show examples of each one of these key strategies, so please keep populating the slide, and





then move on to the next slide. So we'll talk about each of these in turn. So visually, rich training materials, again, we're trying to use a lot of imagery that speaks thousands of words in any language and then anchor it with English, the language that we're trying to teach people. This example of a planting calendar can show the different vegetables, what times of year it's best to plant them here in our climate. It also shows frost states, but as Aley said, you may have to orient people, like can they read the grid? Do they understand that a column going all the way down represents a month? Do they understand the flow of a timeline? But this resource is also popular in our ESL classes, because it does teach people the names of vegetables. And we've included some of the tropical vegetables and less common vegetables that aren't normally found on a US based planting calendar to get things like cassava on our list and help people figure out when they can plant some of their things. Next slide, please.

**TA:** Along with the visual stuff, we incorporate plain language, and I want to spend a little bit of time on this, plain language. Really, it's how we can communicate very simply, short sentences, present tense, not complicated clauses, subjunctives, no quotes or slang, no sort of polite inflections and things, just want the basic information laid out in a simple way. We also try to avoid passive voice and make it active. So instead of, you could plant this 10 inches apart, just say plant it 10 inches apart. I'm going to bring up open-ended questions again here. It's sort of unusual to figure out when you can use open-ended questions or talk about them here. But instead of asking a 20 questions type of yes, no question, which stops the conversation, try to phrase your questions in a way that would invite the learner to share their own experience.

**TA:** So instead of saying, did you sell your produce in your own country before you came here? They can say yes, but wouldn't it be more interesting if you said, how did you sell and buy produce in your own country before you came here? And then everyone has an experience that they can share about that.

## Poll Question

How might we rewrite this question to be more Plain Language?

**TA:** So in this exam, if you could go back to the previous slide in the example with this picture, underneath the picture, we have a caption, and in the Slido that's coming up, we're going to ask you to rewrite that caption in a way that you think would make it more accessible through plain language. So we'll give you a couple of minutes to do. Now, you can go to the Slido and we'll give you a couple of minutes to do that. All right, well, it seems like no one wants to rewrite that sentence unless it's taken.

**EG:** I'm seeing people typing. It might take a little while.

**TA:** Oh, okay.

**EG:** Yes, please remember to scan the QR code to get into Slido. If you haven't, if you joined a little bit later and aren't sure what to do or go to [slido.com](https://slido.com).

**TA:** We have a couple of good examples popping up, now they're popping in, very good. Honestly, when we were doing this, we went through so many iterations and you can really simplify and simplify and simplify more by putting different people's eyes on it. So it's really helpful to have a lot of people craft it, and then choose what you think communicates the idea the best and the simplest way.



**TA:** So for example, I might rewrite that first sentence, instead of having a clause at the beginning with a comma, it's sort of an if then situation. I might just rewrite it to say, check the roots after four to six weeks. Many of you came up with that rewrite. And then maybe the second sentence, again, instead of having clauses and using the word plug, which is a new vocabulary word and things like that, you might say, when there are enough roots to hold the soil together, they are ready to transplant. But then I thought you could even make it simpler and more active by saying seedlings are ready to transplant when there are enough roots to hold the soil together. So as you can see, you can keep iterating these to get them simpler and simpler. And the value of doing that is not just for the learner, but also for the interpreters, because if your sentences are clear, the interpreters can translate them more easily.

## Overview of Key Strategies (2/2)

**TA:** All right, let's go to the next section. So we also gave each participant a binder. It was actually a really pretty thick binder that had all the resources. It had the charts and graphs and lots of different worksheets that we made. We also made the worksheets with using images and plain language to reduce the amount of English on the page, make people feel comfortable writing in their own language or drawing or using any note-taking format that might work for them but trying to organize it in a way. And I really feel like the worksheets need time during your training session for people to actually work on completing them. It's not something that you can assign homework and expect that people will come to the class next time, prepared. Make time during your session for people to actually complete the worksheets. Next slide.

Another big adaptation, since the original modules were developed 10 years ago, and then the pandemic changed everything.

**TA:** I feel like there's sort of three different modules in there that dealt with money. And farmer's market used to be a place of cash, but COVID killed cash. So now if people cannot accept digital payments, they lose a lot of customers because people are used to paying now with digital payments. So we had to update some of that to train people and give people opportunities to access deeper training on how to use some of these different digital payment apps now. And that increases their income by 60 per... 40 to 60%, just by having that new way of taking money. And the other thing that I really want to spend some time on is the interpreters. It's... Even though we're trying to do things with plain language and things that support people that don't speak English so well, it's still super helpful to have interpreters so that people can have deeper understanding of what you're trying to teach them in their own language. And since we're not English, like English is not the goal in our class, we're not teaching English as a second language.

**TA:** We want people to be able to learn the important teaching points that we're trying to get across in their own language so that they don't have any question about it, especially if we're talking about legal stuff, taxes, food safety, we really need them to understand. So having the interpreters is key. And the interpreters in a classroom setting, we have found that the interpreters are almost like teaching assistants. They're sort of managing their little language group at the table. And when we have... So instead of a traditional interpretation situation where the interpreter is just interpreting what one person says and then say, interpreting back what the other person says, to have conversations and discussions and point things out and do worksheets, the interpreters also have to kind of get involved and be a supporter of the trainer. We've found that the interpreters all want to join the program after they've finished translating the course, but doing all this takes a lot of time.



**TA:** So if you have a standard curriculum that you can present in an hour, depending on how many languages you're interpreting at the same time, it's going to take two hours or we've actually found two and a half hours for one hour session was appropriate. We tried to have two hour to three hour sessions blocked for our courses to allow enough time for everything. And in the picture, you can see they're doing a crop planning exercise. As Aley mentioned, the word realia, which is also new to me, I'm like, use the real stuff. So we have real seed packets and real seed catalogs, and we're trying to get them to do some crop planning and look at these reference materials and play with them. And kudos to the seed companies that put pictures on the front of their seed packets. That really helps our clients.

### Key Adaptations

**TA:** Next slide. And so we also provide the interpreters with the notebooks because that helps them interpret properly. And we have found difficulty with people who aren't familiar with some of the more technical words around agriculture. There's sometimes hard to interpret, like compost and greenhouse. Those turned out to be difficult words for the interpreters to translate because maybe there's not something similar in their own culture. So just to review one more time, because as we know, repeating the main tenets of your lesson multiple times during your training helps people learn and remember and go back to that. So again, we recruited using personal calls and a lot of research to really find people who we thought would be interested. We adapted the modules to meet the needs of our learners and what our teaching goals were for that year. We chose different content depending on the level of the students.

**TA:** And in the last two years, we really have had a broad range of education levels among the people in the classroom. So it's important to choose activities that aren't too simple or too complex. We try to choose the activities that are somewhere in the middle. We also like to replace some of the pictures in the PowerPoints with pictures of our local markets or pictures of our own local farmers that people might know. Because it's good when people see people that look like them doing the activity that we're trying to train them to do. But it's even better if they see someone that they actually know and can say, well, gosh, if she can do that, I'm sure I can do it too. So I think that's very inspiring to have the local pictures there. And then again, keeping the students engaged and sharing their own knowledge. When you look around the table, you've probably got a hundred years' worth of agricultural experience from all over the world, and we can all learn from that. So honoring the knowledge that people bring to the table and respecting their perspectives on what's happening.

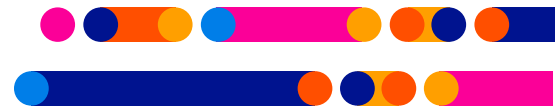
### MPA Participant Reflections

**TA:** So some of our longer, like, here's quotes from two of our participants who have actually been in the program since the beginning. And these two ladies participated in the early Micro-Producer Academy courses, and now after 10 years decided to take it again to refresh their minds. And both of them, I hope you can read that, learned a lot. And it was kind of surprising to see what things were more to each of them as we know them. So here's another Slido activity if you go to the next slide. And so what do you see as the benefits of using the MPA for newcomer farmers?

**EG:** And Terry, just looking at the time, we'll probably have to wrap it up after this slide.

**TA:** Yeah, we're on the last slide.

**EG:** Awesome. Fine.



**TA:** So yeah, the course does build confidence for people. Yes, the language is already simplified, and that was a very useful tool. When I was adapting the curriculums, I was really happy that the main teaching points were already there and slides were already conceptualized. So it was very easy for me to plug and play and then just substitute some local pictures. Let's see, proven examples. Training presentations are translated for better understanding. I would also say that the orientation session at the beginning helps us get a grasp on what the learner's goals are. And then I can adapt the modules that are coming up based on that. In the orientation session, we have them work on some goals. And so once we understand what those are for each person, it helps us customize the trainings.

## Big Take-Aways

**TA:** And so our big take-away is that we find the Micro-Producer Academy is really good for helping our participants figure out if they want to go further or not. There's a lot of things to consider. Once we know what their goals are and have them a little bit more defined, we can customize our personal technical assistance for each unique business. The things that they learn in the Micro-Producer Academy, even if they decide not to go into a farming business, might help them get started in a different kind of business. Many people come with entrepreneurial backgrounds, which are harder to realize, I think, here in the U.S. if you don't have an in-depth knowledge of the language and culture. So the people have told me that they felt that it was very useful that they didn't think that they would have been able to figure out how to get into a farmer's market without some support and help oriented toward it. So, I'm sure there's going to be a lot more questions. Let me turn it over to Eugenia, I think, for our Q&A and wrap up.

## Q&A Panel

**EG:** Great. Thank you so much, Terry, Cecilia, and Aley for such a great presentation. We are answering some questions already in the Q&A. However, there are still some questions that are open, so I might just popcorn it out to you all. So there's some location-specific questions about West Michigan, knowing who to partner with there, or Lancaster County, PA. I don't know if anybody wants to take that up, in terms of knowing other partners who might be in this space.

**CS:** I can jump in, Eugenia.

**EG:** Go ahead.

**CS:** I did answer some specific Pittsburgh questions, so that's in there. But more generally, I would say what I've learned from our network is that there's been some really transformational collaborations between refugee resettlement agencies and other urban agriculture non-profits or organizations. That could be extension or it could be non-profits, and also land trusts. And those three entities have created these very interesting encounters that can galvanize the strengths of each of their own roles, whether it's content expertise, land access, relationships with diverse community members. And that has created some really interesting synergies. I'm thinking about our partners in Kansas City as one example, but I know that when we think about starting, stepping into this work, developing strong partnerships from the start can be a really important way to build off of the existing efforts in a community.

**EG:** Thanks for that. I don't know if Terry or Aley want to add anything to the location-specific questions, or we can move on.



**AK:** I unfortunately don't have any particular contacts in those locations, but I would agree with... Well, I have worked with some groups in Lancaster itself, but again, yeah, I think this idea of linking up with maybe unlikely partners can sometimes lead to great things, even if there's not currently a refugee farming training program nearby, per se. There are a lot of local food and agricultural initiatives happening all over the country, and sometimes even just using a Google search, you can figure out that there's people who are using a Google search, you can figure out that there's people nearby who would be interesting to collaborate with. So that's all I got.

**TA:** Yeah, it's hard for us to... The program has been building over 10 years. Yes, there were lots of grants. They're all USDA hard-to-get grants. To really pull off the program, you probably need a \$200,000 to \$250,000 budget. Annually, so you really would have to raise a lot of money to have a fully robust program. And the interpreter situation, we have a really great interpreter situation here in Charlottesville, and that can be a big obstacle for others of you that might not have interpreter services available. There are phone services available for interpretation and such, but a lot of these local partnerships are things that you will have to find out from your local area. And then I see that Sarah from Richmond wants to start a program. Well, come visit us first. And then look for other organizations that already are doing community gardening programs and see if you can get one or two of your refugee clients into them as a way to get started, perhaps.

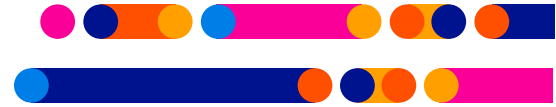
**TA:** The Charlottesville program started by just having a four-by-eight raised bed in front of people's apartments when they moved in. So it started super small. And yet, even in that small space, one of our growers who's now coming to market, I met with her yesterday as we're about to go to market for the first time this week, and she said, everyone was really impressed that I had a freezer full of food just from my eight-by-four space. So you really can help the food security of people with a small way. And then we've just continued to grow and expand it. And as we expanded, we saw that people with good skills and could produce more than they needed themselves could use that as an outlet to actually make money. No one is making money as a full-time farmer.

**TA:** I mean, people are making money, but they might not be making a living as a full-time farmer, just like American farmers. New Americans also probably have to have a second job to be a farmer.

**EG:** Great. I see Cecilia is going to be answering. I don't know, Cecilia, if you typed something up or if you just want to take that question. What are the common challenges refugees face regarding ongoing business development? What things challenge the sustainability of a refugee-growing farm? We only have a couple of minutes left, really. So I want to make sure folks can hear one more answer, maybe. So many question.

**AK:** I think in terms of ongoing business development, I think, again, being very realistic about the timeline that it often takes for someone to truly go from exploring farming to really being able to do it all on their own. It's probably many, many years more than you think it takes. On the other hand, a lot of refugees come with a lot of skills and previous experience and a lot of drive to make this happen. And so I think in terms of the different challenges, it's understanding the banking system here, it's understanding credit and loans and how that factors into making their business thrive. I mean, land access, everybody was already saying it, is a huge deal. And a lot of times, income and business development is limited by just your access to resources and that land base. And then, yeah, English language communication does a lot for access to markets, different market opportunities.

**EG:** Great. Thank you, Aley. We're going to have to move on. But if there's any unanswered questions, please feel free to reach out to us via email or LinkedIn. Patricia, can you move to the survey slide?



## Conclusion

### Reviewing Learning Objectives

**EG:** So we already know the objectives and hopefully we hit the nail on the head. So let's keep going to the survey.

### Stay Connected

**EG:** We want to make sure that we're able to get your feedback from this webinar. This webinar is part of a series of content that I will be releasing over the next couple of months until September, focused on various topics around agriculture and nutrition and food security and newcomers. So please take 60 seconds to respond if you can stay for an extra one or two minutes. After this survey slide, we will share a list of recommended reading resources and there's a few more things coming down the pike in the next couple of months.

**EG:** So watch the Switchboard space for that. Please go ahead and fill out this survey. We're going to give you about 30 seconds as you get that QR code queued up in your phone. Thank you so much. It really helps us understand how to do this better.

### Recommended Resources

**EG:** And the training resources, we have all the links that we shared earlier in the chat, the Micro-Producer Academy Toolkit, which has eight parts, Refugee Farmer Training Handbook, which Aley talked about at length, and then some other additional resources depending on what background you're coming from, right? If you don't have a casework background, so maybe some of those trauma-informed care resources might be also of use. And then some experiential and popular education frameworks that were referenced also are a great background tool if you're looking to support and teach to farmer, newcomer farmer audiences.

**EG:** I want to thank again our amazing speakers, Aley, Cecilia, and Terry, and also Patricia, who is in the background and who is manning a lot of the slides and all of these transitions. Thank you all so very much, and thank you to everyone that was able to join us today.

**TA:** Bye, thanks.

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