



“Planning for Start-up” 2014-15

Note – the above dates and location are the only offering for this course in 2014-15. Sign up early to reserve a space.

Planning For Start-up (Planner) is a step up from considering farming as a personal pursuit to implementing your income generating agricultural ideas. It is aimed at 1) graduates of “*Exploring the Small Farm Dream*” (*Explorer*), created by the New England Small Farm Institute and presented by MDAR, or 2) individuals who can complete the Explorer workbook on their own well before the first session. You must also have access to land suitable for starting your farm venture.

This course helps develop an Action Plan to move your farming ideas closer to reality. It builds on the personal assessments, goal-setting, research and decision-making begun in Explorer and the Explorer workbook, taking you into the first year or two of scaling up. An action plan is not a traditional business plan, because you haven’t started farming as a business yet - though we hope you intend to do so soon. Planner helps you identify achievable goals and avoid common pitfalls as you begin. If you feel you are beyond the Planner stage, consider taking our full business plan course – “Tilling the Soil of Opportunity”.

The Planner process is primarily self directed learning, with the addition of course meetings, peer feedback, Instructor input and some individual guidance.

Planner recognizes that:

- planning and implementing a farm startup is not a one-size-fits-all process
- the relative importance of four key elements of a farm start-up plan (land, enterprises, market strategies and financial resources) is different for each new farm.

For example, if you already have land, it’s production capabilities will drive your decisions about what farm enterprises to pursue, and its location may influence your decisions about how to market what you produce. Or if your preferred market strategy is

operating a retail farm stand, you will generally not be looking for land in a remote isolated location, even if it is temptingly affordable. *Planner* will help you prioritize among these core “drivers” so that you can proceed with your research in a way that works for you. The resulting Action Plan will provide a road map and cost estimates for advancing your farm start-up.

Consider attending this program if you have done all of the following:

- ✦ completed the *Exploring the Small Farm Dream* course - or completed the Explorer workbook on your own in time to submit well-considered Explorer worksheets a month before the course. The workbook can be purchased from the New England Small Farm Institute Bookstore at www.smallfarm.org.
- ✦ acquired the basic technical farming skills to start your venture through prior work experience, courses of study, or successful backyard experimentation
- ✦ decided to farm commercially (intending to generate a profit or to run a sustainable non-profit) but have not yet fully started your business **OR** have recently started your business but need to confirm your direction
- ✦ are committed to attend ALL of the six workshops, complete the pre-assignment, complete individual session assignments, do needed research and respond to emails in between class sessions

Each of the six Planner sessions runs 4 hours on Saturday mornings, with two possible break weeks. You or a partner must agree to attend all 6 sessions.

Pre-course preparation background will be assigned a month ahead

Session 1 (Introduction): Review of goal-setting done in *Explorer*, introduction to *Small Farm Planner* and planning process, prioritize drivers, review farm business start-up checklist, begin research

Session 2 (Planning Element - Land): Assess your farm location (or a specific proposed location) and its capabilities, including suitability for specific enterprises and market strategies. Determine land/location/tenure legal issues to research, and land/infrastructure costs related to farm start-up

Session 3 (Planning Element - Enterprises): Assess enterprises you wish to pursue relative to land/location and market strategies. Research legal issues related to specific enterprises and determine potential revenues and expenses for each. Learn how to evaluate and choose core enterprises to start your business.

Break Week for Research

Session 4 (Planning Element- Markets): Determine potential customers for your core enterprises. Assess market strategies you wish to use relative to land/location, enterprises and potential customers. Research legal issues related to specific strategies and determine

costs/benefits for each. Learn how to evaluate/choose the best market strategies to start your business.

Session 5 (Planning Element- Financial): Develop a farm start-up budget and cash flow projection for your first year of production/sales. Assess funds available for start-up including personal resources and possible loans and other financing.

Break Week for Research & Presentation Preparation

Session 6 – (Graduation – Wrap Up) - Present and receive feedback on start-up action plan.

Class size is limited to 10 prospective farms to maximize group time, with the opportunity to bring another person from your enterprise at no additional cost. The **\$150** registration includes instruction and materials.

You must have email, Microsoft compatible word processing and spread sheet software, and internet access to take this course!

Once we have enough good applications, we will notify you that the course is a go and request payment.

For a Registration Form, please contact:

Rick Chandler, MDAR, 101 University Drive, Suite C-4, Amherst, MA 01002

Email: rick.chandler@state.ma.us

or visit the Agricultural Business Training Program (ABTP) section of the MDAR website - <http://www.mass.gov/agr/programs/abtp/index.htm>

Out of state applicants

This course is sponsored and financially supported by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources and is intended for Massachusetts agricultural entrepreneurs. If you are from a neighboring state or are planning to farm in another state, we can put you on a waiting list in case the course does not fill with in-state candidates.