

impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

Annie's Project 101: improving women farm operators' risk management skills

AT A GLANCE

Annie's Project 101 is a six-week course focused on helping women farm and ranch operators hone their skills in USDA's five areas of agricultural risk management.

The Situation

In Idaho, women make up 39% of farm and ranch operators, many of whom manage small- to mid-size operations that are vital to the local agricultural economy. Historically, women have been seen as secondary contributors rather than primary operators in agriculture. A barrier to their success is a lack of business and management skills, particularly in areas like risk management, financial planning and marketing. Research indicates that many women farmers are unaware of or underutilize resources available from USDA agencies, University of Idaho Extension and other state, federal and nonprofit organizations, which limits their ability to grow their operations and improve profitability.

Without addressing these challenges, women farm operators will continue to face obstacles that hinder their financial success and the sustainability of their farms. Small- to mid-size farms, which are integral to Idaho's agricultural landscape, risk being less competitive or even disappearing.

Our Response

To improve women farm operators risk management skills, a six-week Annie's Project 101 farm and ranch management class was offered virtually statewide and



Promotional graphic for Idaho Annie's Project.

targeted to small- to mid-size farms and ranches engaged in direct marketing. The January to March 2024 course was led by UI Extension certified facilitators and focused on educating women producers in USDA's five areas of agricultural risk management: human, legal, financial, market and production. Each week of the course covered a different topic identified as an area of interest by a five-person women farm operator advisory committee and the UI Extension facilitator team.

During the three-hour Friday morning sessions, women risk management experts from around the state presented on topics such as using the Real Colors® framework to improve communication, human resources, business structure, agritourism and

marketing. These sessions included time for participants to ask questions and to discuss their specific farm and ranch challenges and opportunities. Participants also had access to an online classroom where they could access presentation recordings, handouts and additional educational materials. Participants who completed the full course received a course completion certificate. The development and offering of this Annie’s Project 101 course was supported by a USDA Agriculture and Food Research Initiative grant #2019-68006-29325 and sponsorship gifts from the Chobani Community Foundation and AgWest Farm Credit.

Program Outcomes

Nineteen women farm operators started the course (participated in one or more sessions) and 16 women farm operators participated completed the course and received a certificate. Evaluations at the end of the course indicated 100% of course participants increased their knowledge of resources available to support their farm or ranch and 78% of respondents indicated they anticipated an increase in their farm/ranch profitability as a result of participating in the class.

Participants shared these statements about the course:

- “My oldest son has come to the farm to live full time... we have always struggled to keep tempers maintained between us. I had him do the colors test and we shared results for better understanding of where some of our friction is.”
- “I have tightened my spending and revisited my business plan. Having a more concise and focused business plan should be more financially safe when starting out...”

- “This class has been amazing and I'm so happy that I learned so much which will help my business.”
- “This class was amazing! I learned far more than two-three things that were so important in setting up my "farm." One thing was how important "colors" are in every aspect of business. Another thing is there are so many resources to help me get started, that I don't feel so overwhelmed. The class was also great for showing me what I want to do, and what I don't want to do as part of my "farm.”

Other program outcomes include improved on-farm and off-farm communications, increased confidence in making business decisions and improvements in recordkeeping, budgeting and managing farm liabilities. Participants indicated they would continue to refine their skills and apply the knowledge gained in the course to their ongoing business growth.

Participants rating value of the Annie’s Project 101 course on a scale of one to five, with five being highest and one being lowest.

Table	5	4	3	2	1
Value of participating in a women only class	67%	11%	22%	0%	0%
Overall rating of the course	56%	44%	0%	0%	0%

Moving forward, the UI Extension team will continue to offer Annie’s Project 101 and other farm management workshops and courses to help women farm and ranch operators build successful, sustainable operations and strengthen Idaho’s agricultural economy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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