Farm Resilience Mentorship Program

Troubleshooting Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide guidance to Implementation Partners (IPs) when responding to risks or challenges as they arise.

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# We are not able to recruit enough Farmer Mentors.

If an IP is struggling to recruit enough Farmer Mentors, they can reach out to their FEWG representative for support. FCS can assist IPs in recruiting Farmer Mentors if needed and may be able to recruit floating national and regional mentors to fill Mentor spaces as needed. FCS will also help IPs review their recruiting, advertising, and promotion strategies.

IPs may ask secured mentors if they know of other potential mentors

IPs may also consider asking any Mentors they have recruited to take on extra workshops to ensure the Farmer participant targets are met. In these cases, funding should be redirected so these Mentors are appropriately compensated for their extra labour.

# One of our Farmer Mentors has quit after receiving training. **OR** During the training process, **OR** we have determined that one of our Farmer Mentors is unsuitable.

If a Farmer Mentor leaves the program early for any reason, IPs face the risks of falling short of their targets and of potential logistical problems. Mentors across the country will be trained simultaneously and it may be difficult to train a single replacement Mentor.

To mitigate this risk, FCS recommends IPs recruit and train 20% extra mentors above their mentor target to and hold these extra mentors in reserve in years 1 and 2, if possible. Any mentors in reserve during year 1 who are not engaged can join the year 2 mentor pool and so year two mentors to year 3.

FCS will record mentor training and participant sessions to share in cases where individual mentors need to be brought on board between group mentor training dates.

If there are no reserve Mentors and no replacement Mentors are found in time, IPs can request FCS provide a floater Mentor or ask existing Mentors to deliver additional training sessions (and redirect compensation accordingly).

FCS recommends paying Farmer Mentors only after they’ve delivered their training sessions to Farmer participants as outlined in the scoping document. This way no funds will be lost if a Farmer Mentor quits or is asked to leave before they have followed through on their deliverables.

In the case of a Farmer Mentor choosing to leave before delivering their training sessions, please ask the departing Farmer Mentor to complete an exit survey.

In the case of a Farmer Mentor being identified as unsuitable, contact your FEWG representative and work with FCS to review the mentor screening and selection process.

# One of our Farmer Mentors has quit after delivering their first Farmer participant session. **OR** One of our Farmer Mentors has not competently delivered their first or second training.

Like the previous challenge discussed, this situation introduces the risk that the IP may fall short of their targets and will face the logistical challenge of training a single replacement Mentor. In the case of a Farmer Mentor not delivering the curriculum competently, there is the added risk of the Farmer participants under that Mentor being left ill equipped to implement the BMPs.

Once again, one way to mitigate this risk is for IPs to recruit and train 20% additional mentors in years 1 and 2 who can step forward if needed. Otherwise, replacement mentors can be trained using recordings of Mentor and participant training sessions, if necessary.

In the case of a mentor who does not delivery competently, review with the mentor whether their mentor training equipped them with the needed knowledge and skills to be an effective mentor. If they identify a shortfall, engage expertise within the IP or if needed, the FCS’ Train-the-trainer contractor to work with that mentor one on one; possibly develop an assessment to identify deficiencies to work on.

In both of these cases, IPs can also approach another Farmer Mentor and offer them $50 per participant to follow up with the participants for their hour of one-on-one support. Participants will be invited to enter their new Mentor’s COI. If a Farmer Mentor has not competently delivered the training, offer their participants the option of joining training sessions with another Mentor.

Ensure that the Mentor who is taking on the additional participants understands that they will not be paid extra for having extra participants attend their training session or their COIs but will be paid for the extra one-on-one follow-up support hours with the additional participants. Each participant will receive up to a total of 1 hour of one-on-one follow-up, up to 12 months after the initial training.

Mentors who leave before their contracted deliverables have been completed should be paid for the work they have done at the agreed upon $50/hour rate.

# One of our Farmer Mentors is not responsive to participants’ calls or requests for information.

If a Farmer Mentor is not responding to participants’ requests for support, IPs should begin a dialogue with the Mentor to discuss this issue. Clearly outline the expectations of mentors and standards of practice to respond to phone calls or emails from interested participants if they still have remaining one-on-one support hours. If required and appropriate, create standard email scripts for the mentors' use so that response to emails is quick; If no solution is found and the pattern continues, IPs should approach another Farmer Mentor and offer them $50 per participant to follow up with the participants for one-on-one support. The original Farmer Mentor should be warned prior to taking this course of action and be notified once the decision has been made to transfer their participants.

# A Farmer Mentor has asked to adapt the curriculum based on their own experiences.

While a significant benefit of this program is providing farmers with the opportunity to share their experiences, there needs to be a degree of quality control among Farmer Mentors. During Mentorship Training, the curriculum developers should cover the extent to which farmers can integrate their personal experience into the curriculum. Farmer Mentors need to ensure they meet the minimum level of desired learning outcomes which will be appended to the end of the curriculum.

If participants are concerned about their Mentor’s adaptations, they can contact their IP. They will also have an opportunity to share these concerns when they complete the participant post-training survey.

IPs should speak with Mentors who stray from the main message in a way that is concerning to participants or IPs and explain the importance of communicating the primary learning goals to participants. If the Mentor can not agree to deliver on these goals at their training sessions, there may be a need to remove them from the Mentor list.

# A Farmer Mentor has not budgeted time to attend the Farmer Mentor COIs.

Ensure Mentors understand that 2 hours of feedback via a Community of Inquiry (COIs) with curriculum developers present is mandatory. While attending the feedback COI is the preferred feedback option, if a mentor has a legitimate reason they cannot attend a feedback COI, IPs can inform FCS and FCS will provide questions to which the mentor in question can provide written feedback to COIs. FCS will schedule other regular Farmer Mentor COIs to build community among mentors where attendance will be encouraged but voluntary.

# A Farmer Mentor’s contract is ending before they can complete their 12 months follow up with their fall cohort of participants.

There may be scenarios where a mentor signs a contract in spring, offers trainings in spring and in fall, but does not renew their contract the following year, in which case their fall cohort of participants may not have the opportunity to attend 12 months of followup COIs with that mentor. In these cases, participants can be paired with a new mentor’s COI. Ideally the new mentor intends to be part of the program for at least 12 months and understands the participant’s production system. IPs are responsible for coordinating this rescheduling and ensuring the participants have a 12 month follow up period.

Once again, IPs should ensure that the Mentor who is taking on the additional participants understands that they will not be paid to add these extra participants to their COIs but will be paid for up to an hour of one-on-one follow-up support with any additional participants who have not received that support from a mentor.

To mitigate this risk, encourage mentors and participants to cross-pollinate where possible across LMS clubs and discussions, and where possible, synchronous sessions. Where possible, don't schedule synchronous sessions over top of each other to give people the most choice as possible (day sessions and evening sessions). The COIs don't have to be run in silos: several mentors could partner together (provincially, regionally etc) to expand the discussion.

# We haven’t been able to recruit 10 Farmer participants for a session. **OR** Not all 10 participants turned up for a session.

Where possible, we recommend signing up 12 to 15 participants per session and keeping a waitlist with any additional interested farmers to mitigate this risk. Send out reminder and confirmation emails to all registered participants as you approach the session date to help avoid no-shows. In these emails, encourage registrants to let IPs know if they are unable to attend a session as soon as possible so you can fill their space with another participant. As part of the intake for the participants, ask them if they would like to share the event information with their network (either through social media or word of mouth).

Do not run a session if you have any less than 7 participants present. In these cases, cancel or reschedule the training. If a mentor has fewer than 10 participants attending their first session, attempt to ensure their second session makes up the difference (i.e. if 7 participants in session one, aim for 13 total in session 2).

# Multiple family members from one farm have signed up for the training.

FCS will include a question on the registration forms asking if more than one member of your farm team is taking this mentorship. If you see that someone has checked this as being true, please follow up with them to determine how many of their team members are planning to register so you can come up with an appropriate course of action that avoids one farm team overwhelming attendance at a given training. It is also important to ensure each participant has individually registered so they will have access to the LMS.

IPs can allow all interested family members to sign up to the training as separate attendees. This may also be a good opportunity to encourage families with multiple attendees to register at least one equity-deserving farmer.

If there are many family members in a single session, remind their Mentor to make sure there is space for everyone to speak and engage.

# We have more Farmer participants trying to sign up than we have space for.

To allow a mentor sufficient time to work with all participants in a session, ideally no training session should have more than 13 attending, but if absolutely necessary, up to 15 is fine.

IPs are encouraged to create a waiting list and to inform prospective Farmer participants that if there isn’t room for them to join this round of training sessions, they will receive priority registration next time.

Create channels for the waitlisted participants to continue connection to FCS - social media, webinars, newsletters, connection to IPs other events. Provide opportunities for self directed learning through the LMS.

# We haven’t been able to recruit to meet FCS’ 30% equity participation target.

If you are concerned about meeting equity targets, reach out to your FEWG representative for support from FCS. FCS can work with IPs to organize sessions dedicated to equity-deserving participants and to assist with reviewing IPs outreach and communications plans to ensure information about the program is reaching equity-deserving community members.

# A Farmer participant is being disruptive during the group session, during Community of Inquiry meetings, or on LMS “Club” discussion boards.

Farmer Mentors will be provided with training in facilitation, including responding to disruptive participants. FEWG will post “ground rules” for participation in FaRM program and LMS and ask Farmer Mentors to remind participants about these at the beginning of each session.

Farmer Mentors should feel empowered to call out racist, sexist, queer and trans-phobic, mysoginist, and otherwise intolerant, abusive or disruptive participant behaviours as inappropriate. Mentors can refer participants who exhibit disruptive behaviour back to the “ground rules” they agreed to. If the disruptive behaviour persists, mentors can suggest that they speak one-on-one after the session to try and resolve any issue the participant may have. If these measures fail to stop the disruptive behaviour, Farmer Mentors can ask the participant to leave the session or, if they are delivering the training or COI virtually, mute the participant or remove them from the call. IPs will need to ensure that Farmer Mentors have Host permission during their training and COI sessions, if possible.

IPs are the first line of response for all complaints. Participants should be made aware that they can lodge complaints with the IP when they are registered and be provided with appropriate contact information. If an IP is unable to resolve a complaint, they can contact their FEWG representative for assistance in discussing whether or not the participant can continue in the training. The FEWG also has the ability to call on support from our Train-the-trainer contractor to discuss the issue as needed.

# A Farmer Mentor has breached the code of conduct.

In these cases, IPs should assess the situation from the participant testimony or complaint and begin a dialogue with the Farmer Mentor in question to find a mutually agreeable solution. IPs can issue warning letters or terminate mentor contracts at their own discretion and can contact their FEWG representative for support, if required.

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# Appendix: FEWG Representative Contact List

| **FEWG member contact list** |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Organization/Farm** | **Role/title** | **phone** | **email** | **Time zone** |
| Gillian Flies | Canadian Organic Growers/The New Farm | Board President | 705-446-6588 | Gillianflies@gmail.com | ET |
| Carlene Schneider | Canadian Forage and Grassland Association/ Northline Farm | Grazing mentorship Project Manager | 780-729-3552 | communications@canadianfga.ca | MT |
| Brenda Hsueh | Ecological Farmers' Association of Ontario/ Black Sheep Farm |  | 519-363-2199 | bbhsueh@gmail.com | ET |
| Iris Vaisman | Organic Alberta | Executive Director | 204 899 6599 | iris.vaisman@organicalberta.org | MT |
| Karen Klassen | Manitoba Organic Alliance / Faspa Farm | Executive Director | 2043339577 | communications@manitobaorganicalliance.com | CT |
| Derek Axten | Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association/Axten Family Farms |  | 306-815-7300 | derek@axtenfarms.ca | Sask :-) |
| Andrew Rushmere | Farmers for Climate Solutions | Field Program and Farmer Engagement Manager | 604-815-9002 | farmers@farmersforclimatesolutions.ca | PT |
| Crystal Arsenault | Farmers for Climate Solutions | Program Administrator | 250 858 5239 | admin@farmersforclimatesolutions.ca | PT |