



Farmer Resource Network Final Report for Nell Newman Foundation November 2012

We are happy to report that our new and improved Farmer Resource Network is live on the web and ready for use! We are confident in the improvements we've made and eager to see how the website's new features are received by farmers and farm advocates alike. This progress would not be possible without the critical support of the Nell Newman Foundation, and we are so grateful for your investment in this project during a key point in its evolution. Below please find our final report on the recent improvements made during the grant period.

Data Quality & Maintenance

A major project this winter and spring was making critical upgrades to our database of over 500 listings of resources, grassroots groups, government agencies and businesses that make up the Farmer Resource Network. Improvements include:

- Streamlined data maintenance so that updates in the database automatically appear live on the website, removing the need for a third party to manage data flow
- The creation of a survey function to streamline the process for referral organizations to update their contact and service information listed on the web
- Revised categories that better capture the type of services offered to farmers and a new system to describe each referral organization's competency to deliver a particular service

The result is a much improved data maintenance system that will save time and resources for Farm Aid staff and Service Providers as the Network continues to grow. For Farmer Resource Network users, these updates translate into refined search results and more transparent and up-to-date information about each referral. We have hired a part-time staff member to continue the important work of improving our data quality, removing obsolete records and researching the best resources available.

New Website Features & Design

In addition to the many back-end updates, we've made big changes to the Farmer Resource Network website itself, in both design and content. The result is a more welcoming and user-friendly interface (www.farmaid.org/ideas), with the search tool as the centerpiece. In addition, we've added four **Resource Guides** compiling resource offerings for our most-frequently requested service areas: Beginning Farmers, Sustainable Options, Crisis Support and Financial Resources. We have also created a **Resource Spotlight bulletin** (<http://resourcespotlight.farmaid.org/>) — a blog highlighting some of the best and most timely opportunities and tools for farm profitability and sustainability. The Resource Spotlight is an active component of the Farmer Resource Network, allowing users to subscribe to updates via their email accounts, and to remain connected to the growing network of resources and opportunities as they become available.

Expanded Resource Partners

To increase the reach of the Farmer Resource Network, we've expanded our partnership with key service organizations across the country that offer comprehensive and quality resources to beginning and established family farmers. These Resource Partners include the Center for Rural Affairs, Farmers' Legal Action Group, National Center for Appropriate Technology/ATTRA, Organic Farming Research Foundation, Rodale Institute, Rural Advancement Foundation International – USA, and The Greenhorns. Resource Partners offer their networks for outreach, as well as strategic advice on how best to connect farmers to the growing number of opportunities available to them. We look forward to continued collaboration with these critical farm service organizations as the Farmer Resource Network evolves.

Evaluation Plan

We have a robust plan for evaluating the Farmer Resource Network search tool and user experience. A real-time feedback form is up on the website, providing users with a place to provide feedback on the functionality of the site and ask questions while in use. In addition, we've created a post-use survey for users to more fully evaluate the quality of the Farmer Resource Network experience, including their experience contacting referral organizations for services. We are in the process of designing focus groups to evaluate the usability of the upgraded Farmer Resource Network search tool and website, and to hear from farmers about the type of resources they seek and where they learn about farm resources and opportunities.

Financial Report

Nell Newman Foundation funds were used in 2012 to support part-time staff dedicated to the FRN project, consultant fees and costs associated with FRN website design and database improvements.

2012 FRN Budget

	YTD (Jan-Oct) Project Expense	Nell Newman Foundation Contribution
*Salaries	\$50,000	\$10,000
Consultant Fees	8,500	3,000
IT Support	1,500	
Public Relations & Media Services	5,750	
Microsite Page Maintenance	4,590	2,000
**Overhead/Indirect Cost Allocation	35,840	
TOTAL	\$106,180	\$15,000

*Includes Program Director, Program Manger, Farmer Resource/Communications team and FRN project interns

**This includes staff benefits, occupancy, office supplies & equipment, postage, telephone, printing, training

The projected 2013 FRN Budget totals \$170,000 to account for increased staff dedicated to the project, increased travel and meeting expenditures for both outreach and evaluation, as well as

funds dedicated to a comprehensive market analysis to help shape our messaging and farmer outreach strategy. Funds have been secured to help support the market analysis. Funds from CROPP's Farmers Advocating for Organics (FAFO) fund are pending to provide support in 2013 for the FRN's service and outreach to organic producers.

Moving Forward

As new resources and new organizations spring forward to service the next generation of America's family farmers, we are committed to the task of mapping out and promoting these opportunities and tools. We consider this first round of updates to the Farmer Resource Network just that, a first round. We have many thoughts for how to strengthen and expand the Network as a clearinghouse for family farmers looking for resources and new ideas for production that will sustain them now and into the future and an organizing tool and space for farmers to learn from one another. We look forward to keeping you informed of our ongoing progress. Please be in touch with any questions or ideas you may have, and thank you again for your critical support of Farm Aid's Farmer Resource Network.