

Outcomes Based Reporting Guide for BFRDP (November 2015 update)

The overall purpose of collecting information on the outcomes of the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) is to enhance and document the impact of the program. Project output and outcomes will be used to learn what works and what does not work, and the information will then be disseminated to future projects. By sharing experiences, the established beginning farmer programs can help promote the success of new programs in other regions. In addition, a brief synopsis of the report including some success stories will be posted on relevant websites to demonstrate the impacts of the program to policy makers and others interested in beginning farmer and rancher issues. Therefore, it is very important for you to provide as much of the requested information as possible as it will help improve BFRDP and in turn, enhance the sustainability of beginning farmers and ranchers in the United States. In this light, an “unexpected result” may be as valuable as a “success.” Information on annual outcomes, or milestones, could also help the project identify and overcome inevitable hurdles, and provide lessons for similar projects in the future.

The Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP) is designed to assist beginning farmers and ranchers in entering, establishing, building and managing successful farm and ranch enterprises. To this end, grant funds are intended to support the development and delivery of education, mentoring, and technical assistance programs. As the projects may have different specific objectives, each project may have different outputs and outcomes. To measure progress towards the primary BFRDP goal of “providing beginning farmer and rancher producers and their families in the U.S., as appropriate, with the knowledge, skills and tools needed to make informed decisions for their operations, and enhance their sustainability,” a common set of output and outcome measures have been identified. Each grantee does not have to report on all the measures but for each question respond only to the most appropriate measure of output and/or outcome.

Although the funded activities of BFRDP projects may be different, the long-term goal is to help beginning farmers and ranchers to start farming and to stay in farming. But, these long term outcomes of the project may not be measurable for several years, especially within the three years of the project funding period. Therefore, shorter term outcomes may be used as proxies to determine the likely outcomes of the projects in the long run. It should also be remembered that factors beyond the scope of individual projects may affect the ability of new and beginning farmers to remain in farming.

REEPort is the NIFA interface for entering your required annual and final reports (replacing CRIS, for those who used CRIS in the past). Instructions are at: <http://nifa.usda.gov/tool/reepport>. A report is due each year within 90 days of the annual anniversary date of your grant, with the final report due within 90 days of the ending date. REEPort is designed for research projects and formal (classroom) education projects, as well as extension/public education programs such as BFRDP; therefore, see below for BFRDP-specific instructions.

To help you gather the information required for REEPort, and to help us analyze and share results across the whole program, the BFRDP-funded clearinghouse (FarmAnswers.org) team at the University of Minnesota Center for Farm Financial Management is working with us on a Results Verification System (RVS). While use of this tool is currently voluntary (while we seek clearance to make it required), we encourage you to use it before entering your data into REEPort, as a way to help you organize the information for your report. Instructions and training webinars are being provided to current grantees.

The suggested measures described below may evolve as the RVS is completed and refined (hence it is marked “Draft”), but in the meantime are meant to provide guidance on important data to track, for both new applicants working on proposals and for new grantees gathering data for their annual and final reports.

BFRDP - Standard Projects

Participants and Audience Served: enter when asked in RVS, and in the “Target Audience” section of REEport (note: the “Participants” section of REEport refers to project leaders and partners, and “Student Count” refers to university/college students involved in the conduct of the project; nothing in that section of REEport refers to the beginning farmer/ranchers participants.)

1. Report the number of people you help achieve the following during the project (cumulative and without double-counting):
 - a. Number whom you help to start farming
 - b. Number whom you help prepare to start farming
 - c. Number whom you help improve farming success

2. Audience emphasis – report up to five special-emphasis audiences that you serve in your project, including:
 - a. Military veterans (be sure to include, if your project has a component that specifically targets them)
 - b. Socially-disadvantaged audiences (be sure to include any for which your project has a specific focus, all or in part)
 - a. Immigrant producers
 - b. Women
 - c. African American
 - d. Hispanic or Latino
 - e. Native American
 - f. Asian or Pacific Islander
 - c. Limited-resource producers (be sure to include if your project has a specific focus, all or in part)
 - d. Farmworkers (be sure to include if your project has a specific focus, all or in part)
 - e. Other categories (organic, specialty crops, urban, small farms, and/or traditional commercial producers)

Outcome (Results) Measures: enter when asked in RVS, and in the “What Was Accomplished?” section of REEport

These are actions that producers (or aspiring producers) take as a result of your project. Most projects have a number of these measures, since they work with new producers on a range of topics in production, marketing, business management, legal, and human/social topic areas. For each topic, there four levels of producer actions, listed here in order of increasing producer engagement:

- Understand - learn, increase awareness, identify, gain confidence
- Develop - write, conduct, obtain, create
- Decide - commit to, indicate, choose, plan to act
- Implement - adopt, establish, incorporate, initiate, use

You may have several producer actions for a component of your program. For example, a proposed result may be that producers will understand how to write a marketing plan with the producer action being “Understand”. You may have a second proposed result that producers will write a marketing plan with the producer action being “Develop”. Finally, you may have a third result that producers will implement their marketing plan with the producer result being “Implement”.

For each outcome, you need a plan for tracking and reporting results. When and how do you verify the results (e.g., a written evaluation by participants at the end of a session or a series of activities)? For how many producers can you report this result?

Activity Measures:

While your primary focus should be on outcomes (results), describing the activities that led to those outcomes provides a record of how you achieved results, and help others learn from your experience. Enter this information where asked in RVS, and also in the “Opportunities for Training” section of REEport.

Products:

Enter the products of your work into REEPort (particularly scholarly publications, reports and products available to the public) and into the Digital Library at FarmAnswers.org, with particular attention to products that could be used by farmers and ranchers, and products that can be used by other new farmer/rancher training/education programs.

BFRDP – Developmental Projects

Developmental grants were awarded for shorter periods (usually 12 months) to organizations without prior BFRDP experience. Development grants should follow the same instructions as Standard Projects, providing as much information as you can. We realize that Developmental Projects may not be able to provide the same kind of results as a 36-month Standard Project.

BFRDP - Educational Enhancement Projects

Note: BFRDP funds relatively few EE projects, and their output and outcome measures may vary from project to project. Here are some suggested data to track and report:

1. Number of curriculum evaluations conducted (curriculum evaluation can be conducted by internal and/or external teams to improve relevance of teaching materials, courses, objectives and learning outcomes, etc).
2. Number of non-curriculum program evaluations conducted (program evaluation can be conducted by internal and/or external teams to improve student recruitment, teaching and mentoring methods, student or beginning farmer assistance, placement, and identification of gaps in program offerings around the nation).
3. Number of new curricula developed, e.g.:
 - a. Production management
 - b. Business management
 - c. Marketing
 - d. Legal strategies
 - e. People management
 - f. Regional or commodity specific
 - g. Other - explain
4. Number of special training programs offered (e.g., train-the-trainer kinds of activities):
 - a. Conference based (national or regional)
 - b. Internet based
 - c. Other - explain
5. Number of trainers trained:
 - a. Standard grantees (i.e., BFRDP-funded)
 - b. Non-BFRDP-funded beginning farmer and rancher trainers
6. Number of BFR organizations assisted with information and/or enhancing their BFR training
 - a. Standard grantees (i.e., BFRDP-funded)
 - b. Non-BFRDP-funded BFR programs
7. Describe information products created by your educational enhancement project (e.g, new courses and curricula, training materials, new program structures, etc). and enter each in the digital library at FarmAnswers.org
8. Number (and/or description) of information products created by other BFR programs as a result of your Educational Enhancement Team activities (and encourage/assist those programs to enter the products at FarmAnswers.org):
 - a. New programs in beginning farmer and rancher education
 - b. New courses
 - c. New training materials
 - d. Revised courses
 - e. Revised training materials
 - f. Other