

AWARD-WINNING MANAGING FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW COURSE HELPS WOMEN MOVE FARM BUSINESSES TO NEXT GENERATION

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Managing for Today and Tomorrow was recognized as an award winning extension education program on July 30, 2018 in Chattanooga, TN. The National Association of County Agricultural Agents (NACAA <https://www.nacaa.com/>) presented the Search for Excellence in Farm and Ranch Financial Management Achievement Award to the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Farm Management Team (<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/ag/farm-management>) for their work on farm transition planning.

The genesis of Managing for Today and Tomorrow, a farm transition planning course for women, began with Annie's Project, (<https://www.anniesproject.org>) a whole farm business management course. Annie's Project participants asked the Iowa farm management team for more information on transition planning. In response, the team led extension partners from 10 states on a USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Project grant from 2012 to 2014. Working with Annie's Project - Education for Farm Women NPO and the Farm Credit System, they created a 300 page workbook along with teaching instructions.

The course is available to educators nationally at <https://www.anniesproject.org/instructors-facilitators-login/mtt-resources/>. Through two USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Professional Development Program grants, the team trained 211 educators from 31 states from 2012 to 2015.

The team published on the effectiveness of Managing for Today and Tomorrow in the December 2015 Journal of the NACAA at <https://www.nacaa.com/journal/index.php?jid=552>.

In 2016, the team partnered with the national eXtension Women in Ag community of practice to develop an online version of the course called "Women's Roles in Farm and Ranch Transition Planning." The video course is available nationally at <https://campus.extension.org/enroll/index.php?id=1289>.

The Iowa farm management team expanded the program impact exponentially by working with a variety of extension colleagues and industry partners across the country. These partners contributed valuable curricula insights and greatly enhanced the quality of the Managing for Today and Tomorrow course. These partners also offered or helped support Managing for Today and Tomorrow courses in many states across the country, reaching a wide audience.

The Iowa farm management team makes improvements every time it offers Managing for Today and Tomorrow. From 2012 to 2018, the team delivered 21 courses reaching 282 women. The team values the collaboration of county extension professionals who have important roles in delivering the courses locally. The team holds a statewide planning meeting each fall for Managing for Today and Tomorrow and other programs for women in agriculture. In 2017, the team initiated monthly "Third Thursday at Three" webinars to support extension excellence and collaboration among colleagues.

The overall learning objective of the Managing for Today and Tomorrow curriculum is to educate women on how to combine business, estate, retirement and succession planning to form an overall transition plan that moves the farm business from one generation to the next. As key activities for each planning task are discussed, participants are encouraged to complete

worksheets, review personal legal documents and take other steps towards building their own farm transition plan.

Managing for Today and Tomorrow is a 15-hour course delivered through a series of five weekly sessions. Transformational education practices include multi-session, small-group, locally-led courses. Woman to woman learning, hands-on activities, confidence-building, and access to resources help women solidify concepts as they take actions to develop and implement farm transitions.

Typically, two or three topics are covered during each 3-hour session. This keeps learners interested and they are encouraged to discuss topics with family members or others. It allows educators to circle back to topics, each time deepening learner's understanding and providing opportunities for them to apply concepts to their own situations.

While extension farm management specialists are the primary teachers of the course in Iowa; typically three to four guest speakers are involved. Guest speakers may include an attorney, private practice financial planners, or extension experts on retirement planning.

Working with the Iowa State University Research Institute for Studies in Education (RISE), the Iowa team developed pre-class and post-class survey instruments using Qualtrics™. The pre- and post-class surveys contained identical items about knowledge and actions taken related to business, estate, retirement and succession planning. The pre-class survey asked what participants wanted to learn as well as demographics; while the post-class survey asked about goals for applying what they learned and suggestions for improving the course. RISE served as a third-party evaluator to collect, and report results.

Survey results indicated courses appealed to women of all experience levels, from those just starting farm businesses to those farming more than 50 years. A majority of participants were ages 45 to 64. Cross-generational exchanges during classes were extremely valuable to participants. Large fonts on handouts and slide shows were important to older women with limited eyesight.

Women validated the teaching methods; 95% of course participants 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' the women-centered learning environment was important and 89% 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' the courses encouraged learning from other participants as well as speakers.

Survey respondents listed 1) estate planning concepts and tools, 2) goal setting, and 3) financial statement basics as the top three most valuable topics.

Pre- and post-class results indicated statistically significant knowledge gains for each planning task: business, estate, retirement and succession. Responses indicated women had taken actions in all four planning areas during the course. The greatest increase in actions taken were on succession planning.

As evidence of learning:

- 22% of pre-class survey respondents knew 'quite a bit' or were 'completely familiar' with IRAs or other savings for retirement, while 52% of post-class survey respondents knew this.
- 9% of pre-class survey respondents knew about "fair" and "equal" distribution of assets and management, while 78% of post-class survey respondents knew this.

As evidence of actions taken:

- 52% of pre-class survey respondents had 'completed' or were 'in progress' of discussing estate plans with family or advisors, while 83% of post-class respondents had/were doing this.
- 39% of pre-class survey respondents had/were preparing a business plan, while 89% of post-course survey respondents had/were doing this.

Women tended to overlook business planning as a critical component of farm transition planning. The course helped women gain an appreciation for how financial situations and business growth affects generational transitions. As the Iowa farm management team works to improve the course, they are providing more support around business planning.

The team gathered participant stories and videos about how they and their families were working on transition planning to encourage others. The story of Kris and Patty Walker, a daughter-in-law and mother-in-law who completed the course together and worked with their family to lay out transition plans is at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtLiJubNkX4&list=PLyDHx-rmZpClcW_juqSHB1-x52ACJ42tT&index=12&t=35s.

Participants in Managing for Today and Tomorrow courses strengthened their understanding of the responsibilities by all generations to manage effective transitions through business, estate, retirement and succession planning. The courses helped these women, and by association their families or business partners, to accept transition planning as normal, necessary, and doable. With training and support from extension farm management specialists, women took important actions to guide their families or business partners towards successful generational transitions.

These actions can improve agriculture sustainability and food security by maintaining family farmers on the land and diverting the sale and disassembly of farm businesses. By collaborating with extension educators in other states and sharing curriculum nationally, the Iowa farm management team expanded the reach of Managing for Today and Tomorrow exponentially.

Iowa's current Managing for Today and Tomorrow and other farm management course offerings for women in agriculture can be found at <http://www.aep.iastate.edu/womeninag/>. For more information about the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Women in Ag program see: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/womeninag> .