



# Building Stronger and Successful Partnerships

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2018 National AgrAbility Workshop. Portland, Maine. March 19 – March 22, 2018



North Carolina Agricultural Industry contributes \$78 billion annually to the state's economy

# 1 Industry of the state

North Carolina is home to more than 80 commodities

More than 50,200 farms in NC



North Carolina is gaining about 100,000 people a year

Loss of 2,700 farms

Demand for food continues to grow

Support conservation farmland.

# North Carolina AgrAbility Partnership Project



United States Department of Agriculture  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

- Funded in October 2011
- Third Year of the Second Grant
- Serving all 100 NC counties
- Involves Collaborative partnership
  - Land grant universities
  - Nonprofit disability service organizations.

# North Carolina AgrAbility Partnership Project

- North Carolina A&T State University
- North Carolina State University
- Disability Partners –CIL
- East Carolina University
- North Carolina Agromedicine Institute
- North Carolina Assistive Technology Program



# Mission

*To educate and assist farmers, ranchers, farmworkers and their family members farming with disabilities to enable them to stay actively engaged in production agriculture.*



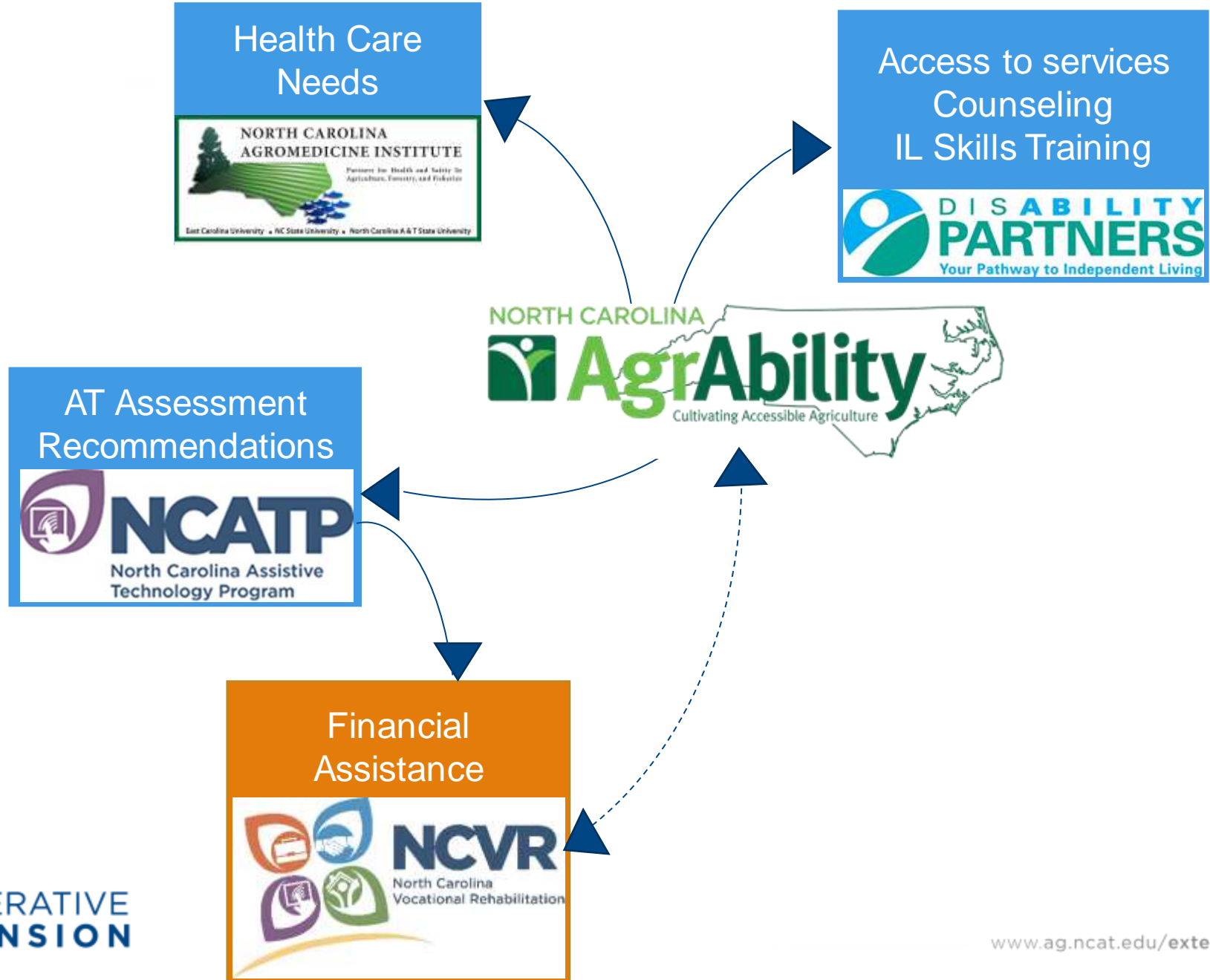
# Services

- ❖ **Direct Services:** to farmers, ranchers, farmworkers and their family members living with disabilities
- ❖ **Education:** educating individuals farming with disabilities on resources available to them.
- ❖ **Advocacy and Awareness:** of the needs of individuals farming with disabilities
- ❖ **Networking:** Provide networking opportunities with resources

# Keeping our Farmers in Farming

- All our existing farmers
- Beginning farmers
- Veteran Farmers
- Women in Agriculture
- Minority Farmers







# Important Factors in a Partnership

- **Objectives** two institutions align with their objectives
- **Flexibility** NCATP training the consultants, AT assessment process, etc.
- **Involvement** creating a closer work relationship with other institutions  
DVRS, DSB, VA-VR, CIL
- **Agreement** supporting the needs of collaborative work
- **Evaluation** case by case process
- **Adjustments** lots of meetings to optimize process



North Carolina Assistive  
Technology Program

*Life, accessible.*

## *NC AgrAbility Partnership*

*National Training Workshop*

*Portland, Maine*

*March 2018*

Tammy D. Koger, Director

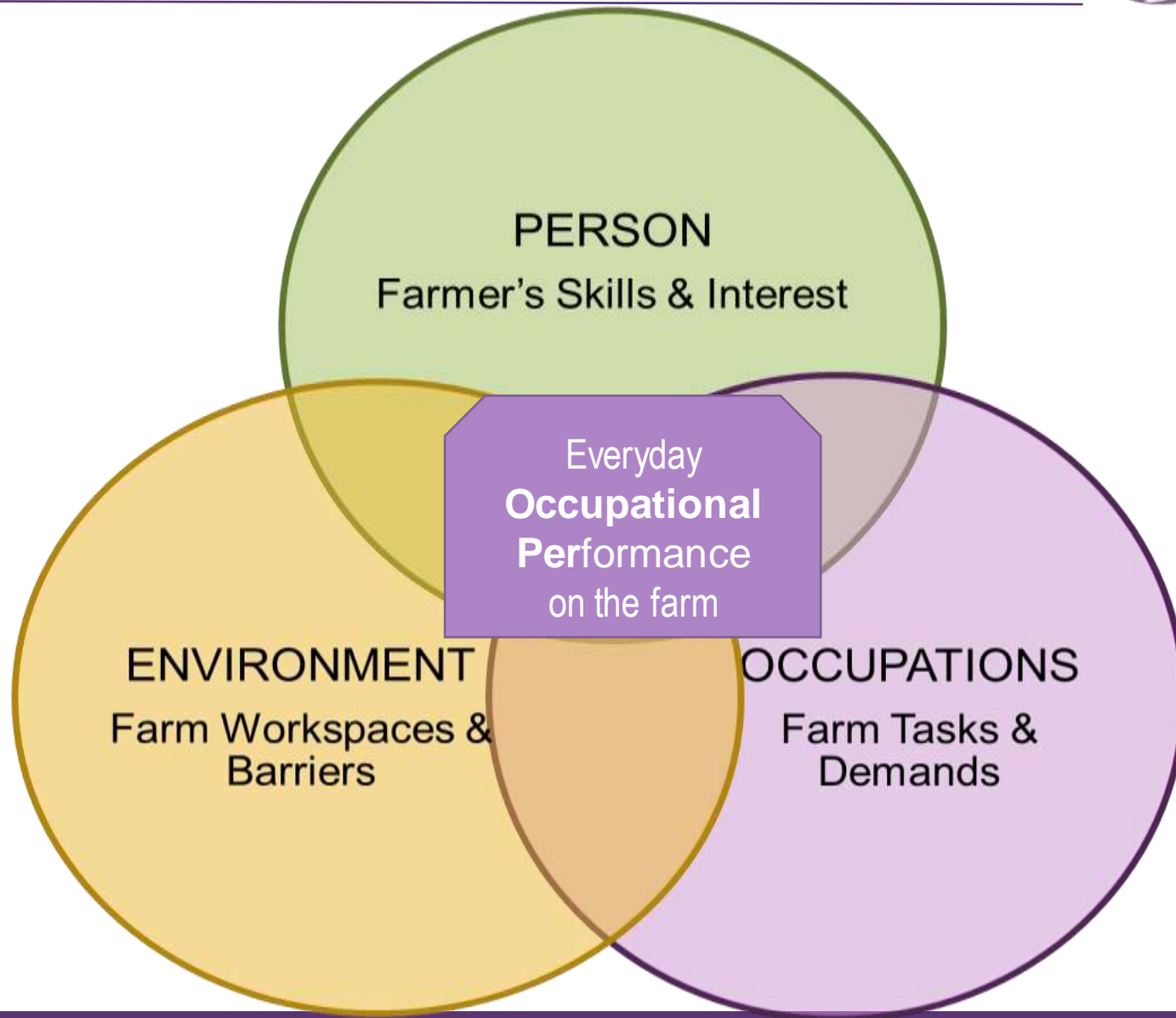
North Carolina Assistive Technology Program

- State & federally funded program created under the Federal Assistive Technology Act
- Website: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/vocational-rehabilitation-services/north-carolina-assistive-technology-program>
- Serve all 100 North Carolina counties
- Serve individuals of all ages experiencing difficulty with daily activities
- Serve family members/caregivers
- Serve professionals in disability related fields, and
- Serve employers/employees in private/public settings



- Provide assessments, farm assessments, training, and technical assistance
- Provide hands-on demonstrations of assistive technology (AT)
- Provide short-term AT equipment loans
- Provide AT resource information and referral to other programs
- Provide awareness activities on AT and overview of services.
- Provide advocacy and funding resource information
- AT reused items: [www.ncexchange.org](http://www.ncexchange.org)
- AT financing: <https://www.self-help.org/personal/loans/other-loans/assistive-technology-loans>

- Provide on-site farm and home assessments
  - Report goes to NC AgrAbility Project Manager
  - Copy of the report may go the DVRS Counselor (release must be provided)
  - Recommendations center around farming and/or activities on the farm
- Provide demonstrations and short term equipment loans
- Make referrals and link to resources
  - A referral is typically made to the local DVRS office
- Follow up after assessments providing on-going information, as needed
- Work with DVRS counselor and engineer regarding AT related needs
- Set up and training of AT devices, as needed
- Provide group trainings/workshops on farming and assistive technology



(Law, et al., 1996)

## Farm and AgrAbility Related:

- 2 week short term loan program (can be longer, if needed)
- Device demonstrations to anyone in NC
- Low tech equipment:
  - Ergonomic grips and handles
  - Kneelers
  - Small wagons and other small tools
- High tech equipment:
  - Communication boards
  - Tablets/apps
  - Lift system (Access Unlimited)



## **Veterans Workshops:**

- 3 workshops
- Veterans, family members and professionals
- Farming and disability related resources

## **DVRS Training:**

- Webinar on AgrAbility and farming in NC
- Counselor training

## **Peer Support Workshops/Trainings:**

- AT demonstrations
- Disability topics, as identified





### Centers for Independent Living

- Peer and advocacy

### Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)

- Disability resources
- Possible funding for AT related devices

### Division of Services for the Blind (DSB)

- Disability resources
- Possible funding for AT related devices

### Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH)

- Disability resource
- Funding for hearing aides, if needed

### Self-Help Credit Union

- Alternative Finance Program (financial loans for AT/DME)



# Progress

- ✓ Working closer with NCDVRS, now they have assigned a person to the AgrAbility clients:
  - *Consultant for the field staff working with AgrAbility clients,*
  - *Confers with the Policy Office on AgrAbility clients,*
  - *Take referrals and assign to the counselor*
  - *Track known AgrAbility cases.*
- ✓ Provided information at AgrAbility Partners Meeting about AgrAbility-DVRS work:
  - *Referral process,*
  - *VR and agricultural employment,*
  - *VR policy,*
  - *Financial need test and*
  - *Income guidelines.*

# Community Creation

- Learning about other institutions objectives and needs
- Creating the need for other institutions to learn about AgrAbility
- Involving other institutions to be part of the NC AgrAbility Partnership collaborative work

# Future Planning

## Institutional educational training for

- VR counselors
- Extension Agents
- VA/VR counselors

## Participating at their Conferences or State Meetings

- North Carolina Conference on Visual Impairment and Blindness
  - DVRS Managers' Meeting

Participating at Events and Conferences for Veteran Farmers, Women in Agriculture, Minority Farmers, Commodity Meetings, etc.

# Lessons Learned

NC AgrAbility Partnership had faced difficulties in the process...

but... **“if there is no struggle there is no progress”** Frederick Douglass



So...NC AgrAbility Partnership welcomes challenges

We have learned:

- (1) effective communication,
- (2) Proper future planning,
- (3) strength of partnership, and
- (4) community creation.



AgrAbility  
Values



# Connect With NC AgrAbility

- Like us on Facebook: **NC AgrAbility**
- Visit our website [www.ncagrability.org](http://www.ncagrability.org)
- Contact us to refer a farmer
- Join Our AgrAbility List Serve

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Questions?

