Building Stronger and Successful Partnerships

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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.

Source: NCDA
North Carolina AgrAbility Partnership Project

- 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
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.post.org
• AT financing: https://www.self-help.org/personal/loans/other-loans/assitive-technology-loans
NCATP’s Role with AgrAbility:

- 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
What is a farm assessment?

Everyday Occupational Performance on the farm

PERSON
Farmer's Skills & Interest

ENVIRONMENT
Farm Workspaces & Barriers

OCCUPATIONS
Farm Tasks & Demands

(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 aids, 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.
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.
Connect With NC AgrAbility

- Like us on Facebook: NC AgrAbility
- Visit our website: www.ncagrability.org
- Contact us to refer a farmer
- Join Our AgrAbility List Serve

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Questions?