

AgrAbility Harvest

An ingathering of
helpful information
on disability in
agriculture

2017

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Cultivating Accessible Agriculture

Does AgrAbility really make a difference?

Few questions could be more important to our program's key stakeholders, including our clients and USDA, our primary funder. We know that AgrAbility produces many "outputs." For example, every year state projects provide direct services to around 1300 clients through farm visits and other intensive interventions; the National AgrAbility Project (NAP) serves hundreds of professionals through educational events; the www.agrability.org website receives tens of thousands of visits.

However, there is a significant difference between an "output" and an "outcome." While the former usually consists of "activities," the latter deals with "impact" – did the activities actually change people's lives in the intended way?

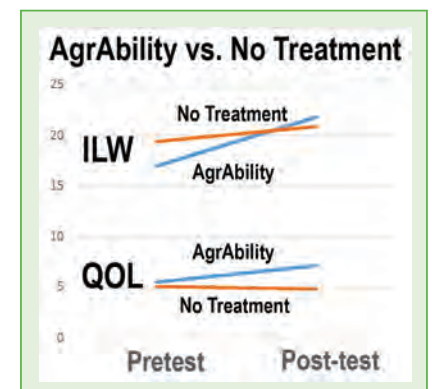
In 2012, a U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) report indicated that of 45 federally funded programs supporting employment for people with disabilities, AgrAbility was one of only 10 that had made efforts to measure their effectiveness. However, the OMB noted that AgrAbility had not compared its impact with a "no-treatment control group," that is, with agricultural workers with disabilities who had not received AgrAbility services.

Challenged by OMB's report, the NAP, led by Dr. Robert Fetsch of Colorado State University, embarked on a multi-year study to compare AgrAbility's impact with such a no-treatment control group. Using the McGill Quality of Life (QOL) survey and a newly-developed Independent Living and Working (ILW) instrument, Fetsch, Dr. Chip Petrea of the University of Illinois, and AgrAbility staff members from around the country gathered data both on AgrAbility clients and on farmers/ranchers with disabilities who had not received services.

The results: on average, the 199 AgrAbility client group participants showed: (1) increased QOL levels of 28%, while the 97 no-treatment control group's QOL level fell by 4%; and (2) increased ILW levels of 29%, while the no-treatment control group increased only 8%.

Among the conclusions drawn: (1) QOL levels of agricultural producers who worked with the state AgrAbility Projects increased by an amount that was both statistically and practically significant, while there was no statistically significant change in the QOL levels of the no-treatment control group; (2) The AgrAbility group's ILW levels improved by an amount that was three times that of the no-treatment control group.

The USDA is rightfully focusing on justifying its program expenses based upon their outcomes. With the new administration in Washington, such efforts may become even more important. AgrAbility has moved in the right direction by evaluating impact, and it plans to continue doing so.



A Closer Look

\$ Finding the Funding

Finance-related questions are among the most common received by the National AgrAbility Project. Inquiries range from funding for assistive technology (AT) needs, like prostheses and hearing aids, to start-up money needed by beginning farmers to purchase land.

Some assume that AgrAbility directly provides funding and/or equipment, but this is prohibited from USDA AgrAbility grant funds. However, some AgrAbility projects are able to provide limited financial help for AT from alternate sources, such as the funding Ohio AgrAbility received from its state attorney general to provide AT to clients.

There are multiple sources of financial aid available in every state, both for disability and agricultural needs. We'll start with the disability side.

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Disability-Related Funding from Government Sources

By far, **state vocational rehabilitation systems (VR)** are the most significant providers of assistive technology, home modifications, and related services for AgrAbility clients. Charged with the mission of assisting people with disabilities in gaining or maintaining employment, VR has significant latitude

in the services it can provide, though policies vary between states. Since being injured in 1997, Indiana farmer Justin Hosler has received, through VR, lifts to reach multiple pieces of farm equipment, hand controls for a grain-hauling semi-truck, a heavy-duty tracked stand-up wheelchair, ramps for

accessing his grain handling facilities, and even a tower-type grain drier that he can control remotely.

VR also has the capability of funding self-employment, small business start-ups. Again, states vary in their policies, but some provide up to \$30,000 in capital for small businesses.



Justin Hosler

The **Social Security Administration (SSA)** provides two main programs to help provide income to people with disabilities. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) provides benefits from workers' contributions to the Social Security trust fund. Supplemental Security Income Program (SSI) provides income to people with disabilities who have limited financial resources. Special work incentives, like trial work periods, impairment-related work expense deductions, and Plan to Achieving Self-Support (PASS) programs, can make it possible for people with disabilities to work and continue to receive SSDI and/or SSI payments. A recent AgrAbility webinar covered SSA programs in depth; see www.agrability.org/online-training.

Some agricultural workers are covered by **Worker's Compensation Programs** administered through the U.S. Department of Labor, which can provide wage replacement, vocational rehabilitation, and other benefits.

The VA (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs) maintains its own vocational rehabilitation and employment (VR&E) program for veterans with disabilities, which is separate from state-run VR programs. It is possible that veterans may be able to participate in both.

Each state also has an **Assistive Technology Act Program** funded under the Assistive Technology Act (AT Act) and administered by various nonprofit disability-related organizations. In addition to demonstrating and loaning AT products, these programs have low-interest loan initiatives for purchasing AT and also connect no-longer-needed AT with recipients who need such.

Disability-Related Funding from Nonprofit Groups

Disability-specific organizations, such as Easter Seals, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, and United Cerebral Palsy often maintain funds to assist with acquiring AT. Some centers for independent living also maintain special funds to help purchase AT. Similarly, **nonprofit organizations** that don't have

disability as their central focus, like Kiwanis, Lions, and United Way, can sometimes provide assistance.

Numerous **philanthropic foundations** make grants to organizations and individuals, usually through a competitive application process. Sites like www.foundationcenter.org are good places to start researching such. In addition, many areas of the country are covered by a community foundation, which is a grantmaking public charity created by and for a community of people. The Council on Foundations website, www.cof.org, has a comprehensive listing. Other foundations, like the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, have provided funding to AgrAbility projects to supply AT to clients.

Agricultural Funding from Government Sources

There are multitudes of potential funding needs in agricultural operations; likewise, there are many sources of information about funding. **USDA** is the government's main agricultural funder, and a good summary of its programs can be found at www.tinyurl.com/usda-programs. In addition, the clearinghouse for USDA's beginning farmer and rancher project information, including "toolboxes" on topics like farmland access and financial management, is available at www.farmanswers.org. Another extensive list of funding sources for beginning farmers can be found through www.beginningfarmers.org.

For those need loans, their first stop should be **USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA)**. Loan categories include farm ownership, operational expenses, conservation practices, and emergencies caused by natural disasters. Microloans are also available for small farmers and niche producers. Targeted loan programs focus on women, minorities, veterans, beginning farmers, and other underserved populations.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can also provide financial assistance for producers that want to improve conservation through enhanced water management, water quality improvement, and erosion control.

For those interested in agricultural sustainability research, demonstration, and education, the **USDA Sustainable Agriculture, Research, and Extension (SARE) Program** makes grants from \$7,500 for individuals to \$22,500 for groups.

Dusty Franklin of Colorado is an example of an AgrAbility client who has benefitted from USDA's services. He is working the **NRCS Environmental**

Incentives Program (EQIP)

to improve the irrigation of his farm and is applying to FSA for a microloan to help purchase a new tractor to better accommodate his disabilities.

Other government agencies provide loans to small businesses, including agriculture-related enterprises. The **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)** loans money for starting, acquiring, and expanding a small business, including microloans, disaster assistance loans, and economic injury loans, the latter being especially helpful to agricultural businesses that suffer from natural disasters. SBA also makes grants, but these cannot fund small businesses.



Dusty Franklin

Agricultural Funding-Related Assistance from Nonprofit Organizations

Sometimes, just finding land is a major obstacle. A variety of **land-matching programs** can connect new farmers and ranchers with retiring landowners. The Center for Rural Affairs maintains a listing of such programs at www.cfra.org under its New Farmers section.

There are also **incubator farms** for those that may need some extra instruction and mentoring before taking the plunge into full-time production. Such programs provide temporary access to land and, often, instruction to help participants gain the expertise they need to succeed in agricultural enterprises.

Veterans can benefit from programs like **Farmer Veteran Coalition's Fellowship Fund**. Since starting in 2011, the fund has provided more than \$1 million to 150 fellows in the form of such assistance as tractors and equipment for livestock handling and specialty crop production. Companies like Kubota and Grasshopper have also worked with FVC to provide veterans with tractors and mowers.

Conclusion

If you're involved with agriculture, you already know that you haven't picked an easy road, especially if you have a disability. However, when financial obstacles seem insurmountable, know that help is available. For specific guidance, work with your AgrAbility project staff, if you have such in your state, or visit with your local Extension educators.

Handy Hand Tools

Among the ever-growing number of entries in AgrAbility's online Toolbox Assistive Technology Database are these five that are designed to help folks get the job done in the farm shop and around the farmstead.



Plastic-Bucket Lid Opener. Provides the leverage needed to pry open a 4- to 6-gallon plastic bucket without having to slit or otherwise damage the lid. Works by affixing the opener's "claw" on the rim of the lid and then lifting the handle upward at a couple locations around the lid. Some makes have a hammer-like projection to reseal. (Many different suppliers, including www.webstaurantstore.com.)

Cobalt Talking Tape Measure. A battery-powered, 16-foot, metal tape measure that audibly announces the measured length accurate to 1/16th of an inch. It also tells total distance stored in memory, switches between U.S. and metric units of measure, adds current reading to memory, re-sets the tape to zero, and adds case width to measurement. Comes in Spanish-language version too. (Visit www.independentliving.com)



Cordless Caulk/Adhesive Gun. Designed to eliminate hand fatigue, this 12-volt lithium-ion, 10-ounce gun reportedly delivers up to 21 inches per minute of caulk or adhesives with 950 pounds of force. Features include a six-setting speed dial, variable-speed trigger, and rotating collar that allows for smooth application around corners. (Visit www.milwaukeeetool.com)

N-Abler Prosthetic Tool/Implement System. Consists of a Preston terminal device and Hayden tool sets. Screwed into a prosthetic arm, the terminal device has a socket into which the numerous tools can fit. Rotating 360° and bending up to 60°, the device enables users to maneuver the tools without having to contort their bodies. (Visit www.n-abler.org)



Active-Hands Gripping Aid.

Allows one to use numerous items that otherwise would require a strong grip to utilize (e.g., shop/garden tools, equipment levers, handlebars, kitchenware). Made of padded neoprene with a wide Velcro strap, it's designed such that the user can put it on independently. (Visit www.activehands.com)

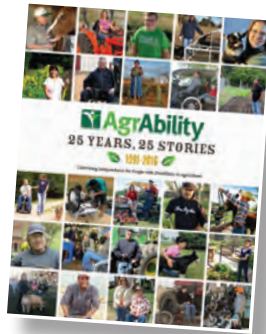
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Resources for Success

25th anniversary report

To help celebrate AgrAbility's 25th anniversary, the National AgrAbility Project prepared the publication ***AgrAbility 1991-2016: 25 Years, 25 Stories***. It contains success stories of AgrAbility clients and related programs, plus descriptions of the program's mission and services. It was designed to raise awareness of AgrAbility among clientele and key stakeholders, including legislators, VR counselors, and other professionals in agriculture and rehabilitation.

25 Years, 25 Stories is available in screen-reader accessible PDF at www.agrability.org/25years where you'll also find all the individual stories, many with accompanying videos. You may request a print copy by emailing agrability@agrability.org.



New acting USDA veteran liaison



Michael A. Alston, associate administrator for USDA's Risk Management Agency, has been named the acting USDA liaison to military veterans. Alston has a long history with USDA and has also served in the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the State Department. He replaces Lanon Baccam, who now serves as the Farmer Veteran Coalition's deputy director.

Equipment programs for farmer veterans

Several agriculture-related companies are supporting veterans involved in agriculture through donations of equipment and other resources.

Among them is Kubota Tractor Corporation, which is partnering with the Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) to sponsor the **Geared to Give** program. Beginning in 2015, the company began providing one Standard L-Series tractor per quarter to a veteran through FVC's Fellowship Fund.

The Grasshopper Company, manufacturer of commercial-grade zero-turn riding mowers, is also supporting veterans through its **Fighter to Farmer** contest. One winner will be a veteran who has a service-connected disability who will receive \$6,000 toward the purchase of a Grasshopper mower and a \$4,000 check. This farmer veteran will also receive a consultation from AgrAbility and \$5,000 to purchase adaptive equipment or other services to enhance his or her quality of life.

New veterans & agriculture video

The NAP recently released a video that explains the therapeutic and economic benefits of agriculture for current and former members of the armed services and how veterans can successfully transition into careers in farming.

Titled *The Next Mission: Breaking Down Barriers for Veterans in Agriculture*, the video's theme is based on the premise that military members are highly trained, self-disciplined, and mission-oriented – characteristics that translate well into agricultural careers.

Produced at Purdue, it includes interviews



with a number of veterans across the country who share their experiences in starting new careers in agriculture.

The Next Mission is posted on the AgrAbility YouTube channel at www.nextmission.us.

Updated technical report on hand controls

Over the years, the Breaking New Ground Resource Center (home to the NAP) has produced approximately 30 technical reports, called *Plowshares*, on topics related to disability in agriculture. The NAP is updating several of these publications, and **Adaptive Hand Controls for Agricultural Machinery** is now ready for distribution. This 12-page report covers a wide range of topics, such as types of disabilities likely to require hand controls, types of adaptive hand controls, and considerations in designing and constructing adaptive hand controls.

The publication can be downloaded in PDF format from www.agrability.org/resources/disability-and-ag/#plowshares. For information on obtaining printed copies, email the NAP at agrability@agrability.org.





Partner Updates

The National AgrAbility Project started a new four-year funding cycle in 2016 with Purdue University's Breaking New Ground Resource Center as the lead organization. In addition to continuing participation by Goodwill of the Finger Lakes as a funded partner, the NAP welcomes new subcontractors and consultants to the team.

Subcontractors

Bob Fetsch of Colorado State University is no stranger to the National AgrAbility Project, as he has led the NAP's quality of life (QOL) studies for several years. However, during the current four-year grant, he and his team are direct subcontractors to help evaluate AgrAbility's impact. Bob will continue to work with the AgrAbility Evaluation Committee, which consists of many state project staff members, to collect data on QOL levels among AgrAbility clients. He is also summarizing other evaluation-related data, such as the demographics of AgrAbility clients over the past 25 years.



APRIL, the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living, is a member association that supports rural centers for independent living (CILs) in their efforts to assist people with disabilities through core services like independent living skills training and peer support. APRIL has been a close collaborator with AgrAbility for many years. Its executive director **Billy Altom** has served on the National AgrAbility Advisory Team for nearly a decade, and the NAP has participated in many of the Association's annual conferences. For this grant cycle, APRIL assumes a subcontractor role and brings another staff member, **Sierra Royster**, to the NAP team. Sierra is APRIL's youth specialist and had previous experience with AgrAbility in North Carolina, where she lives. She has already helped facilitate an AgrAbility-related conference call with the APRIL membership and is preparing a web survey to help assess the roles and needs of CILs in serving agricultural workers with disabilities.



Consultants

Farmer/consultant **Ed Bell** continues to serve with the NAP as an ambassador to the farming and disability communities; however, he is joined by three additional consultants during the current four-year grant.



Brian French is professor of educational psychology at Washington State University and director of its psychometric laboratory. He will be helping with evaluation efforts by conducting and summarizing the Annual Staff Needs Assessment to provide the NAP with feedback on its services and resources and by administering the evaluation process for the AgrAbility National Training Workshop. Brian will also assist in developing a set of core competencies to help guide staff selection and development.



Carla Wilhite has a long history with AgrAbility that includes staff positions with Colorado AgrAbility and Oklahoma AgrAbility plus service as a member of the NAP Advisory Team. Currently an assistant professor in the University of New Mexico's occupational therapy (OT) program, Carla will lead the NAP's efforts to expand its impact within the OT community. She has recently collaborated with NAP Project Director Bill Field to produce peer-reviewed articles related to tractor seating for farmers with paralysis.



Steve Etheridge was an Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Services counselor for more than 20 years, during which time he worked with Indiana AgrAbility on multiple client cases. He is also a long-time member of the Indiana AgrAbility Advisory Team. Steve will serve as the NAP's vocational rehabilitation specialist to assist the state projects with issues related to their VR systems and clients. He has already helped coordinate a webinar related to work incentives for people with disabilities and will be surveying the state projects as to their VR-related needs.



Remembering Cliff and Kylie

AgrAbility lost two members of its family in summer 2016.



Clifford Racz passed away on July 11. He had served for many years as the National

AgrAbility Project's information technology specialist and was the main architect for both the www.agrability.org web portal and *The Toolbox Assistive Technology Database Online*. At the time of his death, Cliff was also close to completing a Ph.D. in Purdue University's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering.



Kylie Hendress died in child-birth on August 11. Although no longer officially employed by

AgrAbility at the time, having moved into another agriculture-related career, she had served as the NAP's outreach coordinator and led planning of the annual National Training Workshop from 2011 through 2016. A family benefit fund has been established at www.gofundme.com/2jnr784. Kylie's newborn daughter, Josslyn Grace, survived and is doing well.



NAP and SRAPs partner for exhibits

The National AgrAbility Project looks for opportunities to collaborate with the state and regional AgrAbility projects (SRAPs) to promote AgrAbility at major events. Recently, the NAP supported efforts by California AgrAbility in staffing a display at World Ag Expo and by AgrAbility of Wisconsin to have a booth at World Dairy Expo, two of the largest farm events in the country. AgrAbility for Pennsylvanians is staffing a NAP-supported display at the American Occupational Therapy Convention in Philadelphia this spring.

Thank you CHS Foundation!

The National AgrAbility Project recently completed three years of work supported by funds from the CHS Foundation. The focus of the \$250,000 CHS gift was to enhance outreach to underserved populations, particularly African American farmers and military veterans engaged in or pursuing careers in agriculture.

Funding from CHS helped the NAP hire a full-time special populations outreach coordinator and a full-time veteran outreach coordinator. These staff members led efforts that included: six AgrAbility workshops for staff and farmers at historically black 1890 land-grant institutions; expanded participation by veterans and 1890 land-grant staff at the National Training Workshop plus the inclusion of a dedicated session track for veterans; AgrAbility exhibits at conferences targeting African American farmers; and AgrAbility participation at veteran-related events, including those sponsored by the Farmer Veteran Coalition.

The NAP believes that the CHS Foundation funding led to transformational changes in the AgrAbility Program that will endure into the future.

CHS, Inc., is a highly diversified company owned largely by farmers, ranchers, and cooperatives. As one of the largest agriculture-related companies in the world, CHS ranked 84th on the 2016 Forbes Fortune 500 list of U.S. corporations. The company produces and distributes such commodities as crop nutrients, grain marketing services, animal feed, petroleum products, and food/food ingredients, along with providing business solutions including insurance, financial, and risk management services.



Virtual NTW archives online

If you weren't able to attend the six webinars that composed the 2017 AgrAbility Virtual National Training Workshop, they're archived and available for viewing 24/7, along with their respective PowerPoint files. Visit www.agrability.org/online-training/virtualntw to view the sessions on hand health in agriculture, resources for farmer veterans, technologies for aging farmers, updates from USDA/NIFA, FSA farm loan programs, and seating issues in agriculture. In all, nearly 60 archived AgrAbility webinars are available at the NAP website.

AgrAbility Harvest

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West Lafayette, IN 47907

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Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity institution.

ON THE HORIZON



Knoxville, Tennessee serves as the host city for the **2017 AgrAbility National Training Workshop** on March 20-23. In addition to breakout and plenary sessions, the keynote speaker for Wednesday evening's banquet and auction will be **Ashlee Lundvall**. Since a paralyzing ranching accident in 1999, Ashlee has redefined her life, become a leader in the accessible outdoor sports movement, and been named Ms. Wheelchair USA. The auction event raises funds that enable farmers and ranchers to attend the conference; approximately 55 farmers and caregivers received NAP travel support to attend this year's event. Visit www.agrability.org/ntw.



2017

March 20-23	AgrAbility National Training Workshop	Knoxville, TN	www.agrability.org
March 30-April 2	AOTA Annual Conference and Centennial Celebration	Philadelphia, PA	www.aota.org
May 3-5	Empowering Women Veterans Conference	Santa Rosa, CA	www.farmvetco.org/ewvc
June 7-9	World Pork Expo	Des Moines, IA	www.worldpork.org
June 25-29	International Society for Agricultural Safety & Health (ISASH) Annual Conference	Logan, UT	www.isash.org
June 26-30	RESNA Annual Conference	New Orleans, LA	www.resna.org
July 16-19	ASABE Annual International Meeting	Spokane, WA	www.asabemeetings.org
July 29-August 1	Disabled American Veterans National Convention	New Orleans, LA	www.dav.org/events
August 3-5	Amputee Coalition National Conference	Louisville, KY	www.amputee-coalition.org
August 8-10	Empire Farm Days	Seneca Falls, NY	www.empirefarmdays.com
August 29-31	Farm Progress Show	Decatur, IL	www.farmprogressshow.com
September 12-14	Husker Harvest Days	Grand Island, NE	www.huskerharvestdays.com
September 19-21	Farm Science Review	London, OH	https://fsr.osu.edu/
October 3-7	World Dairy Expo	Madison, WI	www.world-dairy-expo.com
October 17-19	Sunbelt Ag Expo	Moultrie, GA	www.sunbeltexpo.com
October 20-23	APRIL Annual Conference	Spokane, WA	www.april-rural.org
October 25-28	National FFA Convention	Indianapolis, IN	www.ffa.org

2018

February 13-15	World Ag Expo	Tulare, CA	www.worldagexpo.com
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