

# Cultivating a Peer and Mentorship Network in Your State



AgrAbility Projects are a partnership between a Land Grant University and a Non-Profit which serves individuals with disabilities



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**  
EXTENSION

TEXAS A&M  
**AGRI**LIFE  
**EXTENSION**



bvcil   
Brazos Valley Center  
for Independent Living

# Meet the presenters



- Dee Jepsen, Program Director
- Laura Akgerman, Disability Services Coordinator
- Rachel Jarman, Rural Rehabilitation Coordinator
- Randy Joseph, Rural Rehabilitation Supervisor
- Kane Lewis, Ag Educator and farmer client



- Cheryl Grenwelge, Program Director
- Makenzie Thomas, Program Manager





# Ohio AgrAbility Peer-to-Peer Network





# Texas Battleground to Breaking Ground



# Today's objectives – Peer Networks

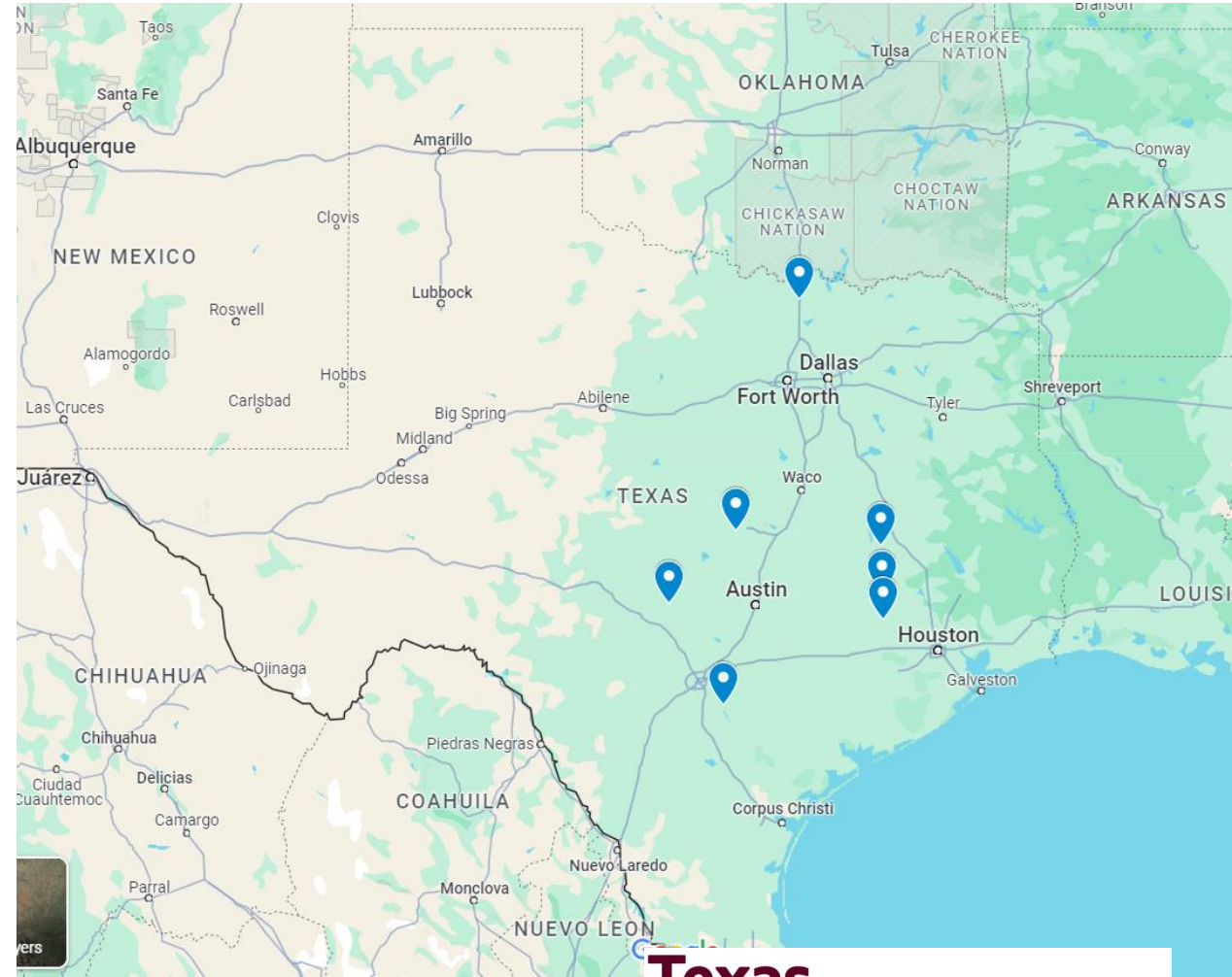
- Forming a peer network
- Planning activities
- Building engagement
- Consistent support and engagement
- Addressing farming, cultural, regional and geographic differences

# Today's objectives – Peer Mentors

- Best practices for peer mentoring
- Military
- Non-military
- Training and encouraging mentors
- Managing different peer groups across the state
- Addressing farming, cultural, regional and geographic differences



# Planning activities across the state



# Building engagement

## Ohio

- Activities
- Spring meetings
- Summer meetings
- Farm Science Review
- Advisory committee



## Texas

- Quarterly calls
- Meetups at events
- Advisory committee
- Facebook Group
- Peer Group Map



# Best practices for peer mentoring

- Military
  - Mentor training program
  - Connecting veterans in-person at training events
- Non-military
  - Engaging clients & planning
- Managing different peer groups across the state



# Train and encourage mentors

**No one understands you like someone who has been there**

- Introduce farmers who are similar
- Age, farm type, disability, or location



## Mentorship Training Program

- Stipends available for completing program and training peers

# Managing different peer groups across Texas

- Cohorts of mentors
- Bring them together at events



# Addressing farming, cultural, regional and geographic differences

## Ohio

- 3 Peer-to-Peer meetings a year
  - Spring, summer, at Farm Science Review
  - Invite Farmers to attend NTW and other trainings
- Rural Rehabilitation Coordinators connect farmers across the state



## Texas

- Peer group quarterly web calls over lunch
- Peer group map to connect individuals in closer proximity







# Consistent support and engagement

- Invite farmers to events throughout the year
- Ask for their feedback about:
  - Developing new resources
  - Educational outreach
  - Farmer outreach
- Have clients or participants be part of the planning process
- Mentor program graduates help train incoming mentors





# Mentoring and volunteering opportunities



# Successes

## Ohio

- Core group who attends events
- Some members serve on our Advisory Board
- Farmers attend Farm Science Review and help "Staff" the tent
- Hard to schedule events when farmers are not busy



## Texas

- Mentorships and relationships created far beyond the program
- They continue to work together to gain experience, network, and share resources
- Some of them even put on workshops together after the program ends





# Barriers

## Ohio

- Hard to schedule events when farmers are not busy
- Hard to find topics/AT that interest or apply to everyone
- Not all ages are represented in the Peer group
- Virtual vs. In-person
- E-mail addresses!



## Texas

- Inconsistent engagement with Texas AgrAbility peer group calls
- Difficult to find events that members are willing to travel to meet in person
- Virtual options are less appealing to aging farmers





# Peer experiences from our audience

- What works for you?
- What has not worked?
- What do you want to try but have not.... Why not?



# Thanks for joining us!

