

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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**DRAFT Report on**

**L.D. 409**

**A Report Prepared for the  
Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs  
Pertaining to H.P. 284 - L.D. 409  
*Resolve, To Establish a Veteran-to-farmer Training Pilot Program***

**January 10, 2014**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Walter E. Whitcomb".

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**Walter E. Whitcomb, Commissioner**

**Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

## OVERVIEW of the RESOLVE

Reference Committee **Education and Cultural Affairs**  
Last House Action **6/11/2013 - FINALLY PASSED.**  
Sent for concurrence. ORDERED SENT FORTHWITH.  
Last Senate Action **6/12/2013 - FINALLY PASSED,** in concurrence.  
Last Engrossed by House on **6/10/2013**  
Last Engrossed by Senate on **6/10/2013**  
Governor Action **Became Law without Governor's Signature**  
Chapter **69**  
Final Law Type **Resolve**  
Date **6/26/2013**

**Sec. 1. Veteran-to-Farmer training pilot program. Resolved:** That the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (“DACF”) and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, in consultation with the agriculture program at Kennebec Valley Community College, the Maine Apprenticeship Program in the Maine Department of Labor, the Finance Authority of Maine, and the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Bureau of Veterans' Services - Maine, to design a veteran-to-farmer training pilot program to enable veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States to develop necessary skills in farming while also addressing the difficulties some veterans face in their transition back to civilian life after military service.

The pilot program designed under this resolve must:

1. Use existing programs and resources to the extent possible;
2. Establish a *certificate program* that provides a hands-on farming skills training curriculum, classroom-based business training, business start-up support and health monitoring for veterans; and
3. Enable veterans, upon completion of the *certificate program* under subsection 2, to create new farm businesses and to meet the requirements to acquire the leases and loans needed to farm.

After its design, the curriculum for the pilot program must be submitted to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for approval in order to allow eligible veterans to use education benefits available pursuant to the federal Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, as amended, for participation in the certificate program; and be it further

**Sec. 2. Report. Resolved:** That the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, shall jointly submit a report, including findings and recommendations, on the pilot program designed under section 1 to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs no later than January 10, 2014. The joint standing committee may report out a bill related to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 126th Legislature.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Maine's Veteran Population

According to Peter Ogden, Director of the Maine Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Bureau of Veterans' Services, Maine currently has 150,000 veterans. This includes the Guard, Reserves and 30,000 retirees, but not Active Duty service men and women. Of the 150,000 there are:

- ~ 20,000 Veterans between of ages 25 to 30
- ~ 90,000 Veterans of age 55+
- ~ 50,000 Veterans of age 65+

Since a person must have high school education to be in the military, many of the younger veterans are computer literate. They prefer to communicate through social media and texting rather than face-to-face communication. As they transition back to civilian life they are not choosing to return to their home communities. While older veterans tend to settle in rural areas, younger veterans are choosing to settle in more urban areas. Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are more disabled due to advances in battlefield medicine that decreased mortality rates. Many may also have TBI (traumatic brain injury) issues.

According to Robert Haley, Director, Maine State Approving Agency for Veteran Education, 3,000 people in Maine are using \$25M of eight GI Bills for education and training. With the exception of the Vocational Rehabilitation program, the VA does not approve programs. Educational institutions approach the Approving Agency for guidance and review to get programs approved.

According to a report published by the US Veterans Administration, in 2010:

- 24,621 Maine veterans received disability compensation or pension payments
- 1,920 Maine veterans used GI Bill education benefits
- 992 obtained home loans backed by US Veterans Administration guarantees
- 450 participated in US Veterans Administration Vocational Rehabilitation programming

### Maine Farm Types

The 2007 USDA Agricultural Census counted 8,136 farms in Maine. According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) a "Small Family Farm" grosses less than \$250,000 annually. Within this group the USDA defines four sub-types<sup>1</sup>:

- Farms where the primary occupation is farming, including:
  - "Low sales" farming (<\$100,000) gross sales, or
  - "Medium sales" farming (>\$100,000)
- Farms where the primary occupation is not farming, and includes farm operator types:
  - Retirement, and
  - Residential/Lifestyle farmers

Based on these definitions, 7,741 Maine farms are "Small Family Farms". Together, these farms represent 20% of Maine's annual Gross Agricultural Product. The remaining 395 larger farms represent 80% of the Maine's annual Gross Agricultural Product in Maine.

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<sup>1</sup> Americas Diverse Family Farms, 2010 Edition. USDA Economic Research Service Economic Information Bulletin Number 67, July 2010.

## REPORT FOLLOWING CONSULTATION WITH OTHER ENTITIES

On October 30, 2013 Commissioner Whitcomb emailed an invitation to all agencies and organizations (entities) named in the Resolve. Staff of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (ACF Department) and UMaine Extension then planned and hosted meetings on November 14 and 22. These were well attended by high-level staff from each entity. Each meeting's agenda, list of participants, minutes, and a Summary of Findings are included in the Appendix.

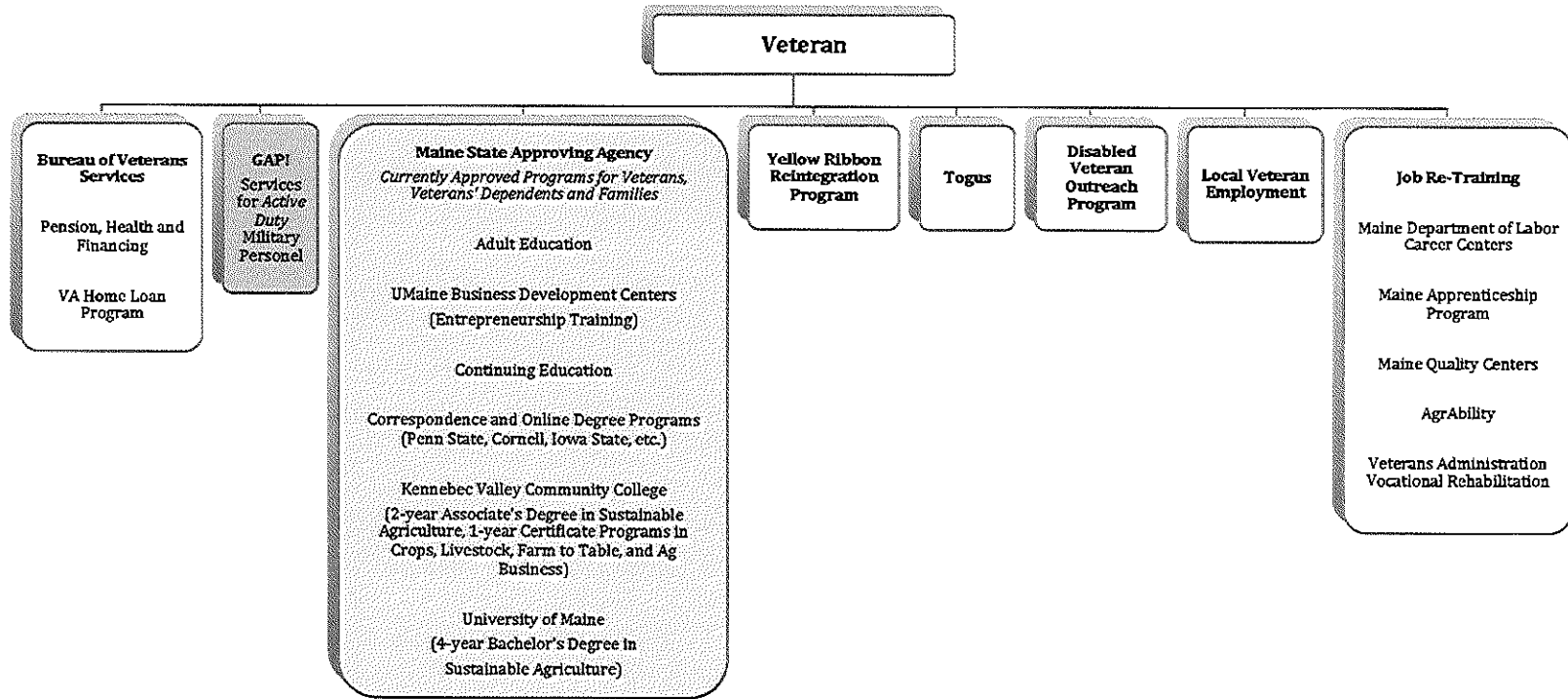
A tremendous amount of information about existing veteran services and beginning farmer programs and resources was shared among participants. While all were enthusiastic about future possibilities, all agreed that a "Pilot Program" would need funds to undertake a rigorous needs assessment, develop specific proficiency standards, and train staff, to deliver on its promises to program participants. Therefore, as there currently are no funds attached to the Resolve, **the ACF Department and UMaine Extension propose that the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs consider and endorse the following recommendations that would instead create an Initiative to "connect the dots" between existing programs and services.** Such an endorsement would authorize the entities to review these recommendations and identify those actions that are truly "doable" within the next 2-3 years; and to articulate their mutually agreed upon commitments in an **Interagency Agreement.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

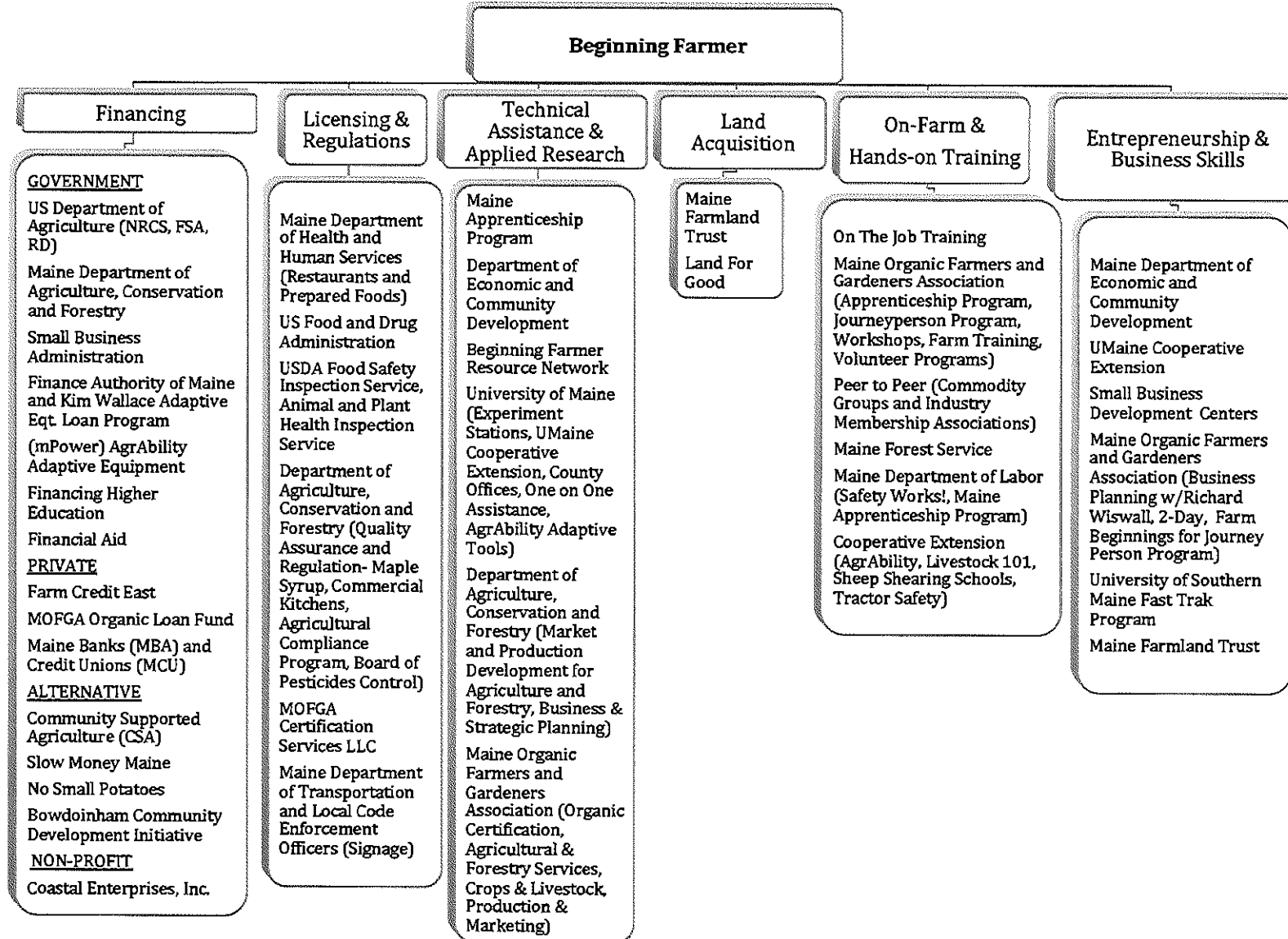
- 1) Utilize the following two "*flow*" charts to better coordinate connections between Veterans Services and New and Beginning Farmer Resources, including:
  - a. Finalizing these two flow charts and publishing them on websites to help interested veterans see various portals of entry to training opportunities and careers.
  - b. Adding links on all relevant State of Maine websites to assist veterans with identifying training opportunities listed on the ACF Department, UMaine Extension and the Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine's websites.
- 2) Utilize the *Resource Kit* developed by the ACF Department and UMaine Extension (see list in Appendix) to inform veterans and veteran services providers about farming – land, forests, and fisheries – in Maine:
  - a. Create and distribute a Fact Sheet that identifies where veterans can apply for financing for agricultural studies, pursuits, loans, and perhaps land leases.
  - b. Utilize additional data available through the US Department of Labor, Maine Department of Labor statistics, and other existing and relevant data to develop one Fact Sheet on current farming careers in Maine. Distribute this Fact Sheet to the administration of the Maine Bureau of Veterans Affairs, Voc Rehab Counselors at Togus, the Maine Department of Labor's - Veterans Program Voc Rehab Counselors, Maine Career Centers, and Maine Apprenticeship Program, to share with their staff.
  - c. Refine the Resource Kit and provide access to for staff of the Maine Bureau of Veterans Affairs, Voc Rehab Counselors at Togus, the Maine Department of Labor's - Veterans Program/Voc Rehab Counselors, Maine Career Center Counselors, and Maine Apprenticeship Program.

- d. Explore the possibility of designing an educational opportunity for staff of the Maine Bureau of Veterans Affairs, Voc Rehab Counselors at Togus, and the Maine Department of Labor's - Veterans Program/Voc Rehab Counselors, Maine Career Center Counselors, and Maine Apprenticeship Program to tour Maine farms, woodlots, and aquaculture facilities that are owned and operated by veterans.
- 3) Create and distribute a Fact Sheet that briefly describes the existing programs that are currently approved for veterans education benefits, these currently include, University of Maine, the Kennebec Valley Community College, and the University of Southern Maine/Small Business Development Centers. And in 2014, will most likely add the nationally trademarked, *NxLevel – Tilling the Soil of Opportunity* farm business planning curriculum.
- 4) Work with Maine State Approving Agency for Veterans Education to approve *NxLevel – Tilling the Soil of Opportunity*, and then use it and many UMaine Extension publications to develop a model Community Education course that could also be approved for veterans' education benefits.
- 5) Assist Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) with developing several additional Agriculture and Food System Certificate Programs.
- 6) Bring National Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) Director, Tia Christopher to Maine, to speak to veterans, to advise and assist the FVC- Maine Chapter and the partners of the Beginning Farmer Resources Network of Maine with their outreach to veterans.
- 7) Encourage state agencies to arrange for Colonel Andrew Gibson (Chaplain Gibson) to provide *Military 101*, a program for civilians to better understand military life, to agency staff who may not familiar with military life.
- 8) Work with Colonel Andrew Gibson (Chaplain Gibson), UMaine Extension, and UMaine to create a YouTube Video version of *Military 101* that includes interviews with Maine farmers who are veterans. Make this video available on the UMaine Extension website.
- 9) Form a committee to identify and approach private businesses about working with the Maine Department of Labor's Maine Apprenticeship Program to:
  - a. Self-identify whether they seek veteran employees.
  - b. Commit to working with the Maine Apprenticeship Program to develop a Registered Apprenticeship Program in their business that can provide state and federal funding to both the business and the apprentice.
  - c. Send veteran apprentice farmers out of state for training, for example to the meat-cutting program in Vermont.
- 10) Develop a simple system for documenting and tracking veterans' needs and interests in farming – land, forest, and fisheries - and report back to Legislature in 2016.
- 11) Collect information about how other states and other countries have developed proficiencies for veterans to advance up the farming training "ladders & lattices" to measure and achieve success.

## Resources for Maine Military Veterans



Resources for New and Beginning Farmers in Maine





## Appendix

- I. Summary of Findings
- II. November 14, 2013 Meeting Agenda
- III. PowerPoint Slides of Initial Findings for November 14, 2013 Meeting
- IV. November 14, 2013 Meeting Minutes
- V. November 22, 2013 Meeting Agenda
- VI. November 22, 2013 Meeting Minutes
- VII. Beginning Farmer Resource Network (BFRN) Fact Sheet
- VIII. Listing of Items in the Resource Kit available at <http://bit.ly/1cnY2iN>

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following findings are derived from the ACF Department's and UMaine Extension's two meetings on November 14 and 22 to consult with agencies designated in L.D. 409, and from comments of agency leaders and industry groups the co-investigators obtained following presentations made to: the Agricultural Commodity Council of Maine (AgCOM) on November 26<sup>th</sup>; the Farmer Veteran Coalition of Maine on December 12<sup>th</sup>; and the Beginning Farmer Resource Network on December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

**FINDING:** Several established federal and state programs strive to meet the needs of separating service members during their transition into civilian life. The programs listed below, and depicted on the following chart entitled **Resources for Maine Military Veterans**, are the portals for the future dissemination of information about new farmer training and education programs.

- US Veterans Administration program focus areas - Pension, Health, Financing and Home Loan – includes the Transition Assistance Program and US Vocational Rehabilitation (VA-Voc Rehab-Togus)
- US Department of Defense - Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program
- Maine State Approving Agency for Veterans' Education
- Maine Department of Labor – Veterans Program & Voc Rehab Counselors at Maine Career Centers
- Maine Department of Labor - Maine Apprenticeship Program
- Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) – State of Maine
- Local Veterans Employment Representative Program (LVER) - State of Maine

**ISSUE:** There is a gap when it comes to outreach to active duty service men and women who are being released from service.

**ISSUE:** Staff in these agencies need more information about Maine's farming – land, forests, fisheries – sectors to better inform veterans about job retraining and career opportunities.

**ISSUE:** Most (perhaps all?) of the existing veteran training programs require pathways that lead to permanent employment. This needs to be done for farming – land, forests, and fisheries – opportunities in Maine. Veterans are trained to respect and trust authority, if a new program does not have clear pathways that guarantee promised results then trust is broken.

**ISSUE:** Many farmers are really small business entrepreneurs who are less interested in being hired by someone else and more interested in being their own boss. These business owners assume different levels of risk for which there are not guarantees of success.

**FINDING:** In order for a veteran, reservist or dependent to use their GI Bill education benefits, the program must be approved by a State Approving Agency for Veterans' Education. Its primary responsibility and focus is to review, evaluate and approve quality programs of education and training under State and Federal criteria.

The Maine State Approving Agency for Veterans Education Programs has been designated by the State of Maine to approve courses and programs in accordance with the standards and provisions of Chapters 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36 of Title 38, U.S.C., and Chapters 1606 and 1607 of Title 10, U.S.C.. In Maine, GI Bill programs can be used for a wide range of education and training programs. The type of institution or facility determines which set of the following criteria apply:

- A review of the curriculum, ensuring that it is consistent in quality, content, and length with similar programs.
- A review of faculty credentials.
- Requirements for completion.
- Attendance standards (as appropriate).
- Standards of progress and assessment of the learning process.
- Review of costs to include tuition, fees, equipment and/or supplies.
- Policy relative to granting of prior education and training.
- The school is financially sound and capable of delivering the training as promoted.
- The school does not engage in any advertising of any kind which is erroneous or misleading.
- Not more than 85% of all the students enrolled in the program are having all or part of their tuition, fees or other charges paid for them by the educational institution or by the VA.
- Charges levied against veterans do not exceed those levied against non-veterans.

**ISSUE:** Offering a curriculum program through an entity that is not already engaged in the business of providing education and training to members of the public could be problematic as there is oftentimes a two-year waiting period before we could approve any programs.

**FINDING:** Currently, there is no data on the number of veterans who are farming in Maine, nor on the number of would-be veteran farmers settling in Maine. However, the general types of training eligible for GI education benefits that pertain to curricula/programs for farming – land, forests, fisheries – in Maine, are:

- Institutions of Higher-Learning that grant degrees, such as 4-year universities, community colleges, and 2-year colleges.
- Non-College Degree Institutions that do not offer degrees, such adult education programs and high schools.
- Organized On-the-Job or Apprenticeship Training lasting 6+ months while working.
- Flight Training at 60% of the approved costs for this type of training.
- Correspondence at 55% of the approved costs for this type of training.
- Entrepreneurship Training via programs offered by the SBCD or the Veterans Corporation.
- Co-op Training Schools partnering with Employers to allow veterans to attend classes in their chosen field while still working.
- Work-Study Program – for any student receiving VA education benefits, who is attending school three-quarter time or more may work under this program at the school veterans' office, VA Regional Office, VA Medical Facilities, or at approved State employment offices.
- Tuition Assistance Top Up – for eligible persons must be approved for federal Tuition Assistance by a military department and be eligible for MGIB-Active Duty benefits. To be eligible for MGIB benefits, the person must be an MGIB - Active Duty participant and must have served at least 2 full years on Active Duty.
- Tutorial Assistance is available to those receiving VA educational assistance at the half-time or more rate and have a deficiency in a subject making tutoring necessary.

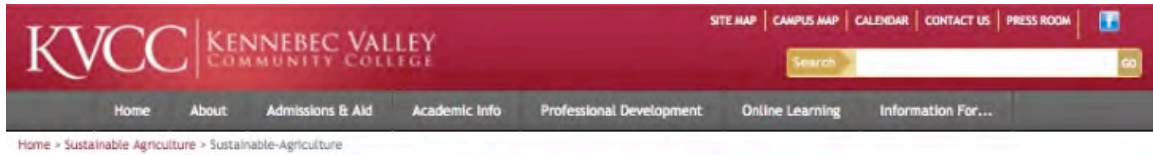
**ISSUE:** A targeted needs assessment of veterans – who are farming – land, forests and fisheries; and or who are working in the industries; and new veterans who desire to settle in Maine to farm or work in farming industries – is needed.

**FINDING:** Maine currently has two accredited programs that have been approved by the Maine State Approving Agency for Veterans' Education. These are the Kennebec Valley Community College and the University of Maine. These institutions have staff dedicated to assist veteran students. Both also have veteran-student led support groups.

Undergrad Programs	Graduate Programs	Focal Areas	SFA Information	Other Links
Animal and Veterinary Sciences	Animal Science M.S.	Animal and Veterinary Science	Director's Welcome	Analytical and Soil Testing Laboratory
Certificate Program in Environmental Horticulture Studies	Certificate Program in Foods and Nutrition	Food Science and Human Nutrition	Faculty	Animal Health Lab
Environmental Horticulture	Dietetic Internship	Plant, Soil, and Environmental Sciences	Academic Staff	Chemical Food Safety Laboratory
Food Science	Food Science and Human Nutrition M.S.		Administrative Staff	Dr. Mathew Highlands Food Pilot Plant
Human Nutrition	Food and Nutrition Sciences, Ph.D.		Forms and Procedures	Process and Product Review testing
Sustainable Agriculture Minors	Horticulture M.S.		News	
	Plant, Soil, and Environmental Sciences M.S.			

**ISSUES:** Many veterans (ages 20 to 35) are seeking hands-on, non-classroom training. The administrators at the Kennebec Valley Community College have observed that the younger veterans are “on-edge” in enclosed, classroom environments and need special consideration in terms of war trauma.

**FINDING:** There are a variety of ways that the Kennebec Valley Community College would support an Interagency Agreement and/or State of Maine **Veteran to Farmer Initiative**.



In the near future, the **Center for Farm-to-Table Innovation** will offer a variety of certificate and Associate in Applied Science Degrees that are connected with agriculture. The College also offers credit for non-credit training programs through articulation agreements and credit for life experience. All of these credit opportunities are described below.

### **Certificate Degree Programs:**

A certificate is awarded upon the successful completion of a prescribed program of vocational and/or technical courses that leads to an occupational skill and includes the following:

1. 12 to 36 credit hours of coursework, including appropriate related and/or general education courses as specified by the program;
2. Demonstrated competence in mathematics and communication skills at a level consistent with the requirements of the program.

Certificate programs are relatively easy to develop in response to industry needs. The certificate could be completed in a relatively short time, one to two semesters, the timeframe depending on the number and sequencing of the course offerings. The certificate programs for the farm-to-table cluster of programming are in development and are scheduled to roll out in Fall 2014. Currently, the proposed certificates would include the following agriculture related areas:

1. Agriculture Technician
2. Quality Control Technician
3. Food Technology (food processing and value added product development)
4. Culinary Arts
5. Animal Husbandry (or some animal related certificate)

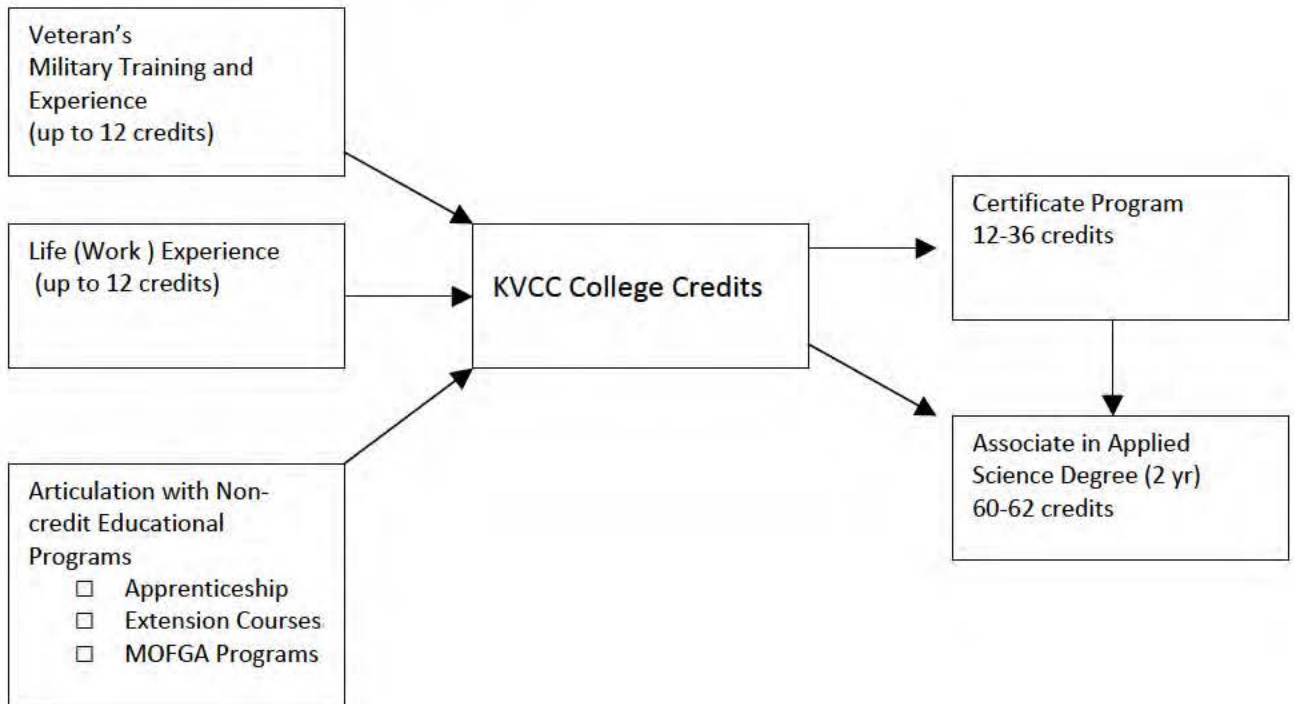
### **Credit for Life (Work) Experience:**

Life Experience is defined as previous experience in a technical or professional capacity. The experience must be of a professional nature and be within the academic purview of the course(s) being considered for equivalency. For example a person who has worked in the military or in agriculture may get credit with proper documentation. Apprenticeship, journeyman and other non-credit programs could also be considered for credit. Life experience may be exchanged for up to a maximum of 12 academic credits.

**Articulation Agreements with Non-Credit Programs for Credit:**

The College is willing to work with any agency offering non-credit programming to develop an articulation agreement for credit. This programming may be in an apprenticeship program or a combination of University of Maine Cooperative Extension courses. These would be developed individually with the agency.

**Pathways to KVCC programs:**



**FINDING:** The University of Maine offers the following six Undergraduate and seven Graduate Programs within the School of Food and Agriculture:

- [Animal and Veterinary Sciences](#)
- [Certificate Program in Environmental Horticulture Studies](#)
- [Environmental Horticulture](#)
- [Food Science](#)
- [Human Nutrition](#)
- [Sustainable Agriculture](#)
- [Animal Science M.S.](#)
- [Certificate Program in Foods and Nutrition](#)
- [Dietetic Internship](#)
- [Food Science and Human Nutrition M.S.](#)
- [Food and Nutrition Sciences, Ph.D.](#)
- [Horticulture M.S.](#)
- [Plant, Soil, and Environmental Sciences M.S.](#)

UMaine also offers Veterans Education and Transition Services (V.E.T.S.) to assist veteran students to navigate student and veterans' resources.

Text Only | Home | A-Z Directory | MaineStreet | Campus Map | Calendar Search:  Go

## Veterans Education and Transition Services

1863 THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

Give Now | Apply to UMaine | Parents & Family | Emergency

Welcome to Veterans Education and Transition Services

Thank you for your service, the VETS office is here to serve you.

Understanding and navigating the various resources available to UMaine student veterans can be challenging. The VETS office is staffed by professional student affairs staff and student veterans, who are here to help.

Our Mission:

The VETS office connects veteran students to programs and resources at the University of Maine and the surrounding community to support their success. As the VA Certifying Official, the VETS office staff facilitates the administration of Veterans Educational Benefits for veteran students or dependents attending the University of Maine.

The VETS Office provides

- **Support and advocacy** for veteran students
- **Assistance** in solving problems related to education
- **Advice** regarding VA Educational Benefits
- **Certification** to the VA for each semester of enrollment and any change of enrollment
- **Referrals** to University resources and other agencies
- **Verification** of pursuit of training
- **Assistance** with credit for prior learning

Please come and visit the VETS office.

- Veterans Education and Transition Services Home
- Student Veterans and Family Members Checklist
- Certification Request
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Certificate of Eligibility/COE or NOBE
- Course Related Concerns
- Student Financial Aid
- Payment Options
- W.A.V.E. Chapter 30 and 1606/1607
- UMaine Veteran Friendly Faculty and Staff
- Yellow Ribbon Program
- Employment Opportunities
- Veteran Resources
- Scholarship Opportunities
- M Project



**FINDING:** All of Maine’s governmental agricultural service providers, currently provide: information, training, technical assistance, grants and loans to new and beginning farmers of land, forests and fisheries, free of charge. People can access this assistance via many modalities, including: hands-on; YouTube demonstrations and testimonials; classroom; apprenticeship; self-serve, on-line modules; on-farm mentoring; and one-on-one counseling. All follow non-discrimination and ADA accessibility policies and design outreach and informational materials to reach the broadest range of peoples’ age, level of experience and expertise.

- Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
- Maine Department of Education
- University of Maine
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension

The Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine (BFRN) is a coalition of the following agriculture agencies and organizations working together to connect aspiring, beginning, and transitioning farmers to resources for farm business success.

- Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
- Cultivating Community
- Farm Credit of Maine
- Land For Good
- Maine AgrAbility
- Maine Association of Conservation Districts
- Maine Aquaculture Association
- Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
- Maine Farm Bureau
- Maine Farmland Trust
- Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets
- Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners (MOFGA)
- Maine Sustainable Agriculture Society
- Sea Grant -- Maine
- USDA Farm Service Agency
- USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services
- University of Maine Cooperative Extension

The BFRN formed in the summer of 2012 following a professional development retreat for farm service providers in Maine. **There was a clear need for agencies and institutions to better coordinate with one another to eliminate duplication of services and to ensure that aspiring farmers would get connected to the resources and services they needed, no matter who they called first.**

In 2013, BFRN launched a website which is hosted by UMaine Extension. The website's resource pages (page titles in blue below) are based on the typical needs and questions of Maine's aspiring, beginning, and transitioning farmers.



- [What to Consider First](#)
- [Learning How to Farm](#)
- [Searching For, Assessing, and Acquiring Land](#)
- [Planning and Managing Your Farm Business](#)
- [Planning for Facilities and Equipment](#)
- [Financing Your Farm Business](#)
- [Managing Risks](#)
- [Understanding Regulations and Taxes](#)
- [Managing Your Farm's Woodlands](#)
- [Farming the Water: Aquaculture](#)
- [Marketing Your Farm Products](#)
- [Balancing Farm and Family](#)

In 2013 and 2014, the Beginning Farmer Resource Network also offered 2 days of workshops on more than 20 topics annual Agricultural Trades Show in Augusta. Topics ranged from farm finances and bookkeeping, and land acquisition and taxes, to lifestyle changes, healthcare and farm family health.

**ISSUE:** KVCC and UMaine campuses have staff serving as veterans' liaisons. Maine's many other agricultural, forestry and marine resource agencies that are partnering in the BFRN do not have staff trained to assist veterans who are transitioning to civilian life.

**ISSUE:** UMaine Extension, is bound by Federal statute which prohibits the entity from providing any accredited course of study. This means that UMaine Extension can only offer a "certificate of attendance" for any of its workshops/training events.

**FINDING:** The Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) is a national non-profit organization that works with veterans in food and farming communities in 48 states, to provide farming education, and veteran assistance to those in need.

Maine's Chapter, led by an enthusiastic group of volunteer and ex officio board members, hopes to achieve its 501(c)3 status in 2014. FVC-ME hopes to follow the example of the national program by offering mentorship matching and educational workshops to promote networking between fellow veteran farmers, and provide Maine's veterans more opportunities to meet face-to-face with agricultural, business and veteran service providers. In time, FVC-ME may also benefit from the national FVC adaptive equipment program that encourages farmers and equipment dealers to donate used (or new) tractors and farm implements for disabled vets.



**ISSUE:** At present FVC-Maine is an all-volunteer effort of determined ex officio board members. While all are deeply committed to the fledgling organization, very few of the board members have experience forming and running a non-profit 501(c)3. This will delay the entities ability to successfully serve veterans who are wanting to or are starting farms.

**ISSUE:** Currently, there is no data on the number of veterans who are farming in Maine, nor on the number of would-be veteran farmers settling in Maine. A needs assessment is critical if the FVC-ME is to deliver mentorship matchmaking, educational and adaptive equipment opportunities akin to the national chapter.

**FINDING:** According to the 2007 US Census of Agriculture, there are an estimated 5,700 farmers, farm family members, or farm workers in Maine with a chronic health condition or disability<sup>1</sup>.



Maine AgrAbility, which has been administered by UMaine Extension since 2010, is one of 20 such programs in the United States and is funded by a grant from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. It is a non-profit collaboration between the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, Goodwill Industries of Northern New England and Alpha One. Its mission is to partner with Maine farmers, farm families and farm workers with chronic health issues and disabilities, to help them gain more control over their lives, continue to farm successfully and live independently.

Maine AgrAbility reaches its goals through direct service, education and networking. The program addresses a wide variety of disabling conditions, including, but not limited to, arthritis, spinal cord injuries/paralysis, back impairments, amputations, brain injury, visual impairments, hearing impairments, disabling diseases, cerebral palsy, respiratory impairments, and head injury. Maine AgrAbility:

- Provides consultative services and technical assistance, such as suggestions for modifying or adapting the agricultural operation, buildings, equipment, and/or tools.
- Works with rural agriculture, rehabilitation, and health care professionals to support Maine farmers with disabilities and their families.
- Shares information and resources across Maine through networking activities.

The National AgrAbility program provides technical support to each state program, and assists farmers in those states that lack AgrAbility programs. The grants allow each state administrator to charge no fee for services provided.

**ISSUE:** The current 4-year grant will end in May 2014. UMaine Extension is currently preparing a grant application to continue Maine AgrAbility for another 4 years, but there is no guarantee that the program will continue.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, nearly 30,000 individuals across the state of the Maine are engaged in some aspect of agricultural production. The disability statistics found in the most recent US census report, state that 19% of Maine's population report having a disability. Therefore, the estimated number of farmers and farm workers in Maine with a disability is approximately 5,700 individuals.

**FINDING:** According to the Maine Department of Labor, in 2012, the Maine Apprenticeship Program served 1,235 apprentices (141 of them veterans) who were actively working on industry-recognized skill certifications. The Maine Apprenticeship Program is one of 25 states (and Guam) that the federal government (US DOL-Employment and Training Administration) has approved to manage and conduct registered apprenticeship programs. Upon completion, an apprentice earns a Certificate of Completion – a nationally portable credential that is based on nationally recognized industry standards – in addition to academic or industry credentials. Several occupations require the certificate in order for the apprentice to sit for their license. US DOL works with employers who provide on-site formal related instruction to offset some of their costs for training apprentices.

According to Federal Statute, an apprenticeable occupation is a skilled occupation that:

1. is typically learned practically through a structured program of 2000 hours per year of supervised on-the-job learning,
2. is clearly identified and commonly recognized through an industry,
3. involves specialized skills and knowledge that require a minimum number of hours as directed by the schedule of on-the-job work experience, and
4. requires related instruction classes to supplement on-the-job learning.

**ISSUE:** There is a broad spectrum of careers that are apprenticeable. A list is available on the Department of Labor website (a pdf of this list is included in Resource Kit that accompanies this Report). Although recently updated, this list focuses on those operational and functional occupations in support of farming, but not specifically on the occupational title of ‘farmer’.

**ISSUE:** More (6 to 8) agricultural, silvicultural and marine businesses need to be recruited to participate in the Maine Apprenticeship Program.

**FINDING:** The Department of Labor and Maine Apprenticeship Program (MAP) can be resourceful in developing an apprenticeship with the Veteran to Farmer Initiative as long as we have the foundational elements in place: an employer/sponsor, related instruction and a program design based on some sort of national standards at the core of the program. Our process is relatively short, and once MAP crafts the documents, the approval process is conducted through email. The program is designed based on national occupational and industry standards and identified employer/sponsor business needs. Then a series of foundational documents are developed and sent for approval to the Council – a body of citizen appointed by the Governor who represent business and industry. The program is reviewed based on a set of criteria and usually approved. The employer becomes a sponsor and the MAP’s staff works with each employer to register apprentices and provide on-going technical assistance.

**FINDING:** There are many financing entities for farming – land, forests and fisheries.

GOVERNMENTAL

- US Department of Agriculture (NRCS, FSA, RD)
- Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
- Small Business Administration
- Finance Authority of Maine and Kim Wallace Adaptive Equipment Loan Program
- (mPower) AgrAbility Adaptive Equipment
- Financing Higher Education
- Financial Aid

PRIVATE

- Farm Credit East
- MOFGA Organic Loan Fund
- Maine Banks (MBA) and Credit Unions (MCU)

ALTERNATIVE

- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
- Slow Money Maine
- No Small Potatoes Investment Group
- Bowdoinham Community Development Initiative

NON-PROFIT

- Coastal Enterprises, Inc.

**ISSUE:** There are no grants to start farming, yet from the typical new or beginning farmer’s perspective, that is their most urgent need.

**ISSUE:** Start-up costs are prohibitive; farmland is becoming more costly while lenders have become more conservative about their risks.

**ISSUE:** An Interagency Agreement is needed to facilitate the ACF Department’s and UMaine Extension’s ability to develop an updated “Finding Funds for Farming” brochure or fact sheet that identifies types of financing available, from direct operating and construction loans to microloans and competitive grants.

**ISSUE:** Most start-up farms need an off-farm income. According to the USDA, a **Beginning Farmer or Rancher** means an individual or entity who: “Has not operated a farm or ranch, or who has operated a farm or ranch for not more than 10 consecutive years.” According to the USDA, “A **Limited Resource Farmer or Rancher or Forest Owner** is: “A person with direct or indirect gross farm sales not more than \$172,800 (for FY2013) in each of the previous two years.<sup>2</sup> **AND** “A person with a total household income at or below the national poverty level for a family of four or less than 50 percent of county median household income in each of the previous two years.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> This value was be increased **from \$100,000** beginning in fiscal year **2004** to adjust for inflation using the "Prices Paid by Farmer Index" compiled by **NASS**

<sup>3</sup> Total household income will be determined annually and indexed for inflation using Commerce Department Data.

**AGENDA**  
**First Interagency Meeting**  
**regarding LD 409 Veteran to Farmer Pilot Program**  
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
University of Maine Cooperative Extension

**Thursday, November 14, 2013**  
Room 319, Deering Building, DACF, Augusta

**Conveners:**

Tori Jackson, UMaine Extension

Stephanie Gilbert, DACF

**Facilitator:** Kevin Doran, Maine Forest Service

**Invitees representing agencies named in LD 409:**

Abby Sadauckas, BFRN Co-Leader & MOFGA, New Farmer Programs Coordinator

Bill Norbert, Finance Authority of Maine

Gloria Payne, Maine Apprenticeship Program

Auta Main, Veterans Program Manager, BES, Dept of Labor

Kathy Englehart, Kennebec Valley Community College

Joan Dolan, Dept of Labor, Maine Apprenticeship and Strategic Partnerships

Laura Allen, DACF Assistant & Team Leader Team Red, White & Blue

Peter Ogden, Bureau of Veterans Services

Rep. Craig Hickman, House District 82 and Sponsor of LD 409

Robert Haley, Maine State Approving Agency for Veteran Training (unable to attend)

**Introductions**

**Outline Concepts named in LD 409 –**

**“How we are *Connecting the Dots*”– Steph Gilbert, Tori Jackson**

**Discussion with the Consulting Agencies:**

- 1) What do we know about adult learners, beginning farmers and veterans?
- 2) What does your agency offer, require with regard to the pilot program?
- 3) What do we see that is missing, who, what, etc.?
- 4) Are there some new opportunities for synergies and success?

From: Whitcomb, Walt  
Sent: Wednesday, October 30, 2013 10:28 AM

**PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING WORKPLAN DATES:**

**You will be asked to attend these meetings:**

- Thursday, 11/14, from 1:00 to 4:30 PM, DACF & UMCE will convene a meeting to gather your agency's expertise and guidance in Room 319 of the Deering Building, 90 Blossom Lane, Augusta.
- Friday, 11/22, from 9:00 to 12:30 PM, DACF & UMCE will convene a follow-up meeting at the UMCE Office at 24 Main Street, Lisbon Falls.

**You will be emailed documents for review and comment on these dates:**

- Thursday, 11/7, DACF & UMCE will email a draft program outline to all agencies listed above
- Monday 11/18, DACF & UMCE will circulate a revised outline
- Thursday, 12/12, DACF & UMCE will circulate the **draft report to obtain each agency's final written comments**

**After incorporating your input, DACF and UMCE will finalize the report for submission to the Legislature's Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs:**

- Monday, 12/23, the Final Draft of this report will be delivered to DACF Commissioner Whitcomb and UMCE Director, John Rebar.
- **Friday 01/10, the Final Report will be delivered to the Maine Legislature.**

Thank you in advance for your cooperation,

Walt

*Walter E. Whitcomb*

Commissioner  
Maine Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
22 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333-0022  
207.287.3419



# A Report on L.D. 409

Resolve, To Establish a Veteran-to-Farmer  
Training Pilot Program

June 26, 2013

STATE OF MAINE

—  
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD  
TWO THOUSAND AND THIRTEEN

—  
H.P. 284 - L.D. 409

**Resolve, To Establish a Veteran-to-farmer Training Pilot Program**

**Sec. 1. Veteran-to-farmer training pilot program. Resolved:** That the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, in consultation with the agriculture program at Kennebec Valley Community College, the Maine Apprenticeship Program in the Department of Labor, the Finance Authority of Maine and the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Bureau of Veterans' Services, shall design a veteran-to-farmer training pilot program to enable veterans of the Armed Forces of the United States to develop necessary skills in farming while also addressing the difficulties some veterans face in their transition back to civilian life after military service. The pilot program designed under this resolve must:

1. Use existing programs and resources to the extent possible;
2. Establish a certificate program that provides a hands-on farming skills training curriculum, classroom-based business training, business start-up support and health monitoring for veterans; and
3. Enable veterans, upon completion of the certificate program under subsection 2, to create new farm businesses and to meet the requirements to acquire the leases and loans needed to farm.

After its design, the curriculum for the pilot program must be submitted to the United States Department of Veterans Affairs for approval in order to allow eligible veterans to use education benefits available pursuant to the federal Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, as amended, for participation in the certificate program; and be it further

**Sec. 2. Report. Resolved:** That the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension shall jointly submit a report, including findings and recommendations, on the pilot program designed under section 1 to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs no later than January 10, 2014. The joint standing committee may report out a bill related to the report to the Second Regular Session of the 126th Legislature.

The pilot program designed under this resolve must:

1. Use existing programs and resources to the extent possible;
2. Establish a certificate program that provides a hands-on farming skills training curriculum, classroom-based business training, business start-up support and *health monitoring for veterans*; and
3. Enable veterans, upon completion of the certificate program under subsection 2, to create new farm businesses and to meet the requirements to acquire the leases and loans needed to farm.

# Our Approach

- Identify existing resources
- Using veterans benefits for education
  - The G.I. Bill(s)
- Currently accredited “certificate programs”
- Access to leases and loans
  - Programs with a special emphasis on veterans

# Existing Resources

# So, You Want to Farm in Maine Workshop Series

## So You Want to Farm in Maine?



The 2012 course will be starting March 20th at the Penobscot and Aroostook County Extension Offices.

### A Short Course for Individuals Who Want a Profitable Farm Operation.

The purpose of this course is to equip participants with the business knowledge and skills to start, adapt and maintain a profitable land-based business. It is designed for current farmers and those

who want to have a farm.

This multi-session course will be offered on five Tuesday evenings in March and April starting March 20th, 2012 at the Penobscot County Extension Office in Bangor, and Aroostook County Extension Office in Presque Isle from 6:30pm-9:00pm. Pre-registration is required, as space is limited to 40 participants. The cost is \$50.00, which includes the text for the course, *Starting and Running a Small Farm Business* by Sarah Aubrey and various handouts. More than one member of a farm business may attend for the \$50.00 fee, provided you only require one set of materials.

To register, please call Theresa Tilton at (207) 942-7396 or email [Theresa.Tilton@maine.edu](mailto:Theresa.Tilton@maine.edu) at the Bangor Extension office. Instructors for the course include Extension Educators Donna Coffin, and Andrew Plant with guest instructors.

A survey will be sent once you have registered. *Please return it prior to the first meeting.*

### Objectives:

- Participants will feel comfortable starting a farm-based business
- Participants will understand the need for and have a framework for a business plan
- Participants will select and use recordkeeping system
- Participants will understand how to use Cooperative Extension and other agencies as a resource for their farm-based business
- Participants will understand the importance of and basics of marketing their products, including customer surveys.

### Session 1

- Assessing your resources.
- Developing a business plan.

### Session 2

- Selecting & evaluating farm enterprises.
- Keeping production and financial records.
- Understanding taxes.

### Session 3

- Types of marketing.
- Doing applied market research for your products and services.

### Session 4

- Production information
- Resources / agencies available to assist farmers
- Regulations that impact agriculture.
- What about farm equipment?

### Session 5 Thursday

- Panel discussion including finding financing, and insurance as well as other topics of interest.

Sponsored by:

**University of Maine Cooperative Extension** in Penobscot, Piscataquis, & Aroostook Counties

**Maine Crop Insurance Education Program** in cooperation with the Risk Management Agency



# The Andy Valley Successful Farmer



Photo by Tori Lee Jackson



## New Farmer Workshop Series

This workshop series is designed for new Maine farmers who have been in business fewer than 10 years, or haven't started yet. A wide variety of topics will be covered, including an introduction to the various federal, state, local and non-profit agencies many farmers work with. Plenty of time is built in for questions and interaction with speakers and colleagues. Participants who enroll for all 7 workshops will be given a resource material notebook.

Topics include:

<b>Farm Business Basics</b>	<b>Tuesday, January 31, 2011</b>	<b>9:00am-3:00pm</b>
<b>Crop Management</b>	<b>Tuesday, February 7, 2011</b>	<b>6:00pm-9:00pm</b>
<b>Nutrient Management</b>	<b>Tuesday, February 14, 2011</b>	<b>6:00pm-9:00pm</b>
<b>Pest Management</b>	<b>Tuesday, February 21, 2011</b>	<b>9:00am-3:00pm</b>
<b>Water Management</b>	<b>Tuesday, February 29, 2011</b>	<b>6:00pm-9:00pm</b>
<b>Energy Management</b>	<b>Tuesday, March 6, 2011</b>	<b>6:00pm-9:00pm</b>
<b>Farm Safety</b>	<b>Tuesday, March 13, 2011</b>	<b>9:00am-3:00pm</b>

# The Beginning Farmer Resource Network

THE UNIVERSITY OF MAINE

Text Only | Home | A-Z Directory | MainStreet | Campus Map | Calendar | Apply to UMaine | Give Now | Emergency

Search UMaine

Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine

Home Events Members

Welcome to Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine

The Beginning Farmer Resource Network is a coalition of Maine agriculture agencies and organizations working together to connect aspiring, beginning, and transitioning farmers to resources for farm business success.

Aspiring, beginning, and transitioning farmers:

- [What to Consider First](#)
- [Learning How to Farm](#)
- [Searching For, Assessing, and Acquiring Land](#)
- [Planning and Managing Your Farm Business](#)
- [Planning for Facilities and Equipment](#)
- [Financing Your Farm Business](#)
- [Managing Risk](#)
- [Understanding Regulations and Taxes](#)
- [Managing Your Farm's Woodlands](#)
- [Farming the Water: Aquaculture](#)
- [Marketing Your Farm Products](#)
- [Balancing Farm and Family](#)

Photos from our members:

Sheep. Photo by Jo Bennett

Partnering institutions, agencies, and organizations:

- [Coastal Enterprises, Inc.](#)
- [Cultivating Community](#)
- [Farm Credit of Maine](#)
- [Land For Good](#)
- [Maine Association of Conservation Districts](#)
- [Maine Aquaculture Association](#)
- [Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry](#)
- [Maine Farm Bureau](#)
- [Maine Farmland Trust](#)
- [Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets](#)
- [Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners \(MOFGA\)](#)
- [Maine Sustainable Agriculture Society](#)
- [Sea Grant -- Maine](#)
- [USDA Farm Service Agency](#)
- [USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service](#)
- [USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services](#)
- [UMaine Extension](#)

If you represent an agency or institution that works with Maine farmers and are interested in joining the Beginning Farmers Resource Network, please contact Toni Jackson at 207.353.5550 or [toni.jackson@maine.edu](mailto:toni.jackson@maine.edu).

Beginning Farmer Resource Network of Maine  
Phone: 207-353-5550 or 800-387-1458 (In Maine)  
E-mail: [toni.jackson@maine.edu](mailto:toni.jackson@maine.edu)

The University of Maine  
Orono, Maine 04469  
207-581-1865

Partnering institutions, agencies, and organizations:

[Coastal Enterprises, Inc.](#)

[Cultivating Community](#)

[Farm Credit of Maine](#)

[Land For Good](#)

[Maine Association of Conservation Districts](#)

[Maine Aquaculture Association](#)

[Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry](#)

[Maine Farm Bureau](#)

[Maine Farmland Trust](#)

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[Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners \(MOFGA\)](#)

[Maine Sustainable Agriculture Society](#)

[Sea Grant -- Maine](#)

[USDA Farm Service Agency](#)

[USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service](#)

[USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services](#)

[UMaine Extension](#)

# New Farmers Website

## *umaine.edu/new-farmers/*

### Cooperative Extension for New Farmers



Give Now | Apply to **FAQ's**

#### Welcome to Cooperative Extension for New Farmers

University of Maine Cooperative Extension can help you decide if farming in Maine is right for you.

Have you had a life-long dream of being a farmer in Maine and wonder if you and your family can make it work? Maybe you grew up on a farm and now want to run your own. Or are you intrigued with the possibilities of life on a farm and looking for an apprenticeship? UMaine Extension has been helping Maine farmers for over 90 years. We can help you, too!



#### Resources and Support for New Farmers in Maine

UMaine Extension is your doorway to University of Maine expertise. We provide practical, how-to solutions and resources based on university research.

Farm management is increasingly more complex. Our agriculture experts help keep Maine farms financially, environmentally, and socially sustainable by developing:

- [compost best practices](#)
- [crop insurance education](#)
- [integrated pest management](#)
- [livestock production](#)
- [sustainable agriculture for farmers](#)
- [sustainable agriculture degree program at UMaine](#)
- [nutrient and waste management solutions](#)
- [value-added food products](#)

Please send us your questions! Do you need information on how to apply for grants or other funding opportunities? Do you want guidance on restoring old fruit trees to productivity? Or do you need advice on another farming-related issue that might be a good addition to this website?

We will be using your questions to build this page. Please send any questions you would like answered to [Tori Jackson](#), Extension educator, and we will post your questions and her responses. Check here for regular updates!

- [So You Want to Farm in Maine?](#)
- [How Do I Get My Soil Tested?](#)
- [How Do I Market Specialty Products?](#)
- [What veterinarians treat large animals?](#)

[Cooperative Extension for New Farmers Home](#)

[FAQ's](#)

[Related Extension Programs](#)


[Videos](#)

[Department of Agriculture](#)

[Additional Resources](#)

#### New Farmers News

- [Extension Survey Finds Maine Farmers Optimistic about Future](#)
- [Extension Expert Comments on the Future of Farming](#)
- [Stack, Lichtenwalner in News Report on Lack of Snow](#)
- [So You Want to Farm in Maine?](#)
- [Maine's Career-Change Farmers](#)

 [Subscribe to the New Farmers News RSS feed](#)

#### New Farmers News Archive

Select Month

#### County Offices

Find out about workshops and demonstrations in your neighborhood and around the state.



# NxLevel Tilling The Soil of Opportunity



The screenshot shows the NxLevel website homepage. At the top left is the NxLevel logo, featuring the letters 'NX' in a stylized, overlapping font with a white swoosh, and the word 'LEVEL' in a bold, black, sans-serif font below it. To the right of the logo is the website address 'nxlevel.org' in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below the address is the tagline: "Helping entrepreneurs reach the next level of success . . .". A yellow navigation bar contains the following links: Home, Buy Now, eBooks, Certification, Resources, Products, About Us, Press Room, and Contact Us. On the left side, there is a vertical menu with the following categories: Business Startups, Entrepreneurs, Micro Entrepreneurs, Agriculture Entrepreneurs, Youth Entrepreneurs, Commercial Kitchens, Going Green, Money Matters, Search Engine Optimization, Spanish Training Materials, and NxLevel Online. The main content area is titled "NxLevel® for Agriculture Entrepreneurs". Below the title is a paragraph describing the course: "This course targets entrepreneurs who have started or are thinking about starting an agricultural venture that is not tied to large-scale, commodity-style production. The materials are specifically designed for individuals who are pursuing innovative ideas and enhanced marketing opportunities in agriculture. This 10-session course is usually delivered over 12 weeks." Below this paragraph is the section "Learning Objectives". Under "Session One", there is a list of five bullet points: "Gain an understanding of the course curriculum and expectations", "Learn about entrepreneurship and explore personal, family and business resources, knowledge and skills", "Gain knowledge of the components of the NxLevel Agricultural Business Plan", "Understand and develop a mission statement, goals and objectives", and "Experience networking with class participants". Below the list is the heading "Session Two". On the right side of the main content area, there is a promotional image for the course. The image features a silhouette of a person standing with hands on hips against a sunset background. The text "Tilling the soil of Opportunity..." is written in a stylized font at the top. At the bottom of the image, the NxLevel logo is visible, along with the text "NXLEVEL™ GUIDE FOR AGRICULTURAL ENTREPRENEURS".

**NxLevel® for Agriculture Entrepreneurs**

This course targets entrepreneurs who have started or are thinking about starting an agricultural venture that is not tied to large-scale, commodity-style production. The materials are specifically designed for individuals who are pursuing innovative ideas and enhanced marketing opportunities in agriculture. This 10-session course is usually delivered over 12 weeks.

**Learning Objectives**

**Session One**

- Gain an understanding of the course curriculum and expectations
- Learn about entrepreneurship and explore personal, family and business resources, knowledge and skills
- Gain knowledge of the components of the NxLevel Agricultural Business Plan
- Understand and develop a mission statement, goals and objectives
- Experience networking with class participants

**Session Two**

*"Tilling the soil of Opportunity..."*

NXLEVEL™ GUIDE FOR AGRICULTURAL ENTREPRENEURS

# Other Programs & Resources

- Hands on
  - Apprenticeship/ Journeyperson Programs, MOFGA
  - Livestock 101, UMaine Extension
  - One day on-farm slaughter workshops (rabbits, chickens, pigs), MOFGA
  - Intro to Organic Farming, MOFGA
  - Maine Compost School
- Classroom
  - From Recipe to Market, UMaine Extension
  - Webinar Classes at Northeast Beginning Farmers
  - Farm Beginnings, MOFGA and MFT
- On-Farm
  - Sheep Shearing, UMaine Extension
  - Tractor Safety, UMaine Extension
- Books and other Ag Resources
  - *The Organic Farmer's Business Handbook: A Complete Guide to Managing Finances, Crops, and Staff - and Making a Profit* by Richard Wiswall
  - Whole Farm Planning classes at UVM
  - *Fearless Farm Finances: Farm Financial Management Demystified*

# Using Veterans' Education Benefits



## Maine State Approving Agency for Veterans Education Programs

Who we are

GI Bill Benefits

Types of Training

Approved Programs

Links

Contact us

### **Vision**

Every veteran/eligible person, National Guard member and Reservist in Maine will be aware of and have full and fair access to high quality, ethically administered education and training programs that can help them reach their full potential.

### **Mission**

Promote and safeguard quality education and training programs for veterans.

Ensure greater educational and training opportunities to meet the challenging needs of veterans.

Assist the VA in preventing fraud, waste and abuse in the administration of the GI Bill.



Maine State Approving Agency for Veterans Education Programs  
147 Water Street, Suite 2, Randolph, Maine 04346  
(207) 582-2100, [robert.haley@maine.edu](mailto:robert.haley@maine.edu)

[Non-Discrimination Notice](#)

# Maine State Approving Agency

- Approve programs for use of GI Bill benefits
- Programs are approved by individual states
- Criteria for approval are covered under 38 USC, Chapter 36 and corresponding regulations under 38 CFR.
- The type of institution or facility determines which set of criteria apply

# Maine State Approving Agency

Common approval criteria include:

1. A review of the curriculum, to ensure it is consistent in quality, content and length with similar programs.
2. A review of faculty credentials.
3. Requirements for completion.
4. Attendance standards.
5. Standards of progress & assessment of learning.

# Maine State Approving Agency

Common approval criteria include:

6. Review of costs to include tuition, fees, equipment and/or supplies.

7. Policy relative to granting of prior education & training.

8. The school is financially sound and capable of delivering the training as promoted.

9. The school does not advertise in an erroneous or misleading way.

# Maine State Approving Agency

Common approval criteria include:

10. No more than 85% of students enrolled in the program are having all or parts of their tuition, fees or other charges paid for them by the educational institution or the VA.

11. Charges levied against veterans do not exceed those levied against non-veterans.



# Maine State Approving Agency

With that in mind, Bill Haley suggests:

1. It would make sense to offer the proposed certificate program at an accredited institution such as KVCC or UMaine, as they are already recognized by the U.S. Dept of Education.
2. Offering a certificate program from another entity (not already offering education & training to the public) could be problematic as there is often a **2-year waiting period** to approve new programs.

# Currently Accredited Programs

# University of Maine

## Degree: B.S. in Sustainable Agriculture



Search UMaine:  [Go](#)

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### Sustainable Agriculture Program



#### Welcome to Sustainable Agriculture Program

The University of Maine offers academic, research, and extension programs in Sustainable Agriculture (SAG) in order to address the principles and practices of environmentally sound, profitable farming.

This academic program emphasizes the building of healthy soil through crop rotations, organic soil amendments and erosion management; protecting water quality by reducing synthetic chemical use; managing pest and weed problems with integrated, ecologically sound approaches; increasing farm profits and income stability through diverse, community-based enterprises; and using knowledge of scientific principles to propose and test farming practices that better mimic natural

[Sustainable Agriculture Program Home](#)

[Bachelor of Science in SAG](#)

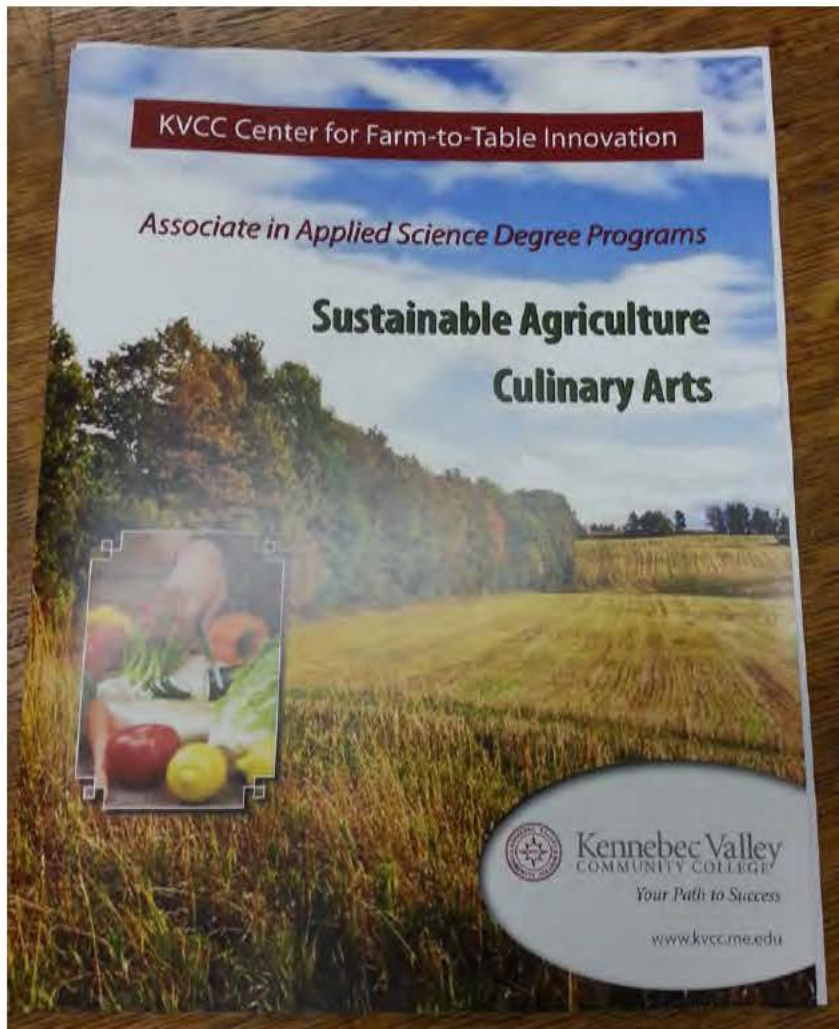
[Student Farm](#)

[Employment Opportunities](#)

[More](#)

# Kennebec Valley Community College

## Degree: Associate in Sustainable Agriculture



Curriculum for Agriculture Associate in Applied Science Degree – DRAFT 3/29/2012

**1st Semester (Fall)**

Course Number	Course Name	Credits	Student Contact Hours
<b>AGR 100</b>	<b>Principles of Sustainable Agriculture</b>	3	3 Lecture
BIO 105	Plant Science*	4	3 Lecture / 2 Lab
BIO 107	Animal Science*	4	3 Lecture / 2 Lab
ENG 101	English Composition*	3	3 Lecture
EYE 1XX	First Year Seminar	1	1 Lecture
			<b>TOTAL: 16 credits</b>

**2nd Semester Spring**

Course Number	Course Name	Credits	Student Contact Hours
<b>AGR110</b>	<b>Soil Science</b>	3	3 Lecture / 2 Lab
<b>AGR112</b>	<b>Biological Pest Management</b>	3	3 Lecture
<b>AGR210</b>	<b>Crop Production</b>	3	2 Lecture / 2 Lab
COM104	Communication*	3	3 Lecture
MAT114 or higher	Technical Mathematics*	3	3 Lecture
			<b>TOTAL: 16 credits</b>

**Summer Session**

Course Number	Course Name	Credits	Student Contact Hours
<b>AGR114</b>	<b>Basic Farm Maintenance</b>	3	1 Lecture / 2 Lab
<b>AGR124</b>	<b>Summer Internship</b>	3	
			<b>TOTAL: 6 credits</b>

**3rd Semester (Fall)**

Course Number	Course Name	Credits	Student Contact Hours
<b>BUS 110</b>	<b>Principles of Management</b>	3	3 Lecture
<b>AGR225</b>	<b>Farm Infrastructure</b>	3	2 Lecture / 3 Lab
<b>AGR221</b>	<b>Advanced Crop Production</b>	3	2 Lecture / 2 Lab
ACC111	Accounting I	3	3 Lecture
	Social Science Elective*	3*	3 Lecture
			<b>TOTAL: 15 credits</b>

**4th Semester (Spring)**

Course Number	Course Name	Credits	Student Contact Hours
<b>AGR 230</b>	<b>Sustainable Livestock Management</b>	3	2 Lecture / 2 Lab
<b>BUS 2XX</b>	<b>Agricultural Marketing</b>	3	3 Lecture
<b>BUS 2XX</b>	<b>Small Business</b>	3	3 Lecture
	Humanities Elective*	3*	3 Lecture
	Humanities/Social Science/Arts Elective*	3	
			<b>TOTAL: 15 Credits</b>

Courses in **BOLD** print are new courses that will be developed.

\* These courses make up the common core in general studies and meet the minimum credit hours required in all Associate in Applied Science programs of study at KVCC.

- English / Communication 6 credits
- Mathematics / Science 6-7 credits
- Arts/Humanities/Social Science 9 credits

Agricultural Science, A.A.S. Degree

# Meeting Requirements for Leases & Loans

# Federal Programs

- The Farm Service Agency (FSA)
- Rural Development (RD)
- Coastal Enterprises Inc (CEI)
  - Special “pools” for veterans, but process is not easier or different
- FAME?

# Timeline for Report

- 11/22 Meeting in Lisbon Falls for Consulting Agencies named in Resolve
- 11/26 AgCOM
- 12/12 Farmer Veteran Coalition of Maine
- 12/12 Draft Circulated
- 12/23 Rev. Final Draft Delivered to Commissioner Whitcomb
- 1/10 Final Report Delivered to Maine Legislature

**Notes from First Interagency Meeting  
regarding LD 409 Veteran to Farmer Pilot Program**  
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF)  
University of Maine Cooperative Extension (UMCE)

**Thursday, November 14, 2013**

Room 319, Deering Building, DACF, Augusta  
1:00- 4:30 PM

**Present:**

**Conveners:** Tori Jackson, UMaine Extension and Stephanie Gilbert, DACF, and Ellis Additon, Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources at DACF

**Facilitator:** Kevin Doran, Maine Forest Service

**Notetaker:** Laura Allen, DACF Assistant & Team Leader Team Red, White & Blue

**Invitees:**

- Joan Dolan, Maine Dept of Labor, Maine Apprenticeship and Strategic Partnerships
- Kathy Englehart, Kennebec Valley Community College
- Robert Haley, Maine State Approving Agency for Veteran Training (unable to attend but informational bullets inserted into PPT slides Peter Ogden, Bureau of Veterans Services
- Rep. Craig Hickman, House District 82 and Sponsor of LD 409
- Auta Main, Veterans Program Manager for the State's network of Career Centers
- Bill Norbert, Finance Authority of Maine (FAME)
- Gloria Payne, Maine Apprenticeship Program
- Abby Sadauckas, MOFGA, New Farmer Programs Coordinator

**Overview of LD 409 – Steph Gilbert highlighted Section 1 parts 1-3 in the Resolve as the focus for the day's discussion:**

1. Use existing programs and resources to the extent possible;
2. Establish a certificate program that provides a hands-on farming skills training curriculum, classroom-based business training, business start-up support and health monitoring for veterans; and
3. Enable veterans, upon completion of the certificate program under subsection 2, to create new farm businesses and to meet the requirements to acquire the leases and loans needed to farm.

**Rep. Craig Hickman presented a brief summary of his inspiration for the bill and its process through the Legislature from the Ag, Conservation and Forestry Committee to the Committee on Education, Cultural Affairs and Veterans Services. Craig did participate in the efforts to create a Maine Chapter of the Veteran Farmer Coalition last year and met Tori Jackson and others. He decided it was worthwhile to put in a bill, not to duplicate that effort, but to add to it. <http://www.farmvetco.org/> After this bill passed, a veteran suggested to him that vets who complete the Maine Veteran to Farmer training they might be awarded a medal in the Hall of Flags in the Capitol Building. Since there was not fiscal note, he envisions opportunities created from existing programs. He would like certificates to ensure that veterans can use VA benefits to learn about farming.**



Peter Ogden noted that he had attended the hearings on the Resolve and had recommended that the Dept of Labor, Maine Apprenticeship Program, Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), Bureau of Veterans' Services and State Approving Agency for Veteran Training be consulted.

"How we are *Connecting the Dots*" – an overview of Existing Resources – a PPT presentation given by Steph Gilbert and Tori Jackson

Brief group comments after PPT presentation regarding additional funding sources relative to part 3 of LD 409 part regarding leases and loans to veterans.

Joan Dolan: Think about the transfer of accreditation from other similar, ag-based, education programs to KVCC and UMO? Perhaps an Articulation Agreement.

Peter Ogden: Suggests Small Business Administration as funding source for program <http://www.sba.gov/> SBA has special funding for veterans. VA Home Loan program (\$400K-\$650K) should be explored, too. Patriot Program also funds start-ups for spouses of military active and veterans. Former state senator Seth Goodall now runs the SBA for our area.

Bill Norbert: Suggests that Farm Credit of Maine should be on funding list <https://www.farmcreditmaine.com/> Noted that the Finance Authority of Maine is a state program, not a federal program.

Autu Main: There is a Priority of Service Program, with funding through DOL that vets have a "first crack at" for education.

### QUESTION #1: What do we know about adult learners, beginning farmers and veterans?

Peter Ogden

- The Bureau of Veterans Services (BVS) has 7 field offices around the state to serve Maine's 150,000 veterans (not counting active duty including the Guard reserves and 30,000 retirees). There are 90K veterans of age 55+ , ~ 50,000 of age 65+ and ~ 20K Younger vets b/w 25-30 yrs. The younger veterans communicate differently; it must be through social media. This younger population is very transitory, they typically don't return to home their community. Older vets are in rural areas, but the younger vets are locating in more urban areas. Must have high school education to be in military now, so many younger vets are very computer literate. Younger vets are much more disabled due to advances in battlefield medicine that has decreased mortality rates. Plus, many may have TBI (traumatic brain injury) issues. Younger vets are of a generation who want to text vs in-person communication.
- UM-Orono is currently doing research to design a marketing program for Bureau of Veterans Services to better reach the younger demographic with media like You Tube videos, etc.
- Health care of veterans is part of BVS charge.

Kathy Englehart

- We see an increase in veteran attendance at school. Many are PTSD, we see many more emotional issues from younger vets. It is tough for this population to be in classroom, sittin is stressful and surrounded by classmates. They don't like to sit with their backs to doors, or feel comfortable at round tables. There is a Veteran Service liaison, Ian Conner, on campus, plus a veteran group. This group is accustomed to being on the go 24/7. They need their mind occupied and many need adrenalin rush to focus.

### **Auta Main**

- **8-10K veterans per year go through the Maine Career Centers. Vets are driven by mission and purpose. They come home wanting to be independent, entrepreneurial, ad self-reliant. They may like farming due to its focus and independence. They are used to an established advancement track in military and become very frustrated when their new work has no clear career track. Are vets interested in farming?**

### **Tori Jackson**

- **I have used Google Chat to consult with vets and active duty soldiers who are interested in farming-including some who are currently in Afghanistan.**

### **Abby Sadauckas**

- **In the organizing meeting for the Maine Chapter of the Veteran Farmer Coalition <http://www.farmvetco.org/> we have also discussed the need for a clear path/pipeline. Perhaps the classroom model won't work for vets? There are internship, hands-on opportunities with MOFGA, but the pay is little.**

### **Peter Ogden**

- **Must get VA Job Training Program into the process, so they can work thru GI Bill to subsidize farming education for vets.**

### **Joan Dolan**

- **Maine Apprenticeship Program can offer financial assistance, but we need Employers who will pay \$10/hr to come forward then we can help them develop a Registered Apprenticeship Program. The vets also get a supplemental payment through their GI benefits.**
- **Our process is relatively short, and once I craft the documents, the approval process is conducted through email. The program is designed based on national occupational and industry standards and identified employer/sponsor business needs. Then a series of foundational documents are developed and sent for approval to our Council – a body of citizen appointed by the Governor who represent business and industry. The program is reviewed based on a set of criteria and usually approved. The employer is then a sponsor and Gloria Payne works with each business to register apprentices and provide on-going technical assistance.**

### **Gloria Payne**

- **This demographic wants to be hands-on and active, how do we ensure success in the pipeline? How do we ensure that jobs and land are available and the apprentices are primed for success? Registered Apprenticeship includes wage increases, relationships with employers, allows trainee to get good fit in industry. Bringing employers into process would be very valuable. The Registered Apprenticeship Program is a national certificate, recognized across the country.**

### **Kathy Englehart**

- **We have been working with MOFGA on making sure they can transfer credits to KVCC through their apprenticeship program.**

### **Abby Sadauckas**

- **An Employer should be represented in this group (or future meetings following recommendations of this group) There is Cooperative Maine <http://cooperativemaine.wordpress.com/> Run by Jane Livingston.**

- **GrassWorks <http://grassworks.org/> is a good example of nationally recognized program that could serve as benchmark. Some of MOFGA apprentice programs do pay \$10, so MOFGA can help bring employers to table.**

**Gloria Payne: Fed Gov has decided that occupations in agriculture are apprenticeable, we can be creative to fit these federal categories.**

**Steph Gilbert: Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP): how long to develop?**

**Joan Dolan: Not long, especially with pieces already in place for education. We need employers.**

**Gloria Payne: MAP must include 2,000 hours/year of work to be “official”.**

**Abby Sadauckas: What ag fields are recognized by the fed? Maine needs more butchers.**

**Gloria Payne: federal categories cover occupation/management/operations/value-added which are all broad**

**Dolan: Tasman Industries, LLC in Hartland, ME (home office in Louisville KY)**

**<http://www.tasmanindustries.com/locations/tasmanleathergroup.html>**

**Tanner would love to purchase hides from Maine farms. Connection doesn't exist yet. Tasman also interested in vets, currently working with DOL/MAP to develop a Master Tanner Registered Apprenticeship Program.**

**Ogden: Industry in Maine is different. Ag and Dairy mostly. Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture has a great program called “Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots” <http://ncta.unl.edu/combatcowboyboots>  
Vets may prefer cattle, animal/livestock**

**Doran: Adult learners, must understand best practices in processes. Kevin's son came back from Afghanistan, went to UMOroono for a semester, could not stand to sit in the classroom, needed to hands-on, applied problem solving went FL and studied turf/golf course management and is enjoying success in that career.**

**Payne: Female vets, how are we acknowledging them, including them?**

**Ogden: The number of women in the military has definitely increased. 20% of Air Force; 15-16% in the Army. Maine has 11K female vets in Maine.....mentioned a female veteran who is 23 years old who is taking over her family potato farm.**

**Gilbert: There are many female farmers in ME, we have measured the increase in the last two ag censuses. And, we need to note that Maine has more than potato and dairy farms. For this Pilot effort, we are talking about all scales and all categories of Maine agriculture, including livestock, commodities, forest products, market garden, niche crops, etc.**

**Doran: Several programs exist for people who want to get into logging industry, Maine Forest Service works with DOL on programs. MFS role is to provide technical assistance**

**Jackson: Michele Pfannenstiel is female and veteran and a veterinarian who is heading up the Maine Chapter of the Veteran Farmer Coalition. <http://www.farmvetco.org/>**

**Payne: We need an assessment of need for occupations in the next 20 years, including non traditional occupations for women. The Maine Apprenticeship Program will assist businesses with developing apprenticeship programs and employers and trainees (apprentices) can get up to 50% reimbursement for tuition. The support for employers could be an on-site training that is offered by an industry provider. When employer provides formal, on-site training, the Maine Apprenticeship Program may make contribution to offset this cost.**

## **QUESTION #2 What does your agency offer, require with regard to the pilot program?**

**Doran: Maine Forest Service – our primary role is to provide technical assistance to private landowners. Staff includes Forest Rangers, Water Quality Scientists, Entomologists and Policy and Management. We work with many veteran landowners around the state. Our staff teaches as guest faculty at community colleges. We currently offer webinars, workshops. Do have some vets as clients now, too.**

**Jackson: University of Maine Cooperative Extension - We can provide one-on-one biz training, classroom workshops, technical assistance in field, and take pieces of existing programs and create an individualized menu. We hope the Voc Rehab counselor would help guide veteran through options? These are not “certificate programs”, but this is one way UMCE can be involved. Federal statute bars Cooperative Extension from offering accredited courses so we cannot offer certificate programs, but we can assist.**

**Norbert: Finance Authority of Maine (FAME). – We offer financing, we are partner with Dept of Ag already. Low interest loans , loan insurance program, direct loans. FAME has helped finance Tasman, Moo Milk, Northern Outdoors, food processing grants, etc. Loan insurance program for vets – 100% insurance, most are 90%. Quite flexible.**

**Steph Gilbert invited Laura Allen to provide her insights about veterans services at Togus and at UMaine Augusta and from her leadership roles with Team Red, White and Blue:**

- **Togus counselors are very initial point of contact and are charged with apprising vets of their benefits. They also provide materials – brochures, etc. about opportunities. My organization, Team Red, White and Blue has a brochure for counselors to distribute.**
- **Amy Line, Veteran Services Coordinator? at UMaine Augusta is a Navy vet and helps veteran students look at their funding, curriculum path, peer group work, etc.**
- **Once this Pilot effort is up and running, Team Red, White and Blue could poll its participating veterans for ideas about how to spread the word.**

**Dolan: Department of Labor – offers a portable credential program that is available nationwide, we define career lattices and pathways in employers. 50% reimbursement for tuition. Maine Job Bank, employers can post jobs for free, direct match program. Safety Works within DOL, safety training for free within businesses. Farm machinery, Voc Rehab services. Unemployed folks may be able to get funding for clothing, other resources.**

**Sadauckas: MOFGA supports vets through volunteer opportunities. MOFGA’s technical assistance is available to all MOFGA members; from production to marketing. Each year MOFGA receives ~300 applications for 150 places in the apprenticeship program. MOFGA works to ensure a quality standard in this educational experience. The Journeyperson program is a peer-to-peer program that includes, 2 yrs mentorship with a farmer of their choice. The other annual work includes the Common Ground Fair, the Farmer-to-Farmer conference which involves guest speakers and considerable peer-to-peer learning, and, hands-on learning/training opportunities, primarily processing workshops. For example the Nose to Tail (butchering) workshop is in high demand and sold out every year. Today MOFGA is teaching a “Low Impact Forestry” workshop. Right now, the demand for our services outstrips MOFGA’s capacity.**

**Hickman: Is and Organic farmer. Craig’s first veteran volunteer on his farm was his godson, which added greatly to his desire and interest in developing this legislation.**

**Englehart: Kennebec Valley Community College – In the first semester of implementing its 2 year Associate Degree program, but learning that many don't want the full two years. KVCC is developing several concepts for certificate programs that would involve 5-6 courses pertaining to animal husbandry (sheep, goats, dairy) and crop production certificate. The 2-year degree program is more developed for a balance of animal and crop. We need more courses on marketing products, bookkeeping, and business plan development. We are also interested in creating an agribusiness certificate (John Harker at DACF has been assisting with this) We are happy to work with apprenticeship programs, too. We give credit for life experience, which may be particularly valuable to vets. Johnny's Seeds would be a great partner, and we are eager to have interns/apprenticeship help. The certificate courses are being designed to be "stackable" so that students can build up to a 2 year program. Our Principles of Sustainable Ag...is a good overview course and we are hoping to have that piece available online next fall. We are focused on Farm to Table and will bring in the culinary arts aspect as well. We are well ware of the need for butchering training.**

**Payne: Hydroponics is important industry to include...**

**Englehart: Right, we could develop a certificate program for that. Since there's already the 2-year program it is very easy to spin off certificate. Maine Community College system must approve these certificates, but the typical turn-around time is just a couple of months.**

**Ogden: All vets get what they need through the Bureau of Veteran Services in terms guidance on VA services, pension and health care. BVS has 7 field offices. Peter spends a lot of time in the Legislature, can continue to help promote LD 409. Feels that the Veteran to Farmer Pilot effort should offer several layers of programs: Control Work Program – is vocational training for disabled to get job retraining. Layers needed include: on-the job training, mentors, certificate, apprenticeship in "chunks" that allow vets to "taste" and find the best fit and decide to go for more training. BVS has multitude of resources to help veterans. Peter can talk to vets about the farming "lattice" and put out brochures, promote the "lattice". 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of vet pop is not native to ME; come from CT, NY and MA. Our state has land and space The Transitional Assistance Program (US Department of Labor) <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/> can attract a lot of others to come to Maine. Our state has land and space**

**Allen: The Travis Mills Camp is focused on providing adaptive equipment and changing rooms to meet injured veterans recovery needs – apparatus, room layout, windows, temperature control, etc. . Disabled vets will need adaptive farm equipment?**

**Jackson: Maine AgrAbility <http://extension.umaine.edu/agrability/> provides adaptive farming equipment.**

**Ogden: California has "Planting Seeds" a program for veterans and farming. <http://www.calvet.ca.gov/News/2013/09/03.aspx> and assistance with new and used equipment.**

**Jackson: Now ME has options to tap into national Farmers Veteran Coalition with the launch of the Maine chapter. <http://www.farmvetco.org/>**

**Gilbert: The Pilot effort will need to train professionals, including voc rehab counselors to ensure that they understand the diversity of farming professions/opportunities.**

**Jackson: Craig, please clarify, what was your intent with respect to the "ongoing health monitoring," what does that mean in LD 409?**

**Hickman:** I was only thinking about the healing nature of farming. For me farming is very restorative. I think it can help veterans. I think the language got more complex in the Committee's drafting process.

**Ogden:** Maine's effort should involve Vet Centers with promotion, outreach, pipeline development. The VA will oversee health care and health monitoring.

**Sadauckas:** Safe work environment? How develop for employers?

**Ogden:** Col Gibson does Military 101 program. Help employers with understanding PTSD, etc. It is a 3-hour training" to help civilians understand how vets think, walk and talk.

**Englehart:** Military 101 could be done with educators?

**Ogden:** Col Gibson doing similar training for police and clergy. It can be offered to educators, professionals, employers. We could (?) create a Webinar

**Auta Main:** Grew up in Dresden on Greenpoint Farm. Believes farming is potentially a very good fit for veterans. Focused on the need for a feeder system/pipeline to help vets find farming. Pipeline development can be assisted by the Maine Career Center. Need an assessment tool for people interested in farming.

**Sadauckas:** Suggesting New England Small Farm Institute's DACUM (Develop A CURriculum) can help. (attached to notes along with two other tools for 11/22 meeting)

**Jackson:** Next week I am launching an on-line assessment for people interested in farming that is based on "So you want to farm in Maine?" assessment interview that I do with beginning farmers. Sort of a kitchen table conversation with "Y/N" questions. <http://umaine.edu/publications/2433e/>

**Auta Main:** Department of Labor – Career Centers - There are 12 career centers in Maine and 14 veteran reps who serve this Career Centers. Maine needs workers. There are not enough people in ME to meet demands of current and future workforce. Maine needs to get as many people working as possible. Even vets with disabilities. Vet reps at Career Centers are all disabled in some capacity. We work with unemployed and underemployed. 100K people who log in to Job Bank. On average 20K job bank seekers and 7 – 8,000 job openings; we need to get more employers listing and using our service. We provide assistance with resume development and can help people work up an individual employment plan. Assessment/education/3-4 yr plan to get to job they ultimate want. Workforce Investment Act, provides job training.

**Englehart:** The tracks in LD 409 program must be stackable so they are flexible enough for each applicant.

**Main:** VA voc rehab at Career Centers. VR will pay for voc training but not everybody is eligible at present ~1,000 people per year. Maine has a disability and employment initiative = new grant at Augusta and Lewiston Career Centers. \$50K per year to support disabled applicants with gap funding for transportation - they have employment but their can has broken down or other such resources.

**QUESTION 3: What do we see that is missing, who, what, etc. ?**

**Gloria Payne:** I see two big needs.

- 1) We need to honor people's unique needs to get from "A to B". 4 year program may not be important. We should not just think about certificates and but how to create credentials for skills and proficiencies to acknowledge development outside of formal degree program. How will the "career lattice" we are talking about equal a credential? We need more employers to be participating in this discussion. We need practical way for vets to get experience and pay during this program. Provide support so they can finish with credentials and skills and funds.
- 2) Maine's a huge state, specific geography? How reach veterans? Launch this at same capacity level in every county?

Englehart: KVCC this is the 1<sup>st</sup> year of our Sustainable Ag Program, will develop distance learning component next year in 2014

Payne: Licensing board in ME? How will they be involved? By reason of statute, they can be difficult to negotiate with. How expedite process for participants in LD 409?

Sadauckas: Maine agriculture does not have many professional licenses.

Englehart: There are the Board of Pesticide Control programs for licensed pesticide applicators, etc.

Sadauckas: Yes, but otherwise there is a "different language" in farming. Perhaps DOL and others can help to change nomenclature and accompanying credentials so it can be more "professional".

Payne: We usually think about credentials from academic perspective, need to tweak for this professional employment purpose.

Main: Help with resume development, help with transitioning skills for vets to farming world.

Doran: Employers are reluctant to designate # of jobs to make commitment. So it's hard to determine demand/supply. Get potential employers involved early.

Englehart: Get Maine Quality Centers involved. If employers have people that come through people Maine Quality Centers/KVCC, other similar programs, training is free. Johnnys will give \$'s

Doran: Get veteran farmers involved with development process.

Gilbert: Commissioner of DACF has asked veterans in our agency to identify themselves to me if they are interested in the this effort. We hope to find veteran farmer mentors. I am also polling recipients of any of our grant programs to find veterans who might want to be mentors. The Farming for Maine Registry enacted in 2009 could be an opportunity to brand professional licensing and that could be tied in with LD 409?

Hickman: Learning mechanics...all trades are important in farming: (construction, plumbing, electrician). Butcher/can/preserve/ferment. Culinary arts? Everything about farming is problem-solving. As think about employers, think about related trades. Engineering.

Sadauckas: Farm Hack <http://farmhack.net/home/> ...brings engineers and farmers together. The pipeline needs to put linkages together. Knowing that when someone is trained, but there's so much variation on farms. Establish standards? How overarch and fit different farming environments. We need to determine level of proficiency.



**Sadauckas and Payne:** Overarching standards for example if someone learns transplanting from 5 different people at 5 different farmshow do we ensure proficiency?

**Ogden:** On job training program, must have standards so proficiency is established. Standards are mandatory for VA training program.

**Gilbert:** Please bring sample standards to next meeting.

**Englehart:** National Occupational Standards exist for Ag roles. Need to develop new metrics based on competencies.

**Payne:** Need to establish matrix to prove that we've met standards and developed competencies in participants.

**Sadauckas:** Need to have other lenders at table to address leases/mortgages, etc.

**Payne:** Need to map-how do vets enter this program, where could they go, what options exist for them?

**Hickman:** Language for the bill had to go through Education committee in order to leverage VA benefits. Does not have fiscal note because it pulls from existing resources. Also seems like two farmer tracks: I want to be a farm worker. I want to run and manage my own farm.

**Doran:** Between now and next meeting – do mind map, put organizations and ideas as movable pieces where they can be shuffled/changed. Get at answer of who will be entity to “own” this.

**Englehart:** Two maps – 1) Where does the person (veteran to farmer) go in their career? 2) What are the resources/services to support that?

**Gilbert:** Yes, agency structures, lenders, need to be “stacked” organized in a separate map?

**Payne:** There are “natural communities” (educational, financing, etc.) and we need to show the intersection of support services. We need to see the different resources and different help at various points in the map.

**Sadauckas:** NESFI has incubator farmer map. BFRN mapped the 5 stages of farmers at a recent meeting I think the farming map is pretty well established. Second conversation of where service providers come into map is really important. Plus need to better understand how VA services come in to play.

**Englehart:** Will look for National Occupational Standards for Ag.

**AGENDA**  
**Second Interagency Meeting**  
**regarding LD 409 Veteran to Farmer Pilot Program Initiative**  
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
University of Maine Cooperative Extension  
**Friday, November 22, 2013**  
24 Maine Street, Lisbon Falls, Maine  
9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

**Conveners:** Tori Jackson, UMaine Extension & Stephanie Gilbert, DACF

**Facilitator:** Kevin Doran, Maine Forest Service, DACF

**Notetaker:** Laura Allen, DACF Assistant & Team Leader Team Red, White & Blue

**Invitees representing agencies named in LD 409:**

Abby Sadauckas, BFRN Co-Leader MOFGA, New Farmer Programs Coordinator

Bill Norbert, Finance Authority of Maine

Kathy Englehart, Kennebec Valley Community College

Joan Dolan, Dept of Labor, Maine Apprenticeship and Strategic Partnerships

David Richmond, Bureau of Veteran Services

Rep. Craig Hickman, House District 82 and Sponsor of LD 409

Robert Haley, Maine State Approving Agency for Veteran Training

Gloria Payne, Maine Apprenticeship Program

John Rebar, UMCE Director

Don Todd, USDA - Farm Service Agency (unable to attend)

**9:00 Introductions** – Table tents provided

**9:15 Group review, edit & accept notes from 1<sup>st</sup> meeting**

Agree to send detailed information on elements in yellow highlighting

Make any adjustments to the draft Agenda for this meeting

**9:35 Brief Introduction of Farming for Maine Farms: A potential vehicle for recognition?** Steph Gilbert

**9:50 Farmer Map - Where does the person (veteran to farmer) go in their career?**

Group Activity: Review maps that depict typical training trajectories for people who want to become skilled farm workers and farm business owner/operators.

- Identify what is missing relative to veterans.

**10:30 15-minute stretch break**

**10:45 Resource Map – What are the resources/services to support that?**

Group Activity: Map resources to indicate how the Veteran to Farmer Pilot “Initiative” might function.

Make recommendations:

- What is doable now?
- What is doable in your agency’s 2015 Workplan/Budget?
- What is doable w/ a designated Entity, with dedicated Funding & 2 full- & 1-part-time staff

**12:30 Adjourn**

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Bill Norbert, FAME

Dave Richmond, Bureau of Veterans Services and Farmer

Rep. Craig Hickman, House District 82 and Sponsor of LD 409

Robert Haley, Maine State Approving Agency for Veteran Training

Gloria Payne, Maine Apprenticeship Program

John Rebar, UMCE, Director

Lelani Carlson, AgrAbility, Program Coordinator

**Group Review, Edit & Accept Notes from 11/14 Meeting**

Steph Gilbert discussed notes and asked for feedback from group, particularly to ensure that data points mentioned by the 11.14 participants were accurate.

CHANGES MADE: Laura Allen to confirm title of social workers at Togus. Bill Norbert requested that FAME be recognized as the Finance Authority of Maine. Gloria Payne asked for MAP to be MAP not RAP for registered apprenticeship program. Rep. Hickman mentioned that the first veteran volunteer on his farm was his godson.

**Agenda:** Steph referred to the success of the first meeting, noting that without a needs assessment and funding from the Legislature, the group was building an “initiative” more than actually creating a “program”. All agreed.

**Brief Presentation of the “Farming for Maine Farm” Designation**

Steph Gilbert referred to Rep Hickman’s comment on 11/14, that when LD 409 had passed, a veteran had suggested trained farmer veterans should receive recognition in the Hall of Flags. She provided all a copy of Title 7 Section 162, explained that the Department had not undertaken rulemaking to activate the program. She suggested that once the state agencies knew more about farming veterans, such a program could be a way to build increase public awareness and recognition of farmer veterans.

**Farmer Map – Where Does the Veteran to Farmer go in Their Career?**

Steph Gilbert presented three different matrix-type map/charts of a typical beginning farmer’s pathway to success. While the detail of the DACUM model could be useful to veterans working with career center counselors to formulate “Individual Development Plans”, it is far too detailed for the scope of this “Initiative” thus far. She asked the members more knowledgeable of the needs of veterans to examine the Land Stewardship Project’s “*Growing the Next Generation of Farmers - From Seed to Success*” and identify what more was needed to assist veterans.

**Haley** asked if the intention of the group is to recruit veterans as farmers or to provided them with resources and connect the dots of providers? Discussion moved to the development of curriculum as focus of group.

**Doran** mentioned that the Association of Loggers provides an initial pathway for burgeoning loggers.

**Norbert** asked that Haley provide an overview of the Maine State Approving Agency. 3,000 people in Maine using \$25M of eight GI Bills for education and training. Veterans Administration does not approve programs with the exception of the

Voc Rehab program. Educational institutions approach the Approving Agency to get programs approved and veterans may review approved programs that are funded by GI Bill.

**Haley** mentioned that it will be very important that the pathways of the program will provide jobs.

**Sadauckas:** What are the critical access points? How do we feed veterans into this system?

**Haley:** Very easy to connect with Guard and Reserve to inform them about training programs for beginning farmers. But it is tougher to connect with Active Duty who are released from service.

**Gilbert:** Then there is a need to highlight **transition assistance** throughout the *Seed to Success* model.

**Jackson:** Guarantee of job is important and it seems is the focus of voc rehab, but beginning farmers are small business entrepreneurs. They're not focused on becoming hired; they are looking to be their own boss.

**Payne:** Farmers may be entrepreneurial in spirit, but others may want to just be part of production or distribution or food "ecosystem". We need to establish pathways for both within the curriculum.

**Hickman:** Made distinction that laborers in agricultural are frequently not recorded as Dept. of Labor statistic, so "growth" figures in agriculture are not accurate reflections of growth.

**Sadauckas:** Census of Agriculture would be good place to get figures about growth of agriculture.

## **MAPPING for Farmers/Resources**

### **Formal Education Ideas**

Adult Ed – valuable as model? Individual programs must be approved by Approving Agency. Enrichment or programs that help vets continue with a certification they already have cannot be approved. New training that will result in a new occupation or certification can be approved.

**UMaine BS Degree –Sustainable Ag**  
**KVCC Assoc Degree – Sustainable Ag**  
**KVCC Certificate Program**  
**Adult ED/DMS/CC, Related Training Program**

### **Promotional Materials**

Video? YouTube. Different channels for different generations (manual, social media). Need local advocates: career centers

Need social media component.

**Richmond:** Mentioned that we need to advocate up to get benefits-level people at VA and VR to recognize agriculture as viable employment opportunity.

**Haley:** VR has ability to approve programs that he can't, so they're a great financial and education resource. Good to get them involved.

**Carlson:** Need to differentiate that there is Voc Rehab for State of Maine, plus US Veterans Affairs Voc Rehab.

## **WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?**

Educate benefits and rehab folks about the importance of farming, viability of agriculture in Maine.

**Sadauckas:** Farmer Veteran Coalition has great source material and wonderful representatives who can help educate decision makers. Pull Tia Christopher to speak to Maine decision makers. Can national produce video for us?

**Gilbert:** The Dept./John Harker is certified to teach the nationally syndicated, NxLevel Tilling the Soil curriculum, that was developed with USDA – Sustainable Ag Research and Education funding. We are investigating whether NxLevel has been approved by any other State Approving Agency.

**Haley:** Please have any future training providers come to him so he can smooth the process of approval now. Programs such as NxLevel need to be approved by their host state before he can approve for Maine.

**Hickman:** Where does Maine Farmer Veteran Coalition sit now?

**Jackson:** Maine Farmer Veteran Coalition is still formulating its business plan. It has filed to become a 501c3, and it has a small Board of Directors. Is working on a gap assessment before rolling out in earnest.

**Haley:** Much easier to approve programs that do not include distance learning. Distance learning must be approved by specific criteria.

**Hickman:** Food Safety Modernization Act could harm this whole process. New standards could negatively impact local farmers. May be movement in the Legislature to respond that will focus on protecting small/sustainable/local farms.

**Rebar:** UMCE has relationship with DOD to fund programs like Operation Military Kids. Perhaps there is a representative from Senator King's staff who could make connections with USDA/Farmer Veteran Coalition and the VA to investigate providing funding and support for LD 409.

Also- what about educating leadership? Field trips of decision makers to get them on a farm, meet farmers. AGCOM does a tour, plan for 2014? Invite VA/Voc Rehab people to join and meet veteran farmers. Tour must not only focus on all-stars and success, must also present the challenges veteran farmers face.

**Rebar:** Suggests tour just for decision makers.

**Sadauckas:** Get people at federal level involved. Similar initiatives going on in the Midwest?

**Haley:** How does VA Voc Rehab work? 20% disability, DVOP recommends a plan....Decision maker at Togus must approve that plan.

**Payne:** Auto Main would be helpful to identify important decision makers. Career centers throughout state, what is geographic spread?

**Haley:** DVOP/LVER do meet several times a year.

**Payne:** Auto can provide information on when the DVOP/LVER meet. Possibly meet 1/month? DVOP/LVER are evaluated on success of their counseling. What are trends in veteran hiring practices?

**Gilbert:** Perhaps cross-reference Bureau of Veteran Services county stats with agricultural stats to determine where our areas of focus should be.

**Payne:** How do we reach people at the outset? PSAs? Direct mailings?

Outreach Ideas:

Feed stores

AG tradeshow

Peer-to-peer network

Partner agencies include us in their outreach

UMCE offices

Stall Talk newsletter (newsletter of ME Army National Guard)

MAINEaiac (newsletter of Air National Guard)

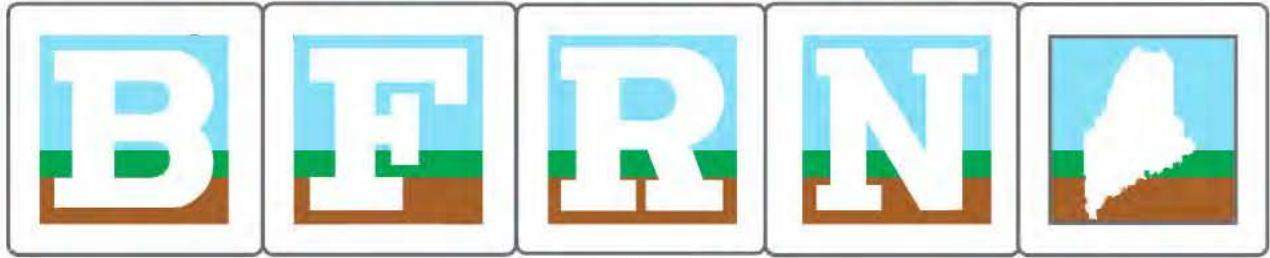
**Jackson:** I think we could easily fold our/this group into BFRN? Meet 2x/year to discuss new ideas and outreach suggestions.

**Gilbert:** Inducements? Some funded by GI Bill, others?

**Haley:** If Voc Rehab does approve IDP (individual development plan) for veteran, then GI bill can usually provide financial resources for additional technology and education.

**Norbert:** Suggest we look at a “Plan B” that doesn’t involve getting money from the State or Federal governments anytime soon. What can we do with existing resources? What might happen if the Legislature tables this initiative? How can we still move forward?

# Beginning Farmer Resource Network



**Are you a new farmer?**

**Do you need help navigating the various programs and services available to help you succeed in your new farming enterprise?**

BFRN is a coalition of Maine agriculture agencies & organizations working together to connect aspiring, beginning, and transitioning farmers to resources for farm business success.



**Check out our website**

**[www.umaine.edu/beginning-farmer-resource-network/](http://www.umaine.edu/beginning-farmer-resource-network/)**

- What to Consider First
- Learning How to Farm
- Searching for, Assessing and Acquiring Land
- Planning and Managing your Farm Business
- Planning of Facilities and Equipment
- Financing your Farm Business
- Managing Risks
- Understanding Regulations and Taxes
- Managing your Farm's Woodlands
- Farming the Water: Aquaculture
- Marketing your Farm Products
- Families and Farming

***Because finding what you need to start farming shouldn't be like finding a shear pin in a haystack.***

- Coastal Enterprises, Inc.
- Gray Harris, Sustainable Ag. Program [gharris@ceimaine.org](mailto:gharris@ceimaine.org)
  - Rose Creps, Sustainable Ag. Program [rcreps@ceimaine.org](mailto:rcreps@ceimaine.org)
  - Dick Clime, Working Waterfronts [rdc@ceimaine.org](mailto:rdc@ceimaine.org)
- Cultivating Community
- Craig Lapine, [craig@cultivatingcommunity.org](mailto:craig@cultivatingcommunity.org)
  - Daniel Ungier, [daniel@cultivatingcommunity.org](mailto:daniel@cultivatingcommunity.org)
- Farm Credit of Maine
- Shannon Webber, [Shannon.webber@farmcreditmaine.com](mailto:Shannon.webber@farmcreditmaine.com)
- Land For Good
- Jo Barrett, [jo@landforgood.org](mailto:jo@landforgood.org)
- Maine AgrAbility Program
- Lani Carlson, [leilani.carlson@maine.edu](mailto:leilani.carlson@maine.edu)
- Maine Aquaculture Association
- Sebastian Belle, [maineaqua@aol.com](mailto:maineaqua@aol.com)
- Maine Association of Conservation Districts
- Hildy Ellis, [hildy@knox-lincoln.org](mailto:hildy@knox-lincoln.org)
- Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
- Stephanie Gilbert, Agriculture, [stephanie.gilbert@maine.gov](mailto:stephanie.gilbert@maine.gov)
  - John Harker, Agriculture, [john.harker@maine.gov](mailto:john.harker@maine.gov)
  - Caldwell Jackson, Agriculture, [caldwell.jackson@maine.gov](mailto:caldwell.jackson@maine.gov)
  - Andy Shultz, Maine Forest Service, [andrew.h.shultz@maine.gov](mailto:andrew.h.shultz@maine.gov)
- Maine Farm Bureau
- Jon Olson, [jolson@mainefarmbureau.com](mailto:jolson@mainefarmbureau.com)
  - Jasmine Jennings, [jjennings@mainefarmbureau.com](mailto:jjennings@mainefarmbureau.com)
- Maine Farmland Trust
- Erica Buswell, [ebuswell@mainefarmlandtrust.org](mailto:ebuswell@mainefarmlandtrust.org)
- Maine Federation of Farmers Markets
- Colleen Hanlon-Smith, [info@mffm.org](mailto:info@mffm.org)
- Maine Marine Extension Team (Sea Grant/Cooperative Extension)
- Chris Bartlett, [cbartlett@maine.edu](mailto:cbartlett@maine.edu)
  - Dana Morse, [dana.morse@maine.edu](mailto:dana.morse@maine.edu)
  - Sarah Redmond, [sarah.redmond@maine.edu](mailto:sarah.redmond@maine.edu)
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  - Abby Sadauckas, [education@mofga.org](mailto:education@mofga.org)
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- Anne Langston, [anne.langston@umit.maine.edu](mailto:anne.langston@umit.maine.edu)
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- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Elaine Tremble, [elaine.tremble@me.usda.gov](mailto:elaine.tremble@me.usda.gov)
  - Pauline Pare, [pauline.pare@me.usda.gov](mailto:pauline.pare@me.usda.gov)
- USDA Rural Development
- Beverly Stone, [beverly.stone@me.usda.gov](mailto:beverly.stone@me.usda.gov)
- USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service
- Gary Keough, [Gary.Keough@nass.usda.gov](mailto:Gary.Keough@nass.usda.gov)

[www.umaine.edu/beginning-farmer-resource-network/](http://www.umaine.edu/beginning-farmer-resource-network/)



If you represent an agency or institution that works with Maine farmers and are interested in presenting to BFRN, please contact Abby Sadauckas or Erica Buswell, Co-chairs, at [bfrnmaine@gmail.com](mailto:bfrnmaine@gmail.com)



## **Resource Kit Contents for Aspiring Veteran Farmers**

Contents available via Dropbox at <http://bit.ly/1cnY2iN>

### **Resources for Agriculture**

2005-2011 Net Farm Income- New England Agricultural Statistics, 2012

2011 Farm Production Expenditures- New England Agricultural Statistics, 2012

AgrAbility

Agricultural Labor Survey- New England Agricultural Statistics, 2012

Agricultural Mediation Program

Beginning Farmer Resource Network (BFRN)

Building a Future with Farmers- Challenges Faced by Young, American Farmers and a National Strategy

Cash Rents Survey 2011-2012- New England Agricultural Statistics, 2012

DACUM Occupational Profile for Northeast Small Scale "Sustainable" Farmer

Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Designation of "FARMING FOR MAINE" Farms

Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition

Farm Aid

Farm Computer Usage- New England Agricultural Statistics, 2011

Farm Numbers- New England Agricultural Statistics, 2012

Inventory of Available Agricultural Training Available in Maine (Compiled by BFRN in 2012)

Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) Sustainable Agriculture Associate in Applied Science

Land For Good Acquiring Your Farm Course Registration

Land For Good Farmland Access And Tenure Innovations

Land For Good Homepage

Land Stewardship Project Fact Sheet #8- Farm Beginnings: Rotating in a New Generation of Farmers

Land Stewardship Project- Farm Beginnings Course 2010-2011: Sessions 1-9

Land Stewardship Project-Roadmap for Farmer Training

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association- Farm Apprenticeships

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association- Journeyperson Program

Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association- Training and Events

MAINE SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE RETREAT- The State of Beginning Farmers (Ethan Grundberg)

New England cash receipts from farm marketings- New England Agricultural Statistics, 2012

NxLevel for Agriculture Entrepreneurs

Resource Guide for Vermont's New and Aspiring Farmers

University of Maine Bachelor of Science in Sustainable Agriculture - Curriculum

University of Maine Cooperative Extension (DRAFT) Sustainable Sheep Production Skills and

University of Maine Cooperative Extension Bulletin #1201, Farmer Skill & Knowledge Checklist: Beef

University of Maine Cooperative Extension Bulletin #1202, Farmer Skill & Knowledge Checklist: Poultry-

University of Maine Cooperative Extension Bulletin #1203, Poultry — Egg Production

University of Maine Cooperative Extension- Resources for Maine Farmers

University of Maine Cooperative Extension's *So, You Want to Farm in Maine?* Brochure

University of Maine Cooperative Extension's *So, You Want to Farm in Maine?* Online Course

University of Maine Graduate Study in Sustainable Agriculture  
USDA Definition of a Beginning Farmer or Rancher  
USDA Definition of a Limited Resource Farmer  
USDA Definition of a Socially Disadvantaged Farmer or Rancher or Agricultural Producer  
USDA Economic Research Service- Participation in Conservation Programs by Targeted Farmers:  
    Beginning, Limited-Resource, and Socially Disadvantaged Operators' Enrollment Trends  
USDA Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher FY 2014 Self-Determination Tool- Aroostook County  
USDA Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher FY 2014 Self-Determination Tool- Kennebec County  
USDA Limited Resource Farmer/Rancher FY 2014 Self-Determination Tool- York County  
USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture- Start2Farm.gov

### **Resources for Veterans**

Bread of Life Ministries- The Travis Mills Project  
Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook  
Center for a New American Security Needs Assessment  
Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots  
Dept Of Labor Maine Apprenticeship Program Apprenticeable Occupations  
Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) National Viewbook  
Farmer Veteran Coalition- Maine Chapter Facebook Page  
Maine Apprenticeship Program- FAQs for Apprentices  
Maine Apprenticeship Program- FAQs for Employers / Sponsors  
Maine Dept of Labor Program and Service Guide  
Maine Military and Community Network  
Tasman Industries  
Team Red, White and Blue  
US Department of Labor Transition Assistance Program (TAP)  
Veterans Administration Maine State Summary 2010