



Ag Biz Planner

**Young, Beginning, Small and Minority Farmer
eLearning Curriculum**

Participant Information Booklet



Welcome!

Welcome to Farm Credit University's Ag Biz Planner: A Young, Beginning, Small and Minority Farmer and Rancher eLearning program. The agricultural industry is dynamic in the production of food, fiber, fuel, products for the life sciences, and life experiences with many opportunities and challenges. This program will position you to capitalize on these aspects for a more successful and fulfilling business, family, and personal life.

The Program: The program is designed for individuals and families with self-initiative and a passion for learning to enhance their business, family, and personal lives. This educational experience brings a body of knowledge together that can be learned and applied at your own pace, offering flexibility to meet today's time-compressed lifestyles. The Ag Biz Planner is one of five eLearning programs offered by Farm Credit University, but the only one designed for producers. It was commissioned by Board and management visionaries who wanted to make an educational investment in future agriculturalists to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to be successful in a globally competitive environment. The program is built upon the experience and expertise of Dr. Dave Kohl, an agricultural finance and management expert, and other academic and industry authorities, and includes proven methods that have been utilized by leading practitioners in the field.

The Process: The program consists of ten modules or short-courses, each taking one to two hours to complete. Periodic quizzes and module exams will allow you to personally assess your comprehension and understanding of the materials presented. Application exercises will allow you to link module concepts and ideas to challenges and opportunities in your own business. The program will take you through the process of building a strategic business plan for your business. This educational experience is self-paced and multifaceted, designed to be approximately six months in duration.

Interactivity: A Farm Credit employee or another mentor of your choice may be available to guide and coach you through the program and facilitate application of the content to your situation. Periodically, a face-to-face educational experience may be offered to those completing the course. This face-to-face Farm Credit University Institute will build upon the subject matter presented and encourage leadership, networking, collaboration and exchange of ideas and action plans.

Journey to Success: Yes, this program will take time and commitment as well as self-motivation, which are all attributes necessary for a successful agricultural professional. The degree of success you achieve in this educational experience will be in your hands as Farm Credit and other sponsors have made an investment in you.

Curriculum Highlights

Module 1 - Megatrends of Agriculture: The first step of your journey will be to go up to the 50,000 - foot perspective to examine trends and forces in agriculture and society that will impact your business, family and personal lives. The information in this module will be helpful as you design or update your strategic business plan.

Module 2 - Strategic Business Planning: Next, the direction will shift to the components of a successful strategic business plan with readings and illustrations that will provide you a road map for application to your business.

Module 3 - Preparing for Your Lender: It is important to discuss preparing for your lender and the ingredients of a positive borrower-lender relationship. It covers the importance of checking your credit report regularly and specific steps to take before visiting your lender.

Modules 4 & 5 - Preparing Agricultural Financial Statements: Next, the focus will shift to preparing your business' financials statements, which are critical in business analysis, planning, interactions with your lender, and sustainable success of your business. One module will cover the balance sheet and the next module will cover the income statement and cash flow projections.

Module 6 - Understanding Lending Decisions: Have you ever wondered what criteria lenders look for when evaluating loan requests? The next module outlines the Five C's of Credit that lenders consider. It also offers tips and suggestions for understanding the lending process.

Module 7 - Benchmarks & Best Practices: After preparing your financial statements, it is important to benchmark your financial situation to industry norms to see how you stack up to industry peers. An understanding of key ratios and metrics for business success will be offered. The topic of risk management will be presented with a self-assessment scorecard to evaluate your business' financial, marketing, environmental, and operational risk.

Module 8 - Growth & Transition Management: For those who are part of a family business, non-family business, or starting from scratch, a special section on succession and transition planning will provide a guidance system for success. Taking a proactive approach to succession planning is critical.

Module 9 - Record Keeping, Budgeting, Personal Finance & Investing: Personal finance and investments are vital for any young or beginning agricultural producer. Time-trusted personal finance and investment strategies will be the highlight of this section.

Module 10 - Professionalism, Communication, Ethics & Leadership: Finally, communications, ethics and professionalism will be presented as Farm Credit University prepares you to be a leader in your industry, professional, and personal lives.

Suggested Training Schedule

The Ag Biz Planner is self-paced; however, the following chart shows a suggested timeline for completion considering time commitment for all assignments in each module.

Module Content	Application Exercises	Approx. Duration
Module 1 & 2	Trend analysis, business SWOT analysis, mission, and goals	20 days
Module 3	Credit score check and development of credit request	10 days
Module 4 & 5	Balance sheet, income statement, and projected cash flow with variance analysis	30 days
Module 6	Five C's of credit analysis self critique and coaching by mentor	10 days
Module 7	Strategic assessment including: finance, marketing, risk management, environmental, general management	20 days
Module 8	Growth management, transition, exit plan	10 days
Module 9	Investment plan – personal finance, outside farm investment, building wealth management.	10-20 days
Module 10	Communications and plan presentation – executive summary, presentation of plan to lender/mentor	20 days
	Total	130-140 days

Assignment Check List

Module:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
View eLearning Module										
Read Text Version of Module Content										
Complete Online Test										
Participate in Online Forum Discussion										
Complete “Making It Your Own” Exercises										
Work on a Portion of your Business Plan										
Review with Mentor (if applicable)										
Record the Date of Module Completion										

Tips and Advice

The following are suggestions and advice from prior participants.

- Be open-minded. This will open your eyes and make you think critically.
- If at all possible, encourage scheduled uninterrupted time to work on the modules. Also encourage your spouse or business partners to be part of the training and completion of the exercises.
- Although working individually, meet as a group occasionally to discuss the training course as a “team” effort, discussing problems or using other participants as a reference. It helps to keep in touch with other participants; you can learn from them and their mentors.
- Use people within the industry for help; they all have stories to tell.
- Take your time; the information provided is useful. Definitely go through all the modules because you will learn something from each one. It is good to be thorough with each module; they each build on the next and end with comprehensive business plan.
- Do not get frustrated if you do not get every test question correct; use it as a learning experience to go back and review the material.
- Do not be afraid to make suggestions; they will help to improve this training program.
- The modules have varied case applications that make you critically think about other agricultural industries so you can be forced out of your “comfort zone” which allows you to make good contacts and learn how to find information, as well as learn something new about your business and yourself.

Your Hosts



The Farm Credit University Training Program is a joint project between AgFirst Farm Credit Bank and AgriVisions, LLC, an agricultural consulting company owned and operated by Dr. David M. Kohl, Professor Emeritus of Agriculture and Applied Economics at Virginia Tech. AgFirst Farm Credit Bank owns the program, and AgriVisions plays a pivotal role in the administration and development of the training program.



Dr. David M. Kohl, the principal content creator for Ag Biz Planner, energizes agricultural lenders, producers, and business persons with his keen insight into the agricultural industry through extensive travel, research, and exposure during his career. Dr. Kohl has traveled over 8 million miles in his professional career and conducted over 6,000 workshops and seminars for a variety of agricultural audiences. Dr. Kohl's personal involvement with agriculture and interaction with key industry players provide a unique perspective into the future trends of the agricultural industry and economy.



Alicia Morris, Director of FCU Training for AgFirst and a business associate with AgriVisions, directs the training from her Blacksburg, Virginia location. Alicia manages development of FCU courses and oversees the training on a daily basis. She has worked with FCU since its inception as her Master's Degree project at Virginia Tech. Alicia Morris is the administrative contact for participants.

Contact Information

Feel free to contact Alicia Morris at almorris@agfirst.com or 1-800-845-1745 ext. 2635 if you have any questions.

Allison Beverly (abeverly@agfirst.com or 1-800-845-1745 ext. 2310) is a secondary administrative contact for FCU.